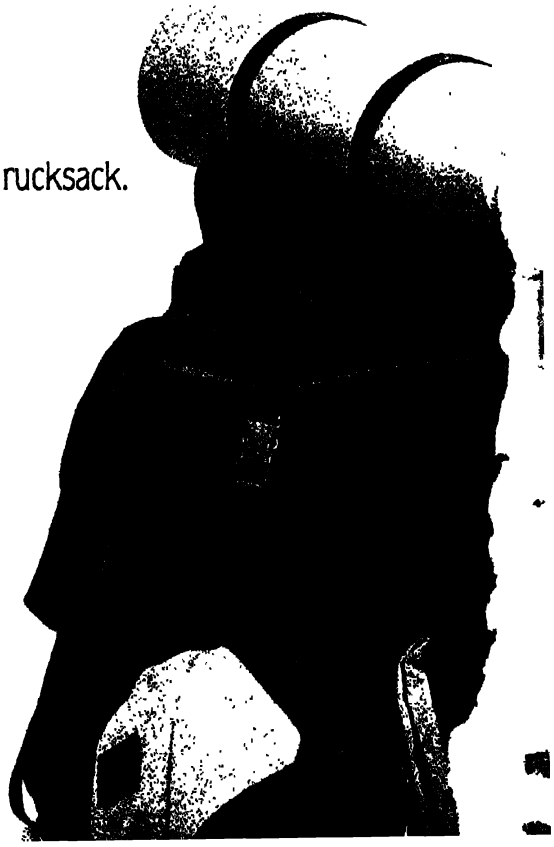
Bakeman's

Bakeman's MINT-O

PEPPERMINTS

Unpack this roll and observe its extraordinary effect on the people you go trekking with.



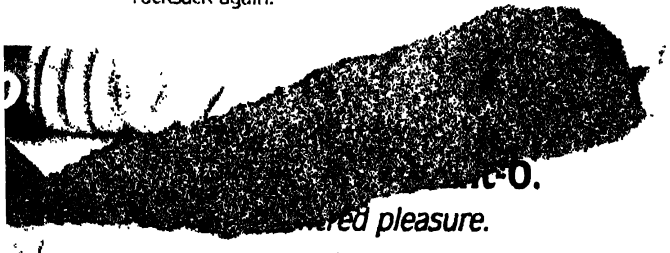
They keep offering to carry your rucksack.

And while familiarising themselves with its buckles and straps, they'll reach in, almost unthinkingly, to fish out your roll of MINT-O.

Those pearly white, nothing-centred peppermint rings with the irresistible flavour.

So cool, so refreshing. You immediately feel like reaching for another MINT-O yourself.

Give in to the feeling... you never know when you'll see your rucksack again.



...t-O.

...red pleasure.

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 5 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
4 -10 FEBRUARY 1990



20
COVER STORY

Heaven can't wait

Osho Rajneesh dies as he lived—amidst controversy, rejoicing and craziness.

LETTERS 4
SOUTH BLOCK 7
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 9
SIGHT AND SOUND 11
SPECIAL REPORT 12
The test ahead
BODYLINE 18
COVER STORY 20
Heaven can't wait
GUEST COLUMN 28
ENVIRONMENT 32
The Green Dream
NEWSWATCH 40
CITYSCAPE 44
Grime and glitter
DRAMA 54
NEWS 59
BUSINESS 66
BOOK EXTRACT 76
Epic remake
CONTROVERSY 86
The last hurdle
MEDIA 88
SPORTS 90
The Nehru Cup farce
SPOTLIGHT 50
KHAAS BAAT 75
SUNDAYWEEK 95
RANDOM NOTES 97
DELHI DIARY 98

12
SPECIAL REPORT

The test ahead

The forthcoming Assembly polls in nine states are crucial for both the National Front and the Congress(I).



32
ENVIRONMENT

The Green Dream

Menaka Gandhi has given a new thrust to environmental consciousness.

40
NEWSWATCH

Down with monarchy

The participation of Indian MPs at the conference of the banned Nepali Congress leads to resentment.

76
BOOK EXTRACT

Epic remake

Excerpts from Garry O'Connor's book on the making of Peter Brook's film, *Mahabharata*.





86
CONTROVERSY

The last hurdle

Will Golden Girl P.T. Usha give in to parental pressure to quit the tracks?

88
MEDIA

Ambanis bag *Patriot*?

Rumours are rife that Dhirubhai has bought into the Delhi-based newspaper.

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North eastern states, 30 paise

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 5 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
4 -10 FEBRUARY 1990



20
COVER STORY

Heaven can't wait

Osho Rajneesh dies as he lived—amidst controversy, rejoicing and craziness.

LETTERS 4
SOUTH BLOCK 7
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 9
SIGHT AND SOUND 11
SPECIAL REPORT 12
The test ahead
BODYLINE 18
COVER STORY 20
Heaven can't wait
GUEST COLUMN 28
ENVIRONMENT 32
The Green Dream
NEWSWATCH 40
CITYSCAPE 44
Grime and glitter
DRAMA 54
NEWS 59
BUSINESS 66
BOOK EXTRACT 76
Epic remake
CONTROVERSY 86
The last hurdle
MEDIA 88
SPORTS 90
The Nehru Cup farce
SPOTLIGHT 50
KHAAS BAAT 75
SUNDAYWEEK 95
RANDOM NOTES 97
DELHI DIARY 98

12
SPECIAL REPORT

The test ahead

The forthcoming Assembly polls in nine states are crucial for both the National Front and the Congress(I).



32
ENVIRONMENT

The Green Dream

Menaka Gandhi has given a new thrust to environmental consciousness.

40
NEWSWATCH

Down with monarchy

The participation of Indian MPs at the conference of the banned Nepali Congress leads to resentment.

76
BOOK EXTRACT

Epic remake

Excerpts from Garry O'Connor's book on the making of Peter Brook's film, *Mahabharata*.





86
CONTROVERSY

The last hurdle

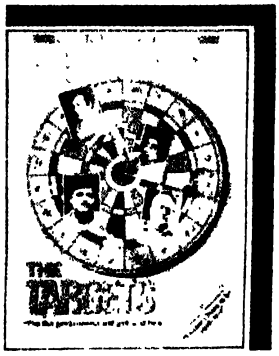
Will Golden Girl P.T. Usha give in to parental pressure to quit the tracks?

88
MEDIA

Ambanis bag *Patriot*?

Rumours are rife that Dhirubhai has bought into the Delhi-based newspaper.

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North eastern states, 30 paise



Victims of vendetta

The cover story (*The targets*, 14—20 January) raised many pertinent issues. It appears that this government is living in an ivory tower. While it is busy making attractive promises, it seems to be oblivious of the real issues. Defeating Rajiv Gandhi





Sharma (left) and Ambani

and gunning for Bofors should not be the government's only objectives. It shouldn't forget what happened to the Janata government in 1979. The Indira Gandhi witch-hunt led to its downfall. The article makes it clear that Amitabh Bachchan, Dhirubhai Ambani, G.P. Hinduja, and Satish Sharma will be the primary targets of the new government. Instead of indulging in political vendetta, the V P Singh government would do well to tackle the myriad problems facing the nation. The country's problems are greater than Bofors.

Kalicharan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Rethinking on reservations

Reservations should definitely not be based on caste, class or tribe (*Reservation politics*, 14—20 January). Equal opportunities should be made available for all persons irrespective of their caste or creed. At the most, economic considerations might be a criteria for reserving jobs.

By seeking special concessions for women (reservation of seats in educational institutions and reservation in jobs) you only make them feel more unequal and inferior. Then why ask for reservations for the fair sex?

Mahesh Kumar, New Delhi

■ There should be no reservation, either on the basis of caste or economic considerations. Reservations are bound to breed inefficiency. Moreover, if reservation is done on economic basis many people will resort to hiding their real income, evading taxes etc.

Vipin Kumar Garg, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

Interesting

I read Amitabh Bachchan's interview with great interest (*"I am a loser"*, 14—20 January). Amitabh has rightly decided to stay away from politics. He can serve the people even as a non-political figure. As his films have been flopping, he needs to concentrate on regaining the top slot in the movie world.

Mahesh Kapasi, New Delhi

■ There is no doubt about the fact that politicians fear any person who has a following as large as Amitabh



Amitabh Bachchan: right decision

Bachchan has. These people are now trying to tarnish the superstar's image through wild and baseless allegations in the print and electronic media. Amitabh can count on his numerous fans to help him counter his critics.

Ashok Kumar Dash, Barbil (Orissa)

Intriguing

While the release of MLA Venkateswara Rao from Naxalite capitivity is a welcome development, there are some intriguing aspects of this case that are still not clear (*Terrorist triumph*, 7—13 January). Why would the Naxalites abduct a TDP MLA to pressurise the Congress government, and why subsequently kidnap a Congress MLA? The calmness with which Dr Chenna Reddy faced the situation seems to suggest that he was quite sure of the outcome.

P. Siva Ram Prasad, Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh)

Chance for youth

It is good to see that young cricketers are finally being given a chance (*Fresh blood*, 14—20 January). These youngsters can play their natural game without any hangups or inhibitions. They are bound to be more fit and will have better reflexes. Our fielding will also improve with these energetic young cricketers in the side.

Ritesh Misra, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

Good reading

I was surprised to read the searing criticism of Mani Shankar Aiyar that appeared on the *Letters* page (*Advertising Rajiv*, 7—13 January). Aiyar writes well and his column



Aiyar: man of letters

always makes very interesting reading. It is rare to find a columnist who presents facts as logically and forcefully as he does.

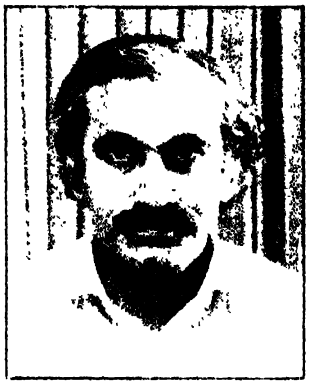
Lalit M. Dutt, New Delhi

Secular politician

In his letter *Why this euphoria?* (14—20 January) Syed Shahabuddin asks the reason for the rejoicing over M.J. Akbar's electoral victory. I did not vote for the Congress this time, but even people like me are feeling thrilled by Akbar's victory, and the reasons for that should seem quite obvious.

The victory of a Congre candidate known to be p sionately committed to secularism in a state wh has rejected the Congres a victory for secularism.

Shahabuddin claims that Akbar has played the communal card by standing in Kishanganj. How so? Though Kishanganj is a Muslim dominated constituency Akbar stood there against Muslim candidates, so he had no added advantage on that score. Moreover, orthodox Muslims were expected to vote against him. Indeed, Akbar would have been much safer in West Bengal where he is well-known and his intellectual credentials widely admired. He took a risk by going to Kishanganj.



M.J. Akbar: sane choice

Akbar's victory brings a message of sanity in the currently insane sectarian atmosphere.

Susmita Bhattacharya, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Improving relations

If the new government wants to develop better relations with our neighbours, then it will have to sacrifice the glamour of signing trade agreements with the Western countries (*Love thy neighbour*, 14—20 January). Trade is the strongest bond of brotherhood. Therefore, India should consider purchasing rubber from Sri Lanka, newsprint from Bangladesh, and supplying tea to Pakistan. In other words, emphasis should be laid on barter deals with our neighbours, which would also help us avoid the Western debt trap. Our politician-rulers should learn to put national considerations above personal ones.

Panna Lall Mundhra, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Ready to collapse

The state of our legal system is such that its collapse is imminent (*Resisting changes*, 7—13 January). Former Chief Justice E.S. Venkataramaiah is right when he says that justice delayed is justice denied. The administrative reforms suggested by him will definitely help in quick dispensation of justice.

The main problem confronting the judiciary, however, is its image. To improve this, judges must stick to a strict code of ethics. As former Supreme Court judge V R. Krishna Iyer recently remarked, justice is more important than Justices.

E.S. Venkataramaiah



Manoj K. Jain, Serampore (West Bengal)

Resounding rejoinder



Shahabuddin: hitting back

I must refuse the crown you have tried to place on my head by crediting me with the electoral victory of the BJP (*1989: That was the year that was*, 7—13 January).

You have apparently adopted the conventional hypothesis of equating Shahabuddin with Muslim communalism, of defining Hindu communalism as a backlash or reaction to Muslim coommunalism, and then relating the BJP's victory to the Hindu upsurge. This is too simplistic a view.

During the 80s I raised the genuine grievances of Indian Muslims and their legitimate aspirations but within the context of a secular order and with a nationalist motive. I encouraged participation, not separatism, quest for a solution within and not outside the system, cooperation, not confrontation. To my mind that is not communalism.

The BJP's victory was only marginally due to communal polarisation; it was essentially a result of the Janata Dal's underestimation of its own strength and the strength of the secular forces and the anti-Congress sentiments, and overestimation of the BJP's strength, which resulted in over-allocation of seats to the latter. The BJP won not because of a wave in its favour but because of the anti-Congress wave. In Bihar there was a triangular contest between the Congress(I), Janata Dal and BJP for 14 Lok Sabha seats. The Janata Dal won each one of them. Similarly, the CPI(M) defeated the Congress(I) and the BJP in Faizabad and Buxur.

A left-of-centre alliance with a secular, democratic programme can defeat the right hands down even today because the Indian people still have their head and heart in the right place.

Syed Shahabuddin, New Delhi

Insincere

The first Parliament session after V.P. Singh came to power was an interesting one (*Gaining confidence*, 31 December, 1989—6 January, 1990). It is now quite clear that our former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, was not sincere when he stated that his party would play the role of a "constructive Opposition". The Congress(I) is capable of stooping to any level in order to discredit the National Front government, even if that entails indulging in anti-national activities.



Rajiv Gandhi

Samir Marx Mahajan, New Delhi

Conflicting views

Ajit Singh, in his interview, says that the electronics industry is more suited to the rural areas ("*We will have to continue with liberalisation*", 31 December, 1989—6 January, 1990). A little later he sneers at Sam Pitroda's mission to take telephones to the villages. I would like to ask Singh how his rural electronics industry is going to communicate. Carrier pigeons, maybe? •

Khalid Majid, Bombay (Maharashtra)

WHEN DO YOU WISH YOUR COURIER WAS DHL?

WHEN

YOU HAVE TO FACE

THE CHAIRMAN

BECAUSE

YOUR BIGGEST CLIENT

JUST WENT TO ANOTHER BANK

BECAUSE

YOUR CLIENT JUST LOST

HIS CLIENT

BECAUSE

THE LETTER OF CREDIT

ARRIVED 2 DAYS LATE

BECAUSE

YOUR COURIER WASN'T

DHL.

RAKA:2767-89 D

THAT'S WHEN.

BECAUSE DHL HAS MORE OFF..ES WORLDWIDE THAN ANY OTHER COURIER,
YOU'RE IN SAFE HANDS ALL THE WAY.

To contact us, please refer to your Telephone/Yellow Pages Directory.

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS
DHL THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

INDER MALHOTRA

The Kashmir issue threatens to sour Indo-Pak relations

Unfriendly vibes



What a quirk of irony it is. The more sincerely India's new government tries to make South Asia an "area of friendship" the more it is thwarted by malign forces that cannot be wished away from the subcontinental scene.

These lines are being written on the morning after Inder Kumar Gujral's dinner in honour of Sahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan, Pakistan's astute and suave foreign minister, believed by many to be on his way out. The meal was delicious and the atmosphere heart-warmingly cordial. Gujral set the tone with a highly conciliatory speech in polished Urdu, enlivened by Faiz Ahmed Faiz's superlative verses. The Sahibzada replied in kind. However, he briefly switched over to English to deliver the message that the Shimla Agreement really reaffirms the commitment of both sides to conduct their relations "in accordance with the UN Charter"

The hint could not have been clearer. Apart from giving terrorists and secessionists of Kashmir ample covert help, in the form of Kalashnikovs, cash, training, indoctrination and sanctuary, Pakistan is now planning to internationalise the issue by taking it back to the UN.

Ironically, just when the two foreign ministers were exchanging pleasantries in New Delhi, she declared at Islamabad that Pakistan would never "compromise" on the "right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination". Her attorney-general, Yahya Bakhtiar, closer to her than Yaqub, had earlier put this matter even more offensively. Other Pakistani spokesmen have been stating that a plebiscite under UN auspices must be held in Kashmir. None of this can be objected to because in July 1972 both sides committed themselves to the Shimla Agreement "without prejudice to their basic stand" on Kashmir. What is open to strong, indeed uncompromising opposition, however, is Pakistan's violation, actual or intended, of the Shimla accord on two counts.

First, these documents lay down that the two sides would solve the Kashmir issue bilaterally—without meddling by any third party—or by such other method as might be "acceptable to both". Any attempt to take the matter back to the UN, which had become irrelevant, way back in the Fifties after the US-Pakistan military alliance, is therefore out.

Secondly—and this is supremely important—Pakistan's not so covert help to the merchants of murder, secession and mayhem in Kashmir is not only a total negation of the Shimla Agreement but something that could cross the threshold of Indian tolerance before long.

Even if the Pakistani rulers are skilful enough to prevent things from going wholly out of control, it is quite obvious that in the current environment, hopes of friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan make little sense. Negotiations between the two sides must continue, however, if only to limit the damage that is being done.

Strangely, there is much greater appreciation of this reality among visiting American dignitaries than among some of the euphoric Janata Dal leaders and the "think tanks" they rely on. Robert Kimmit, the highest ranking US diplomat to visit India in several years, and Congressman Stephen Solarz, have both gone back deeply disturbed. They realise that if Indian-Pakistan relations over Kashmir continue to deteriorate at the current rate, the US policy of befriending both India and Pakistan, of giving military aid and political support to Pakistan and economic and technological assistance to India, would become untenable.

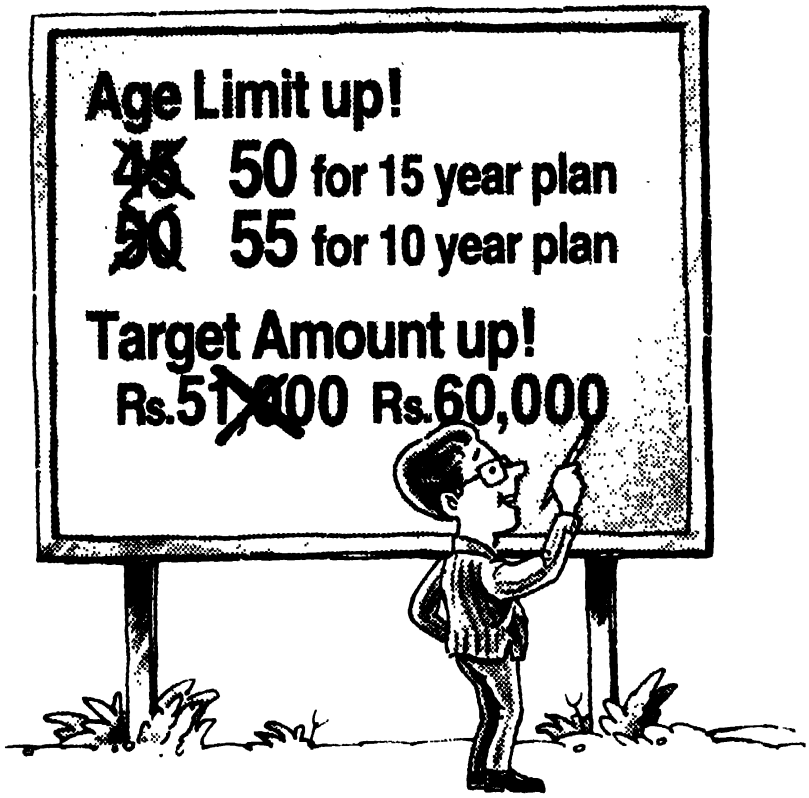
Against this backdrop it is all the more laughable that Chandra Shekhar and some other Janata Dal MPs should have also complicated the much simpler process of mending fences with Nepal. Representatives of other Indian parties, to say nothing of other countries, also went to the Nepali Congress convention in Kathmandu to demand the restoration of democracy in the Himalayan kingdom. But the Nepalese ruling establishment has been infuriated only by the presence of the Janata Dal contingent. The vehemence of the Nepalese statements on the subject has to be heard to be believed. •



Yaqub Ali Khan (left) with Gujral

Ironically, when the two foreign ministers were exchanging pleasantries in New Delhi, Benazir Bhutto declared at Islamabad that Pakistan would never "compromise" on the "right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination"

GREAT NEWS WITH ULIP



UNIT LINKED INSURANCE PLAN is now even better than before!

Things are looking up with ULIP - the savings cum insurance scheme

With effect from January 1, 1990, the upper age limit for joining the scheme has gone up by 5 years. So you get longer life insurance and accident insurance cover

	Former Age Limit	Revised Age Limit
15 year Plan	45 years	50 years
10 year Plan	50 years	55 years

What's more, the target amount has gone up too - from Rs 51,000 to Rs 60,000. So, you can now claim a higher income tax rebate under Section 80C with an annual contribution of Rs 6,000!

Besides this, of course, you still get the other advantages of ULIP. You get high returns. Dividends on ULIP have been going up every year – the dividend for 1988-89 was 13.75% (Dividend eligible for exemption under Section 80L)

In addition, you get a Maturity Bonus too. At the end of the 10 year plan, you get a 5% Maturity Bonus. And at the end of the 15 year plan, you get a 7.5% Maturity Bonus.

For free literature on ULIP, please contact any Unit Trust office or Chief Representative or Agent, or selected Hindustan Petroleum petrol pumps.

Or mail this coupon to any of the Unit Trust offices

Please send me free literature on ULIP

Name _____

Address _____

_____

UNIT TRUST OF INDIA

(A Public Sector Financial Institution)

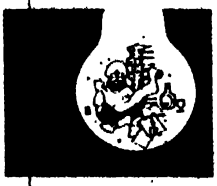
- 13, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Marg, (New Marine Lines), Bombay 400 020. Tel. 2863767, 6201995
- 2 & 4, Fairlie Place, Calcutta 700 001. Tel 209391/205322
- Justice Basheer Ahmed Syed Building, 45, Second Line Beach, Madras 600 001. Tel 587433/580938
- Gulab Bhavan (Rear Block), 2nd Floor, 6, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002. Tel. 3318638, 3319786

Hurry. Take full advantage of the new benefits. Invest in ULIP now!

SHAH-LT-486-90-CD

KHUSHWANT SINGH

What's a blooper?



The word does not exist in the two-volume *Short Oxford Dictionary*. It is probably a variation of bloomer; a silly mistake, a slip of the tongue, a mispronunciation which embellishes the meaning of the original. Such verbal *faux pas* have different variations: fluffs and flubs, goofs and gaffes, boners and boo boos. Richard Ledever in his *Anguished English* has some amusing examples taken from answers given by school children in their examinations. For example, inhabitants of Moscow are called mosquitoes; having one wife is called monotony; man with more than one wife is a pigamist; a man who marries twice commits bigotry; acrimony is what a man gives to his divorced wife; and reversing a g and a q, an examinee wrote "when a man and a woman are deeply in love with each other, there is no quilt between them". Another wrote in an essay, "the girl tumbled down the stairs and lay prostitute at the bottom". Amongst other student howlers he quotes are: "a virgin forest is a place where the hand of man has never set foot...; the problem of inter-sexual swimming is that the boys often outstrip the girls; the difference between a king and a president is that a king is the son of his father, but a president isn't; artificial insemination is when a farmer does it to the cow and not the bull; a moth is a female myth; Socrates died from an overdose of wedlock (hemlock); Queen Elizabeth was the Virgin Queen. When she exposed herself before her troops, they shouted, "Hurrah!" Then her navy went out and defeated the Spanish Armadillo; Sir Frances Drake circumcised the world with a 100-foot clipper; Cervantes wrote *Donkey Mote*; Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*. Then his wife died and he wrote *Paradise Regained*; the sun never sets on the British Empire because the British Empire is in the east (from the USA) and the sun sets in the west."

The law courts provide another rich harvest of bloopers, most of them in cross-examinations in which lawyers make fools of themselves. "Do you know how far pregnant you are right now?" asked the lawyer. "I will be three months November 8th," she replied. "Then the date of conception must be August 8th" he asked. "Yes," replied the lady. The next question was: "What were you and your husband doing at that time?"

Printers' devils often provide hilarious bloopers. The 1632 edition of the Bible left out the word 'not' from the Seventh Commandment to read: "Thou shalt commit adultery." In another edition published in 1716, the command to John to "Sin no more" was printed as "Sin on more."

Nobody has thought of compiling an anthology of Indian bloopers. I have quite a sizeable personal collection. One I used in my recently published novel, *Delhi*. A man unwittingly broke wind while in company. Overcome by embarrassment, he stuttered, "excuse me, it was slip of the tongue."

Another two of my favourites have unfortunately been converted into Sardarji jokes. At the time I invented them, the most important Sardar was Swaran Singh. And as is the practice, they came to be attached to his name despite his being one of the ablest ministers to serve under Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The first was of an American journalist who wanted to find out reactions to the proposal to make Zakir Hussain, President of the Republic. He thought he would ask a Sikh traditionally (but wrongly) regarded to harbour anti-Muslim prejudices. "Sardar Sahib," he asked Swaran Singh, "what is your reaction to having a Muslim as President of India?" Swaran Singh replied in his Punjabi-English, "Why not? India is a *seculiar* state."

The second is when he was urban housing minister. He was shown plans for constructing urinals in the capital. Having approved of the plans he addressed the officials present, "Gentlemen, having passed plans for making urinals, I think we should seriously think of making plans to construct arsenals."



Inhabitants of Moscow are called mosquitoes; having one wife is called monotony; man with more than one wife is a pigamist; a man who marries twice commits bigotry

Night cricket

One night two rustics were listening to the cricket commentary of the one-day match between India and the West Indies on All India Radio. "Once again the West Indies beat the Indians. Why is it we never win against the West Indies?" asked one.

"You see our boys are not used to playing at night," explained the other.

(Contributed by J.F. Singh Kaka, New Delhi)

Changing styles

A footwear shop-owner sold a brown pair of shoes to a young man who was highly delighted with his purchase. Next day, he re-entered the shop, returned the pair of shoes and got his money back. "My girl doesn't like it," he explained. A week later, to the shop-owner's surprise, the young man breezed in and bought the same pair of shoes again. "Has your girl changed her mind?" the shop-owner asked him. "No," he smiled. "I've changed the girl."

(Contributed by Reeten Ganguly, Tezpur) ●

ILLUSTRATION: DEBASHIS DEB

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ANNUAL CARTOON CONTEST 1990



THEME :

1. THE NEW GOVERNMENT
2. Caricatures of prominent Indian/foreign personalities

DEADLINE

Wednesday, February 28, 1990

PRIZES

(in each category)

1. FIRST PRIZE : Rs. 15,000
2. SECOND PRIZE : Rs. 10,000
3. THIRD PRIZE : Rs. 5,000

There will be 10 consolation prizes of Rs. 500 each.

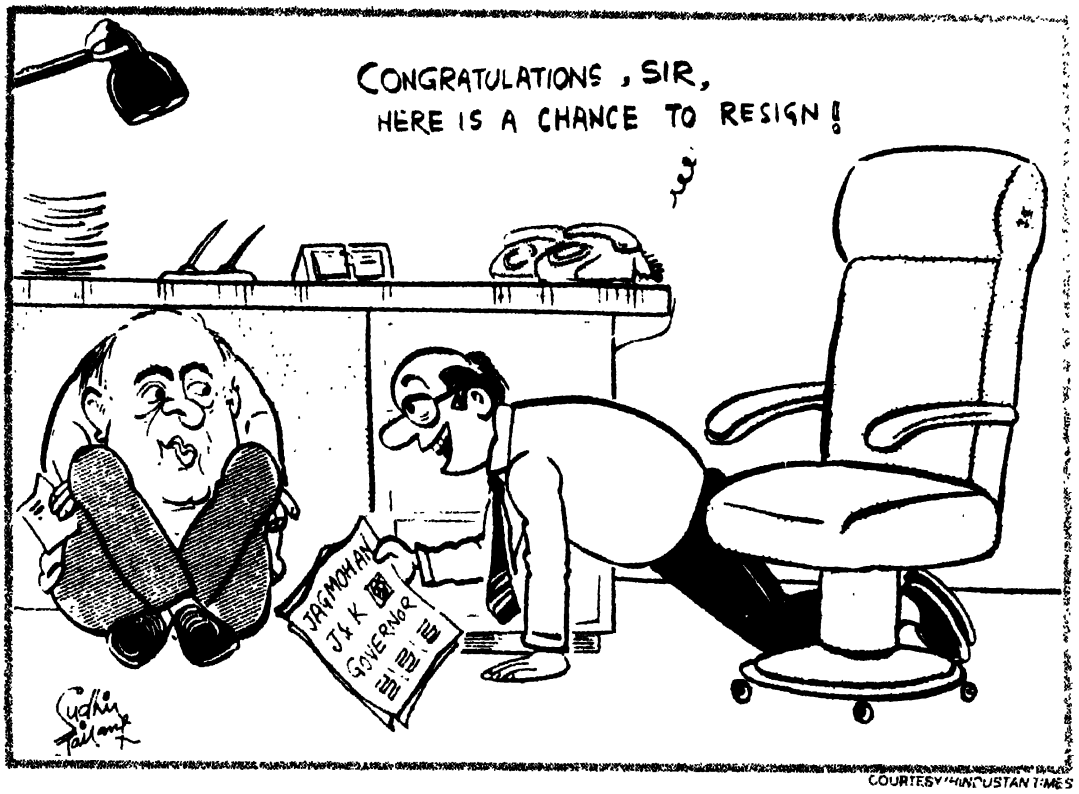
1. The contest is open to amateur, non-professional Indian cartoonists above the age of 18 years (Those who earn a living from cartooning are not eligible. Please attach a signed declaration that you are not a professional cartoonist.)
2. All works must be original and unpublished.
3. The size of the cartoon should not exceed 30x50 cm. or be less than 20x30 cm
4. Each entrant should indicate name, age, address, occupation, telephone number (if any) on the reverse side, in BLOCK LETTERS
5. Each contestant may take part in either category or both, but submit no more than THREE entries in EACH category. All caricatures should be identified on the reverse side
6. All prize-winning entries will become the property of The Hindustan Times. The Hindustan Times reserves the right to reproduce the award-winning cartoons in newspapers and magazines published by the HT Group
7. All entries should be on white drawing paper and in black, waterproof ink. All drawings should be neat and clean. No drawings in colour will qualify
8. The decision of the jury will be final and irrevocable.
9. The results of the contest will be published in The Hindustan Times dated March 18, 1990 (Dak editions: March 19)

F.N/XIII-707

Laugh and let laugh. Make India laugh.

The Hindustan Times once again invites all gifted amateur cartoonists from 18 to 80 who have a talent for making people laugh. Come, show your skill.

Entries should be addressed to: THE HINDUSTAN TIMES ANNUAL CARTOON CONTEST, 18-20, KASTURBA GANDHI MARG, NEW DELHI-110 001.



COURTESY HINDUSTAN TIMES



■ Our objective will be to bring the people into the mainstream, restore their confidence in the democratic institutions and have free and fair elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

MUFTI MOHAMMAD SAYEED, *Union home minister*

■ Mufti (Mohammad Sayeed) hails from Kashmir, so perhaps he knows better... (but) this is not the way to run a sensitive state like Kashmir.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Janata Dal leader, on the appointment of Jagmohan as Governor of Jammu and Kashmir*

■ He (Rajiv Gandhi) is personally and wholly responsible for the explosive situation prevailing in the Kashmir Valley today.

S. JAIPAL REDDY, *Janata Dal spokesman*

■ They (the present government) seem to be thinking that any decision of the previous government can be dumped.

RAJIV GANDHI, *AICC(I) president, referring to the compensation due to the Bhopal gas victims*

■ When I see your enthusiasm and your expectations, I get frightened and I wonder whether it will be possible to live up to them.

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister, speaking to the crowds in Ahmedabad*

■ If Raja Saab could be termed as anti-national, what about the former Prime Minister? He not only approached me using Mr Akbar as a conduit, but also tried to buy me, offering to make me the chief minister of Punjab if I was ready for negotiations.

SIMRANJEET SINGH MANN, *United Akali Dal (M) president*

■ Jyoti Basuji has asked me to look after West Bengal's interests at the Centre as there is no minister from Bengal in the government right now. I would be happy to do the job.

P. UPENDRA, *Union information and broadcasting minister*

■ It was a horrendous tragedy but technology was no more at fault than if the lives had been lost in an airplane accident.

RUSSI MODI, *chairman and managing director, Tata Iron and Steel Company, on the Bhopal tragedy*

■ I am among the very few heroines who look beautiful even when they cry.

JAYAPRADA, *actress*



TESTING TI

If the November 1989 Lok Sabha polls wiped out the Congress from the Hindi-belt states, all was not yet lost for Rajiv Gandhi and his partymen. For, in most of the northern states, Congress governments were still in power. The real test for the Congress will be on 12 and 27 February when nine states and one Union Territory go to the polls. If the Opposition once again trounces the Congress in most of these states, it will be established once and for all that the country's largest political party has lost the confidence of the people. The Assembly elections are equally crucial for the Opposition. the polls may well turn out to be a referendum on the performance of the V.P. Singh government. This is the first instalment of SUNDAY's *Assembly election reports.*



If there is one state where the supremacy of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is never in doubt it is Madhya Pradesh. The November 1989 Lok Sabha polls proved conclusively that this crucial Hindi heartland state is saffron territory—the BJP won as many as 27 out of the 39 parliamentary seats in the state leaving just eight to the Congress and three to the Janata Dal. Such a spectacular performance naturally made the party leadership confident of sweeping the Assembly polls—to be held on 27 February—and emerging as the single largest party in the 320-member House.

And the BJP's calculations are not entirely unfounded. The party has already thrashed out the contentious business of seat-sharing with the Janata Dal. Initially, of course, the Janata Dal, driven by an inexplicable ego problem, had demanded an incredible 170 seats. This, in spite of the fact that the Dal had won just three seats in the Lok Sabha polls and out of the eight constituencies where the Congress won, as many as six defeated candidates were of the Janata Dal. A clear indication that the Dal had little or no base in the state. But finally, V.P. Singh and his partymen saw reason, they decided to go by whatever decision the BJP took.

Of course, the task of the Opposition in Madhya Pradesh—the state has a Congress government headed by Shyama Charan Shukla—has become somewhat easy due to the continuous infighting within the Congress camp. Soon after the party's debacle in the parliamentary polls, the high command sacked both the chief minister and the Pradesh Congress president hoping that the new team of S.C. Shukla and Arjun Singh would be able to achieve the impossible: enthuse the disillusioned party workers and lead the Congress to victory in the Assembly elections in two months flat.

The main task of chief minister Shukla was to bring the warring factions within the state party unit together. Prior to Shukla's appointment, there were primarily two groups which never lost an opportunity to embarrass each other: one was headed by the former chief minister Motilal Vora and the ex-Union railway minister Madhavrao Scindia while the other was led by the formidable Arjun Singh. In the short period that Shukla has been in power, he has managed to form yet another group in the PCC(I): his own.

Chief minister Shukla began his term in a militant fashion. Realising perhaps that both Vora and Arjun Singh had to be cut down to size if he wanted to rule, Shukla declared that all that Vora did during his reign was wrong. He scrapped the tendu leaf policy, appointed his own men to head a host of corporations and publicly humiliated Vora. What is more, the



MADHYA PRADESH *S.C. Shukla has a formidable task ahead of him. He has to rejuvenate the Congress, fight dissension and take on the might of the BJP*



RAJASTHAN *Harideo Joshi was recalled from Assam to lead the party in Rajasthan. This, pitted Joshi against former heavyweights*

ME

The forthcoming Assembly elections are crucial for the ruling Janata Dal, the BJP and the Opposition Congress(I)

large number of Congressmen both Vora and Arjun Singh had alienated, rallied around Shukla.

Shyama Charan Shukla was particularly harsh on his predecessor, Motilal Vora. While Vora's supporters claimed that Shukla was only capitalising on the developmental projects launched by the previous government, the chief minister's men held Vora responsible for all the ills plaguing the state. At one stage it seemed that Vora was Shukla's main rival and not the BJP or the Janata Dal.

The chief minister, however, was cautious in his criticism of Arjun Singh. And the wily politician that Singh is, he did not waste any time in unnecessary duels with Shukla. Instead, he went about consolidating his position in the PCC(I). With an eye to the crucial business of ticket distribution for the forthcoming Assembly polls, Singh appointed over 200 observers—all of them his trusted lieutenants—for the district committees to oversee the selection of candidates.

With the Congress stalwarts in Madhya Pradesh battling it out amongst themselves, the going for the BJP-Janata Dal combine is smoother than ever. Victory in the Assembly polls being a certainty, the BJP is now thinking in terms of forming the next government in the state. Who will be the chief minister in that case? None other than Sunder Lal Patwa, a leader accepted by all sections of the Opposition in Madhya Pradesh. But then, where does that leave the Janata Dal leader, Vidhya Charan Shukla? In the same place where he is at present: in the cold.

M.V. Kher/Raipur



"My task is stupendous. Mine is a war Cabinet and I have to work on a war footing," said Harideo Joshi soon after he was sworn in as chief minister of Rajasthan barely two months ago. For once at least, Joshi had correctly and honestly assessed a situation. The Congress was wiped out in the parliamentary elections just a few months back—the party lost all the 25 Lok Sabha seats from the state—and partymen were a thoroughly disillusioned lot. The deposed chief minister, Shiv Charan Mathur, was trying to make things difficult for Harideo Joshi. And with the Assembly elections round the corner and a spirited Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) determined to wrest the state from the Congress, even diehard supporters of the chief minister admitted that Joshi was aiming for the impossible.

But Harideo Joshi was not a man to give up easily. He began preparing the party for the polls right away. And as if everything is fair in war, the chief minister did not think twice before announcing a host of populist measures aimed at winning over the estranged electorate. Such is the hurry that even administrative formalities have been given a go-by. As the vice-president of the BJP, Bhairon Singh Sekhawat put it: "Joshi is acting like the commander of a defeated army. He is destroying everything knowing well that the Congress is not going to rule the state after the polls."

And, it is Joshi himself who has given the Opposition a stick to beat the government with. In one stroke, the Congress government, which is already burdened with heavy overdrafts, committed itself to liabilities worth over Rs 800 crores. Consider the following populist schemes announced by the Joshi regime within a month:

- Loans extended to farmers, artisans and weavers up to a sum of Rs 15,000 to be waived.
- Pension to old and infirm to be raised from Rs 65 to Rs 100 per month.
- All unauthorised con-



BIHAR ***Jagannath Mishra is known to pull off miracles—just what the Congress needs to form the next government in Bihar***



MAHARASHTRA ***Sharad Pawar has a lot at stake. He has to prove that he still commands a sizeable following***

structions on government or private lands to be regularised. The commercial use of agricultural land to be permitted and development charges and conversion fee to be reduced

- At least 50,000 wells in the rural areas to be energised
- Ban on recruitment in state government services has been lifted and the upper age limit for eligibility in government services has been raised to 35 years
- Unemployed youths appearing for interview can travel free in state government buses
- A pension of Rs 150 per month for journalists retiring after 1 February, 1990.

This package is meant to placate all sections of the state's population. Whether the electorate gets carried away by such gimmicks remains to be seen but one thing is certain, the Congress has to first set its house in order before it can even dream of taking on the combined Opposition in the forthcoming elections. Infighting has reduced the Congress in Rajasthan to bickering groups and there is disenchantment within Joshi's Cabinet. Only recently, five senior ministers had threatened to resign in protest against what they called the chief minister's arbitrary and partisan style of functioning. In fact, the entire state unit of the party under the leadership of Mathur and former PCC president Ashok Gehlot raised the banner of revolt against Joshi. The high command had to intervene and the warring factions declared a truce. But observers feel that this is only the lull before the storm.

And the storm is not far off. Pressure and counter-pressure from both the groups have forced the state party leadership on the defensive. The Assembly elections are just over a month away but the Congress is yet to prepare a panel of candidates leave alone finalise the list. The Congress' only hope is that things are no better in the Opposition camp either. The Janata Dal president of the state unit and Union minister Nathuram Mirdha is dead against other senior party leaders from Rajasthan. In fact, both the warring groups run parallel offices in Jaipur. While Mirdha operates from 10, MLA Quarters, the other leaders, including the powerful general secretary, Digvijay Singh, functions from the official party office at 27 Museum Road. What is more, in separate press statements both Mirdha and Singh have asked Assembly ticket-seekers to deposit their forms with them. Naturally, such a bizarre situation has confused everyone including the party workers. Digvijay Singh, of course, has asserted that his differences with Mirdha are only over the internal functioning of the party. Otherwise, he added, "we are one and ready to give a tough fight to the Congress".

Though the BJP in Rajasthan is not altogether free from internal squabbles, it is, in the present circumstances, the most organised of the three. The party has already drawn up a panel of prospective candidates for all the 200 Assembly seats. "We have prepared a list for all the 200 seats not because we don't want an adjustment with the Janata Dal. We did this so that we are not caught on the wrong foot if seat-sharing talks break down," clarified Bhanwar Lal Sharma, the president of the BJP's Rajasthan unit. He is, however, confident that the Congress will be wiped out in the Assembly polls should there be a straight fight in all the constituencies.

But the BJP and the Janata Dal can hardly afford to rest on their laurels. There is no reason to believe that just because the Congress fared badly in the parliamentary polls, it cannot retrieve lost ground. In fact, there are precedents to establish that a party which swept the parliamentary elections did poorly in the Assembly polls. Take this example. In the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress(I) bagged all the seats. But the following year, the Opposition won as many as 85 Assembly seats.

THE OPPOSITION'S HOPE



RAGHUNATH JHA *The Janata Dal leader from Bihar played a crucial role in the party's impressive showing in Bihar in the parliamentary polls*



B.S. SEKHAWAT *The veteran BJP leader could well assume the reins of Rajasthan should the party secure a majority in the polls*

The forthcoming Assembly elections are crucial for both the ruling Janata Dal and the Opposition Congress(I). The BJP, too, is putting in all efforts to establish its hold over the Hindi belt states





BAL THACKERAY *Though the Shiv Sena supremo has denied that he has chief ministerial ambitions, observers feel that he is the natural choice*



S.L. PATWA *He usually keeps a low profile but Patwa is the unanimous choice for the chief ministership of Madhya Pradesh*

The mood in the Opposition camp is upbeat and such apprehensions are dismissed with disdain. Janata Dal and BJP leaders argue that since the Opposition unity in Rajasthan is complete, the Congress is bound to be wiped out.

Whatever the high command in Delhi might say, the state Congress leaders too feel the same. As a senior party functionary put it, "Seat adjustment or no seat adjustment among the Opposition, we are not going to win more than 50 seats."

Milap Chand Dandia/Jaipur





Only a month back, a group of Janata Dal activists had met Prime Minister V.P. Singh at his New Delhi residence. The discussions inevitably turned to the forthcoming Assembly elections in nine states and the Union Territory of Pondicherry. Explaining how important the polls were for the new government, V.P. Singh concluded the meeting with the warning: "Bihar should be the testing ground for the Janata Dal's strength."

The Prime Minister couldn't have been more right. The stakes for the Janata Dal alone in most of the states going to the polls are not really very high: in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra the party is riding piggyback on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shiv Sena. The outcome of the elections in Manipur will have little bearing on the fate of the new government. The only other state, apart from Bihar, where the ruling Janata Dal's popularity will be put to test is Orissa.

And the Janata Dal stalwarts in New Delhi are indeed taking the Assembly polls in Bihar seriously. They began by holding prolonged discussions with the Dal's principal ally, the BJP. Initially, the BJP, with its new-found confidence, demanded as many as 200 seats out of the 324 in the Assembly. This, in spite of the fact that the BJP did not do too well in the parliamentary election in the state. On the other hand, the Janata Dal had put up an impressive show in the Lok Sabha polls: the party had secured as many as 31 seats from the 36 it had contested. At one stage, the Janata Dal had even threatened to go it alone if the BJP stuck to its "unreasonable demand". But better sense prevailed and though the modalities of seat-sharing are yet to be worked out, the BJP has informally agreed to go by whatever decision is thrashed out at the national level between the BJP and the Janata Dal leadership.

The problems for the Janata Dal, of course, does not end there. The Lok Sabha polls in the state had proved that the communists and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) had sizeable following in central Bihar and the Chhotanagpur areas respectively. The communists may arrive at an understanding with the Janata Dal as it did during the parliamentary polls but the JMM will definitely go it alone. The Jharkhandis are sure to cut into the votes of the Janata Dal.

And the Janata Dal cannot afford to lose a single vote. The Congress(I) has made the Assembly elections in Bihar a prestige issue and is reportedly putting in all efforts to retain its hold over this crucial Hindi belt state. Soon after the near-complete rout of the Congress in the parliamentary polls—it won just four seats out of the 54—party president Rajiv Gandhi made a number of changes in the state unit set-up. He sacked chief minister S.N. Sinha and replaced him by the indomitable Jagannath Mishra.

And, Mishra, true to his style of functioning, began the near-impossible task of rejuvenating the Congress and preparing the party for the battle ahead. Knowing full well that this was probably his last chance to prove himself, Jagannath Mishra took measures on a war footing with very little regard for the rulebook. And, inetivably he kicked off a major

"She's sacrificed so much... In time, I'll need a lump-sum for her dream house."



DHANARAKSHA

Set a target. Invest on a recurring basis. Watch the money grow. And get life cover* too.

LIC Mutual Fund

We'll help you meet your goals

Most of us find putting down a lump-sum difficult. That's why Dhanaraksha units are of great value.

We set a target amount for saving in 10 or 15 years. The amount is divided into equal, yearly or half-yearly, instalments which are paid into the fund. A small portion provides life cover...and the balance is issued as units with a face value of Rs. 10/-. Accident cover comes free!

Dividends will be declared every year and reinvested in units credited to our account. Should anything happen to us, the value of the units accumulated, plus the contribution remaining unpaid, becomes payable to our nominees.

A final reward of 10% to 15% of the target amount will be given for complete participation in the scheme.

Also, contributions are exempted from tax under Sec. 80C and dividends under Sec. 80L of income tax act.

Thus, our lump-sum target will definitely be met.

All payments are to be made only at designated branches of the Central Bank of India.

* Insurance appropriation varies by age. Restrictions of life cover and accident cover apply. Maximum target amount is Rs. 60,000. Please contact, any LIC branch or any LIC Mutual Fund agent for details

RKSWAMY/LMF/4694A

controversy.

Soon after assuming power, Mishra began reorganising the bureaucracy, placing his men in key positions. Mishra's reading was that the Congress lost the Lok Sabha polls in the state because the people who matter were hostile towards the party. Within a week, as many as 150 IPS and IAS officers were transferred. This move irked the Election Commission, which asked the Bihar chief minister to stall all transfers and appointments on the grounds that such large-scale changes just before the polls went against the rules. Jagannath Mishra ignored the advice and went ahead with his Operation Revamp. The chief election commissioner, Peri Shastri, threatened to dismiss the Bihar government. But just when the battle was taking an interesting turn, Mishra chickened out.

That was not all that Mishra did. He announced a flood of populist measures to placate all sections of the electorate. But his fancy schemes gave rise to a fresh controversy: Mishra's critics alleged that the state's coffers cannot even fund a fraction of what the Bihar chief minister has announced. But Jagannath Mishra remains unperturbed. "You leave the implementing part to me," he says with confidence.

But whatever Mishra and his supporters may say, there is no doubt that the Congress has an uphill task in Bihar. But then, the Bihar chief minister is known to pull off miracles and bounce back just when he is written off.

Jaishankar Gupta/Patna



With just a few weeks to go before the Assembly elections in Maharashtra, the state's political scenario looks all but confusing. The contest for the 289 Assembly seats will be mainly confined between the Congress(I) led by Sharad Pawar and the BJP-Shiv Sena combine. Though the leaders of both the parties express the confidence that they will be able to form the next government, the general impression is that Maharashtra will have a 'hung' Assembly—a word that has become fashionable in political circles after the last general election.

In the November '89 parliamentary polls, the Congress(I) led in 162 Assembly segments, the BJP-Shiv Sena in 82 while the Progessive Democratic Front (PDF) was ahead in 44 Assembly segments. But since then it is the, BJP-Shiv Sena alliance that has consolidated its position.

The prospects of the Janata Dal in particular is extremely bleak. Party leaders are not even sure whether they will be able to field candidates for all the Assembly seats. Moreover, the hope that the Republican Party of India would join them has also been dashed. The only men who are knocking on the doors of the Janata Dal in Maharashtra are some disgruntled Congressmen who have been denied party tickets. While a Janata Dal spokesman declared that they cannot promise tickets to such elements, Congressmen in their turn have alleged that they are being asked to pay huge sums to secure a Dal ticket.

The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance has made significant inroads into rural Maharashtra. The Janata Dal has virtually no base in the state and the Congress(I) is having a trying time to contain the Shiv Sena

In fact, state Congress leaders are somewhat apprehensive that these 'rebels' might spoil the chances of the party's success in the forthcoming elections. Former chief minsiter A.R. Antulay and Pratibha Patil are of the opinion that this mad scramble for tickets will have a demoralising effect on the Congressmen and they are highly critical of chief minister Sharad Pawar's role in the whole business.

The party which stands to gain most out of these internecine squabbles is the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance. Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray has persuaded the Dalits to support his party. In fact, the Shiv Sena is so confident of doing well that it has decided to field one of its leading lights, the popular actor-director Dadasaheb Kondke, against chief minister Sharad Pawar from the Baramati constituency.

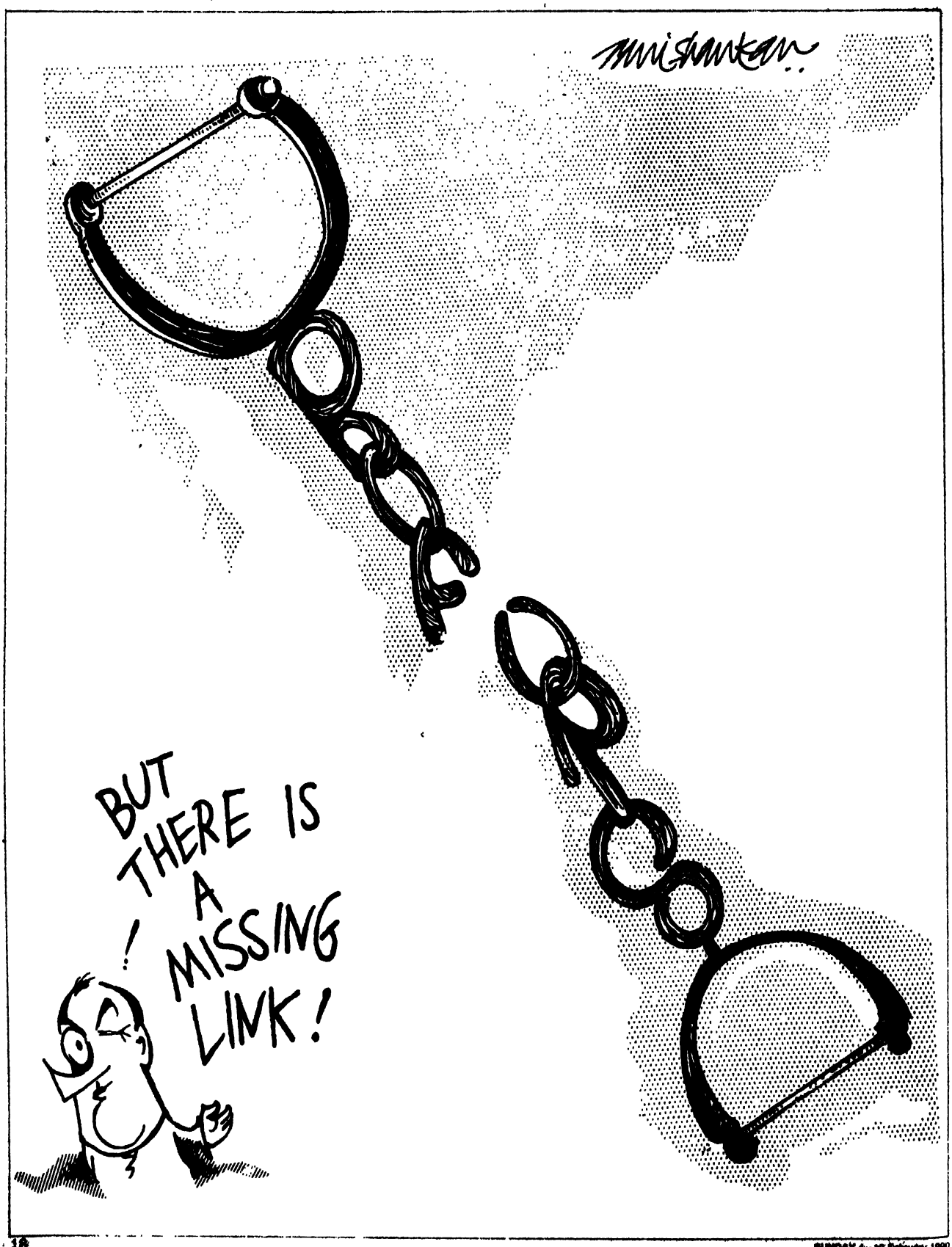
With speculations rife about new political alliances and confusion getting the better of conviction everyday, it seems that the Assembly elections in the state will be a closely fought battle. In such a situation one cannot really rule out violence. •

Olga Tellis/Bombay

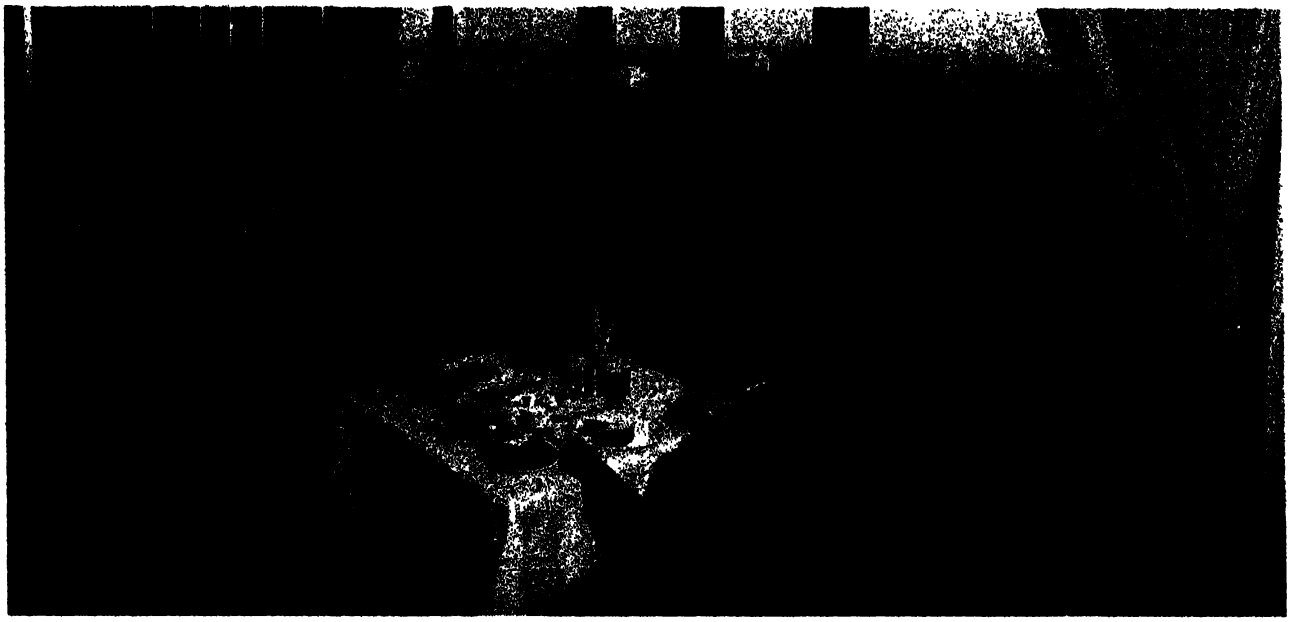


Bal Thackeray with A.B. Vajpayee: *formidable alliance*

RAVI SHANKAR



Experience the exquisite charm of Kanishka



In the very heart of Delhi

When at Hotel Kanishka, you're in the centre of Delhi's major commercial hub and important offices. You have an easy access to most of the places you want to visit during your business stay.

And you have at hand a host of facilities that make it more convenient to conduct your business. Telex, telephone and secretarial services. And a conference room in case you have a business talk.

To unwind after a hard day, there's Panorama. The roof-top restaurant, close to the stars. Have a sumptuous fare leisurely, while live music creates a spell. From your window, gaze at the infinite pearls scattered in the sky.





Hotel Kanishka
19 Ashok Road
New Delhi 110001
Tel 3324422
Cables KANISHOTEL
Telex 031-62788 KNK IN
031-62736 KNK IN

Dining and entertainment
Panorama: Roof-top restaurant serving Indian and continental cuisine. Live music. **Dilkusha:** Restaurant serving lavish buffet spreads for lunch and dinner **Palm Court:** 24-hour coffee shop. **Tea Lounge:** Serving the choicest flavours of tea. **Mishti:** Confectionery and Indian sweets. **Kushan Bar:** An intimate cocktail bar. **Eagle Bar:** Roof-top bar.

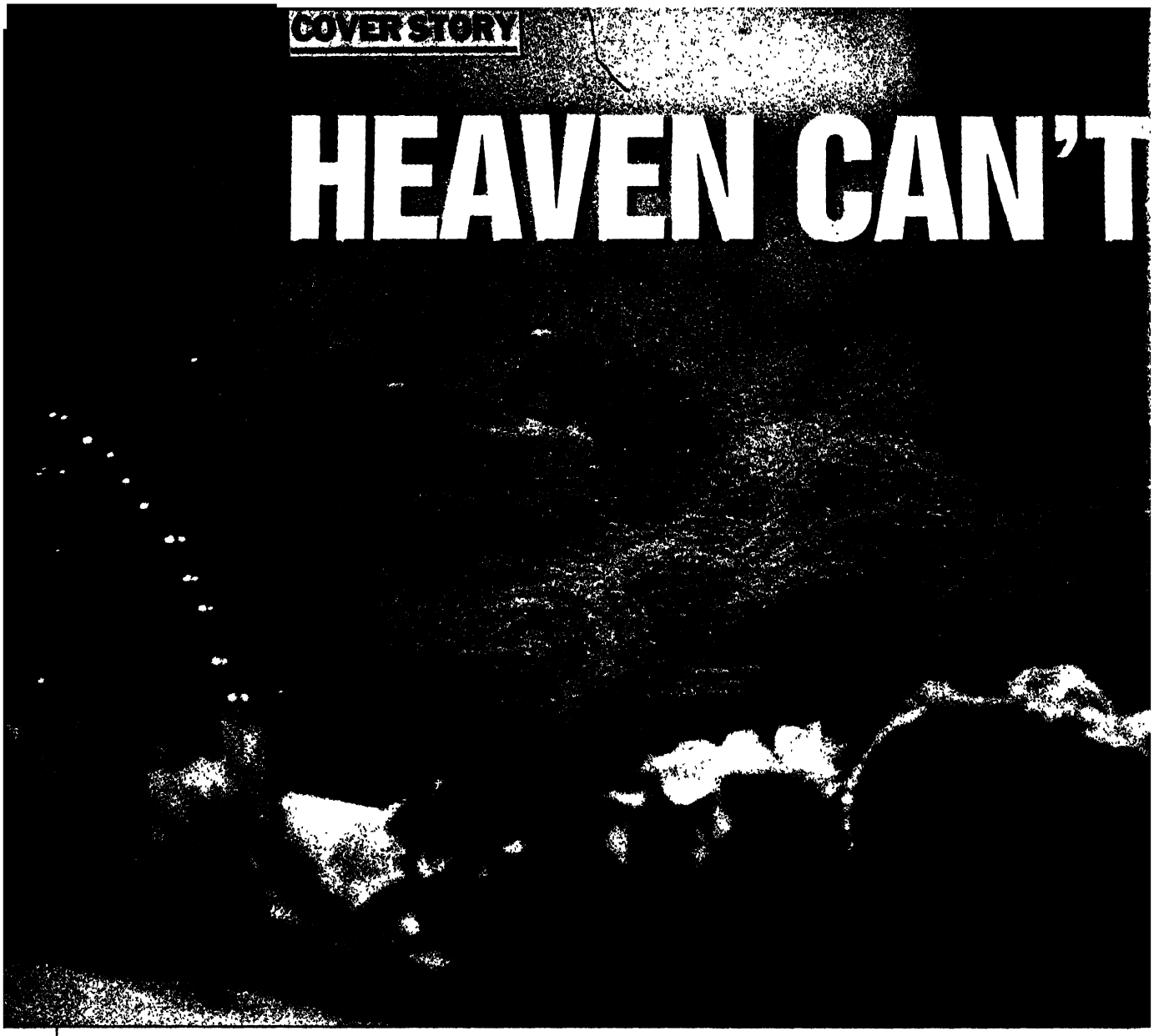
Conference and banquet
Gandhara: Seats 275 theatre-style, 350 for banquets. **Party Rooms:** Seats 25 theatre-style, 18 for sit-down lunch and dinner **Party Room:** Seats 50 theatre-style, 75 for (roof-top) banquets

The Ashok Group

India's host to the world

AKSHARA/ITDC-3230

HEAVEN CAN'T



"Osho: Never born, never died. Only visited the planet Earth between December 11, 1931 and January 19, 1990."
Epitaph composed by Osho Rajneesh's disciples

Rajneesh dies as he lived—amidst controversy, celebration and craziness

The going was as tumultuous as the visit. When Mohan Chandra Jain, the one-time Bhagwan Rajneesh (also known from time to time as Gautama Buddha, Zorba the Buddha, Rajneesh and the plain Osho) left the planet for good, the rollicking did not stop. His going was a 'tryst with destiny', a passing into the state of samadhi or oneness with the universe. Not a moment of mourning. And, almost as if with a vengeance, thousands of his followers went about proving that their performing priest's life and lessons were not mortal. The day he was cremated, thousands of maroon-clad Rajneeshites bade farewell to their controversial guru with 'song, dance and laughter'. It was a touching show but also oddly reminiscent of the forced gaiety that had always shadowed the purple priest's life and times.

The ecstatic cries of "Osho!", the chanting, the expressive forms of mass meditations and the initiation of a whole host of new sanyasins, could not detract from the fact that Rajneesh's passing was in the main an ordinary mortal affair, tinged with human pain and as tragic or commonplace as any death. The end for the 59-year-old guru, far from being a smooth transition to the 'other world', was in reality a particularly painful experience. As Swami Amrito, Rajneesh's personal physician and closest disciple, admitted in between wracking sobs: "He had been able to do less and less for the past few months, though he never did let on." And on 19 January, at 5 pm, when Rajneesh suffered a massive coronary thrombosis, Amrito asked the dying Swami

WAIT



COURTESY OSHO COMMUNE

whether he should prepare for cardiac resuscitation and the reply was: "No. If I die it will be a relief from the pain."

The wheel had turned full circle. The Bhagwan, born Chandra Mohan Jain in Kuchwada, Madhya Pradesh, might have achieved Godhood, celebrity status and raised controversy in life, but in death he was back to human proportions. His roller-coaster life looks in retrospect as much a spectacle as his funeral, as unreal and melodramatic as his pronouncements and fantastic escapades. What, in fact, had made him the iconoclastic clown of religion was the irreverent form in which he would couch old truths. He had been playing godman since he was twenty-one years old (in 1953). He spent nine long years, between 1959 and 1968, travelling throughout India, challenging religious leaders in public debates. But polemics did not get him very far. What did was his book *Sex To Superconsciousness* published in 1968. "The title was enough to provoke people," recalls Swami Chaitanya Keerti, Rajneesh's press secretary. "And since then Rajneesh came to be known as the Sex Guru."

This image proved to be a boon for Rajneesh during the sexy Seventies. Flower children, freakheads and frustrated Indians homed on to Pune and the Rajneesh ashram in droves. The philosophy that maintained that salvation was to be found not in renunciation but in the celebration of life and all its processes, sex included, found instant appeal. "Enlightenment does not mean impotence," Rajneesh once declared, and delighted his disciples by advocating special methods of sexual intercourse to bring out man's fundamental sex energy and channel it towards creative directions. A disciple did one better and organised 'encounter therapy' sessions where devotees would engage in group sex. The Pune ashram received worldwide publicity after explicit photographs of the 'encounter sessions' appeared in the West German magazine *Stern* in 1977.

In terms of sheer flamboyance, Rajneesh's style had always been unbeatable. In the early 1980s, when he found the going was getting tough in Pune, the city of the orthodox Maharashtrian Brahmins, he disclosed that he was setting up a dream city on 126,000 acres of wasteland in Oregon, United States. Rajneeshpuram, as this city was called, grew into a 5,000-strong self-supporting community, and a centre of media attention. Those were the days of his famous Rolls Royces: 93 in all. Each afternoon, the Master would emerge from his mansion, slide into a Rolls and slowly cruise down the streets of Rajneeshpuram, benignly waving at his disciples, all of whom would dutifully line up by the curbside to pay homage.

But that paradise proved to be short-lived. Between July and September 1985, Rajneesh appeared on prime-time national TV nine times, including *Good Morning America* and *Nightline*. And what he said on TV was outrageous: calling Jesus Christ a crackpot for claiming to be the

THE COMMUNE AFTER RAJNEESH

New sanyasins are initiated into the faith while the body of Rajneesh lies in state



GAUTAM PATOLE



THE PUNE ASHRAM *The meditations, the dancing, the discourses continue*

only son of God, accusing Christians of being hypocrites, lashing out at Reagan and his government for their sham democracy and manipulative Christianity, and declaring the Bible to be full of pornography.

"America couldn't take it", says Amrito, a member of Rajneesh's inner circle. "Bhagwan was trying to tell them many things, about the conditions of Americans, the barbarity of modern civilisation, and how drugs, mental illness and loneliness were destroying people." Amrito feels that Rajneesh rattled the shutters of the men in power in America, none of whom gave a toss for all the real, terrible problems of their country, and got back at him when the chance came. That was when Rajneesh's secretary, Sheela, defrauded the community of millions, and was exposed for a whole set of illegal acts and ultimately tried to flee. Rajneesh himself condemned her activities and invited the state police to properly investigate the matter. This was 14 September 1985. One and a half months later, Ranjeesh himself was arrested.

Photographs of the Sex Guru in chains splashed across newspaper front pages all over the West, his pleading guilty on two counts and his subsequent deportation from the country marked the beginning of a new kind of notoriety for Rajneesh. The downfall was complete. His name was suddenly associated with drugs, with sexual misdemeanors, and newspapers ran stories about him having AIDS. He tried to make his return to India as ostentatious, as extravagant

AFTER RAJNEESH WHO?

Apparently, there is no successor

After Rajneesh who? Nobody, if the late guru's closest disciples are to be believed. Questions about succession and the inheritance of Rajneesh's considerable empire are not welcome at Rajneeshdham. There is no successor, chorus Rajneeshites. The Master's death has changed nothing. Life will go on as usual at Oshodham, Pune. The meditations, the dancing, the chanting and evening discourses will continue.

But who will oversee things? Who will be the master of rites now? The questions persist, generating both curiosity and suspicion. Why did the Master not name a successor? Will some of his closest disciples now hijack the still-rolling Osho bandwagon? In an attempt to lay these apprehensions to rest, Rajneesh's closest disciples, the ones who administer the Pune ashram, called a press conference two days after his death. Here, Swami Amrito disclosed that on 6 April last year, Osho had ordered the setting up of a 21-member 'inner circle'. Rajneesh had, apparently, taken this decision because his health was fast deteriorating. Perhaps, knowing that the end was near, he felt he should do something to prevent Oshodham from plunging into chaos after his death.

In the new set up, Swami Jayesh as chairman of the inner circle is considered the unofficial successor to Rajneesh. Swami Amrito, inner circle vice-chairman, describes Jayesh as a "professional sanyasin" who joined the commune during the Oregon days. Ma Neelam, who had been Rajneesh's personal secretary and 'caretaker', says: "Jayesh looked after the legal affairs of the commune, and you know with Osho, these cases would keep popping up. He was part of a very intimate group and was in close contact with Osho."

"The workings of the inner circle are secret—and that's how Osho wanted it to be," claims Amrito. And indeed, secrecy seems to be the inner circle's distinguishing feature. Swami Jayesh is elusive and Amrito, who acts as the group's official spokesman, is not prepared to disclose any details about the Osho ashram. Amrito is equally evasive about the precise legal status of the inner circle. Does the inner circle only administer the ashram or does it own the whole complex, the Rolls Royces and everything else? Amrito merely says: "You could say that it isn't

SWAMI AMRITO

The vice chairman of the inner set up by Rajneesh





GAUTAM PATOIL

an occasion as possible, hiring 60 rooms in a New Delhi five-star hotel and chartering a Vayudoot Avro to fly his entourage to the seclusion of Kulu Manali. He gave indignant interviews to Indian magazines, tried mustering his legendary aplomb and failed. He looked fatigued, hid his once lustrous eyes behind dark glasses and could not convince the world of his innocence.

Instead within a few weeks, the Guru and his flock departed once again, on what was to prove an abortive world tour. The Rajneesh caravan stopped to preach in Kathmandu, then proceeded to Greece where he was once again arrested and asked to leave the country. From March to July 1986, Rajneesh hopped from one country to another, constantly hounded by securitymen. In all, 21 countries either deported him or refused him a visa. Finally, an exhausted Rajneesh returned to Bombay in early January 1987 and slunk back to his ashram in Pune, back to where it had all begun.

That, in restrospect, marked the end of his golden period. True, he did make a comeback exactly about a year ago by claiming to have been visited by none other than the soul of Gautama the Buddha. But the spirit had faded. So had his atrocious glamour of the Seventies. It was a different, more restrained Rajneesh. Sex seemed to be out. His devotees no longer ran about the streets of Pune half-naked, there was no group sex and the world no longer gasped when he opened his mouth. His claim to have been visited by Buddha elicited more amusement than shock. The only ones outraged were of course the Buddhists, who were soon silenced by Rajneesh's argument that being Buddha was merely a state of mind and applied to every individual who was truly enlightened. But the smiles soon faded and the world turned its back on the greatest performer of modern-day religion.



GAUTAM PATOIL

marriage but only a live-in relationship."

A salient feature of the inner circle is the dominance of 'foreigners'. Apparently, only five of the circle's 21 members are Indians. Zareen, who is in charge of publishing Indian sannyasins, Satya Vedanta, vice-chancellor of the Osho University of Creative Arts, Neelam, secretary of Indian Affairs, Jayashibha, who would look after the commune during Rajneesh's trips abroad, and Yatnagni, who handles the day-to-day running of the ashram.

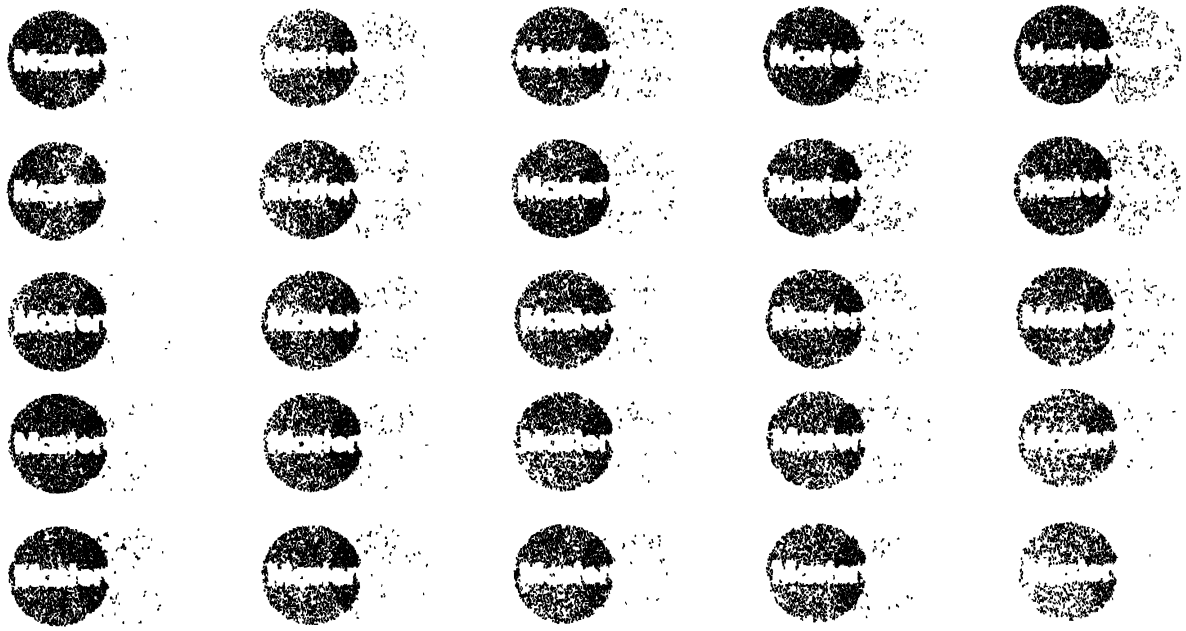
MA NEELAM



The ordinary citizens of Pune, who had once risen in protest against Rajneesh and his disciples, had long forgiven their local prophet and his religious trespasses. He had become something of a local curiosity and when he died, Puneites to a man only wondered what would happen to the lucrative flow of foreigners into their city. "There is a chance that foreigners will stop coming to the city," worried a local police officer. "They were a major source of foreign exchange for us and obviously boosted the economy." Hoteliers, restaurant operators and other local tradesmen are equally worried. To them, the Bhagwan meant only one thing: good business.

If the mood of Puneites was predominantly cynical, that of the devotees of the dead prophet was no brighter. The celebrations, the meditations, the evening discourses of Rajneesh on video, and the carefully

If your credit card carries this symbol, walk into any of our 12000 outlets.



If it doesn't, stay at home.

Before you leave home, check your credit card for the MasterCard symbol.

It doesn't matter which Member Bank it belongs to. Walk into any of over 12000 Merchant Establishments in India and Nepal, where a warm welcome awaits you. Because with MasterCard, you get credit at the collective Merchant Establishments of ten leading banks in India and Nepal.

No other credit card is more widely accepted than MasterCard. None.

MasterCard is the world's largest association of banks and financial institutions. With over 29,000 banks in 170 countries. Offering the best financial services and products to customers around the globe. Servicing more than 153 million MasterCard cardholders. At 7.2 million Merchant Establishments worldwide.

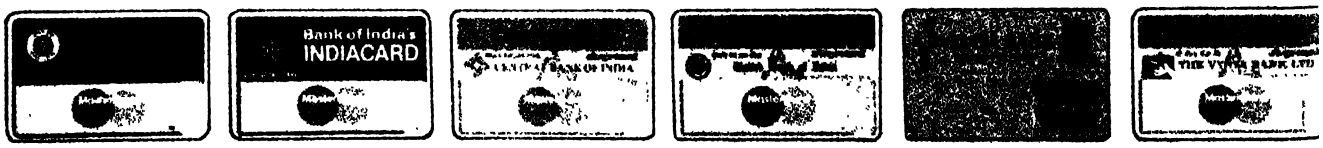
Now, ten of the finest banks in India and Nepal are members of the MasterCard worldwide family. Andhra Bank, Bank of America, Bank of India, Central Bank of India, CitiBank, Hongkong Bank, United Bank of India, Vijaya Bank, Vysya Bank and Nepal-Arab Bank.

Come, use your MasterCard to its fullest advantage. Of course, if you've been reading this without owning a MasterCard, contact any of the MasterCard Member Banks.

Today!

ITALIA'90 OFFICIAL CARD OF THE 1990 WORLD CUP

More power to your credit card



death was a turning point." That strangely enough would be the best thing that could happen. For, the later Rajneesh had turned his attention away from sex and focussed it against the crippling orthodoxies of religion, government and the view that the environment can be taken for granted.

But the magician of modern times, the flamboyant prophet of the 20th century was an exhausted man by the end of the 1980s. "Our Master's health had deteriorated alarmingly," says Ma Neelam, who, like most of Rajneesh's closest disciples, believe that US officials had secretly poisoned him with thallium during his imprisonment. His hair—the little that he had by that time—was falling out, his facial muscles twitched uncontrollably, his eyeballs moved on their own, eyesight was impaired and his gait had become unsteady. He suffered constantly from minor infections, was forced to wear dark glasses in public, could barely move about and slept most of the day. He would not see anybody save Ma Neelam, Maneesha and a handful of others and that too only between 3 and 4.30 pm. He emerged from the seclusion of his suite only thrice a day: twice to walk around his private lawn and once for delivering his daily discourse. And for a total of 14 hours every day, he slept.

"The Osho had been preparing for his samadhi long ago," believes Swami Amrito. "He effaced himself from everything and at the end he took a name like Osho which is not even a name and became a nameless person. He said: 'After I die, just forgive and forget me'." The forgiving will be easy. Not the forgetting. For, charlatan or saint, Rajneesh will remain one of the greatest performers in history, made more human in death. ●

Adite Chatterjee/Pune



Rajneesh's final performance

"Never speak of me in the past tense, my presence here will be greater without the burden of my tortured body." Those were Rajneesh's last words, uttered minutes before he succumbed to the massive coronary attack on 19 January, 1990. Present at his deathbed were Swami Jayesh, Swami Amrito and Ma Anando. Rajneesh, reportedly, also instructed the trio that he should be taken to the Buddha Hall for ten minutes and then directly to the burning ghat. The next instant, he was gone. "It was as if he was going for a stroll, it was that simple for him," recalls a distraught Swami Amrito.

Half-an-hour later, at 5.30 pm, a doctor certified that the cause of death was heart disease. At the Buddha Hall where the sanyasins were preparing for the evening meditation, Amrito made the official death announcement. Osho's body was brought in and bedecked with flowers. And instead of meditation that evening there was celebration. Cries of "Osho!" punctuated the air as sanyasins greeted the momentous event with song and dance.

Ten minutes later, the singing dancing throng proceeded to the burning ghat as scheduled. Clad in white, the official colour worn by the sanyasins in the evening, they presented a stunning sight. Clashing cymbals, and notes of the flute filled the night air as they moved on towards the burning ghats, where the Master's body was laid on the bier. Swami Vijay Bharati, brother of Rajneesh, lit the pyre and the singing reached a crescendo and climaxed with shouts of "Osho".

The next day, at 9.30 am, Osho's ashes were brought into the commune by Swami Vijay Bharati who was followed by chanting sanyasins, clad this time in maroon, and a band of musicians. The procession made its way to the *sanctum sanctorum*, the Chuang Tzu auditorium which has been redesignated Osho Tirth, the official samadhi. The urn containing the Master's ashes was placed on the samadhi. "He would have loved the celebration," said Ma Neelam. "You can see for yourself, this is not an old-style funeral of tears and grief but a Mardi Gras of laughter and dance."

But in certain respects the "most enlightened master in the world" did conform to religious rites. Despite his claim that he did not want his way of life to become "a prison as all other religions", in the end he became just that: a prisoner of Hindu rites and rituals.

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Everybody except the Bharatiya Janata Party

Who lost the elections?



Well, the Congress, of course. (Thought I'd better get that one off my chest before my more prolific readers reach for their economy-size vials of potassium cyanide to dip their quills in before dashing off yet another letter to the editor.) So, that's agreed on all hands, then. The Congress went into the last general elections with well over 400 seats and returned with a shade under 200. A sound and thorough drubbing.

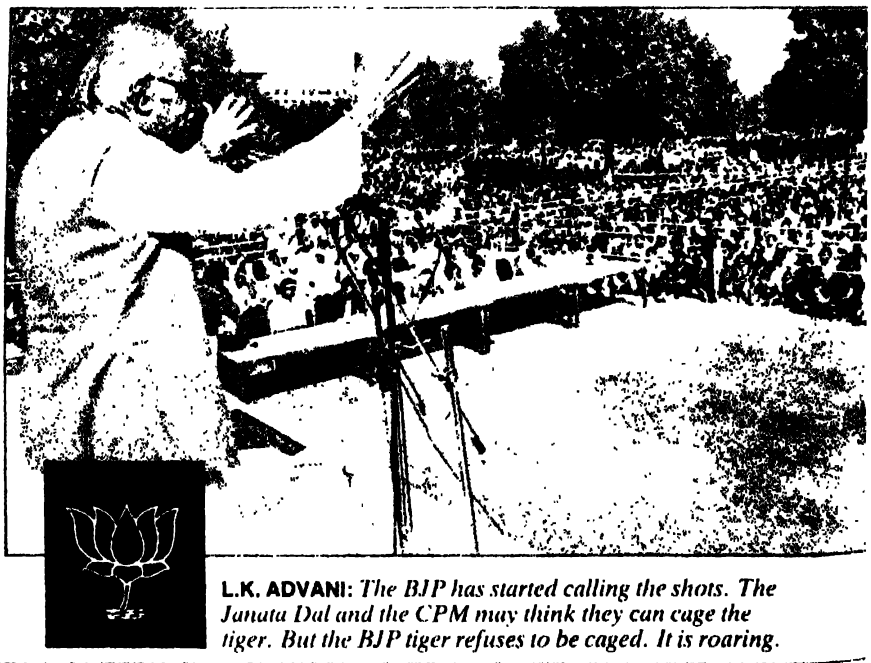
But would one say the CPM won or lost? On one reckoning—which is the one their spokesmen use on the floor of the House - they were the great victors as they whittled the Congress down from 16 seats to four in West Bengal. Now that's an excellent showing for a regional party with regional aspirations. But is that anything to crow about for the voice of international proletarianism? They lost both the seats from Tripura (which bears roughly the same relationship to West Bengal as Romania once bore to the Soviet Union). They also lost all they staked in that other bastion of people's democracy, the lovely land of Kerala. In Punjab, where their courageous workers have lost more lives than any party (other than, of course - dare I say it?—the Congress), none of their candidates could match intimidation of the terrorists.(Instead, the Janata Dal, which has achieved the miraculous feat of buckling their knees in both directions to the terrorists, picked up a couple of seats). In Bombay and Ahmedabad and Coimbatore and Dhanbad—and wherever else the working class congregates in large numbers—the CPM drew a blank. (No, not quite *everywhere:* they've given Mrs Mohashini Ali from Kanpur, for which kind act grateful thanks from all who are good and true.) All in all, as one looks across the length of the country (from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, to coin a phrase) or indeed its breadth (from Kutch to Kolasib, shall we say, in order to keep the alliteration going) there is little to show from the CPM benches beyond a collection of the most interesting Bengali accents.

Yet there is no denying that, their minuscule numbers notwithstanding, the CPM are exulting. Why? For two reasons, closely interconnected.

First, they've got rid of Rajiv Gandhi. Since all of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao (not to mention the unmentionable lesser gods of the left) have, in the Indian political context, been reduced to the one-point programme of getting rid of Rajiv Gandhi (so that we can bring in Dhirubhai Ambani to realise our 'proletarian dream'.) The joy on the CPM benches knows no bounds. They've succeeded in transferring Rajiv from the treasury benches to the Opposition (that is, in the perspective of the seats on which they sit in Parliament, from their left to their right.

The second cause of their trumpeting triumph is that, with only about 7 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha, the fate of the country is clenched in their fist. The National Front and its principal supporter, the BJP, do not between them command a majority of the House. So it is the CPM that has pitchforked this odd couple into power—and the moment the pitchfork is removed the whole house of hay will come sagging to the ground. No wonder our Comrades feel quite chuffed. Even if, almost to a man (or even a woman, Geeta Mukherjee included), they come from but one state of India that is Bharat, they are now performing the function which rightfully should be shared by all the states and territories of our Union.

Yet, one wonders how long-lived the CPM's joy will, or could,be. It was no part of the CPM's election strategy to bring the BJP to the position of prominence it now occupies on the national stage. This is clear from the CPM's election manifesto, a text which I, for one, would prescribe as compulsory reading for all schools in West Bengal (along with such other standard text-books as the *Collected Works of Nicolae Ceausescu*, the *Thoughts of Enver Hoxha* and *A Criti-*



L.K. ADVANI: *The BJP has started calling the shots. The Janata Dal and the CPM may think they can cage the tiger. But the BJP tiger refuses to be caged. It is roaring.*

que of the Convolutions of the Communist Line. The CPM election manifesto is replete with the usual heavy-verbiage condemnation of the Congress and its many misdeeds. But the choicest abuse is reserved for the BJP, a party of which the CPM speaks in only reptilian metaphors and similes: poisonous, venomous, slimy, slithering. The CPM (god bless their discerning souls) see the BJP as fork-tongued, like the snake, and sting-tailed, like the scorpion.

Nothing, then, was further from the CPM's purpose than having the BJP call the shots. Yet that is practically what is happening. The BJP having grabbed more than double the number of seats the CPM managed to garner, it is not the CPM but the BJP, as the senior partner, that has started calling the shots. They have just demonstrated their clout by getting the NF government to nominate Jagmohan as Governor of J&K over the shrill protests of our comradely Comrades.

The CPM guessed right when they predicted a Congress defeat. But they went hopelessly wrong in imagining that a left-of-centre coalition would emerge at the Centre. The NF neither holds sway on its own nor in collusion only with the CPM. This is no loss to the NF, whose natural posture is to sway in whichever direction the wind blows. But it obviously galls the CPM cadres, who don't expect the dictatorship of the proletariat to play second fiddle to majority communalism.

ALL of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao have been reduced by the CPM to a one-point programme: to get rid of Rajiv Gandhi. And they are exulting on their success

What the CPM strategists failed to anticipate was the Congress clean sweep in the south (Kerala included) and the Congress clean sweep in the north-east (Tripura included). That sweep has had two consequences. First, it put paid to any hopes of the NF forming a government on its own or with the collaboration of the CPM and its Left Front allies. Second, it hacked into nothingness every component of the National Front other than the Janata Dal– the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, the Hegde camp in Karnataka and, prospectively, the AGP in Assam. All that now remains of the National Front is the Janata Dal, as much a regional party of UP, Bihar and Orissa as the CPM is the regional party of West Bengal.

Far more disquieting for the CPM than the performance of the Congress in the south, north-east, and far north was the outcome of the seat adjustment between the NF and the BJP in the heartland where national laurels are won and lost: the vast plain that stretches from the deserts of Rajasthan through the battlefields and birthplaces of our epics to where the Ganga pours its heart out to the seas. In this thickly populated heartland, the political parameters are totally different to what they are in the India of the periphery. The implications and long-term lessons of the BJP-JD seat adjustments in the states of the Hindi heartland cannot be evaluated without a clear understanding of what, in political terms, distinguishes the south, east, north-east, far north periphery from the country's heartland.

Put in a nutshell, the distinction is that, whereas in the states of the periphery, our democracy has matured to a virtually two-party system, in the heartland the polity still remains split in at least three different directions. Let me explain.

In Tamil Nadu, now that the hiccup over who is MGR's true legatee has been resolved, the voter is given a clear choice between the DMK and the Congress-AIADMK alliance. All other parties are irrelevant. The Congress alliance wins.



JYOTI BASU: *The CPM's election manifesto was full of the choicest abuses for communalism of the BJP.*



V.P. SINGH: *The Janata Dal has ended up being totally dependent on the BJP's support.*

In Kerala, the choice lies between the Left Democratic Front [i.e., CPM + allies] and the United Democratic Front [i.e., the Congress + allies]. All other parties are irrelevant. The Congress-led front wins.

In Karnataka, the Hegde Janata Dal faces the Congress. With apologies to Subramaniam Swamy, it is virtually a straight fight, with Swamy's friends being little more than distracting noises off-stage. The Congress wins.

As in the south, so in the east—but with a difference in outcome. In Orissa, it is a one-to-one contest between Biju Patnaik's Janata Dal and our Patnaik's Congress. The Congress is worsted. In West Bengal, it is a titanic struggle between the CPM—led Left Front and the Congress. Again, it is the congress that is worsted. In Sikkim, of course, politics has become little more than a household quarrel. But whether it is Sikkim Congress versus Congress or husband versus wife, the contest is one-to-one.

In the north-east, be it Mizoram or Manipur, Tripura or Meghalaya, Nagaland or Arunachal—the contest is, in effect, one-on-one: x or y against the Congress. As in the south so in the north-east, the Congress takes all. And when the elections are held in Assam (with the Election Commission going the way it is, I almost said "if") it will again be in effect one-to-one, Congress versus AGP- and may the best man win.

As for the far north, it is the Congress in alliance with the National Conference that alone stood their ground against fundamentalism, terror and secession, as Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, with the courage and valour which has distinguished his tenure as home minister, fled to the safe haven of western UP from his home constituency of Anantnag in the valley the moment the communalists called for a boycott of the elections. Thus in J&K, too, it is one-on-one, the alliance versus those who would break our country. The country wins.

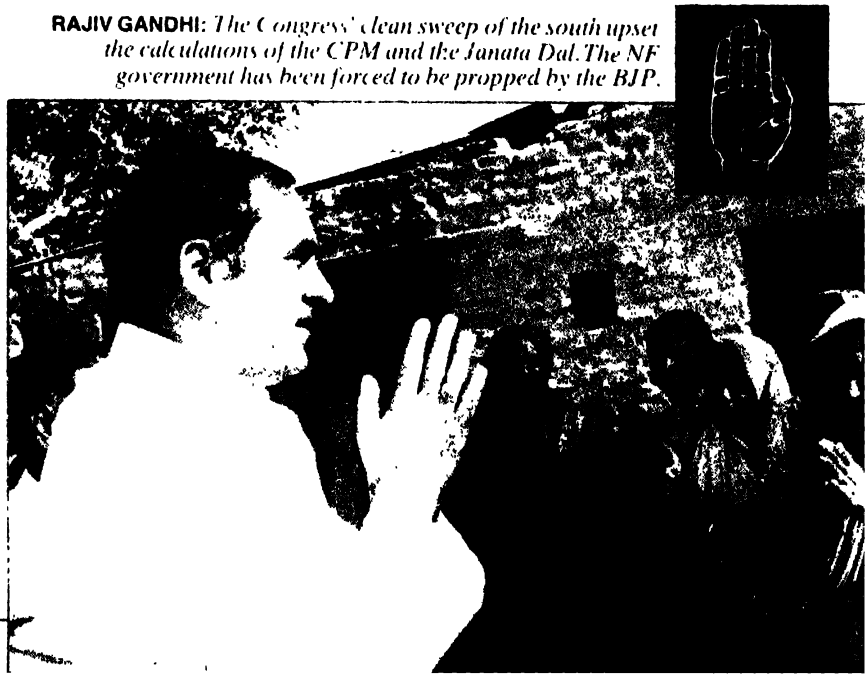
In sum, whether it is the Congress that wins or the other side, in the states of the periphery we have a two-party democracy. As is normal in such democracies, marginal shifts in the vote will lead to massive changes in seats held. It is a fair and equal fight, with the disproportionate change in the seats won by the victor being the guarantor of that political stability which is the bedrock of stable government. Commentators like Pran Chopra (pace his recent article in the *Illustrated Weekly*) are talking through their V.P. Singh fur caps when they pretend that coalition governments are a normal feature of democracy. They are a normal feature only of democracies based on proportional representation, as in continental Europe. The first-past-the-post system of democracy, which obtains in Britain and Canada and the United States as, for that matter, in Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka and Australia (or even, from time to time, in Pakistan) is predicated on the assumption that voters will choose any one party—albeit with a small plurality of votes but a large plurality of seats—to give the country a strong and stable single-party government. Far from being a "normal" feature of democracy, coalition governments in the first-past-the-post system can be no more than an occasional, short-lived aberration (which is, of course, what the NF government will be. Sorry, Pran, but better luck next time!)

THE real loser has been the people of India—who returned a confused mandate, but certainly not for the sale of the country to the forces of communalism

In contrast, however, to the periphery, the heartland of India remains fractured between three irreconcilable forces. The first is the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi. The second is the ex-Congress, whose pet aversion is Rajiv Gandhi. It is a politicalviewpoint that goes under many names much of the time and under one name some of the time, as now in the guise of the Janata Da'fand is fooling all of the people all of the time). The third is the force of communalism, with the BJP in the vanguard. All other forces - such as the CPM- count for little or nothing in the polity of the heartland.

It was only in 1984 that the political forces represented by the Congress established a clear, if wafer-thin, absolute majority in the heartland over the other two forces. In six of the other eight elections, the combined non Congress vote was higher than the vote of the Congress but because the parties representing the non-Congress votes were *not* combined, the Congress emerged the victor. The two exceptions were 1977 and 1989. In 1977, the non-Congress parties coalesced their different identities into a single identity (that the coalescing came unstuck is another but most germane story). This time round, the JD and the BJP retained their separate identities and, notwithstanding their fundamental differences on the issue of

RAJIV GANDHI: *The Congress' clean sweep of the south upset the calculations of the CPM and the Janata Dal. The NF government has been forced to be propped by the BJP.*



majority communalism, came together to share the spoils

It was at this point that the Janata Dal lost the elections. In its anxiety to prevent the non-Congress vote from splitting two ways, the JD surrendered so many seats to the BJP that it lost all prospect of forming a government on its own or even in concert with its "natural allies" to the left

If, as I have argued, it was no part of the CPM's election strategy to find itself beholden to (of all parties) the BJP, nor was it any part of the JD strategy either to end up in such abject dependance on the spokes party of majority communalism. Between the essential secularism of the JD and the blatant communalism of the BJP is a bridge that can be built only on the pillars of opportunities.

If the story ended there, this piece might have been called 'A Comedy of Errors' or even 'As You Like It' What places it in the section titled 'tragedy' is what we are about to witness in round two, that is the forthcoming elections to eight state Assemblies and Pondicherry The JD is on the brink of surrendering the governance of a quarter of the country to the dark forces of majority communalism to keep their minority government going at the Centre, which guarantees the exclusion of Rajiv Gandhi even if it guarantees nothing else

Now, keeping the Congress out is fair game. Nothing undemocratic about it. Nothing unsecular about it. But what if the game means bringing the BJP in? Is that not a different and far more dangerous game? The JD and the CPM may think they can cage the tiger. But the tiger does not feel, or behave, as if it were caged. It roars. It struts. It demands more. And is being fed more.

The parallel between India in 1989-90 and Germany in 1931-33 is frightening. Then in Germany, as now in India, parties that wished to have no truck with the Nazis brought the Nazis in to keep the others out and themselves in. The tale of what happened eventually is too well-known to bear repetition. The only thing that can save us is for the Janada Dal to set itself up on its own as the alternative to the Congress in the heartland. That would be the way to bring in two-party democracy from the periphery to the heartland. Sometimes the Congress will win. Sometimes the Janata Dal will win. But at all times democracy will win.

What must be isolated and marginalised for the nation to survive is communalism, as represented by the BJP. There is hope for this still, provided the JD shows the necessary maturity, patience, skill and, yes, patriotism to strike out on its own. For, in this year of the Ram Janmabhoomi—and notwithstanding seat adjustment—the BJP increased its national vote by a mere 4 per cent from just over 7 per cent in 1984 to a little more than 11 per cent this time round (The parallel with the Nazis' rise to power begins with similar incremental percentages.) This means that, in the most frenzied period of communalism to overtake an Indian election since the Muslim League played its dirty card in 1946, nearly nine out of ten Indians have said "no" to the BJP. And yet—such is the consequence of the JD-BJP seat adjustment—the number of BJP seats in the Lok Sabha has exponentially soared from 2 to 88.

Who lost the last elections? The Congress, certainly. The CPM also in all but their own estimation. Even the National Front, notwithstanding its having formed the government. The only winner has been the BJP. The real loser has been the people of India—who returned a confused mandate, but certainly no mandate for the sale of the country to the forces of majority communalism. Whether the sale goes through is for the National Front to determine. True, that with the rout of their regional allies, nothing national remains of the National Front but its name, but should the NF's historic mission be but to remain a 'front' for the BJP? ●

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute official statement of the Congress Party's position.





Right in the heart of Calcutta

For super sensible Business Executives and people who don't want to spend more than is necessary—Big Star luxury at small star rates
Hotel Shalimar
Right in the heart of Calcutta
Opposite the USIS Library
Double and Single rooms Airconditioned. Wall-to-wall carpeting. Attached baths
Fully equipped Conference Room for 20 to 30 people
And an excellent restaurant called 'TAVA' for authentic Moghlai Cuisine

Hotel Shalimar

3 S N Banerjee Road
Opp USIS Library
Calcutta-700013
Phones. 28-5030 / 28-5016 / 28-4904

GREEN DREAMS

With Maneka Gandhi as minister, environment is suddenly 'in'

Twenty years after environmentalism caught fire in the West, it has only just begun to smoulder here. While environmental issues are crucial political determinants abroad, India's first "green" politician has only just emerged. But delayed reactions apart, suddenly there is a new awareness of environmental concerns: of the suicidal implications of denuding our forest cover, belching out noxious wastes, polluting our rivers and impoverishing our soil

Almost overnight, the ministry of environment has been transformed from a neglected backwater to a hub of frenetic activity. "We have received more letters from the environment ministry in this past month than we have in the past five years," says a source in the energy minister's office. "My ministry can be ignored only at the cost of the country's future," claims the 35-year-old minister of state for environment, Maneka Gandhi. This is no longer a *ratpatiya* (ramshackle) ministry. Not while I'm here, anyway." Bravo, bravissima, etc. Ignore the egotism and hang on to your seat belts. But do not believe anything till it happens.

Maneka is not the first Gandhi to evince an interest in the environment. Her late husband Sanjay's family was full of nature-lovers who were quite vocal about it. In Indira Gandhi's time, environmentalism had burgeoned to become a global issue whose time had come, and she responded to it marvellously—well, globally at least. Her address at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the environment in Stockholm was inspiring, and she was hailed the world over as a significant international environmentalist. However, at home she did little to sustain her lofty pronouncements to ensure a better world. Through the '70s, when many countries were thinking of ways to protect their ecosystems, India continued to sacrifice environmental aspects at the altar of "development". (Her father Jawaharlal's preoccupation with "development" in the '50s and '60s caused him to eulogise about the giant concrete dams he initiated—he referred to them as "the temples of today"—he did not live in an era where signs of an "ecocatastrophe" were all too evident to be ignored.)

When Rajiv Gandhi took over in 1984, he, like his mother before him,



NITIN RAI

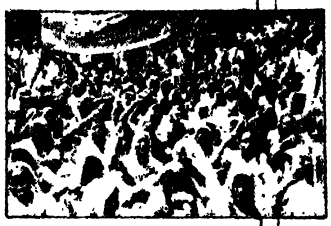
recognised the worth of supporting environmentalism: it was a fashionable cause to support for a Prime Minister who carefully cultivated his international image. To his credit, he did take some steps in the right direction (*see box*) but there was no holistic approach to development, and no real attempt to enforce the loophole-ridden laws formulated then. Vested interests and powerful forest and business lobbies continued to receive precedence over the interests and safety of the people. "The Gandhis made much of the environment, but their interest in it was at best superficial, and at worse, faddist," says a member of the Planning Commission.

Then what makes environmentalists hopeful that the new government will be any different? For a start, they have already soiled their record by dithering on the first environmental crisis to confront them: to dam or not to dam the Tehri river in the Garhwal Himalayas. The new-look Centre insists that it does not favour big dams. But the state, though run by a National Front majority, was adamant that work on the project would go on as scheduled. Sunderlal Bahuguna, the Chipko leader, announced a fast till death if work on the Tehri Dam continued. It required an assurance from Maneka herself that talks would be held before the fast was broken.

The conflict is by no means resolved: while activists in the area dramatically swear that cement for the dam will have to be poured over their bodies before work goes on, the Centre has called for yet another appraisal by a special committee, whose recommendations the Cabinet will use to decide the issue. Senior officials in the environment ministry claim that the younger Mrs Gandhi has already thrown her hands up over the issue. According to them, her attitude is that she cannot save Tehri because a lot of money has already been pumped into the project. Incontrovertible evidence that the dam is being built on a seismic fault is not enough reason to scrap the project, say sources close to the minister. Proclaims one: "There may be upheavals, but then again, there may not be. Bahuguna does not have a leg to stand on." While Maneka insists that she has no opinion on the subject, she concedes that "any project which submerges 1,09,00 hectares of land to provide (irrigation to) 1,20,000 hectares", cannot be such a great idea. She also admits that the Rs 400 crores spent on Tehri till now is not enough of an excuse to see the project through, if it means chasing it with another Rs 2,000 crores to further a costly mistake.



Bhopal victims: hoping for justice—again



Maneka plans to introduce an innovation that exists nowhere else in the world: environmental courts. Retired Justice P.N. Bhagwati has been asked to work out the modalities

Earth, wind and fire

Maneka Gandhi's approach to the environment is sensible, silly and controversial

As if orchestrated by some divine campaign manager, the blue skies cloud momentarily, and there is a shower. "Wherever I go, there is rain," proclaims Maneka Gandhi, as she arrives at a public meeting in Pilibhit in a green—she *is* the environment minister—cotton Kanjeevaram sari. "I am happy, but I believe it's not the best thing for the crops now."

If only life were that simple, our rain goddess could traverse the country, and with a touch of her personal magic—whatever that is—turn the parched earth to green. Instead, she sits at her ministerial office in the capital, signing endless letters, taking snap decisions—and snapping while doing so—and generating a whirl of activity at a ministry that has traditionally slumbered through everything. "It's important for me to give the right signals," she tells you. And so, she's begun at home. The dreary corridors of her ministry have sprouted beautiful indoor plants overnight. Down the road, at the zoo, she takes officials to task over an icecream wrapper found floating in a lake, or a bored monkey, who is fed overripe bananas. She wrinkles up her freckled nose as she toes a piece of cowdung on the road and wants to know how it got there. "Everything here is somebody else's job," says the hard task-master. "In the zoo, animals have the right of way and not the unions and not the staff." Fair enough, but don't ask questions about the cowdung.

While most environmentalists are sceptical about how much the new, and very green, minister can really achieve while being part of the political system, they all agree that Maneka is genuinely concerned about the environment—and pushy enough to get her way if she wants to. "Whatever you say about Maneka, you have to grant it to her that she is a go-getter," pronounced one of her Cabinet colleagues. Perhaps, this is the reason why the Prime Minister tagged on the programme implementation portfolio to her charge. "These are both policing jobs," explains the only woman in the Cabinet. "I run my ministry like a woman runs her house." Her plans include restructuring her kingdom and making people accountable. "Environment has been accorded such low priority," she claims, but refuses to dwell on where brother-in-law Rajiv Gandhi went wrong. Maneka hopes that her abiding interest in the ecosystem percolates down to her bureaucracy, but predicts, *"Apres moi le deluge"* (after me, the deluge).

The greening of Maneka is only a recent phenomenon. "I ate meat for breakfast as well, until I gave it up some years ago," when she discovered her true passion, which is now also her life's work. "I am religious in a different way," she continues, "For me, religion is beautiful things, not harming, not stepping on an ant, or breaking a leaf." Animals hold a special place in her heart: in the years after her defeat at Amethi in 1984, she spent much of her time at the hospital for animals she had set up, sometimes driving out in the dead of night to save a sick creature. "People call me up at the oddest of hours, and I can't even be annoyed. I rush there, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to sleep," says the minister who lives in a house with ten dogs.

Today, Maneka is at the helm of a ministry she has, in her own



NEERAJ RAI



If Maneka Gandhi cannot stop Tehri, it will have been her first battle lost. And yet, in many ways, she symbolises a significant change in the government's attitude to the environment—moves to reopen the Bhopal case is a major example. And despite the ministry's defeatist attitude on big dams, the Tehri issue is not really closed. "The real difference is that this government is prepared to listen,"

"There is nothing that you can bribe me with, or threaten me with," says Maneka, "After all, haven't I already lost whatever I had to lose"

words, "been itching to get her hands on". And environmentalists who criticise her for her total lack of knowledge and understanding of environmental problems are quick to grant it to her that she is at least on the same side as them. The trappings of her new-found power are nowhere in evidence, but she cracks her whip and unleashes a harsh tongue when she wants to.

She is quick to disclaim all connections with the Emergency her husband and his mother imposed. "They make me out to be the arch queen of the Emergency," she says. "Nobody believes me when I tell them I was only 17 and straight out of Sanawar (public school). My whole life was my husband and college. I only knew more about that time after it was over." The years that followed her fairy tale marriage to the Prime Minister's son, his subsequent death and her ignominious exit from the Gandhi household are a legend. They couldn't have been easy for a girl in her early twenties, but Maneka was no ordinary girl. After realising that her Rashtriya Sanjay Vichar Manch would get her nowhere politically, she latched on to Ramakrishna Hegde's coat-tails and cultivated an interest she knew would get her an uncontested berth in any Opposition government. "One of the lessons I have learnt is that you have to be clean first, then you can achieve anything in life," she espouses sagely. "That is why I don't muddle up my life with want or attachment."



While environmentalists have reason to celebrate the fact that the environment ministry has a green politician to run it for the first time, bureaucrats in the ministry are upset at being mercilessly shouted at by a minister who sometimes behaves like an "immature teenager", in one senior bureaucrat's words. But Maneka couldn't care less about what people say. She is probably aware that her "purity of heart", as she calls it, might make her enemies in high places, but is not at all insecure about her future. "There is nothing you can bribe me with or threaten me with," she says in her usual dismissive manner. "After all, haven't I already lost whatever I had to lose?"

Shiraz Sidhva/Pilibhit and New Delhi

says environmentalist Shekhar Singh of New Delhi-based Indian Institute of Public Administration, who is also on the special Tehri committee. "The Rajiv government may have been interested in the environment, but their style of functioning made it difficult for them to achieve anything. It was a closed government which could not draw their power or strength from the people; without that, no environmental project will succeed," Shekhar explains.

Shyam Chainani of the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), like Singh, is optimistic that the new ministry will do something "positive". "With the reopening of the Bhopal compensation issue," he says, "there definitely seems to be a change in the right direction." But Chainani laments that environmentalists are not yet a powerful lobby, and are often defeated by other vested interests. For instance, the new development control rules have certain provisions—read loopholes—which will greatly benefit the builders' lobby. Says he: "Unless the reservation of rules is revised and the dereservation of plots discontinued, the city of Bombay can be ruined."



Sources in the ministry say that Devi Lal's proposed 'Disneyland' in the heart of Haryana has to first pass muster on environmental grounds

Yet, Chainani is hopeful that one day India's "green" movement will be strong enough to keep vested interests at bay. "If the Brits can go green (years after Germany did), so can India," he claims optimistically. "The new awareness is in response to issues and events that are affecting people here, and not a throwback on the Western movement."

"It's not going to be an easy ride," warns Bittu Sehgal, Bombay-based environmentalist and editor of *Sanctuary* magazine. "At least the government has been forced to realise that it can't ignore what is happening to our world today." Sehgal points out that till recently, people regarded environmental issues as the "luxurious fetishes" of a few. "Ecological issues have attained the status that they have today only because the movement has become a grassroots one," says Sehgal. He scoffs at the suggestion that environmentalism has gained momentum only because it is fashionable. "It is because people are realis-

Voices in the wilderness

India's important environmental crusades

It may take a while for thousands of students wearing gas masks and brandishing bottles of sewage and pesticides to throng our beaches as they did in Miami in the Seventies. Environmentalism may have been slow in coming to India, but over the past ten years, it has burgeoned to come of age at the Harsud rally last September. Thirty five thousand people crowded this little town on the Narmada to express their solidarity with its inhabitants and pledged that they would not allow the Indira Sagar megadam project to wipe Harsud off the map.



Worried villagers gather around the launching pad at Ballapal

The Harsud rallly was much more than an attempt to save the town's inhabitants. It symbolised the new-found strength of a people's awareness: they could make all the difference to their immediate environment and to the world.

The Centre for Science and Environment has contributed significantly to the awareness of environmental issues through the publication of *Citizens' Reports* on the *State of India's Environment*. It has documented some fascinating people's struggles. Here are some important environmental campaigns:

The Chipko movement

India's most famous environmental movement. It derives its name from the principle of hugging a tree and thereby saving it. Spearheaded by the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, a Gandhian organisation, the movement, headed by Sunderlal Bahuguna, began in 1973, to protest against the policy of the government of Uttar Pradesh to auction forests. Chipko activists stand for people's right to forests. They have organised women's groups to carry out afforestation in their areas.

Save the Silent Valley

The first major campaign against a dam in India, which started in the early Eighties, it successfully saved a genetically rich and one of the last-remaining rain forests in Kerala from being submerged. The campaign was spearheaded by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, an organisation whose main objective is the demystification of science.

Save the Taj campaign

Environmentalists feared that pollution from the Mathura Refinery, located 40 km away, could seriously corrode the pristine marble of the Taj Mahal. The campaign they generated forced the authorities to take precautionary measures and monitor the monument for any further signs of deterioration.

Save the soil campaign

Known as Mitti Bachao Abhiyan, the movement was launched in 1977 against waterlogging and salinity caused by the Tawa Dam in Madhya Pradesh. The campaign mobilised local farmers to demand compensation for the affected lands.

Thal Vaishet campaign

The siting of the world's biggest urea plant just 21 km from Bombay evoked enormous opposition from the city groups, notably Shyam Chainani's Bombay Environmental Action Group, which feared that the plant would increase Bombay's pollution and congestion. Their concerted efforts delayed the project over two years, but ultimately failed to change the site.

Bedthi campaign

This hydro-electric project in Karnataka was the second in India—after Silent Valley—to be abandoned after environmental protests. The project would have submerged tracts of dense forest and prosperous areca-nut, cardamom and pepper gardens but local farmers and eminent scientists from Bangalore campaigned and got the project scrapped.

Stop Bhopalpatnam-Inchampalli Dams

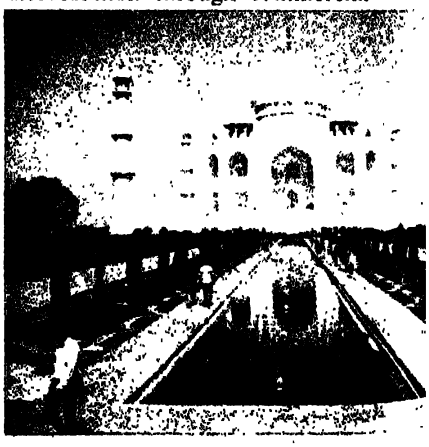
Work on these two dams on the Indravati river in Maharashtra was stopped by local protests from tribals led by the Jungle Bachao-Manav Bachao Andolan—a local coalition of activists, politicians, and social workers.

Doomed Valley

Limestone mining in the Doon Valley and Mussourie Hills has left permanent scars on this famous hill region, destroying forests and permanent water sources. The Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra in Dehra Dun filed a public interest case in the Supreme Court, which in a historic judgment, ordered the closure of the mines on grounds of environmental destruction.

Protect Karnataka's commons

The Karnataka government's decision to grant nearly 80,000 acres of degraded forest and revenue land to a joint sector company for afforestation is being opposed by environmentalists. Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, a local voluntary agency, has filed a petition in the Supreme Court contending that the people's access to government forest land is crucial to their survival and so the decision to undertake afforestation through commercial



interests affects their fundamental right to life.

Kaiga campaign

Opposition to the nuclear plant at Kaiga in Karnataka started in 1984 and has since gained momentum. In spite of the government's decision to go ahead with the project, it may not come up due to escalating costs and concerted and continued agitation against it. The new government will have to review the project seriously.

Gandhamardhan bauxite mining

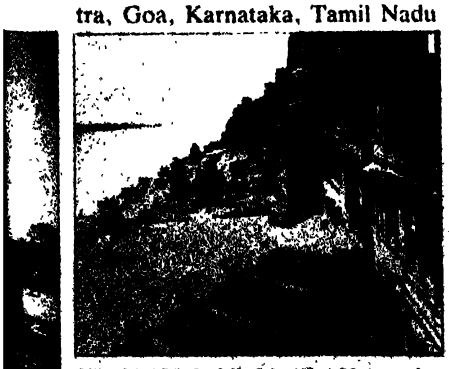
The proposal to mine bauxite in the Gandhamardhan reserve forest, though formally cleared by the government, has been stalled because of the intense agitation by the local tribes who do not want to see their forests destroyed.

The Narmada campaign

This campaign against the massive river valley project along the Narmada has mobilised enormous public interest. One dam, the Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat, is already being built, while another, in Madhya Pradesh, has been proposed. These projects will displace lakhs of tribals and thousands of little villages will be wiped out. The campaign has been joined by hundreds of small and large groups across the country. At the Woodstock-style rally in Harsud, several thousands gathered to express their solidarity with the environmentalists' case.

Save the Western Ghats march

This *padayatru*, jointly organised by a number of environmental groups in 1988, covered over 1,300 km across the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The march which was very popular focussed attention on the environmental problems of the Western Ghats.



The Taj Mahal (left); the Narmada river valley project in Madhya Pradesh

Tehri Dam

The construction of the Tehri Dam in the seismic Himalayas has been challenged by many environmentalists. Protests by the Tehri Bandh Virodhi Sangarsh Samiti, a local organisation, have been raised for over 20 years. This is the new government's first real, environmental challenge.



Baliapal

In July 1985, J.B. Patnaik, then chief minister of Orissa, announced that a national testing range for missiles would be set up at Baliapal, a fertile coastal area in Orissa, resulting in the eviction of 70,000 people. The people of Baliapal (under the banner of the Khepanastra Ghati Pratirodh Committee) along with environmentalists all over the country have been protesting against the scheme. But all that the government has done so far is to revise its estimate—it now says that only 40,000 and not 70,000 people will be displaced. But this figure is disputed as it does not include the migrant population or the fishermen.

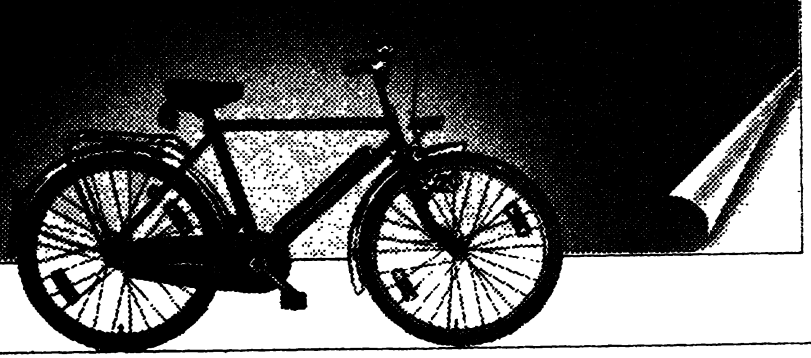
ing that these issues touch their lives that they are joining in," explains Sehgal. "People like Sunderlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Medha Patkar (who organised the Harsud rally last September) and Shabana Azmi participated in a process of sharing problems and solutions with the people, and merging the environment issue with human rights, economic skulduggery, global loss, deterioration of health, and the equal distribution of available resources."

Sehgal blames the Rajiv government for the arbitrary clearance of large dams. "The Narmada project, for instance, was not a national decision, but a Congress(I) decision," he charges. While nobody expects a magical transformation, the very fact that a free flow of information is possible is half the environmentalists' battle won.

Tehri: to dam or not to dam; (inset) Sunderlal Bahuguna

This is precisely where the Planning Commission can get involved. Already, there is a tremendous change in attitude, with members such as Laxmi Jain, Rajni Kothari and Ela Bhatt staunchly supporting the environmental battle and encouraging the participation of people on the one hand and the science and technology departments on the other. But how much can intellectuals, social workers and greenhorns do, even with the best of intentions?

THE WAY YOU DRIVE YOUR VEHICLE NOW WILL DECIDE WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL DRIVE IN FUTURE.



Let's face it
A major global crisis we could face in the near future is a world without oil. A crisis that will affect every aspect of life. Let us do something to prevent our children from facing it.

A few simple steps today could postpone this global crisis. And create time and opportunity for alternative sources of energy to develop.

Save oil today. It takes very little effort and goes a long way. All you have to do is to –

- Get engine tuned regularly.
- Have exhaust checked periodically.
- Get air filter cleaned from time to time.
- Check tyre pressure and wheel alignment.
- Turn off the engine even at short halts, instead of idling.
- Avoid unnecessary acceleration and frequent braking.
- Avoid using the clutch as a foot rest.

I am keen to know more about fuel saving.
Please send me a free booklet.

Name . _____

Address _____

_____

Dist. : _____ Town : _____

Pin . _____

TR/EV/2/SUNDAY

Petroleum Conservation Research Association

P.B No. 572, New Delhi-110 001.
Phone : 3315868.

SAVE OIL.
FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S SAKE.

everest/d90/PCRA/30

Anil Agarwal of the New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), along with other environmentalists, points out that one party or a stray minister who is genuinely interested in the environment and willing to listen cannot solve the environmental problem. There has to be an integrated approach to environment, which involves all departments and ministries. Till then, all the legislation in the world will make no difference. "Our legislation is better than in most countries," claims Ashish Kothari of Kalpvriksh. "But we have to take into consideration the human side and adopt a holistic approach." For instance, says a prominent environmentalist who declines to be identified, if the minister—with her special penchant for birds—jails bird-trappers in Pilibhit, what will their families live on? "Maneka's main concern is animals," says another environmentalist. "She has to realise that the ecosystem has to be viewed as a whole."

Perhaps this realisation has already sunk in. The new ministry has recommended amendments to over ten legislations including those concerning hazardous chemicals, public liability, noise pollution and wildlife. Sources in the ministry say that the deputy prime minister Devi Lal's proposed "Disneyland" in the heart of Haryana will never get off to a start if it does not pass muster on environmental grounds. "We are working towards making the environment ministry stronger than any minister," says Maneka. "I may be here today and gone tomorrow, but our environment cannot be played around with."

Besides strengthening the Environment Protection Act and plugging its loopholes, Maneka plans to introduce an innovation that exists nowhere else in the world: environmental courts. Retired Justice P.N. Bhagwati has been asked to work out the modalities; the law ministry and the central government have agreed to it in principle. At the district level, there will be watchdog committees to accord power to the people and get them involved in protecting the environment at the grassroot level.

Also on Maneka's drawing-board are plans for alternatives for firewood: garbage turned into pellets. Since animals are her pet obsession, it is quite likely she will transfer the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act from the agriculture ministry to the environment ministry.

Already, Maneka has made herself unpopular with the Uttar Pradesh government because she has proclaimed all forest officials corrupt. "They probably are, but we are afraid she will go about alienating everybody, and then the larger cause will be lost," says a senior bureaucrat in the ministry.

Whatever her style of functioning or her level of ignorance (there is a story doing the rounds that Maneka only recently realised that the Narmada project consisted of two large dams in two different states), it seems crucial that the new government accept the wisdom that the environment is not a low-priority area. "Environment is not just pretty trees and tigers, threatened plants and ecosystems," explains CSE's Agarwal. "It is literally the entity on which we all subsist and on which our entire agricultural and industrial development depends." •

Shiraz Sidhva with Nandini Dasgupta/New Delhi, Adite Chatterjee /Bombay and bureau reports

What Rajiv did—and didn't

The Ganga Action Plan

At the end of this year, around Rs 190 crores will have been spent on this ambitious project (total sanctioned cost Rs 266 crores), launched by Rajiv Gandhi in 1986.

The principal task of the 262 schemes, monitored by the Central Ganga Authority, is to cleanse the river. Most of the schemes deal with diverting the waste water and treating it before it enters the Ganga.

In addition, schemes for the conversion of dry latrines, the setting up of electric crematoria and the improvement of river fronts are being taken up. The task of cleaning the river is likely to be completed in the first two years of the 8th Plan, around 1992.

The project has generated worldwide interest. Its critics complain that it is not a people's project, but a network of sewage works.

The National Wastelands Development Board (NWDB)

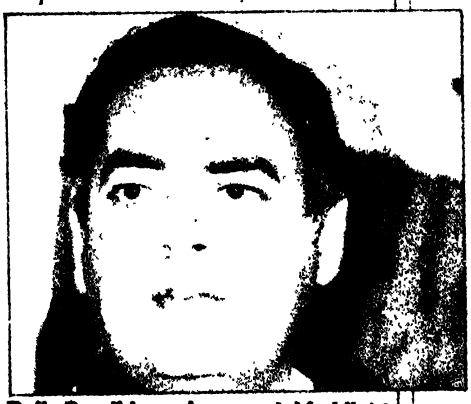
Set up in 1985, the NWDB was the first programme of its kind on a national scale to develop wastelands with people's participation. Regarded as a failure by many and criticised for concentrating only on afforestation, its programme was restructured in October last year.

The Motor Vehicles Act

An important legislation for a cleaner environment, this amended Act ensures uniform emission standards all over India. Introduced by Rajiv's regime, this Act was left for the new government to implement on 1 March this year.

The Environment Protection Act (EPA)

Introduced in 1986, this significant umbrella-type legislation includes water, air, noise, hazardous substances and micro-organisms. Though there are serious loopholes in the EPA, it substantially increased fines under various heads and made public interest litigation possible. Besides, it empowered the ministry of environment to issue directives to other government departments.



Rajiv Gandhi : environmental faddist?

The Wildlife Protection Act

Amended in 1986, this Act banned trade in Indian ivory and regulated the export of African ivory by means of licensing. It also banned internal trade in furs and snakeskins. However, trade in these items continues because stay orders have been obtained by fur and snakeskin traders from various High Courts all over the country.

Mission solidarity



An NC rally at Chetrapati: demanding reforms

Indian MPs create a flutter by taking part in a conference of the banned Nepali Congress

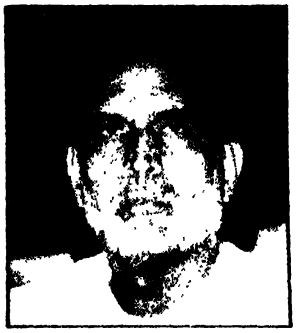
The winds of change are blowing from the Caucasus to Kathmandu. The landlocked Himalayan kingdom of Nepal is heaving for a change in its 30-year-old political system, in which the King commands absolute power behind a facade of partyless democracy.

On 18 January, leaders of the outlawed Nepali Congress began their party's three-day national conference to chalk out a plan of action to fight for the restoration of a multi-party system of government in the country. The meeting was also attended by the representatives of a newly-formed front of Nepal's splintered communist parparties, and the leaders decided to launch a *satyagraha* from 18 February, if King Birendra, Nepal's reigning monarch, failed to concede their demands by then. But from all indications it appears that the King is in no mood to relent. And with the royalty chosing to remain impassive and impervious in the face of growing popular resentment against what has come to be regarded as a malevolent system, a time-bomb seems to be ticking away in Nepal.

This is not the first time, however, that the NC has raised a demand for political change. It has been stridently demanding the re-introduction of the multi-party parliamentary system, ever since Nepal's nascent democracy was subverted by a royal coup in 1960. That year King Mahendra, father of King Birendra, dimmissed the elected government of B.P. Koirala--one of Nepal's political titans—and dissolved solved Parliament. In their place, he introduced a partyless *panchayat* (parliament), in which the members are elected as individuals without any party ty affiliation and assumed absolute authority by reserving for himself all legislative and executive powers. His son King Birendra, who succeeded him in 1972, has fiercely defended that legacy and has, so far, refused to bow to popular pressure.

But what set the January conference apart from all previous conventions of the party was the participation of a number of Indian parliamentarians, who openly advocated an end to monarchical rule in Nepal, much to the chagrin of the country's loyalist establishment. The Indian delegation, led by the Janata Dal (JD) leader, Chandra Shekhar, comprised Hari Kishore Singh (JD) M.J. Akbar and Harish Rawat (Congress-I), Harkishan Singh Surjeet (CPI-M) Subramaniam Swamy (Janata Party), and M. Farooqi (CPI). While these seven leaders arrived to take part in the proceedings on the opening day, three more Janata Dal MPs--Yashwant Sinha, Kamal Murarka and Rabindra

KEY FIGURES



Chandra Shekhar: The veteran Janata Dal leader compared the King with Hitler and faced a government-sponsored protest demonstration

M.J. Akbar: The Congress(I) MP pointed to Romania where a decades-old order was swept away in December and wondered how the forces of change could be kept subdued in Nepal





Subramaniam Swamy: The Janata Party leader launched a frontal attack on the King and cast aside the civility of referring to him in innuendos

Harkishan Singh Surjeet: The CPI(M) leader criticised the King for perpetuating a feudal political system



Manchanda flew in the next day.

The conference was held at the residence of Ganesh Man Singh, who is designated as the supreme leader of the NC, because the government had refused permission to the party to hold the meeting in the Royal Academy Hall. The NC was, therefore, constrained to hold the public rally in an adjoining plot of vacant land which could at best accommodate 5,000 people.

When Chandra Shekhar rose to speak, the ground at Chetrapati in downtown Kathmandu, was packed to capacity with people perched on walls and trees. In a brief, fiery speech, punctuated by rapturous applause, Chandra Shekhar lashed out at the monarch and the monarchy. He cited the fate of some of the most hated dictators in history and said that if Hitler and Mussolini could fall, lesser despots could not hope to fare better. And Shekhar, whose speech was bound to affront the Nepalese royalty and had the potentials of torpedoing Indo-Nepalese relations, made it clear that he was not speaking in his individual capacity, but was voicing the sentiments of his party and the ruling National Front in India.

M.J. Akbar, who brought a message of goodwill from his party president and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, also spoke passionately, advocating changes in Nepal's political order, in a speech that was unmistakably Nehruvian in its lofty idealism and style of delivery. Pointing to Romania, where a popular upsurge swept aside a decades-old autocratic regime last December, Akbar wondered how the forces of change could be kept subdued in Nepal.

Subramaniam Swamy, a former Harvard professor and leader of the Janata Party launched a satirical attack on the King by casting aside the civility of referring to him in innuendos.

Surjeet and Farooqi, who represented the Indian left at the conference, were equally critical of the King for trying to perpetuate, what they called, a despotic feudal order. They particularly welcomed the increasing cameraderie between the NC and the Nepalese communists, who have decided to fight for democracy on the basis of common programmes.

Whether the participation of the Indian delegates and their fulminations against the monarch will affect Indo-Nepalese relations in not yet clear, but it was more than apparent that the ruling coterie in Nepal was irked by the goings-on. On 19 January, the second day of the conference, Chandra Shekhar, who was lodged at Kathmandu's plush Everest Hotel, faced an angry demonstration—said to have been organised by the government—of a few hundred loyalists, led by the leaders of the Kathmandu district *panchayat*. The agitationists handed over to the Dal leader a protest letter

The government whipped up a virulent campaign against the NC in the government-owned English daily, *The Rising Nepal*. For several consecutive days, the paper frontpaged denunciations of the NC by various loyalist groups which accused the party leaders of acting as stooges of a foreign power and railed against the Indian MPs for "interfering" in Nepal's internal affairs". The editor of the paper, K C. Bahadur, felt that the Indian leaders had offended Nepali sensibilities by equating the King with Hitler and Ceausescu and that this was unlikely to go down well with the people.

But Shekhar, who has been manoeuvred out of power and has been maintaining a low profile in India, has emerged a hero in the Himalayan kingdom. NC sources say that video recordings of his speech made by private professionals are selling like hot cakes in the Nepalese capital and are trickling to the districts.

The Kathmandu grapevine has it that the government would not have allowed the conference to be held had it not been for the presence of the Indian delegation. The leaders of the NC were themselves a trifle surprised by the government's unprecedented show of tolerence. They attribute this change of heart on its part to the fact that the rulers know they are sitting atop an active volcano.

The NC, led by the troika of veteran leaders such as Ganesh Man Singh, acting president K.P. Bhattarai and general secretary G.P. Koirala, is confident of carrying its struggle forward this time round, whereas earlier its programmes had either proved to be too conciliatory or had been countermined by the King.

Ganesh Man Singh told SUNDAY



VINAY BHARDWAJ-ACHARYA

Chandra Shekhar addressing the NC rally: speaking out



Most people in Nepal feel that the King is a unifying force but they want him to give up his powers and become a titular figurehead

that his party has been inspired by the recent changes taking place across the world, but the initiatives to resuscitate the pro-democracy movement were taken much earlier. "I had an audience wih the King about 14 months back and I placed before him our very minimal demands. We have demanded fresh elections on a multi-party basis and the formation of an interim government to hold the elections. I also told the King that if we failed to restore full democracy in the country, all will be lost."

Few people in Nepal are against kingship as an institution. Even the most democratic people, including the members of the NC, say that the King is an unifying force and would like the monarchy to remain, but want the King to become a titular figurehead, leaving the governance of the country to the people's representatives.

Though the King tries to pass the present system, in which individuals are elected to the Rashtriya Panchayat (RS) as democratic but none in Nepal is ready to accept this. Of the 140 members in the RS, 112 are directly elected while the rest are nominated by the King himself. Moreover, there is what is called a Panchayat Policy Evaluation Committee (PPEC, which virtually dictates every aspect of the *panchayat*'s policy and takes its orders from the King and, by extension, the royalty. The PPEC screens the candidates contesting for a seat in the RS and critics of the present system say that this automatically tilts the balance in favour of the royalty. It is mostly the yes-men who get elected and the RS merely serves as a rubber-stamp to ratify the diktats of the royalty as people's choice. No legislative or executive actions can be taken by the government without the sanction of the Palace and even routine decisions like bureaucratic promotions have to by endorsed by the King. And what makes the arrangement oppressive and draconian is that the crown or the royalty cannot be criticised.

However, there exists a body called the Commission of Probe into Abuse of Authority (CPAA) but sources reveal that an enquiry has never been initiated against any members of the royalty, who are steeped in corruption. "If in India you have had one Bofors, in Nepal we have kickbacks in every commercial transaction," laments a journalist, who has been in and out of jail several times for his no-hold-barred writings.

Not everyone in Kathmandu is as yet convinced of the NC's ability to make a dent in the present system, and are content with adopting a wait-and-see policy. But the leaders of the NC are hoping that the country's increasing bankrupty, rising unemployments, plummetting per capita income and all-pervasive corruption in the administration will help to rally the people behind them.

Though much of the kingdom's present economic hardships have been caused by India's refusal to renew trade and transit agreements in March 1989, (the matter has not been settled yet) people in Kathmandu are not prepared to lay the blame squarely on India's shoulders. This is a passing phase, they believe, and feel that the economic maladies have deeper roots.

According to Ganesh Man Singh, 30 years ago, only 15 per cent of the population were below the poverty line, but today the figure is 60 per cent. Nepal which once used to export grains has now become a grain-importing country. Its forests have been recklessly exploited to fill the royal coffers. Now the country stands on the brink of an ecological catastrophe. Moreover it is followed only by Ethiopia in the World Bank's list of poor nations.

The NC does not expect its movement to be a cakewalk. Ganesh Man Singh says there is every likelyhood of a crackdown before the *satayagraha* begins on 18 February, but he is confident that this time round his party activists are better prepared. Remarks a political observer, who prefers to remain incognito for safety's sake: "If the struggle for democracy fails yet again, terrorists will take over in future."

Quarters close to the Palace, however, say that the King is keen on meeting the challenge, politically. They have even hinted: the King might be ready to initiate a dialogue with the NC, if it sought a fresh referendum on the multi-party system. "We already have the verdict of the people on that score, and if the NC wants the multi-party system, it must seek the people's verdict again," say government insiders.

But, the NC is unlikely to change its demands, and with the political situation hotting up in Nepal, India may have thought it wise to follow a two-tier foreign policy. The participation of the Indian MPs at the NC conference may have caused some embarrassment to New Delhi's foreign office but the solidarity move at the party lavel is sure to pay off if the people were to get the better of the crown. ●

Anish Gupta/Kathmandu

THE TRIUMVIRATE



(Left to right) Singh, Bhattarai and Koirala: confident

Whether the participation of the Indian MPs will affect Indo-Nepalese relations is not very certain, but it was apparent that the rulers of Nepal were irked by the goings-on

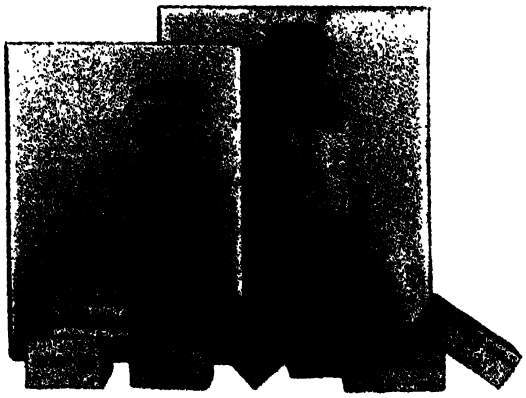


Nostalgia in Black & White, and Colour. That occasional flip through the family album Candid pictures of the little ones Captured in all their glory. Proud moments you'll cherish all your life It brings back a chain of events that kindle good old memories that will stay with you. Forever.

Keeping those moments fresh is Hindustan Photo Films. First with INDU Black & White Roll Film and Bromide Paper. And then, with Colour Negatives and Colour Paper. All manufactured to satisfy the uncompromising needs of professional and amateur photographers in the country

INDU films save the nation valuable foreign exchange, by cutting down imports Because this industry demands more in quality and quantity every day Photography today has become the cynosure of the publication and printing industry. A dedicated profession to thousands And a satisfying hobby for millions of amateur photographers.

The next time you take a trip down memory lane, remember



INDU

HINDUSTAN PHOTO FILMS

PHOTO
CINE
X-RAY
GRAPHIC ARTS
INDUSTRIAL X-RAY
CHEMICALS
MAGNETIC TAPE
INSTANT PHOTOGRAPHY

मेरा भारत महान

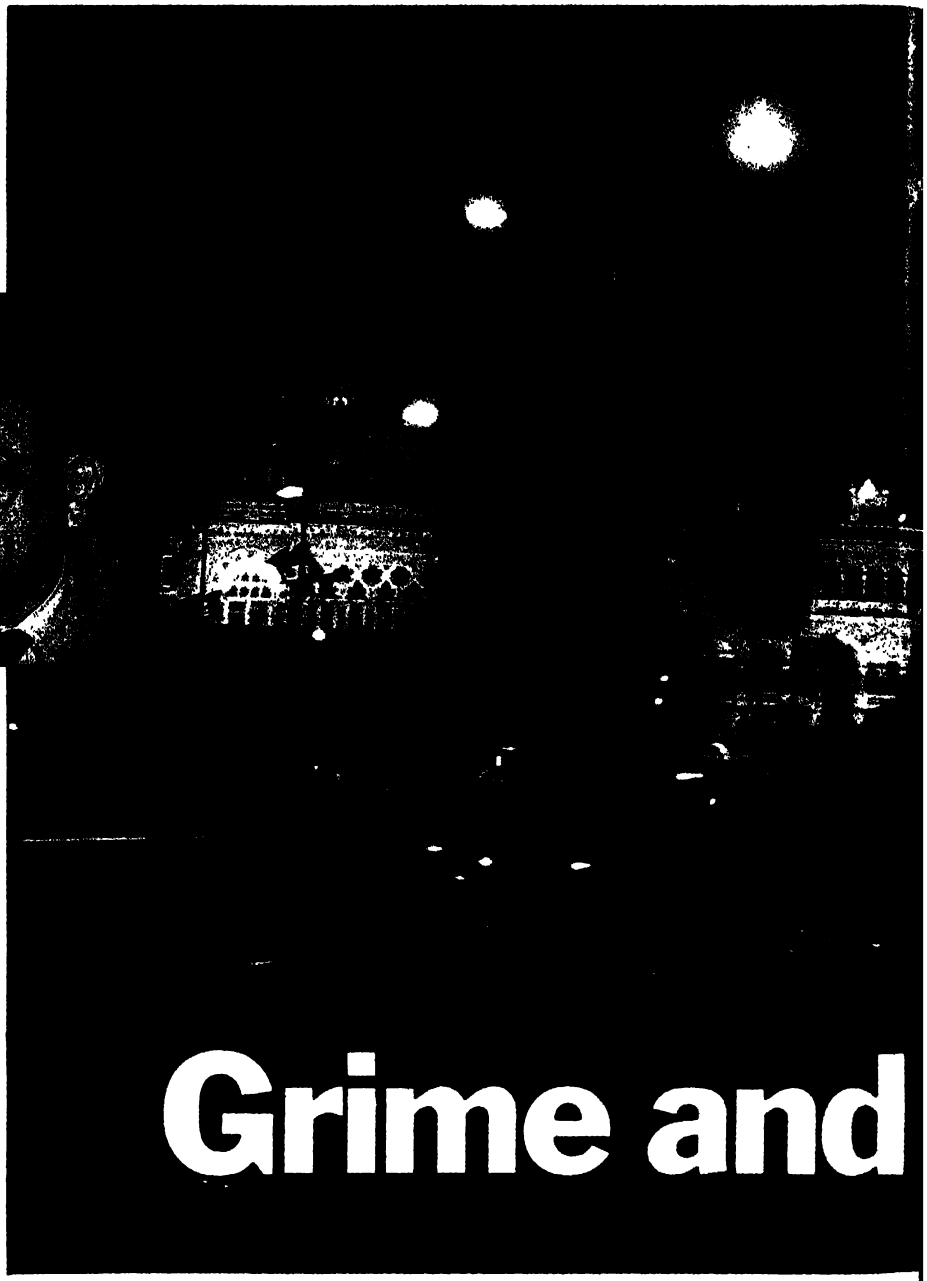
F U T U R E I N F O C U S

Hindustan Photo Films Mfg. Co. Ltd. (A Govt. of India Enterprise)
Registered Office: Indunagar, Udhagamandalam 643 005
Marketing Headquarters: Bali Towers, 1 Abdul Razak Street, Saidapet, Madras 600 015.

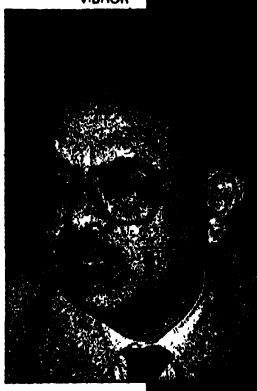
R K SWAMY/HPF/7376

Grime and

Businessmen and politicians team up to give Bombay a controversial facelift



VIBHOR



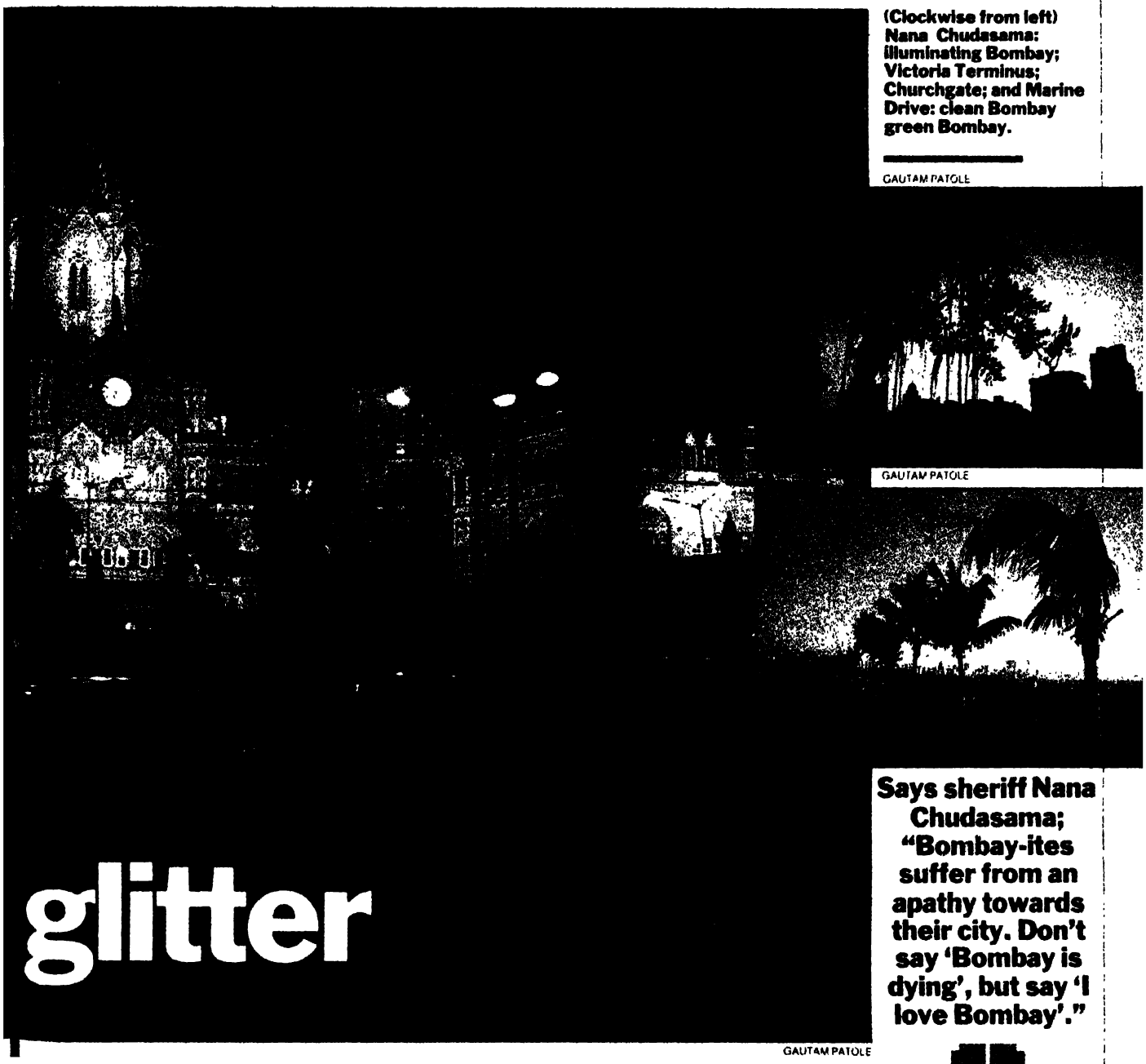
Bombay. Nana Chudasama, the city's sheriff and self-appointed do-gooder, wants to paint it white. Ex-mayor Manohar Joshi prefers green, in keeping with his much-trumpeted slogan "Clean Bombay, Green Bombay". And government officials, assorted businessmen and banks—in a sudden burst of civic awareness—are falling over each other to adopt traffic islands, set up road dividers, and light up historical monuments.

Last November, Chudasama and the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) hit upon the idea of illuminating the Rajabai Towers, a neo-Gothic monument attached to Bombay University. The MTDC is shelling out Rs 3 lakhs for initial installations, and the Housing Development and Finance Corporation is chipping in with Rs 70,000 a year for maintenance. Says Heta Pandit, an honorary secretary of the Indian Heritage Society's Bombay Chapter: "Lighting generates a lot of awareness among the citizens. People who would never have noticed certain facets of the building during the day, look at Rajabai Towers with new eyes when it's lit up in the evening." MTDC managing director D. Mehta talks about "illuminating" 30 historical monuments, including Bombay's Town Hall and the High Court building.

In January, the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) unveiled plans for the proposed Veravali Gardens at Andheri, a North Bombay suburb, with a state government sanction of Rs 12 lakhs. The government has identified 13 such projects under its "Beautification of Bombay" programme, and has already sanctioned Rs 70 lakhs—with a promise of Rs 1.5 crores more—for the projects.

"Bombay-ites suffer from an apathy towards their city," says Chudasama. "I have been trying to awaken them, and my approach is a positive one. Don't say 'Bombay is dying' but say 'I love Bombay'." Chudasama took up the cause of planting saplings and transformed it into a crusade. Now, the sheriff is on to the whitewashing of any and every wall in residential compounds with a vengeance. Another Chudasama-inspired programme is to distribute plastic trashbags to slum dwellers to inculcate a sense of hygiene.

Good intentions, however, are usually not enough. For example, Chudasama has come in for flak for his ill-conceived programme of planting saplings (he claims to have distributed 70,000 of them) in the middle of a scorching summer. Says Kisan Mehta of the Save Bombay Committee: "In a city where 50 per cent of the population lives in slums, talk of beautifying it has no relevance unless you make an effort to provide the basic amenities. But creating pretty parks right next to a slum complex is



(Clockwise from left) Nana Chudasama: illuminating Bombay; Victoria Terminus; Churchgate; and Marine Drive: clean Bombay green Bombay.

GAUTAM PATOLE

GAUTAM PATOLE

GAUTAM PATOLE

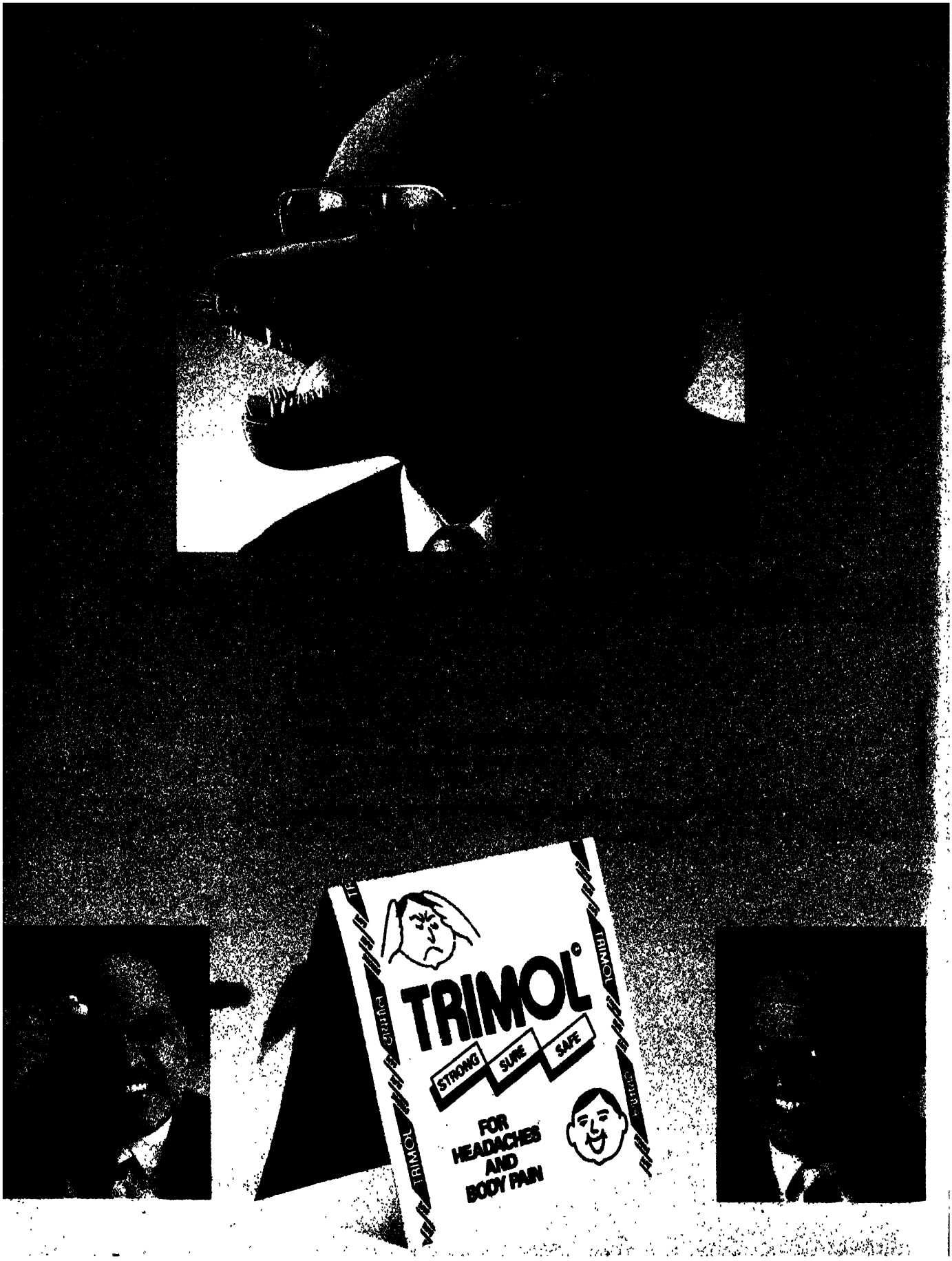
glitter

Says sheriff Nana Chudasama; "Bombay-ites suffer from an apathy towards their city. Don't say 'Bombay is dying', but say 'I love Bombay'."

neither aesthetic nor of any value." Mehta proposes that instead of big corporations spending lakhs on road dividers—which serve more as advertising space—they could adopt a slum and provide a more "sustainable" cleanliness programme. Says he: "The big businessmen are ignorant about what's good for the city. It's only their public image that they are worried about." Chudasama strikes back with a "What's wrong with getting a little mileage from it? If public image was their only concern, they would have gone in for advertising."

But deputy municipal commissioner Pravin Kamdar is not as enthusiastic as Chudasama. Says he: "Corporate sponsorship is most important in South Bombay where most of the offices are located. It's only natural that a party would be reluctant to take up a beautification project in the suburbs where it's most likely to go unnoticed." Nevertheless, Kamdar feels that corporate sponsorship is vital to beautification, as they have the resources. "Take for instance the Chowpatty beach, which was completely transformed after lights were provided," says Kamdar. "Now, the common man can enjoy his evenings at Chowpatty. It's a social service."

The Heritage Society, in an effort to create an awareness about the city, has instituted the Urban Heritage Awards Scheme—the first of its kind in the country. In the best-maintained public buildings category, Grindlays Bank's Fort branch won the gold award, the University's convocation


TRIMOL
STRONG
SURE
SAFE
FOR
HEADACHES
AND
BODY PAIN
TRIMOL
TRIMOL

hall the silver, and the Taj Mahal Hotel the bronze. The Mukand group is sponsoring a project to restore the BMC's conservatory. But at the same time, says Heta Pandit, misguided beautification can do more damage than help. For instance, the Muljee Jetha *piao* in Pydhonie was torn down and a new fountain set with ugly bathroom tiles came up to replace the one that was not working. Says Pandit: "The jewellers who had undertaken the project could have got the old fountain working, instead of tearing it down. By doing so, a part of the city's history has been lost." Adds a cynical Pandit: "The 'beautification of Bombay' is the most abused term today." Concurs Kisan Mehta: "Green Bombay means more trees and not just pretty shrubs. But then these projects are all propounded by a lobby that consists of influential people with money to burn, people who want to give the impression that they are doing something for society."

GAUTAM PATOLE



Rajabai Towers and (inset) Flora Fountain: part of the beautification plans

A scathing indictment and perhaps a little unfair. As Kamdar points out, one has to "view beautification in the context of the city's needs. Widening of roads will not have any value if there is a huge tree right in the centre. Just being a lover of trees is not enough, you have to take a realistic view in connection with the growth of the city." Chudasama, of course, has his usual way with rationalising: "I have always said that there are ten per cent people who work, ten per cent who watch, and the rest criticise."

And it is with similar disdain that the sheriff brushes aside all criticism about his project, which must surely rank among his most ambitious: a 200-feet high fountain right in the middle of the sea, across his sea-facing office at Marine Drive. Says Chudasama: "It will have laser electrification and the costing is being worked out by S.M. Dyechem, which has agreed to sponsor it. It's going to be the only project of its kind this side of Asia."

If Chudasama has his pet project, so does the state's urban development and environment minister, B.A. Desai.

The government has identified 13 'beautification' projects with a promise of Rs 1.5 crores for them

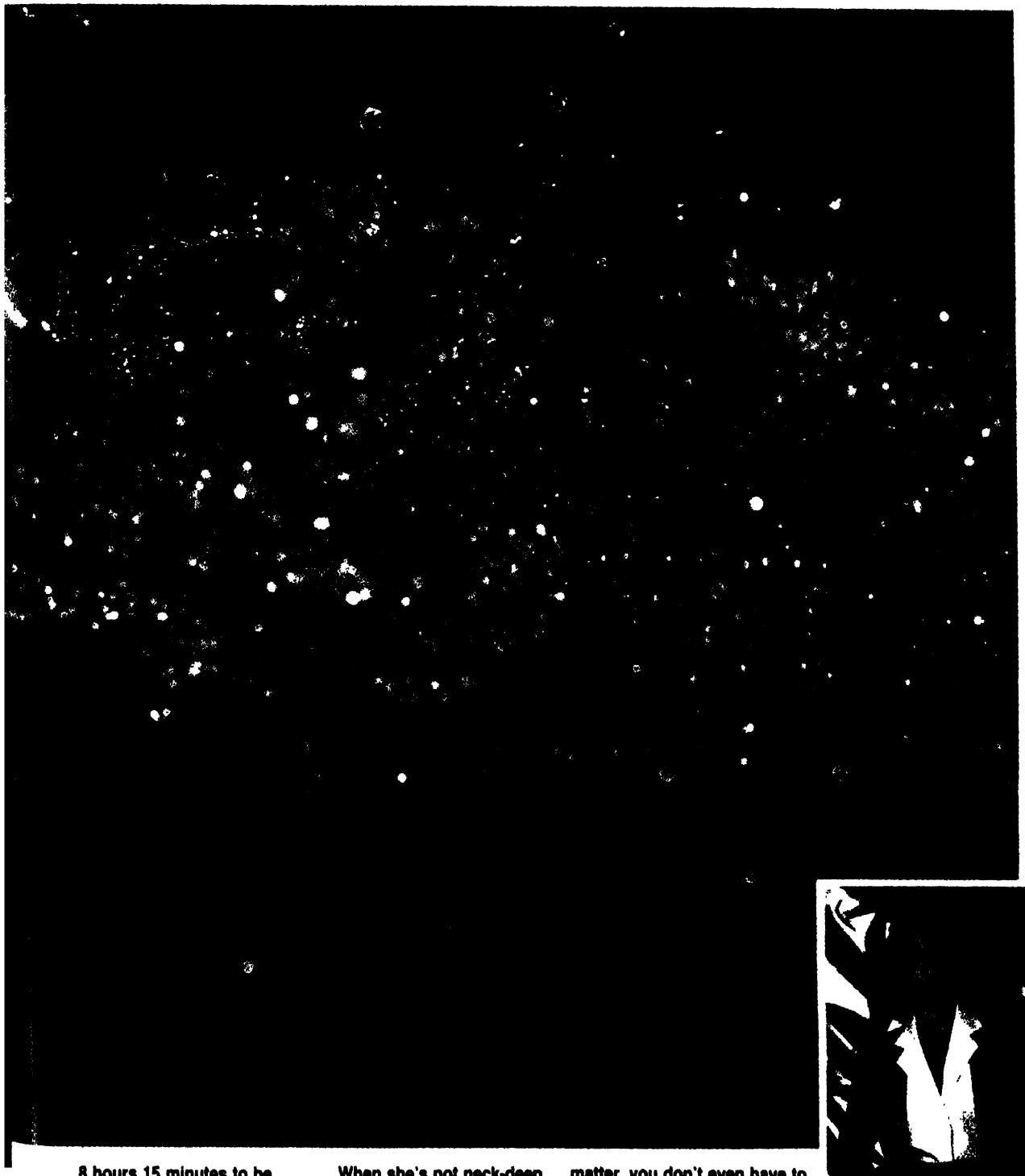
The minister is taking the credit for rescuing a 23-acre plot of reclaimed land from the clutches of real estate developers. So, instead of a cluster of multi-storied buildings, the plot has been turned into park—called Priyadarshini—with Rs 2.3 crores being pumped in to develop it. The plan envisages a synthetic athletics track, an artificial lagoon with facilities for boating, the works.

The cynics, of course, feel that it is just a ploy by the minister to keep the up-market residents of nearby Malabar Hill—who comprise his vote-bank—happy. But Desai protests that a good project is unnecessarily being politicised. But politicians *do* have a way with controversies. So do businessmen, especially these days. And their focus could well be the catch-phrase: "Beautify Bombay." ●

Adite Chatterjee/Bombay

You don't have to be the fastest Indian woman to swim the English Channel to be a Raymond's person.





8 hours 15 minutes to be precise. A new Asian record for man or woman, and the fifth fastest time in Channel history. For Anita Sood, this is par for the course. Her 22 mile swim from Capri to Napoli set a world record, high point of a brilliant career.

When she's not neck-deep in water, Anita may be seen making waves in a smart grey pant suit of sparkle polyester-and-wool, appropriately named "Sapphire".

You don't have to be a Raymond's man to be a Raymond's person. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's person.

... but it helps.



Raymond's

Never say no to life.

AUNTIE AZMI

Film star by profession, hunger striker by choice, and now, chairman of the Children's Film Society by default: that's Shabana Azmi for you.

The resignation of Jaya Bachchan from the chairmanship last month brought the post back into the market, and there were reports that several film personalities were vying for it. But pavement demonstrations and outbursts against the Congress at the last international film festival paid off for activist Azmi. The National Front decided that she was "politically sound" and, therefore, the best bet for the job. Feelers were sent out to the actress, to be met with a positive response. And Azmi confirmed at the Calcutta film festival that she was open to the offer.



GAUTAM PATOLE

Shabana Azmi: rooting for Bugs Bunny

If Azmi does take up the job, "social realism" could well invade the realm of children's cinema as well. And nearly all indigenous cartoon strips will have Bugs Bunny as the leading character.

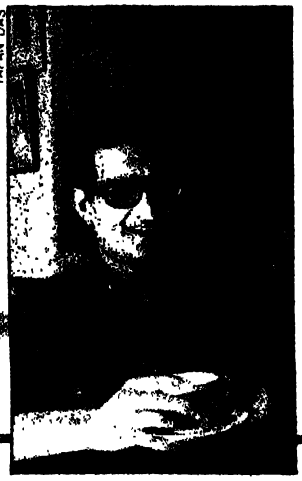
AWARDED

While still at Presidency College, Calcutta, a student of economics and philosophy, Amartya Sen occasionally came up with questions that left his professors stumped. It was obvious, they say now, that the young boy had the makings of a world-class economist.

The promise came true. And stints at Jadavpur University and the Delhi School of Economics were followed by teaching assignments at Cambridge, Berkeley, Stanford and Oxford.

The acme of his teaching career came when Sen was appointed dual professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard—the only other man to achieve this honour was Adam Smith: a good 200 years before.

Amartya Sen: not the last such honour, surely



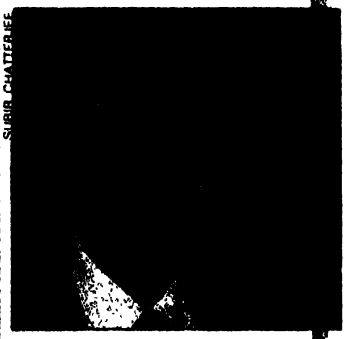
TAPAN DAS

His reputation as an economist grew alongside, with Sen being considered an expert in socialist economics. His study of democratic values also assumed importance with the recent events in Eastern Europe proving right his belief that socialist government couldn't survive without democratic values.

Sen's contribution to the humanities has now been awarded: with the Senator Giovanni Agnelli Institute Award for Ethics. And it won't be the last such honour, by any means.

RAJA AND RAJA

[redacted] We'd thought, at first, that this was going to be a government of bureaucrats. But the V.P. Singh regime seems to be turning into a *sarkar* of technocrats instead. First, it was Dr M.G.K. Menon who was inducted as minister of state for science and technology. Now it's Dr Raja Ramanna's turn. The former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and scientific adviser to the ministry of defence was brought back into government: as the minister of state for defence.



SUBIR CHATTERJEE

Dr Raja Ramanna: the latest technocrat in government

The Prime Minister, for one, had no doubts that the appointment would serve the government well. "Obviously," said V.P. Singh, "he will be an asset."

And would the trend of inducting professionals into government prevail? "I believe in the philosophy of national consensus and people from a much broader section must be involved," said the Raja.

So, what's wrong with Sam Pitroda?

ON TO CANNES

The battle over the relevance of international film festivals may still rage, with no resolution in sight. But the Indian Panorama section, agree filmmakers, has its uses.

Buddhadev Dasgupta is bound to agree. After all, it was the viewing in the Panorama section of the recently concluded film festival in Calcutta, which got his film, *Bagh Bahadur*, in the running for the main section at the Cannes Film Festival, 1990. The movie comprises such exotica as is most popular in the West. The storyline: Ghunuram (Pavan Malhotra) is a tiger dancer without compare in a small village in Orissa. The commercial viability of his art is, however, threatened by the arrival of a circus troupe from the big city, which lures the villagers away from Ghunuram with its gimmickry and glamour.

Dasgupta uses this story idea to explore the psyche of an artist caught in the flux of time, who has to make a choice between his old vocation and the new alternatives before him.

RASHBEHARI DAS



Buddhadev Dasgupta on the sets of *Bagh Bahadur*: chosen from among the best

BACK FROM THE US OF A

He'd listed his profession as "writer" in his passport. And after that all-too-brief sojourn in Washington D.C. as the Indian Ambassador to the United States of America, Dr Karan Singh is back at work on his desk.

Only this time, it's not the Poetic Muse that has possessed him. Having submitted his resignation as the Indian envoy to the external affairs minister I.K. Gujral, Singh is all set to begin work on the memoirs of his time in the States.

The book should be ready by the end of this year. And keeping Singh's passion for American rock in mind, it will probably be called *Back From The US Of A*.



NITIN RAI

CHIPKO CHIPKO

In the old days if the original Indian pop star, Asha Puthli had crooned *"Chipko, chipko"* it would have been interpreted as *the* come-on. Now, everyone knows that the recently-converted Green is only championing Sunderlal Bahuguna's cause. For, the flashy singer (who's better known for other things) whom the lure of greenbacks took away to Manhattan is back in town, to promote the concept of a "green India", with an album called, appropriately enough, *Chipko Chipko*.



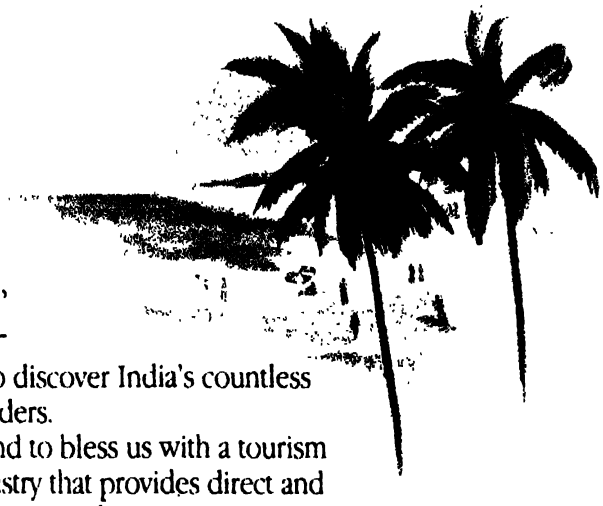
Asha Puthli: back with a vengeance

There's more to the new Puthli than praise of Bahuguna. One of her new numbers has the singer going all hysterical over the "frauds committed by Chandra Swami", while the sentimental-romantic treatment is reserved for *Rail Travel In India*.

If the new album succeeds, Alisha may be the next one turning green. ●

अहर्निशं सेवामहे





'Day and night will I serve.'

Leaving nothing undone to make the guest's stay an unforgettable joy and pleasure.

This is the true essence of India's timeless culture.

The tradition that manifests itself in a myriad colourful rituals and ceremonies.

Like offering auspicious leaves and flowers.

And giving the best in the house to our welcome *atithi mitra* or 'guest friends'.

To let them know how honoured we are to please them.

The 'guest friends', today, come by planes, trains, tourist buses and coaches.

To discover India's countless wonders.

And to bless us with a tourism industry that provides direct and indirect employment to more than 13 million people.

Plus incalculable goodwill and friendship.

Friendship First!

That's it. The real meaning of tourism.

And that's what we must make it mean, whenever we see or meet tourists.

Specially if they need help of any kind.

Let's make them feel so good they'll want to come back again.

God bless them!

Tourism is Friendship First

India. Destination of the 90s.

पर्यटन विभाग भारत सरकार Department of Tourism Government of India

HTA 6619

Playing on

Nataka Karnataka Rangayana, the third Indian theatre repertory, is alive and well

The light certainly seems to be fading out from the Indian stage. With television casting its shadow over cinema and theatre and the Eightjes witnessing the exodus of actors, actresses and directors from the stage to the small screen, there seems to be little hope for Indian theatre. But Karnataka is among the few states holding out against this trend, with the state-sponsored Nataka Karnataka Rangayana, the third Indian theatre repertory which celebrated its first anniversary in Mysore on 14 January, 1990.



SHIVARUDRAIAH

A Rangayana production: using folk ideas to add charm

The first anniversary performance by the Nataka Karnataka Rangayana was received with enthusiasm, proving that theatre was alive in the state

The repertory, which was constituted in the face of overwhelming scepticism, had reason to be excited: the audience reacted with great enthusiasm to the anniversary performances by the trainees. It was obvious that the first year trainees, who performed "exercise productions" of Jnanpith awardee K.V. Puttappa's *Kindara Jogi* in December 89, had a hit on their hands. Even before the official anniversary celebrations on 14 January the play had been performed 15 times in the outdoor 'Vanaranga' behind the Kalamandir complex of the repertory.

The chief of the repertory B.V. Karanth appeared to be surprised, and even a little frightened, with the success. He told SUNDAY: "I was not willing to expose the students so early. They have three years to go before they can become full fledged performers. With success will come complacency and they will stop learning." Rangayana's deputy director (art) Jayatheertha Joshi: shared Karanth's apprehension. But says Joshi "How do you expect us or them (the students) to hold ourselves back? We had to do something, show something.".

The staging of *Kindara Jogi* (an Indianised version of the *Pied Piper Of Hamilyn)* and *Govina Kathe* (A Cow's Story) was actually meant to be in the nature of a practical annual examination for the trainees, with no tickets charged. To avoid any danger of creating a 'mini-star system' among the 24 trainees, the lead roles are being played by different performers on a 'pick-your-draw' basis. As Karanth explains: "This will also make every show fresh and different. They have to rehearse afresh with every different casting." The experimental nature of the performances has not, however, dampened audience response."Ideally we would prefer to have a total audience of 200 for a show," says Karanth. But the 'Vanaranga' packs at least 500 for every show and some members in the audience—who have obviously seen the play several times—sing their favourite tunes along with the cast.

Kindara Jogi seeks to combine almost all elements of Indian theatre. The 24-member cast uses masks to play such stereotyped characters as the village landlord, the teacher, the

Brahmin and the rampaging rats (of the *Pied Piper* story) The music is live: sung and played by the 'Mela' and the colourful costumes and stylised forms make it the ideal children's play.

Rangayana was started last year, after two or three years of discussion. The former chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde, an avid theatre-goer promised to support a full-fledged repertory if B.V. Karanth was willing to run it. After the theatre pioneer was finally persuaded to take charge, candidates were selected from all over the state. Mysore, 140 kms from Bangalore, was decided as the location. Only 24 out of 400 candidates were selected after three interviews.

The participants would have to undergo three years of training before being considered artistes. After five years of its existence the repertory will commence touring all over the state and become fully functional. It is to be funded by the state government entirely during this period, (Rs 15 lakhs a year), but the repertory hopes to meet the production expenses from gate collections in the sixth year. The government will, however, continue to pay salaries to the employees of the repertory. At present, trainees get a stipend of Rs 800 per month, with an increase of Rs 100 every year. Their salaries double when they become artistes, after three years.

The repertory is well provided: with a students' hostel, a documentation centre for music and video studies, a library, indoor and outdoor auditoriums and production facilities. A visiting British theatre expert last month reportedly observed: "This is a godsend. We cannot dream of this kind of government support in the U.K." The ten teachers of the repertory, including four National School of Drama (NSD) graduates, are hopeful—for the first time in years—that there will be a regeneration of Kannada theatre.



SHIVARUDRAIAH

B.V. Karanth: creative genius behind the effort



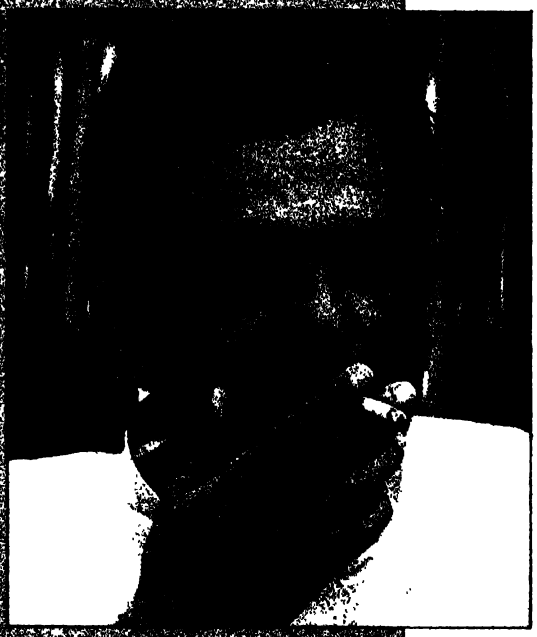
SHIVARUDRAIAH

Scene from *Kindara Jogi* being performed by the repertoire members

Karnataka is unique in the enthusiasm of its amateur theatre. The state can boast of a strong folk theatre—the hugely popular *Yakshagana*, for instance

It was former NSD director Ebrahim Alkazi who first mooted the idea of repertories. But the man who implemented it was B.V. Karanth. The NSD repertory, which toured the country, under Karanth with three plays in the early Eighties created a minor sensation. It was Karanth again who, under the patronage of bureaucrat Ashok Vajpayee, started the 'Rangamandal' repertory in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The great maverick has now come home to start the third Indian theatre repertory in Karnataka where he first came into prominence in the Seventies with the spectacular productions of plays like P.Lankesh's '*Sankranti*', Dr. Chandrashekar Kambar's '*Jokumaraswamy*', Girish Karnad's '*Hayavadhana*' and J.B. Joshi's '*Sattavara Neralu*'.

And Karnataka is ready for Karanth's repertory stock. The state has at least 30 NSD graduates in residence—Karanth himself is from the 1964 batch. And if ever a state needed a repertory it was Karnataka. The 'Ninasam Tirugata' of Heggodu, Shimoga district, is already running a nationally famous seasonal repertory. In the last three years two other touring companies 'Chinna Banna' and 'Srushti' are performing in Malnad districts of the state. As Karanth says: "We have been helped a lot by K.V. Subbanna's Ninasam Group.



B.V. Karanth has now come home to Karnataka, where he first came into prominence in the Seventies, to implement the idea of repertories

Their's is really the first repertory venture in the state." But Ninasam survived mainly on the enterprise of its founder K.V. Subbanna and fell short of becoming a full-fledged repertory due to inevitable financial constraints. It is not surprising, therefore, that 40 per cent of Rangayana trainees are formerly of Ninasam.

Rangayana is not striving for proficiency but excellence. Says Joshi: "Our roots are still in amateur theatre. Karnataka is unique in the enthusiasm of its amateur theatre. We still get that creative madness and resolute courage from our amateur theatre." The state can also boast of a strong folk theatre with the hugely popular '*Yakshagana*' in the coastal districts. In the professional theatre field there are at least eight companies. The Nataka Karnataka Rangayana wants to eventually branch out into the four zones of Karnataka, each with its own dialect of the Kannada language.

The theatre enthusiasts of the country are avidly watching Karanth's efforts in Karnataka. At the recent theatre retrospective in New Delhi, says Joshi, "There were so many question from delegates about our repertory. Even scepticism." But Joshi is confident: "In the Sixties and Seventies Karnataka gave the country a whole breed of great playwrights. In the Nineties we will give a whole new breed of playwrights."●

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

Fair deal

The Bishnupur Mela *comes of age*

The Tourism Department of West Bengal organised a festival and nobody came. Except for the handful of art aficionados from Calcutta and the local populace who landed up at the Bishnupur Mela, 1988 for a spot of fun, that is.

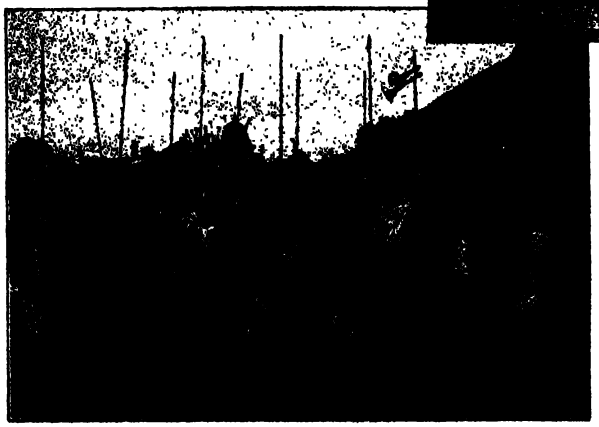
In 1989, the story was very different. The response to the fair, organised jointly by the Bankura district authorities and the tourism department of West Bengal, with the Eastern Zone Cultural Centre providing the entertainment component, was "tremendous both from participants and tourists". Such was the rush to this rural retreat that state tourist officials had to turn away a number of craftsmen due to the unavailability of stalls. And not all the coachloads of people who landed up at the fair site could be accommodated.

Says Jayanta Sanyal, secretary, department of tourism, West Bengal: "We wanted to provide a venue for local craftsmen to display their wares and provide an opportunity to visitors to the fair to get a flavour of the rich cultural traditions of the area." To an extent that desire was fulfilled: over 100 craftsmen were provided with stalls and the visitors to the *mela* were treated to a rare glimpse of Bengal's craftsmanship and culture.

The *mela* presented a varied fare: Bankura burnt clay pottery, the famous Bankura horses, silk Baluchari saris, with themes from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the *Krishna Leela* woven into their fabric, scrolls or *patuas*, and the work of *dhokra* and *sanbha* (conch shell) workers.

What attracted the greatest attention was the Naksha Tash, or hand painted cards. Legend has it that a Malla (the dynasty that founded Bishnupur) king once paid a visit to the Mughal court and was very taken with the cards, circular and brightly painted, which Akbar played with. He imported these Naksha card makers into Bishnupur, and the art took root here as well. Today there are only two proponents of this art form—the Faujdar brothers—who sold their sets of 120 cards at Rs 350 a pack at the *mela*.







(Right) View of a craftsman's workshop: good business; (below) local artistes and craftsmen at the *mela*: rich cultural traditions

The response to the fair was heartening: most of the things on display were sold out. Says a spokesman of the Bankura Dhokra Shilpa Samabhay Samiti: "We brought very few pieces last time thinking that we would not be able to sell. But by the end of the *mela* we had very few pieces left. This year we have sold goods worth over Rs 4,000."

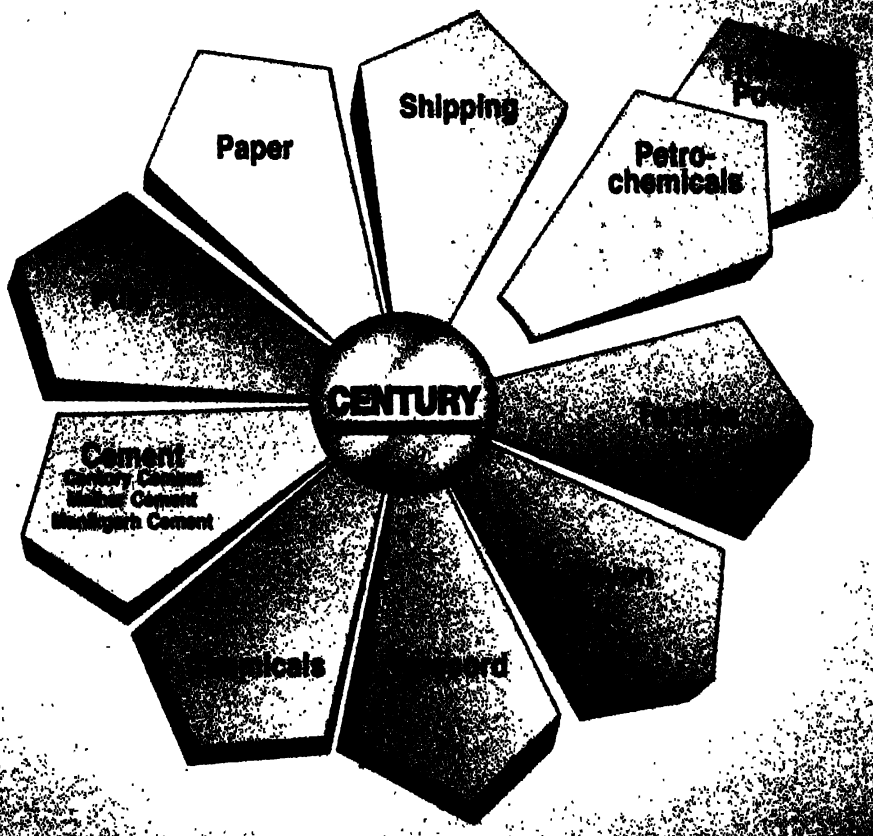
The Baluchari weavers of Bishnupur had a particularly good deal: they sold at practically their own doorstep, thus ensuring that the profits were much larger than usual. (A Baluchari sari costs anything between Rs 800 to Rs 2000—or more.) Also direct sales meant that the weavers didn't have to rely on government agencies to pick their stock at the arbitrary rates they fix.

Next year will see the Bishnupur Mela assuming even more interesting dimensions, with the proposal to get the tourism department of the Government of India involved gaining strength. Plans are also afoot to set up a Bishnupur Fair authority to ensure that standards are not compromised and new artistes and craftsmen are encouraged to come forward. Not only will this invigorate the economy of the Bankura district but also provide an impetus to local tourism.

The potential is enormous. But its realisation depends on how well the state government mobilises its resources. And, on whether the curiosity the annual Bishnupur Mela aroused this time round will hold year after year.

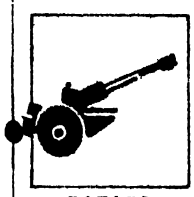
Debjani Sinha/Bishnupur

One of India's most progressive companies is also the most diversified



The CBI lodges an FIR, accusing 14 persons in the Bofors kickback controversy

A salvo too late?



BOFORS

It was a long-awaited move. On 22 January, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a First Information Report (FIR) relating to the Bofors deal. The National Front government had first promised to reveal the names of the beneficiaries of the commissions within 30 days of coming to power. That rash promise had not been kept and there were fears that the regime was backtracking on its commitment to get to the bottom of the scandal.

The FIR set those fears at rest. Not only did it demonstrate the government's sincerity, but because it minced no words and named names, indicated that nobody could expect special consideration from this regime. Fourteen individuals were accused of illegality in the FIR, but only three were named: Martin Ardbo, the former managing director of Bofors, Win Chadha, the head of Anatronic General Corporation, a 'consultant' to Bofors in India, and Gopichand P. Hinduja, the controversial London-based non-resident Sindhi (NRS) who plays a starring role in the Ardbo diaries. Eleven others are referred to as directors and beneficiaries of the various companies that received the kickbacks.





The Bofore gun; (above) Rajendra Shekhar (left) addressing a press conference: hopeful

In a sense, the FIR has little effective force. Martin Ardbo is hardly likely to present himself before a New Delhi magistrate and the 11 unnamed conspirators can hardly be apprehended if the CBI is not aware of their identities.

But in another sense, the FIR is a crucial first step towards unravelling the Bofors tangle. The National Front government believes that a close examination of the Bofors files will only yield evidence of a cover-up, not proof of the identity of the recipients.

Therefore, its investigations must be conducted outside the country: in Sweden where Bofors is headquartered and in Switzerland where the pay-offs were stashed away in numbered accounts. For any enquiry to be successful, both the Swedish and the Swiss governments must cooperate. So far, both have refused to help. The Swedish authorities have taken the line that they cannot intervene in a

commercial dispute between Bofors and India while the Swiss have pleaded that their bank secrecy laws make it impossible for them to cooperate

The CBI hopes that with the filing of the FIR, both governments will change their attitude. The Swedes have consistently refused to reopen the Bofors deal but now they will be asked to assist in a criminal investigation. As for the Swiss, they told the Rajiv Gandhi regime that they would not cooperate in the preliminary investigation because the Indian government had said that it was only investigating charges of tax evasion against Win Chadha and, according to the Swiss, failure to pay income-tax does not count as a major crime.

The NF government believes that a scrutiny of the Bofors files will only yield evidence of a cover-up, not proof of the identity of the recipients



PRAKESH SAHAI

Win Chadha: named in the FIR

The FIR, however, refers to other crimes. These include:

- Criminal conspiracy
- Corruption
- Abuse of official position by public servants to gain pecuniary advantage
- Cheating
- Criminal breach of trust
- Forgery

Says the CBI's new director, Rajendra Shekhar, "Now that the principle of dual criminality has been established, we are hopeful of getting all the necessary cooperation from all other governments."

The CBI hopes that Bofors will now be forced by the Swedish government to reveal the names of the agents and that the Swiss will waive bank secrecy laws to reveal who the beneficiaries of the Svenska, Pitco/Moresco and AE Services accounts are.

This may or may not happen but the way ahead is not as clear as Shekhar appears to believe. Whatever one's moral views on the subject, it is not a crime in any country of the world for G.P. Hinduja to accept a commission from Bofors. (If he was an Indian resident—which he is not—and accepted the commission without informing the Reserve Bank, then he would be in violation of FERA: for non-disclosure, not for being an agent.) The CBI has, therefore, put the cart before the horse and argued that these commissions were used to bribe officials and to then conspire to prevent the truth from emerging. The charges may be valid but they relate to activities that occurred in India—not in Switzerland.

The Swiss may use this as an excuse for not cooperating (though the government is confident that they will not) arguing that there are no parallels with the case of Ferdinand Marcos. In that instance, the charge was that Marcos had accepted bribes and deposited them in Switzerland; so the Swiss agreed to open up his account. They may also claim that while they have cooperated with the American FBI in opening up the accounts of mafia figures, there is no evidence that the Hindujas or the Chadhas are criminals.

Nevertheless, nearly everybody agreed that after three years of deliberate cover-up, the Indian government was finally serious about investigating Bofors. Only, was it too late? ●

Vir Sanghvi

The last of Bhindranwale's closest aides, Harminder Singh Sandhu, is murdered

A militant's death



PUNJAB

"The Falcon" is dead. And Punjab will never see another militant like him. He was a brilliant mind, academically accomplished, well-read, astute, and, some say, too clever by half. He wanted to be too many things at the same time. He was an alleged "double-agent" who worked both for the extremists and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and an ambitious politician who rode the bogey of 'Khalistan' till his last day.

At 33, Harminder Singh Sandhu, was perhaps the most articulate person in the ranks of the militant Sikh movement in Punjab. But he could never resist the impulse to live dangerously. From his rise as a Naxalite leader—who mysteriously escaped being killed in a police encounter because he is said to have been "recruited" to work for intelligence—in the late Seventies, when Prakash Singh Badal was chief minister, to his emergence from detention and declared avowal of the path of 'Khalistan', Sandhu lived with challenges. In his last days, he tried his best to outdo Simranjit Singh Mann and emerge as the chief architect of 'Khalistan'. He came up with a proposal to set up *khalsa panchayats* from 26 January, 1990, with the aim of setting up a parallel administration in the state. He had also announced a boycott of the Republic Day celebrations.

Sandhu had surrendered to security forces during Operation Bluestar in June 1984, spent three and a half years in a high-security prison, and was released last month on the orders of the then Punjab Governor S.S. Ray. Soon after his release, he called a press conference and declared that there was no alternative to 'Khalistan'. The then Punjab Governor, S.S. Ray, immediately got in touch with the V.P. Singh government to seek its permis-

sion to rearrest him. The central government would have nothing to do with it, because the decision to release Sandhu was the Governor's own "administrative matter". The former PM Rajiv Gandhi protested against this attitude of the new government during the debate on the confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, and made out that it was "acquiescing in terrorism".

Sandhu's assailants said they came from Canada. They had visited his house two days ago and gone away because he wasn't in. At around 7 am on 24 January, a youth in a jacket visited Sandhu's Court Road residence, and told his cousin Gurmit that he had come from Canada and wanted to see the leader. He said he was Satinder Singh. Moments later, he was with Sandhu. They were joined by a second visitor. While they were talking, the telephone rang. The caller said he was speaking from Canada. As soon as Sandhu began his conversation on the line, the second visitor got up, whipped out a revolver and emptied four shots into Sandhu's head from point-blank range. Rumours were rife that Sandhu was killed by Paramjit Singh Panjwar, the new KCF chief, and cousin of Gen Labh Singh alias Sukha Sipahi.

Four extremist outfits claimed responsibility for his murder. They are the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), Babbar Khalsa and the Daljit Singh Bittoo faction of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF). The four organisations sent a joint press note to the Punjabi daily, *Ajit*, saying they were behind the killing. The note was signed by eight persons, "Gen" Paramjit Singh Panjwar, "Lt Gen" Gurnam Singh of Sultanmind (both of the KCF), KLO chief Bhai Gurjant Singh of Budhisinghwala, and Bhai Takhat Singh, Bhai Sukhdev Singh and Bhai Wadhwa Singh of Babbar Khalsa and Daljit Singh Bittoo of the breakaway AISSF faction. In the note, they also said that they were responsible for the murder of another AISSF leader, Sukhwant Singh Akanwali, who also belonged to the Manjit Singh faction of which Sandhu was the general secretary.

The statement denounced Sandhu and Akanwali as "traitors to the Sikh cause". It equated them with "Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, Prime Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh" for their "foxy moves". Sandhu and Akanwali were accused of trying to grab "the chair" and cash in on the sacrifices of the true fighters for 'Khalistan'. "We warn the leaders of the Sikh world," the note said, "that either they should fight sincerely for 'Khalistan' or sit quietly at home". Official circles see the hand of the Bittoo group behind the killing. Since the note held out a threat to other Sikh leaders, too, security for S S. Mann was tightened.


PARAM VEER

The body of Sandhu surrounded by his relatives: brutal murder

Sandhu was a Masters' degree holder in English and History. He stood first class first in the MA (History) examination, appearing from jail, and had registered himself for a Ph D. He was once a rabid Marxist who flouted the tenets of Sikhism and later joined the AISSF in 1978, after the Akali-Nirankari clash, and became Bhindranwale's foremost intellectual guide. But his detractors found it curious that he should have surrendered after Operation Bluestar, when all other major leaders were killed. Sandhu was general secretary of the AISSF for the longest-ever stint of seven years. Members of his family had come to associate a jinx with him. He was married for the first time on 6 May, 1984. The ceremony was performed by Bhindranwale himself, within the precincts of the Golden Temple. His wife Paramjit Kaur was killed during Operation Bluestar. On 17 January, 1990, he married Paramjit's younger sister Kulwinder Kaur. But he died six days later.

Whether Sandhu was a government agent or not, he remained a hero of a misguided section of Sikh youth

The rank and file of the AISSF is extremely upset about Sandhu's murder. The air at his funeral was tense. Most of the 1,000 activists who gathered to pay homage to their leader in the compound of the Shaheedganj *gurdwara* on 25 January looked too shocked for words. There were no pro-Khalistan slogans. The funeral pyre was lit by Baba Thakur Singh, head of the Damdami Taksal, amidst the chanting of the religious slogan *Bole so Nihal, Sat Sri Akal*. Among those who looked on were Sandhu's relatives and leaders of other Sikh organisations. The *antim ardas* (final prayer) was performed by Jasbir Singh Rode, who is still recognised by the Mann group as the chief of the Akal Takht. AISSF activists openly swore to avenge Sandhu's death on Daljit Singh Bittoo, whom they described as a frustrated element.

Whether Sandhu was a government agent or not, he remained a hero of a misguided section of Sikh youth. His death has come as a blow to the movement for 'Khalistan', and deepened the militant groups' mistrust of each other. It is a deterrent to all those Sikh politicians who claim to be "close to the militants", and hope to gain from it. •

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

Did Devi Lal appoint two Dal office-bearers without informing the state party unit?

Mysterious letters



TAMIL NADU

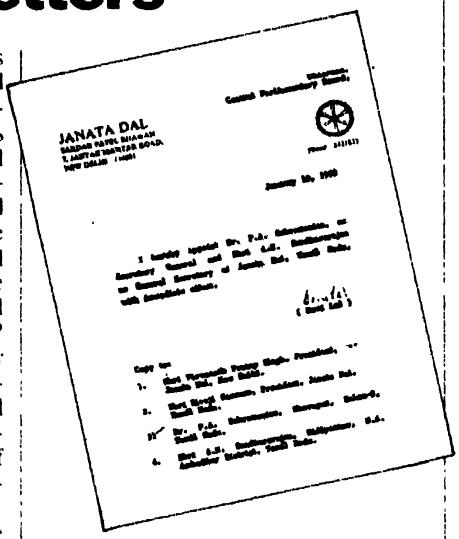
The Jat supremo has done it again. And even before the Janata Dal could get its act together in Tamil Nadu, a serious controversy has rocked the state unit. The issue: did Devi Lal appoint two office-bearers to the state party unit without informing the Dal central parliamentary board (CPB)? The Madras newspapers of 12 January featured a PTI report, quoting a "party release" which said that the Dal CPB had appointed Dr P A. Subramanian as the secretary general of the Tamil Nadu unit and A K. Sundararajan as the general secretary.

Even as the agency despatch came on the ticker the previous evening, the two virtually unknown politicians were addressing a press conference at a posh hotel in Madras claiming that they were personally chosen by Devi Lal to help the new state party president Sivaji Ganesan unify the various Dal factions in Tamil Nadu. They even showed photostat copies of the letter from Devi Lal, who is the chairman of Dal CPB, appointing them to the two important posts. The letter was dated 10 January, with copies endorsed to party president V.P. Singh as well as Sivaji Ganesan.

The news came as a big surprise to the state Janata Dal as the two men were hardly in the running for these posts in the newly rejuvenated state unit. Subramanian is a medical practitioner from Salem who was in the Lok Dal for some time, while Sundararajan is an advocate from Gudiyatham in North Arcot district. Beyond that nobody seemed to know much about them. Sivaji Ganesan was visibly upset when he saw the news in the morning papers: obviously, he had not been consulted by the high command about the appointments.

Ripples were created in the capital too. An exasperated Dal spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy reacted to Ganesan's ire by altogether denying that the central parliamentary board had made any such appointments.

In another twist to the controversy,



A facsimile of the appointment letter: documentary evidence?

Dr Subramanian came up with a second letter from Devi Lal—this one was addressed to Sivaji Ganesan—dated 11 May, 1989, in which he expressed happiness about the talks Ganesan had had with state Dal 'secretary general' Subramanian regarding the merger of Ganesan's party, the Tamizhaga Munnetra Munnani, in the Janata Dal because "it is the right time to unite..." Significantly, Devi Lal said in the letter that his eldest son, Om Prakash Chautala, and Subramanian "are duly authorised" to discuss the Dal-TMM merger. While this implies that Devi Lal was actively involved in the merger efforts for several months, those in the know of things in the local Dal unit stoutly deny this.

Three questions emerge from the unusual controversy facing the Janata Dal. If the CPB did not make the appointments - as Jaipal Reddy has claimed—is it disowning Devi Lal's nominations? If so, will the high command pull up Devi Lal for making such unilateral appointments? And, in case the letters are forged and Devi Lal does not know anything about them, why is it that no criminal action is being taken against Subramanian and Sundararajan for flouting forged letters carrying the deputy prime minister's signature?

Meanwhile, Subramanian is learnt to have pushed off to Delhi to plead with Devi Lal to save the nominations. If that be so, does it then mean the Jat supremo did after all sign the letters?

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

A Janata Dal leader resigns over the Centre's failure to implement the Mandal Commission report

Falling out

Dissension once again threatens the Janata Dal. The party, which put up a show of unity after it came to power as a constituent of the ruling National Front at the Centre, received a rude jolt when its all-India general secretary, Rampoojan Patel, resigned from his post on 24 January. Patel had differences with his party leadership on the Mandal Commission issue and the appointment of deputy prime minister Devi Lal as the chairman of a Cabinet subcommittee which is to work out the modalities of implementing the commission's recommendations on job reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Patel, who is a prominent leader of the backward castes, and a close associate of Prime Minister V.P. Singh, resented the government's decision to go slow on the implementation of the commission's re-

Patel: firm stand



The rift between Biswal and Satpathy widens

Chinks in the armour



ORISSA

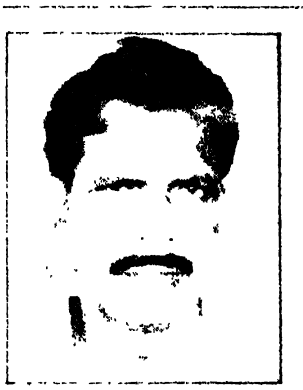
Janaki Ballabh Patnaik is perhaps the happiest person in Orissa today. A month after Nandini Satpathy took over as the PCC(I) chief and Hemananda Biswal replaced Patnaik as chief minister following the party's severe mauling in the Lok Sabha polls, the state Congress is witnessing a serious tug-of-war, and a reconciliation now seems unlikely before the coming Assembly elections. With his adversaries fighting it out, the chances of Patnaik taking over the reins of the party again have brightened beyond his expectations.

But no one had expected Satpathy and Biswal to fall out so soon -at least not before the crucial Assembly polls. After all, it was at Satpathy's behest that Biswal--who was a minister of state in the J B. Patnaik Cabinet in 1985 and 1986 before being sacked for anti-party activities--was nominated by the party high command as the chief minister. Satpathy preferred to head the state party unit rather than occupy the CM's seat.

The first cracks in the Biswal-Satpathy leadership surprisingly began to show within a few days of its taking over. Rumours began to do the rounds that Biswal was merely running "big sister's errands". An embarrassed CM tried to scotch the rumours by alleging that these were being spread by "interested parties", the implication being that the Patnaik camp was trying to divide the new leadership. But subsequent developments have made it more than clear that the Satpathy-Biswal team may not really be able to live up to its promise: ensuring an absolute majority for the Congress in the state elections.

Satpathy's first action which indicated that she intended to call the shots, was to issue press statements asking the CM to take certain measures to win back the electorate to the Congress fold. Some of the steps she suggested to the Biswal government were waiver of loans to small and marginal farmers, introduction of single-point taxation, that the new ministers should continue to reside in their MLA quarters instead of shifting to the larger ministerial bungalows, and that they declare their assets. When some of the ministers refused to submit their property statements, Satpathy reportedly wrote to the CM asking him to sack them.

Meanwhile, Biswal began to feel slighted by Satpathy's "overbearing attitude". Some eager partymen including ministers threw in their lot with the CM in his cold war with the PCC(I) chief. Biswal resented Satpathy's move asking him to appoint her as chairman of the state planning board, but had to agree to ensure his survival. Satpathy's appointment broke a long-standing practice of the planning body being headed by the CM. To Biswal's further discomfiture, the PCC(I) chief chose a chamber next to the CM's. The transfer of 35 commissioners and district magistrates within a month of the new government coming to power, which has created deep resentment in the bureaucracy, and drawn the chief electoral officer's objections, is known to be Satpathy's handiwork.





Hemananda Biswal (left) and Nandini Satpathy: parting ways?

But the issue which has virtually wrecked the Satpathy-Biswal team is that of collection of party funds through the award of as many as nine dolomite, manganese and limestone mining leases as well as the finalisation of some public works tenders in early January. The Satpathy camp is learnt to have taken serious exception to the fund collection drive behind her back. She got an opportunity to embarrass Biswal, mining minister Jayadev Jena, PWD minister Prakash Debata and forest minister Netrananda Mallick--who belonged to the Biswal camp--when she got copies of resignation letters of four ministers. Satpathy used these letters to heckle the CM and his confidants at a late-night meeting at her residence on 11 January. The acrimonious meeting, which continued till the early hours of the morning, ended with the ministers agreeing not to quit. But the crisis is far from over with the Biswal camp accusing Satpathy of having engineered the resignation threats by the ministers. ●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

comendations and the formation of the sub-committee, which, he feels is a ruse to stall the implementation process. Patel sent in his resignation to V.P. Singh, the Janata Dal president, who tried to dissuade the disgruntled leader from taking the extreme step. But Patel remained firm and said that he was not ready to compromise his principles. He feels that the formation of the Cabinet sub-committee, headed by Devi Lal, is a hoax because the Jat leader is known for his strong anti-reservationist stand.

Resentment has also surfaced within the party over the distribution of tickets for the Assembly elections. So, Patel's rebellion at this juncture could affect the party's poll prospects adversely given the fact that he enjoys the support of a significant chunk of the backward castes. For V.P. Singh, Patel's resignation could not have been more ill-timed. ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

A group of IAS officers is accused of appropriating prime land in Bombay

Landing in trouble



A welfare organisation has got the better of top bureaucrats on this occasion. A group of senior IAS officers who tried to put up a multistoried building in one of Bombay's prime locations, has been frustrated in its efforts by Bal Kalyan, an organisation looking after the welfare of underprivileged children, to whom the land belonged. Bal Kalyan filed a petition in the Bombay High Court against the Angarkari Cooperative Housing Society (ACHS), which had been formed by the IAS officers, alleging that the land for the proposed 17-storied building had been appropriated by unfair means. Justice S.C. Pratap, who heard the case, observed in his verdict that the manner in which the land had been cornered "was possible only for those wielding power and influence in the executive branch of the government".

It all began in 1988 when the IAS officers approached the state government for the release of a 33,000-sq ft plot on the posh Napean Sea Road in south Bombay. The Sharad Pawar government reportedly went out of its way to oblige them by issuing a letter of allotment on 31 August, 1988, even before the ACHS was officially registered.

The spadework for the deal had apparently been done much earlier. In July 1987, V. Ranganathan, then the revenue secretary to the government of Maharashtra, and the chief promoter of ACHS, had written to the minister for revenue requesting him to treat the plot "in isolation". It was a clever move, for this provision relieves the government of the obligation to issue a public notification before gifting away any land to an individual or organisation. Once this was done, Ranganathan again wrote to the revenue minister asking for the release of the plot to the housing society. And one of the first things that the state government did after Pawar took over, was to issue a letter of intent to the ACHS which was yet to be registered.

It was smooth going, till the Bal Kalyan authorities sensed that they were going to be robbed of the land. The land was originally given to G.D. Tendulkar, a Gandhian scholar and biographer of the Mahatma. Before he died, Tendulkar gifted the land to Bal Kalyan, which works for the welfare of children of servants of ministers, judges and other well-to-do families of the area. Realising that the land which belonged to it all these years was about to be appropriated, Bal Kalyan challenged the government's order in the High Court. It was joined by the Save Bombay Committee (SBC) in its campaign. The SBC alleged that the government had "in the most arbitrary and malafide manner allotted two plots measuring about 33,000 sq ft which included a public road", in a "surreptitious manner, without any public notice whatsoever, and that too virtually for a song".

The ACHS could only put up a lame defence in the no-holds-barred legal battle. It argued in its affidavit:

- The decision to allot the land to the housing society was an internal arrangement of the government made under the rules of business and that the petitioners had no business to question it.
- The government had a declared policy to house the poor at public cost but it may not always be possible for the weaker sections to be perpetually subsidised.
- It is not for the petitioners to stipulate government policy.
- The valuation, based on whatever applicable data, was no concern of the petitioners.

Justice Pratap found this line of reasoning particularly objectionable.



The plot on Napean Sea Road: disputed territory

Doctors in a Bombay hospital face charges of corruption

Medical misdemeanour

Gone are the days when medical practitioners stood by the Hippocrates' oath to offer selfless service to mankind. If an incident in Bombay is anything to go by, even the most expensive medical institutions and the highest paid specialists are no exceptions to this rule. This is precisely what prompted P.C. Singhvi, a former IAS officer from Rajasthan, to file a case before the medical council.

Singhvi's wife, Lila, was admitted to the Bombay Hospital in Bombay in 1987. But she died during the operation because of what her husband says was "callousness" on the part of Dr Prafulla Desai, director of the Tata Memorial Hospital, who is also a cancer specialist with the Bombay Hospital. According to the complaint lodged by Singhvi with the Maharashtra Medical Council, even though Dr Desai charged the full fees for Lila's operations, he did not even attend the patient despite being summoned by the junior doctors. As a result Lila breathed her last.

During the hearing of the case, one of Dr Desai's juniors came up



He observed: "To those enjoined to uphold the laws and the Constitution without fear or favour, affection or ill-will, the above averments sound rather unfortunate. One wonders whether this also reflects the thinking of the state government."

The court has now stayed the construction of the building and the case has been referred to the Chief Justice of the High Court. According to sources, a special bench is being set up to hear the case and the ACHS has been debarred from undertaking any construction work till the final disposal of the case. With that, the citizens have won the first round in their battle with the powerful bureaucrats. ●

Olga Tellis/Bombay

with some startling revelations. According to Dr A.K. Mukherji, fees were often charged from patients for the services of senior specialists, but junior doctors were pressed into service. Citing an instance of gross malpractice, Dr Mukherji alleged that Bombay Hospital was still charging fees for the services of Dr J.C. Paymaster who had retired from the hospital a few years ago. He also cited the instance of another doctor who had died three years ago, but in whose name patients were still being admitted to the hospital. These operations were allegedly being performed by one Dr Chitlangia.

During the cross-examinations, Dr Mukherji came up with two more startling cases of this nature. While the cross-examinations have drawn to a close, the medical fraternity ought to be sufficiently chastised by these revelations. ●

Milap Chand Dandia/Jaipur

Vested interests oppose the merger moves between the Janata Dal and the Janata Party

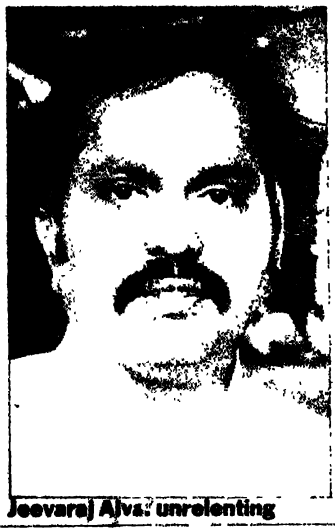
Spanner in the works



KARNATAKA

When the Janata Dal and the Janata Party (JP) in Karnataka were routed in the November polls, everyone blamed the feuding leaders of the two parties for the debacle. Kannada weekly, *Lankesh Patrike*, lampooned Dal's campaign leader Ramakrishna Hegde, and Janata party's H.D. Deve Gowda as the Jayalalitha and Janaki of Karnataka politics. However, unlike their Tamil Nadu counterparts, the Opposition parties in Karnataka have been unable to bury the hatchet. The unity moves initiated by well-meaning senior leaders in both parties are being opposed by hawks in the Janata Dal.

On 19 January, leaders of both parties went to New Delhi to consult central leaders about the unity moves. The immediate target of the negotiations was the civic polls in the state on 25 February. Despite all indications that the Opposition parties will repeat the November disaster in the civil polls if they fail to have seat adjustments, the Janata Dal stalwarts led by Hedge's frontman, Dr Jeevaraj Alva, are unrelenting.



Jeevaraj Alva: unrelenting

Alva, a traditional Deve Gowda baiter, is already going around singing the pre-election tune of November that Deve Gowda is a Congress(I) agent. Reacted Y.S.V. Datta, the general secretary of the Janata Party: "If the Janata Dal is not prepared to make seat adjustments, we are not in any desperate hurry to cajole them to do so." Deve Gowda's supporters point out that the initiative came from the Janata Dal's J.H. Patel, a senior leader who is disillusioned with Ramakrishna Hegde. In order to pre-empt the expected noises from Hegde's followers in the party, Patel first announced that he had Hegde's approval for taking the initiative. Later, however, he was compelled to 'clarify' that he was acting on his own counsel.

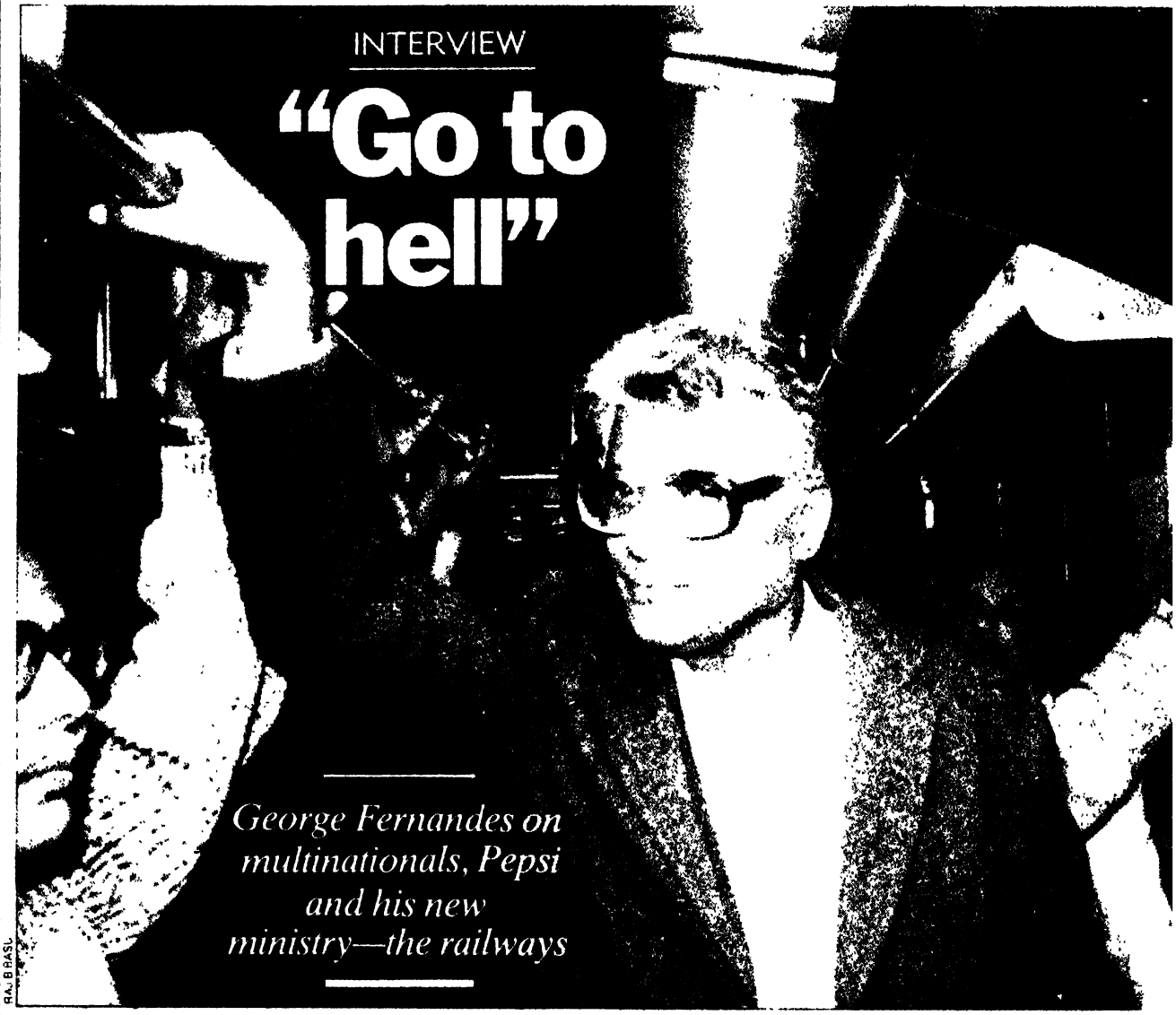
The hawks in the Dal comprise the Hegde-loyalists, Alva, R.V. Deshpande and B. Rachaiah. The role of former chief minister S.R. Bommai in the unity efforts is not clear. The Deve Gowda group believes that Alva and Deshpande will never agree to have seat adjustments. Alva has repeatedly stressed that the party's future was threatened under the old order and that he was the rightful heir to the leadership. Also the Hegde group believes that seat adjustments for the civic polls can only be a precursor to a full-scale merger of the parties. And Alva and Deshpande, who were among the few former ministers to win the Assembly elections, are not ready to share the leadership with the Deve Gowda faction. They have reportedly dismissed Deve Gowda as "finished".

But Janata Party leaders are far from convinced that they are finished. Says Datta: "There is no logic in these statements. The Janata Dal is prepared to make seat adjustments with the communists who got a mere 0.8 per cent of the votes and the BJP which got two per cent in the Assembly elections. The Janata Party, in comparison, got 15 per cent and finished second to the Congress(I) in more than 70 constituencies out of 224." ●

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

INTERVIEW

"Go to hell"



RAJ BASU

George Fernandes on multinationals, Pepsi and his new ministry—the railways

SUNDAY: Will you go ahead with the multi-crore computerisation programme initiated by (former minister) Madhavrao Scindia?

George Fernandes: The computerisation has reached a stage where it may not be possible to completely do away with it. I am making a review of the present situation and the extent to which computerisation has progressed, to find out what are the areas where it may be possible to do away with it, in terms of any future expansion, and in what areas it is now necessary for us to continue with it. Only after a review, will it be possible for me to come to any positive conclusion.

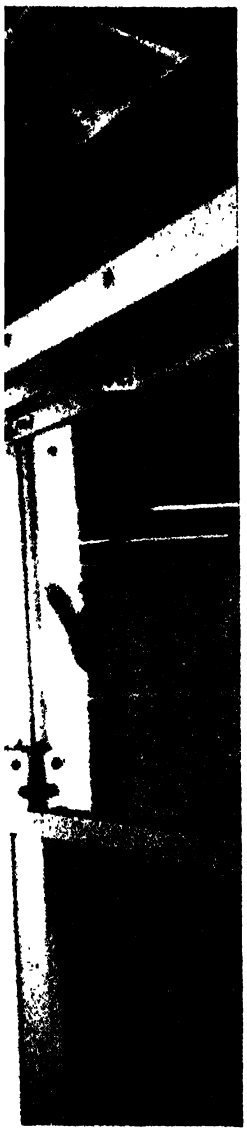
Q: Will your railway budget be very different from earlier ones?

A: Well, the railways have no budget, they only have balance sheets. After all, railways don't produce any fiscal policies, and so on. We are a transporting agency, like any public transport corporation. We could be a very big trucking agency, or a private railway in the country which would balance its books and do its business, that's all railways is about.

Q: But will there be any increase in fares and freight charges?

A: I am not in a position to answer that question at the moment for the reason that I am producing a status paper on railway finances and other related issues. This will be made available for public discussion, hopefully on 1 March. Only after the paper is out and we have had some discussion, will it be possible for me to take any view on how exactly we proceed to balance our books. At the moment, I can only say that we are losing Rs 1,700 crores this year on account of passenger traffic losses, and what are known as social costs, in the movement of freight, particularly in the movement of salt, fodder, and certain other essential commodities. It is necessary that the state underwrite these losses because at the moment it is the earnings in the freight which compensate for these losses and unless there is budgetary support to underwrite these losses, it will be very difficult for the railways to be in business.

Q: Will there be any departures from the past budgets in terms of expansion?



A: Yes, the railway budget indicates certain thrust areas of our developmental activity, like the laying of new lines, doubling of existent tracks, conversion of the meter gauge into the broad gauge, and so on. Now this is where some innovation or moving away from what has been happening is possible. For instance, the conventional wisdom in the railways is that we should go into areas where the new lines that we lay are going to earn profits for the railways -'remunerative' lines,that's the word used. If one is to talk only of remunerative lines, then it will mean that in all the backward areas of the country there will be no railways at all, because you don't have industry, you don't have electricity, you don't have much money in the hands of the people, then who's going to travel from these places? This conventional wisdom of railways following development rather than the other way around, will have to be abandoned, and we'll have to take railways into the backward areas.

There are also certain areas where for years, no special efforts have been made to build the lines that are very essential. Resource constraint is the argument that has been advanced, and it's quite a justified argument. But while there are resource constraints to take the railways to areas where they are desperately needed, the resources have been spent on computers, on metros and such other high-profile or sophisticated projects, which need not have been there, at least in the present state of our finances. So therefore, to that extent there is bound to be a shift in the priorities which I am going to have, and a change in the sort of budget to be presented.

Q: Does this also mean that during your tenure, there will be no modernisation of the railways? Also, will all development be indigenous, making the railways self-sufficient?

A: No, I don't think one needs to go in for any imports where the railways are concerned. Of course, we need technology to haul heavy-duty freight trains, to haul longer passenger trains, to have trains which can take on faster trains. Goods trains for instance, move at a speed of about 20-25 kms per hour on the broad gauge and on the metre gauge, at a speed of 14-15 kms per hour. Now, if you have better tracks which can carry more weight and which can take care of faster speeds, these are technologies we need.

Q: So that means you will import technology?

A: Well, we don't need to import it in the sense that it is not available with us, but we certainly need to improve on some of these things, and here we'll need collaboration. Again, for signalling, which is a very important factor which governs the speedy movement of trains, we need improvement. Because if your signals are remote-controlled, computerised, automatic, signalling has its own momentum, where it allows the trains to overcome the existing delays that we now have with the present signalling system which is quite outdated.

There is also the safety angle involved in signalling, very often the accidents we have of trains running into each other, is a failure of the signalling system. In these areas, we will need import of technology. Similarly, to reduce fuel consumption, whether it is electricity or diesel, and to go in for more fuel-efficient locomotion methods, we will need some kind of technical imports.

Q: What are the other changes you plan for your ministry?

A: One is to get out of the budget constraints, to go in for the laying of new lines. A proposal that I have mooted is to identify specific areas, like for instance, the west coast railway, where I would like to go in for the setting up of a west coast railway corporation, or west coast railway authority, in which there will be a participation of state governments who will be the beneficiaries of this new railway, namely Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra. These four state governments and the ministry of railways in the Government of India participating in the equity and then issuing bonds and debentures, to industries and to the people living in these areas. Because this west coast railway would ultimately cost between Rs 1,000-1,200 crores, if it is to be completed in, let's say, three or four years' time. And the railways do not have the money—the budget that we have had for new lines in the current year is only Rs 250 crores for the entire country. If you want to speed it up then you need to raise resources outside the budget. I have discussed this with the finance ministry and the Planning Commission, and we are now working on a proposal.

Q: To move to another area—industry. You have earlier been the industry minister, and continue to express strong views on the subject. Could you elaborate on your government's liberalisation policy, for instance?

A: But this is a subject where I can only express my views, and it becomes very difficult in government to express personal views, because then you are interfering in policy-making in what is not your area...

Q: Well, you used to be associated with the industry ministry...

A: I believe, and I continue to believe that a multinational presence in India in the non-essential sector should be done away with. And we should go in for an industrial policy which very categorically makes it clear to these companies that only in the priority sectors, where we need high technology, which we don't have but is necessary for us, that we would like to buy such technology where we can afford it, or if the only way of getting that technology is through financial collaboration, then we should go in for it. But beyond that, the Indian market for the multinationals, or inviting

"Any kind of cheating of the government will not be allowed until I am in power"



them to set up their units here in sectors where we don't need them, and Pepsi Cola is just one of those examples. Today, briefcases are made in collaboration with American Tourister in India, all Members of Parliament have been given these. You have foreign collaboration to produce toys in India, to produce commodes, and technology to produce kitchen sinks, and a whole lot of other non-essential sectors, where we should ask them to pack up and go.

Q: So what does liberalisation mean then?

A: Liberalisation cannot mean that India should open its doors for exploitation, and here, it's just plain exploitation. I also do not favour these international brand-names being used in our country, because these put the indigenous manufacturer at a tremendous disadvantage, even though their products might be equally good. I know small footwear manufacturers who could never compete with Bata. And then Bata would go to these people as they became bankrupt, and tell them, you make it, we'll put our stamp and market it for you. That's the only way they survived.

A large number of these multinationals use our facilities. Who makes these toothpastes and soaps, and so on? I am sure that you have little units in Bombay and elsewhere which are making soaps for Hindustan Lever. I am sure Godrej lends its facilties to multinationals. We are losing on all sides. Our indigenous industries cannot grow, they cannot compete within the country, forget their being able to export things abroad. And another aspect of this is that these multinationals come in saying, we will export things from India, and they make a deal while getting their licence or permission to establish their units here. What they are exporting is not what they produce. Do you know that Hindustan Lever, which has the largest share of toilet soaps in the country, don't export soaps anywhere outside India? International brand-name, but they are using it only within the country. And this holds good for toothpaste and most of these toiletry manufacturers. Instead of an Indian export house doing its exports, these multinationals produce consumer goods here, buy up things which our export houses would have sent out, and claim that they have fulfilled their export commitments. So, these are some of the areas where discussing so-called liberalisation, we actually get into a situation of total exploitation of our economy by the multinationals, and I can't accept this.

Q: So now it seems that the Maruti 1000 stays. What about Pepsi? After all, you kicked out Coca Cola (in 1977).

A: I am not authorised to speak on Pepsi, it's for the ministry of industry and the minister for food processing, I think, who can speak on it. But there are one or two things that matters about Pepsi which need to be discussed.

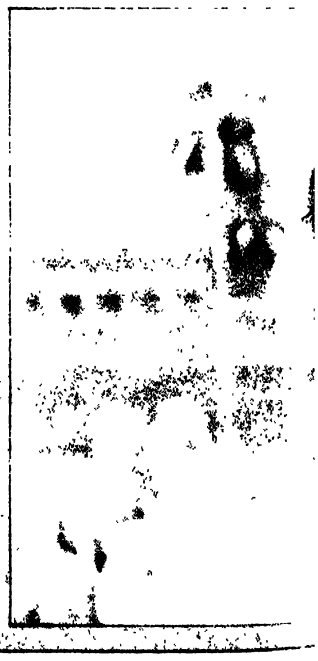
Pepsi came into the country saying that...firstly, of course, Pepsi had no business to come into the country, they came in through kickbacks that they must have given to these earlier government leaders. Secondly, they have now upped the cost of the project from the original Rs 12-13 crores to Rs 70 crores plus, which makes me suspect that they have siphoned off a lot of money from India by over-invoicing the machinery that they are bringing into the country. So whatever money that was offered as kickbacks, they have made that and more. Thirdly, they promised to create 50,000 jobs in Punjab. My information is that they have created no jobs, and the number of jobs that will become available ultimately in this huge investment will not perhaps even touch four figures—could be under a thousand jobs. And the next point is that this whole idea of fruit processing about which so much of noise has been made, about how they'll process the fruit in India, grown in Punjab, and how this whole project was going to help the farmers of Punjab, and how this processed fruit was going to be exported to the rest of the world. Now they have backed out of that, and have said that they are not going to export this fruit because it's very expensive to export it. Now either you made a project report, you made a study of the markets abroad, etc., and then set up your unit.. I do not believe that an American company of the calibre of Pepsi could have made such a mistake, of not making a project report and not understanding the economies of processing this fruit and then exporting it and making money on it.

Related to this also is the point that they are now going to make potato chips. Now making potato chips in Punjab and then marketing them in India, doesn't make sense even as some kind of domestic enterprise, because potato chips are made all over the country by small and cottage industries. So therefore, to me this whole Pepsi thing has been one big exercise in cheating the Government of India and the Indian people, and particularly the people of Punjab. They have taken advantage of the economic and political situation in Punjab, and the Congress government decided to make some money out of them, and now the people of Punjab are going to be left high and dry because nothing is going to come their way. Yes, Pepsi must go from India, but unfortunately it is for the government to decide.

"Yes, Pepsi must go from India, but unfortunately it is for the government to decide"

PEPSI

"These multinationals buy up things our export houses would have sent out and claim they have fulfilled export commitments...I can't accept this"



Q: You have just been appointed on the Cabinet committee to look into the Bhopal case. The case has been reopened, but was it something that the government had to do?

A: Yes, we have taken two very important decisions on Bhopal. Firstly, we have rejected the judgement, which as the Janata Dal, and trade unionists, and as any patriotic Indian should have done, we had rejected it earlier. Because that was a "fixed" judgement. The man who delivered it, has gone to the international court of justice, he got his reward, and a lot of other people who were involved in the settlement need to be investigated.

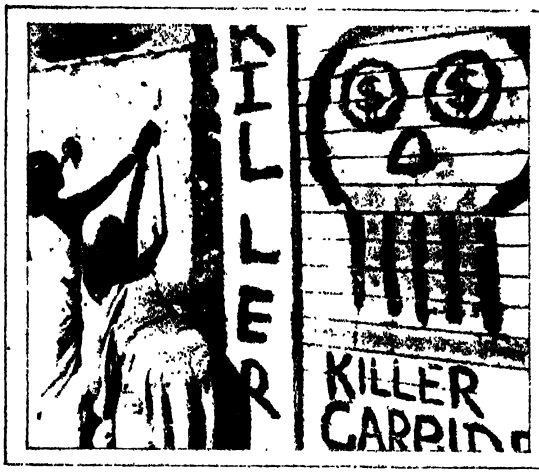
Q: Does your government plan to investigate these people?

A: I don't think that our government has such plans at the moment, but they certainly need investigating. They were always in league with Union Carbide. Don't forget the way Union Carbide came into the country, the way the Bhopal plant was commissioned and run, and all the things that happened in the aftermath of that explosion.

Q: Why haven't any steps been taken to blacklist the company?

A: Well, that will depend on what happens from now on. The important point is that we have rejected that judgement, and therefore, we have liberated our country from the kind of sellout that (Rajiv) Gandhi and his government had organised by using the Supreme Court. The decision to provide interim relief to the victims numbering over four lakhs, every citizen in those 36 wards will be given interim relief.

I believe that on Bhopal, we have vindicated our earlier stand. The significance of what we have done is not merely helping the people who were involved, but restoring the dignity of the country which had been mortgaged by the Congress government to an American multinational.



"That was a fixed judgement... people involved in the settlement need to be investigated"


GOUTAM CHATTERJI

Q: To get to the political situation, what is happening on Punjab?

A: (In) Punjab, we have taken initiatives which I think are in the right direction. I feel that we should move in the direction of finding a solution to the problem in the not-too-distant future.

Q: The situation seems a lot more hopeless in Jammu and Kashmir.

A: Yes, in Jammu and Kashmir we are now paying for the anti-national policies that were pursued by the Congress Party, which totally alienated the people from the democratic process. It is very funny for Mr Gandhi to keep saying now that we are mishandling the situation, he is the architect of the situation, we are carrying Mr Gandhi's baby.

Q: Is it true that you have banned Pure Drinks (the makers of Campa Cola) on Indian Railways?

A: There's no such ban, but Pure Drinks owes the railways Rs two crores. The property of the railways they are occupying is (worth) Rs 50 crores, and if it were in the hands of a private developer, it would be worth many more fifty crores. And the man, (Pure Drinks chairman) Charanjit Singh, has been defying the courts with impunity, and manipulating and managing to avoid paying his dues to the railways, when a potter on the streets is removed with a *lathi*. Any kind of cheating of the government, and this one law for the poor and another for the rich will not be allowed at least until I am in power.

Q: What do you have to say to the general impression of the people that yours is a weak government which is bound to fall?

A: You know, we are a government with only 145 members or so in the present House of 525 members. And with our 145 members we were able to pass constitutional amendments, that shows the strength, and not the weakness of the government. We were strong enough to repudiate the mighty American multinational, and tell them, "go to hell". So what is the yardstick to decide whether we are strong or weak? The Prime Minister of the strong government could not dare to go to Punjab and talk to the people like we are doing. I believe that we are a very strong government, and we are going to run the country for the five-year mandate that the people have given us.

Interviewed by Shiraz Sidhwa in New Delhi

PETROCHEMICALS

Art of the possible

Darbari Seth snatches the Haldia petrochemicals project—and leaves R.P. Goenka behind—speechless

"It was as if the project was ordained for us," says Darbari Seth. Very likely, if the past has anything to do with the future. Seth, chairman of a group of Tata concerns—among them Tata Tea and Tata Chemicals—walked into Calcutta in the last week of December; and walked off less than a month later, on 22 January, 1990 with a Rs 3,000 crore naphtha cracker project and five downstream projects at Haldia, a sleepy, West Bengal port-township.

In the process, he left an enviable pack of industrialists dumbfounded with his finesse. Rama Prasad Goenka, who had been gunning for the project for the past five years, and had even formed a joint venture company with the West Bengal government to run it; Dhirubhai Ambani, whose petrochem ambitions are falling apart at Patalganga, and who craved Haldia as an alternate swansong, what with a change of government; Viren Shah, the Rs 400 crore iron-man, and his ambitious counterpart in Calcutta, Ispat group's Mohanlal Mittal. The Singhanias, Raunaq Singh of Apollo Tyres, the list goes on. What really struck home was the fact that while the assorted industrialists heavily publicised their intent, Seth moved quietly, swiftly, and with elan. Something that may go down in corporate history books as the "Bombay House" style. All Goenka said was how "painful" an experience this education was.

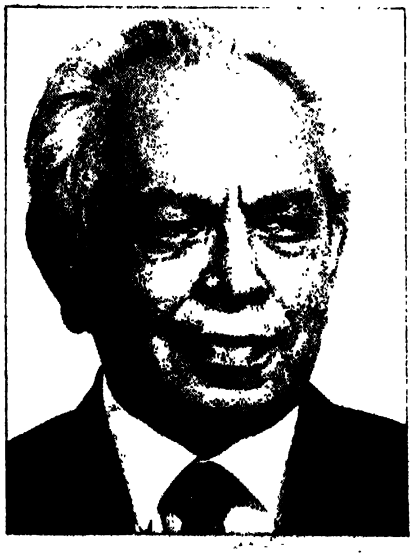
To hear Seth tell it, on 29 December last, he was in Calcutta to attend a Tata Tea board meeting (presumably to complete formalities for taking over Bangalore-based Consolidated Coffee Ltd) and met Asim Dasgupta, West Bengal's finance minister. "So I told him," relates Seth, "I was glad that Haldia has finally got off to a start and that many people have shown interest. But as a technical man I believe that if the Haldia project is to be a success, it cannot be a fragmented project. It should be an integrated project." Here lies the masterstroke. Haldia, planned as a naphtha cracker plant—supplying raw material downstream for the manufacture of ethylene, propylene, butadiene, benzene and other chemicals—made sense, according to Seth, only if that logical step between primary producer and consumers was taken. Very simply: it all goes to one bidder.

Continuing his tale, Seth says Dasgupta came up with something on the lines of "Your suggestion is very dramatic." Seth countered with a modest refrain that it was only a "concept", and that it is "neither a suggestion nor a proposal." Finance minister Dasgupta, in an apparent stroke of naivette—read: move to snare the big fish—asked Seth how this concept "could be made a reality". Seth, ever helpful, returned to Bombay, and was back in Calcutta armed with a full proposal barely two weeks later. By 21 January, when Seth was once more in Calcutta—for another Tata Tea board meeting—the word was out: Haldia belongs to the Tatas, and R.P Goenka picks up the scraps. The official confirmation came three days later in the state Assembly, when chief minister Jyoti Basu went public with this dramatic turnaround. But the point was made—West Bengal has snared a top industrial house.



Jyoti Basu went public with the dramatic turnaround—West Bengal had snared a top industrial house

At the cost of another, but that is the way of all business. Five years ago Goenka formed a joint-venture company with the West Bengal Industrial Development Corp (WBIDC), called Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd (HPL) with full backing of the state government. The venture gradually snowballed into a classic Centre-state battle for supremacy, with New Delhi tripping up Basu's pet project. And Basu,



Finance minister Asim Dasgupta asked Seth how his concept of an integrated project "could be made a reality". Seth obliged...and walked off with the whole project



One school of thought maintains that Goenka was never really in... last October, Gopi Arora stumped for Ambani

in turn, heaping emotional vitriol on anything that spelt Rajiv Gandhi. But in a sudden move, Gandhi showed up last October to lay the HPL foundation stone with much fanfare. Though some heaved a sigh of relief, most people correctly interpreted the move as a pre-election stunt, more to swing Basu's left-wing comrades towards the Congress(I), than to fulfill any fantasy about an industrially developed Bengal. Gandhi's electoral demise a month later firmed the project up still more. Basu was now a major force in the new government, and would be able to push the project through very quickly. Only, Basu—the master-strategist that he is—kept his options about a partner wide open. A horde of hopefuls stepped in.

Ultimately, it was Seth's win. The Tata stalwart, under the Tata Tea banner, will chip in Rs 185 crores as equity for the Haldia project—ironically for Goenka, it will continue to be known as Haldia Petrochemicals. The state government will contribute Rs 190 crores to the total equity pegged at Rs 750 crores. The balance 49 per cent will be disbursed through public subscription. Term loans will account for a further Rs 2,250 crores.

Seth was initially hesitant about a joint venture, but the Basu-Dasgupta team won him around to their point of view. There is yet another round of convincing left: to tell Seth to share some ethylene production with Goenka, possibly in two downstream units. A six-member committee—three from the state and the rest, Tata executives—has been formed to speed up the project. Bombay House gossip has S.K. Ganguly, chief petrochem negotiator for Basu, as Haldia Petrochem's chairman, the post of managing director going to a Tata nominee. (Speculation is rife about the deal including Seth being asked to pick up a sick unit, perhaps Bengal Potteries. Wags say Goenka picked up Gramphone Co. of India in much the same way. Only, the operation is still a burden for him, and Haldia remains a distant dream.)

Both corporate and political observers are quick to praise Basu's quick-stepping. But even within this haloed circle of commentators, there are divergent views about what exactly happened. One school of thought maintains that Goenka was never really in. In October-November last year, ex-finance secretary Gopi Arora and Rajiv's economic adviser Montek Singh Ahluwalia(*see* SUNDAY *24—30 December 1989*) stumped for Ambani as the WBIDC partner. Therefore, they maintain, Goenka's shaky seat was up for grabs anyway.

Another point of view—not entirely unexpected in business circles—says Basu's controversial son Chandan was on the Ambani take. This is a view repeatedly endorsed by the West Bengal Bharatiya Janata Party members, arch enemies of the state-based left. To make it all appear straight, other industrialists also had to be called in for discussions on Haldia. Seth took this opportunity, and despite being a late entrant in the race, worked the Tata magic on Basu.

A third argument has a Calcutta newspaper in the act. Goenka, goes the wisdom, chipped in with funds to keep this paper afloat. When he discovered that he was losing out as a Basu favourite, he orchestrated a media campaign against the chief minister. Basu was so livid that he axed Goenka's chances immediately. After that, it was merely a question of who offered the best deal.

Point. Counterpoint. But that is where the analogy to music ends. This is business, where one conducts power with more power. Not a flimsy baton. Basu has plenty of clout, and Seth is not without influence either. How one plays the other will now be corporate history. Perhaps Goenka, despite the heartburn, is a lucky man.●

Sudeep Chakravarti with Olga Tellis/Bombay

COMPANIES

Peer pressure

Peerless heavyweights knuckle down for a court battle

It is back to the court house for Peerless General Finance and Investment Co., a Rs 800 crore powerhouse and India's largest non-banking investment company. The actors are the same, but this time round, the charges are different.

Parvenu millionaire Parasmal Lodha—once the single largest Peerless shareholder—stands accused of forgery and cheating by the company's heavyweights: chairman and managing director P.C. Sen, and S.K. Roy, brother of Peerless founder B.K. Roy. Moreover, the Sen-Roy-led group claim that Lodha owes the company Rs 2.61 crores—almost four crores if interest is added on. The company filed criminal charges against Lodha, his wife Madhu and father Manoharmal in November last year, but they were able to get themselves bailed out a month later. The case is now due for hearing.



Parasmal Lodha: accused of forgery and cheating

These charges relate to a real-estate development project on Loudon

Street, an up-market central Calcutta thoroughfare. According to an agreement signed between Peerless and Indu Gouri Commercial Co. Pvt Ltd– later changed to Bhagyalakshmi Ltd—a Lodha venture, Lodha received Rs 2.61 crores to construct 54,000 square feet of commercial space in six months. The agreement was signed in June 1987, say Peerless officials, and even provided for a grace period of six months in case Lodha was not able to deliver in time. Their contention is two-fold: the construction was never completed, and documents produced by Lodha to defend himself had forged signatures, swinging the deal in his favour. Hence, the criminal charges brought against Lodha.

The other side, of course, has a different story to tell. According to a spokesman of the Lodha camp (as the matter is sub judice, people are unwilling to be identified) plans for the building, were changed numerous times. The proposal, originally intended as a residential complex, was later changed to an hotel—therefore, the delay. There is no breach of contract, they assert. And besides, they say, in case of a dispute an independent arbiter should have been appointed, as provided for in Section 16 of the agreement.

However, according to many corporate watchers, the bone of contention is really the much-coveted Peerless shares. Hounded by taxmen and controversies, Lodha resigned from the Peerless board in March 1988. At that time, he came to an arrangement with Roy for transferring his shares which would serve to break Lodha's link with Peerless. (The price at which shares changed hands is still a closely-guarded secret.) Now, however, there appears to be a rider. A second agreement was signed, say company insiders, which said that Lodha would buy back the shares once the controversies died down. But both Roy and chairman Sen are unwilling to sell shares back to Lodha. This has led to a lot of heartburn. Perhaps that is why, say observers, Sen found himself arrested in mid-September on charges of violating the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act. And Lodha, in turn, was dumped with criminal charges against him.

The truth will out in court. Until then—as has happened in the past three years—it is time for trading accusations. ●

Debjani Sinha/Calcutta

COMPANIES

Set free, forever?

Bombay Dyeing share prices signal great times for the company, but arch-rival Reliance is still good for a few surprises



You may call it defying gravity—or Dhirubhai Ambani. And if you look at its share price, you might say that Bombay Dyeing's fortunes are up there with the satellites. Since general elections were announced on 17 October last, the beleaguered company's shares have shot up from the Rs 120 level to end up at Rs 208 by the end of last week. Just three months—and a change of government—later. "How can I comment? Honestly," says Bombay Dyeing chairman Nusli Wadia. "It is the stock markets that decides these things."

Going by this logic, stock-brokers, analysts and investors appear to be dead certain that V.P. Singh as Prime Minister means good times ahead for the company. It means, perhaps, that Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance group will not receive favoured treatment any longer. And Wadia, who—ironically enough—pays out over Rs 100 crores a year to buy paraxylene, a raw material for the ultimate manufacture of polyester, from rival Reliance at inflated rates, will now have to pay less than half the amount. As Wadia cautiously told SUNDAY last December: "I expect justice and fairplay from this government."

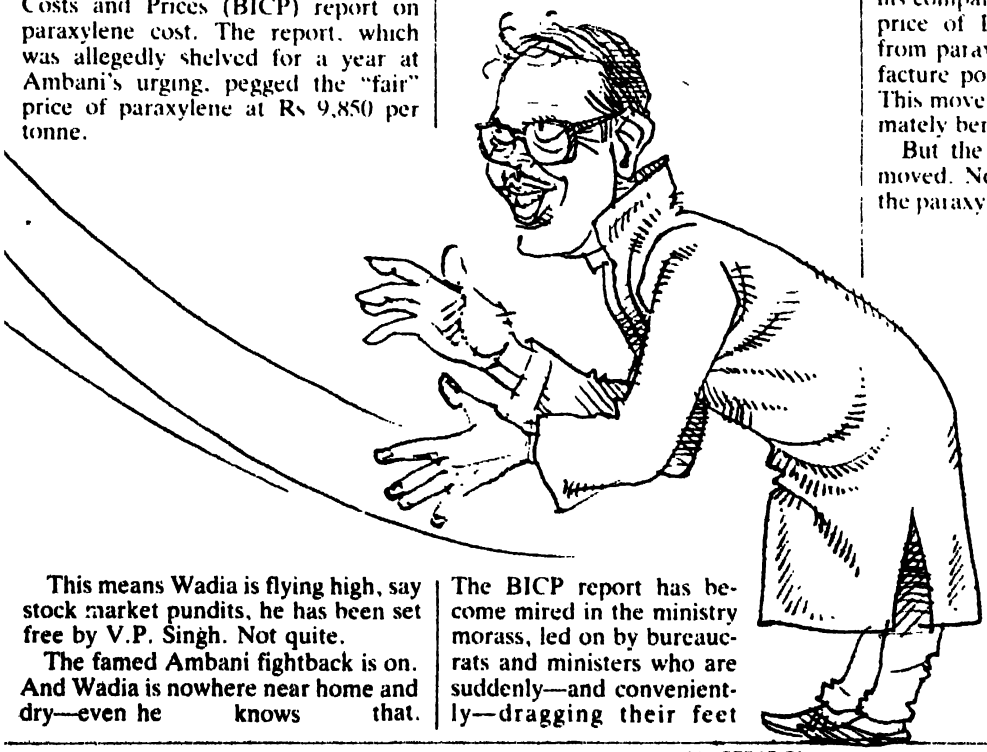
In Wadia's lexicon, "justice and fairplay" ties in neatly with stock market expectations, however much he



may like to distance himself from it. Wadia's problem is that Reliance—the only private manufacturer of paraxylene—sells it to Bombay Dyeing at import prices, with duties and processing charges added on. That works out to almost Rs 22,000 per tonne, while Reliance's cost price is more like Rs 10,000. Wadia is forced to buy stock from Reliance as, more often than not, imports do not arrive on time. Ordinarily, paraxylene imports are routed through the Indian Petrochemicals Corp. Ltd. (IPCL). But Reliance, maintains Wadia, charges IPCL import rates but delivers domestically made paraxylene. A perfect setup, according to the Bombay Dyeing camp, and a prime example of Reliance manoeuvering. Reliance officials, expectedly, deny any wrongdoing.

This is precisely where the Raja can step in, as far as the Ambani doomsdayers are concerned. And it appears he has—along with the far more overt move to get engineering giant Larsen & Toubro out of the Reliance hold. In mid-January, the government updated and released a Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP) report on paraxylene cost. The report, which was allegedly shelved for a year at Ambani's urging, pegged the "fair" price of paraxylene at Rs 9,850 per tonne.

The famed Ambani fightback is on. And Wadia is nowhere near home and dry—even he knows that



This means Wadia is flying high, say stock market pundits, he has been set free by V.P. Singh. Not quite.

The famed Ambani fightback is on. And Wadia is nowhere near home and dry—even he knows that.

The BICP report has become mired in the ministry morass, led on by bureaucrats and ministers who are suddenly—and conveniently—dragging their feet while passing the report around for necessary approvals

Nusli Wadia and Anil Ambani—Dhirubhai's go-getting younger son—and IPCL chairman Hasmukh Shah were in New Delhi on 24 January, for a protracted session of negotiations with government officials. Petrochemicals secretary M.S. Gill chaired the meeting, but finance secretary Bimal Jalan ran the show, say insiders. Wadia submitted in writing that if the government reduced paraxylene prices to around Rs 12,000 per tonne, his company would in turn reduce the price of DMT, a chemical derived from paraxylene—and used to manufacture polyester yarn—by Rs 6,800. This move, argued Wadia, would ultimately benefit the consumer.

But the government remained unmoved. No case for any reduction in the paraxylene duty structure, it maintained. So, the import price remains high. And if Wadia goes to Dhirubhai for the chemical—and he continues to do so—the canny Gujarati will overcharge him. So it goes. The Raja may wait for the budget to really spring any duty or price-related surprises to elevate Bombay Dyeing and trip up Reliance—at least that is what Wadia and the stock market would love to believe. But with Ambani around, anything is possible. Ask Wadia. He knows all about it. ●

Olga Tellis/Bombay

ILLUSTRATION: ANUP RAY

■ Waiver wobble

Why shoot your mouth off? Wouldn't they have voted for you anyway, with the Rajiv-sickness setting in? When you went around asking to be elected, trying to tap the farmer vote banks—saying all the while that the country was broke—did you ever stop to think what a loan waiver means? Did you jump on the idea simply because Devi Lal is so hot in National Front politics?



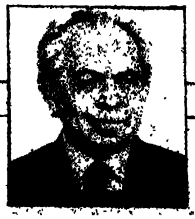
Madhu Dandavate: wobbly?

If yes, didn't you realise most of his brainwaves are hot potatoes? Like this one, this loan waiver business. Rs 10,000 write-offs for "small, marginal, and landless farmers and artisans" Great stuff—happy farmers, granaries overflow, green revolutions one after the other, bringing on the golden age of golden corn, or whatever. But India, dear leaders, *is* a country of farmers. So many, that even your mind boggles with the total sum needed to fulfill your promise. So huge a sum, that your Prime Minister, finance minister and Planning Commission chief can't handle it, and say first it will cost the exchequer Rs 12,000 crores, then Rs 14,000, then Rs 8,000 and then Rs 10,000 crores. What's up, don't you know where the money will come from? First you say the Centre will handle it all, magnanimous soul. Then you panic, so it's a bit of the Centre, and the rest of this amazing sum split down the States. But from where, really? More octroi, more sales tax, more income tax? But haven't you promised some benfits in these areas also? Then you have a railway minister screaming for subsidies. Erase the dreams, dear leaders, please come down to earth. Before the dreams erase you.

Stock quote

"Next time Darbari Seth tells you he's not interested in you, prepare for your funeral. Bombay House style."

A disgruntled industrialist, after Seth walked off with the Haldic project



■ Banking on shares

If you think only foreign banks are desperate for stock market money—forget it. The era of the share boom and mega-issues—gathering in Rs 10,000 last year alone—have nationalised banks panting for the spoils, too. Slicking up and following in the footsteps of our banking superiors include as many gimmicks they lay on to attract fat commissions and interest earnings from companies raising money. That means—oh, glory be—picking up clients' tabs with an under-the-table intent. All costs for advertising the issue. Tabs for those five-star press conferences. A holiday or two for the company exeutives who select the lucky bank(s). In short: everything. With good reason. Which banker would say no to anything between Rs 5 and 500 crores locked up in the bank-books for three months or more? Lend this money around for high interest, short-term loans and you have fattened bottomlines at the year-end. Fat enough to earn a round of applause from New Delhi, that bureaucratic heaven-on-earth. Whatever happened to public sector morals? Or is it just a touch of "what the private sector does today..."

■ INCAB's intent

This is one of those—a closely held-company trying to spread its base, giving in to the practical lure of public money for expansion. INCAB Industries Ltd., a Rs 150 crore maker of cables—among other things, for the Navy, and for the Air Force's Jaguar aircraft—is diversifying into jelly-filled cables for telecommunications. The company plans to raise Rs 31.9 crores in a mid-February public issue



K. Tapuriah : chairman INCAB

to fund the expansion, a project backed by a technical collaboration with Eriesson Cables, a subsidiary of Swedish telecom giant Ericsson Aktiebolaget. The public issue will increase INCAB's capital base from Rs six crores to Rs 13 crores. The company's chairman and his associates currently hold 26 per cent of the equity, with financial institutions chipping in with 46 per cent, and TICC Holdings Ltd. of Britain accounts for 26 per cent. The rest is in the market, with a total shareholder strength of 3,000. Small company, big plans. With telecom, anything is possible.

At the launching of Lalit Suri's discotheque at Holiday Inn, Vinod Khanna and Pooja Bedi were a conspicuous couple. Pooja, of course, true to form wore a micro-mini dress with a plunging neckline. Not content with dancing the evening away the duo made a together exit. And where do you think they ended up? Well, your guess is as good as



Vinod Khanna: real-life irony



Deepti Naval: comeback time

Aditya Pancholi's. Or Sonu Walia's for that matter.

Even by film industry standards the irony of it all was a bit too much. When Vinod Khanna first returned to India he began dating Sonu Walia who is now going around with Kabir Bedi. And Vinod Khanna has now switched his attentions to Kabir's daughter. That's the way the cookie crumbles in Bombay's film world.

The latest on Deepti Naval is that she is making a comeback in a big way. She has bagged the lead role opposite Chunky Pandey in Ramesh Khanna's *Gopala*. She also has Subhash Ghai's *Saudagar* in hand. While these are the typical *masala* films that Ms Naval has had to accept, she is also getting ready to direct a film entitled *Aks*. It is, appropriately enough, a woman-oriented subject and stars Ms Naval's real-life sweetheart, Nana Patekar.

Even if Sanjay Dutt's faithful directors ditch him, he need not worry. For, Raj Sippy remains faithful to the end. He has cast him in *Thanedar*, *Indradhanush*, *Kuruksheira* and *Aag Hamare Seene Mein*. Obviously, Sippy believes in throwing caution to the winds when it comes to his favourite hero.

Will someone remind him of the old saying about familiarity breeding contempt?

After three flops in a row Amitabh Bachchan is a changed man. He was in his element at the shooting of Shashi Kapoor's *Ajooba*, for instance. Pointing at Shashi he loudly bellowed for everybody to hear, "Who says Hitler is dead? He is very much alive. You see that fat old man there with a stick in his hand? He's Hitler."

The "fat old man", good sport that he is, took no offence and smiled charmingly instead.

While Kimi Katkar has taken to acting in a Marathi film *Ek Full Char Half*, Varsha Usgaonkar better known as the Kimi Katkar of the Marathi screen, is all set to conquer the Hindi screen in a big way. She has already been signed by Umesh Mehra for his Indo-Soviet co-production *Shikari* opposite Mithun Chakraborty.

With Kimi on the verge of quitting films and settling down into holy matrimony, Varsha may prove to be an ideal screen replacement for her. And she has coloured eyes, too •





(Top) Amitabh Bachchan: changed man; (right) Varsha Usgaonkar: Kimi clone

EPIC REMAKE

Excerpts from Garry O' Connor's book on the production of Peter Brook's Mahabharat*—the film*

For *The Mahabharata* Brook himself had to circle the world many times to bring the demi-gods and superhuman beings out of India and into the souls of his actors. With Carriere he had inaugurated an original approach to casting, using Carriere's script, with the playwright in attendance, Brook auditioned actors from all parts of the world. Brook then made Carriere, in front of the actors, play the characters. From then on possession had been penetrated straight away. Others resisted in differing degrees Several switched from one character to playing another.

Each of these individuals, highly recognisable as 'Brooktian' actors, had a definite nationality, yet their nationality did not impose on their character. For example, Yoshi Oida played Drona, the Brahmin sage and master of arms, like a Japanese and not like a Japanese. He brought to Drona the sympathy and heroism from his own culture that he recognised in Drona, yet he also made the character into a unique and timeless individual. His 'supra-nationalism' was the product of working with Brook for twenty years.

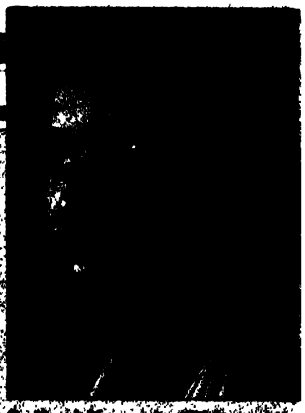


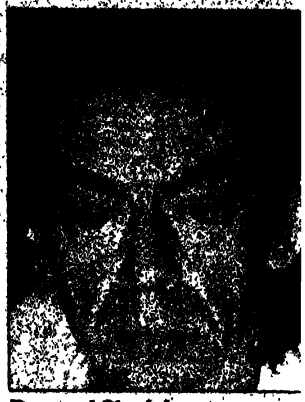


(Above) Vyasa starts to tell the child the story of his race; (right) Bhisma contemplates the problem of life-long celibacy

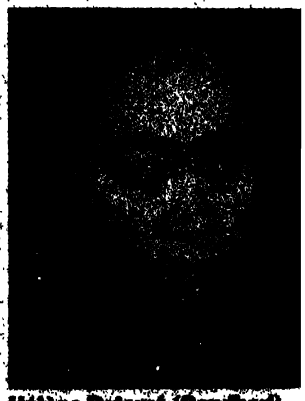
If *The Mahabharata* is the universal story of mankind— the mirror in which every human being can see him or herself, as Oida called it—the actor himself, as Hamlet says, also holds a mirror up to nature. Brook's actors employed their own national characteristics, but were endowed with something extra—an essence of universality, an appeal which crossed boundaries. Brook's method of work drew from each a range of expression that not only freed him or her to receive the character, but made the meaning as broad as it could conceivably be.

How do you achieve the magic and directness of a children's folk-tale, of scripture, and became a complicated, miraculous process. Some actors, when the work came to be filmed, believed that only then had they become fully changed into the personages they were conveying. Some, with the crude practicality of Haitian voodoo,





Ryszard Cieslak (Dhritharashtra)





PHOTOGRAPHS GILLES ABEGG



Bruce Myers (Krishna)



Mallika Sarabhai (Draupadi)



Vittorio Mezzogiorno (Arjuna)
Georges Corraface (Duryodhana)



of myth and legend everywhere? The Italian Vittorio Mezzogiorno confronted with the problem of playing the legendary warrior Arjuna, son of Indra, king of the gods, related that the words of Brook that helped the most—and, typically, were said to someone else and only overheard—were 'To think of playing a god is madness'.

Brook never generalised. In fact *The Mahabharata* achieved its universality by being, at every point, clear and specific. Paradoxically and completely unlike modern attempts to collectivise religious texts and universalise rituals—its richness was one of a deepened and concentrated image. Taking the best from each country he distilled it, or painted it deeper and harder so it stood out. As Kissoon pointed out, 'Peter's intention is to simplify'. Mamadou Dioume, who played the giant, demi-god Bhima, called it 'imagination instead of determination'.

The distinctive and gaunt six-foot-five frame, and finely sculpted head, of Sotigui Kouyate as the ideal celibate warrior-god, Bhisma, had a powerful and unforgettable presence both on stage and on screen. In the latter in particular, in close-up, Kouyate's radiant spiritual quality underlined Bhisma's renunciation: 'To avoid all conflict, and for love of my father, I swear the oath of absolute renunciation. I will say it clearly, I abjure forever the love of woman.'

Kouyate, a fifty-three-year-old 'Griot' from Upper Volta, is a highly sophisticated and all-round actor, dancer, singer and composer who has appeared in many African, German and French films. 'Can I play God?' he asked me when I met him at Joinville studio. 'No, it's stupid; you have to be yourself plus "something", a force which is beyond you.'

He had first created the role of Bhisma in the French version. I was struck by his relaxed Parisian manner and beautifully cut suit of black and grey silk, with leather-trimmed collar and pockets: not at all that of a sombre acolyte of high art. Yet he had, naturally, a stillness and timeless broad appeal, which might easily and instinctively have adjusted themselves to absorbing the presence of a god.

He found it very difficult. Bhisma is the son of a goddess. Although he finally takes up arms on the side of the Kauravas, his sympathies lie with the Pandavas because he knows they have no father on earth, and they were stripped bare of their lands and cheated of their possessions in the game of dice.

It had been, in Kouyate's case, the twelve-day trip he and the cast made as part of their preparatory work on *The Mahabharata*—in particular the effect of the omnipresence of Hinduism which helped him to understand the problem. The 'profound attachment of the people to their religion and how it was truly part of their life', gave him the solution. 'I had, *at the same time*, to be both man and god: never something in between the two.'

'Krishna is you and me, and fire and water.' The English actor, Bruce Myers, who had been with Brook from the





(Above) The game of dice; (left) Draupadi disguised as a serving girl

1960s, asked the same question as Kouyate, yet in a different way. Krishna, incarnation of the god Vishnu, descends on earth with his supernatural power to save *dharma*, to restore the equilibrium which is menaced by the conflict of the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He has to

Mallika Sarabhai, who played Draupadi, complained that at first this ideal creature had been awfully misrepresented



Draupadi assaulted by Kitchaka during the exile

accept his role, namely, that while as a god he can order destiny, as a man all he can do is to try to prevent the war, while still knowing it is inevitable. Krishna, therefore, is a highly ambiguous figure—'he does not answer questions'—and he even dies like a human. That 'there is no certain way', according to Myers, sums him up.

'The key to being Krishna,' Myers finally resolved, was that 'if you know something is going to happen, you are calm.' Parallel to the playing of Krishna, who sees people piercingly, who is unscrupulous and resorts to tricks and lies to save the principle of harmony in the world, Myers observed that the more he worked with Brook, 'the more I see what can be achieved through calmness than through dynamism'.





(Left) Shooting of the Bhagavad Gita scene; (above) Brook at work

'You might then ask where the emotion is in Krishna?' Myers claimed that Brook's answer to this would be that it is 'not personal' This was echoed by the diminutive Algerian Jewish actor, Maurice Benichou, the French Krishna, whom French critics credited with a smile more mysterious than the Mona Lisa 'You must not act Krishna, but be present,' said Benichou.

What drew Mireille Maalouf to *The Mahabharata*, although she had worked frequently with Brook since 1975, was the theme of war. Born in Paris, of Christian Lebanese and French parentage, she grew up in Beirut where she studied law. With



dark, classical features and a compelling beauty, Maalouf played two key roles in both the French and English stage productions: Ganga, Goddess of the sacred river, the Ganges—the mother of Bhisma—and the Princess Gandhari, who on marrying the blind king, Dhritharashtra, binds up her eyes and embraces voluntary blindness. It is Gandhari who give birth to a hundred sons, the Kauravas.

Maalouf strongly identified the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas—not only a civil war, but a family war in which every warrior on both sides is somehow related — what has continued without end in the Lebanon. For her, Gandhari is a complete, farseeing woman. She binds her eyes to live in equality with her husband, a great act of love on which she never goes back. People have reproached Gandhari for her submissiveness, but Maalouf dismissed [illegible] emphasising that she is both human and tough—the only one who takes Krishna to task for the underhand and scheming way he runs the war. 'It's the same thing in the Lebanon, I can cry out against it, but nothing changes.'

As Ganga, Maalouf had to suggest that she carried a torrent and was, simultaneously, both a goddess and a very feminine and attractive woman passing through a number of stages quickly—almost an abstraction of a role. She described this transparency of non-being as needing incredibly precise and exact preparation, even to the extent of making sure, nightly, the creases in her veil were correctly ironed and fell in exactly the same place. She had to act 'without formulating gestures' and signify something concrete and true without making it smaller—and another *'colorato'* she called it, a 'special note or dimension'. Hard although it was for her to put her finger on it exactly—how can one describe possession, when one is simply possessed?—she felt just as passionately involved after four years of playing this one page of text as she had been on the first night.

Andrzej Seweryn, blond-haired, heroic looking, who enhanced with mysterious, Christ-like power the role of the Pandava Yudhishthira—son of Kunti and of Dharma, the god of earthly harmony—played his diametric opposite Duryodhana in the French version. Ferocious and evil and first-born of the Kauravas, Duryodhana desires rulership of the whole earth. These two characters, more than any of the others, hold *The Mahabharata* on its course of action.

Seweryn saw Duryodhana as an idealist who, at one moment, succumbed to a terrible weakness: not a conventionally evil character but, as his father, Dhritharashtra, describes him—'He's blind and he attracts disaster.' 'In India,' said Seweryn, "We learnt that in Sanskrit the good-evil dualism does not exist.' Duryodhana, bent on achieving power and keeping it, is the nearest in the play to a godless egotist: 'He has no need of the gods nor of heaven, which is why he has to be exterminated.' Born a hundredth part, like each of his brothers, of the stone ball that issued from Gandhari, he can command mightier forces than the five sons of the gods he is bent on destroying.

But at the end, paradoxically,

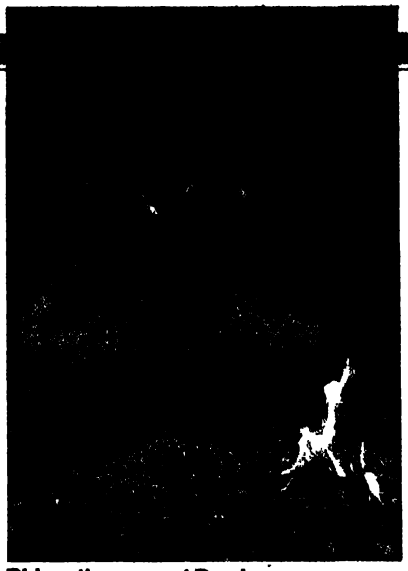
Brook's actors in *The Mahabharata* employed their own national characteristics, but were endowed with something extra—an appeal which crossed boundaries





(Left) Kunti chants the *mantra* and asks for a child; (right) Karna seeks the absolute weapon

Brook never generalised. Taking the best from each country he distilled it, or painted it deeper, so it stood out



Bhima the second Pandava

detested as he is, legs smashed in a cheap trick played on him by Bhima, Duryodhana witnesses the terrible destruction wrought by Aswatthaman on the Pandava camp and dies happily. 'I reigned on earth, I was just, I laughed, I sang, I loved my friends and my wives. I knew all human joys. Conflict is a necessary part of man's emotional dualism: we cannot judge, but we must accept the consequences.'

The notion is profoundly Hindu: condemned by destiny to what he is, Duryodhana achieves his *dharma*. Blindness had been passed on to him in a mental form from his father, and right to the end, he carries no regret of individual responsibility for his wickedness. Duryodhana reaches Paradise: 'He has,' said Seweryn, 'realised his *dharma*.'

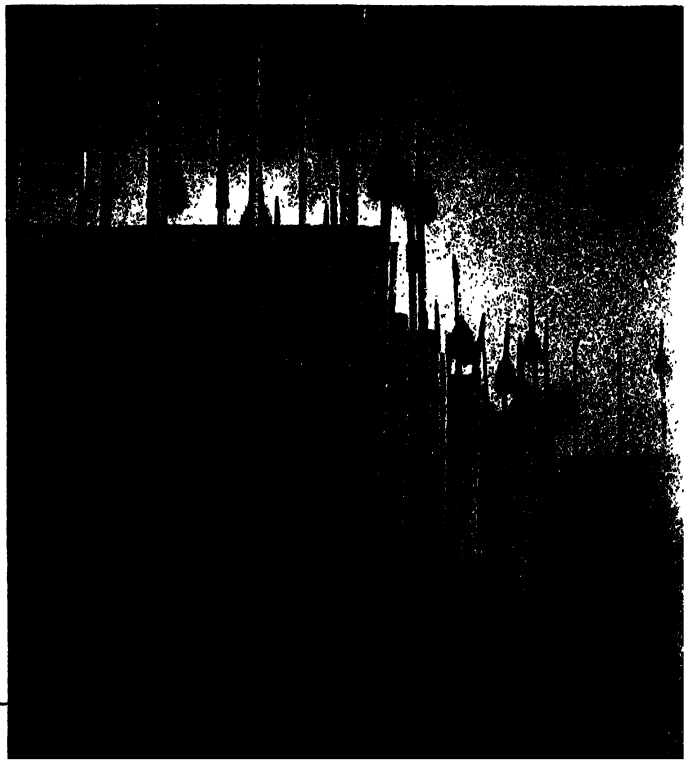
Seweryn found Yudhishthira, his role in the English and film version, much easier to identify with. Although all the characters harbour qualities which oppose their central nature, Yudhishthira, for all the shadows he harbours in his personality, approaches an occidental hero more closely than any other character

Yudhishthira's tastes for gambling and perfection also precipitate the war that leaves eighteen million slain on the battlefield. 'There is no answer,' commented Seweryn, 'to why Yudhishthira does not stop playing dice before he has lost his possessions, his land, his brothers, and finally his—and their—wife Draupadi.' It seems an extreme *dharma* to have to realise, but, even so, Seweryn found that he drew upon his own Christianity, especially in the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill'. While he understood the openness of Hinduism, and its acceptance of evil, *The Mahabharata* did not convert him to Brook's belief in the 'essential degeneracy' of Western Christianity: 'No one has proved to me that the love Christ has proposed to us is not a unique thing to follow and respect'.

'I must forget the light,' pointed out Ryszard Cieslak, also Polish, cast as the old blind king Dhritharashtra. Cieslak worked with the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski for twenty-five years. As an expert in 'self-penetration', which Grotowski taught him and 'in engaging in a sort of psychic conflict with the audience', Cieslak felt more prepared, perhaps, than some of the others for the assumption of a mythical character of Indian legend.

In Hinduism woman occupies a very different role from the one idealised in Christainity. Mallika Sarabhai, who played Draupadi, the woman married to the five demi-god Pandavas, complained that at first this ideal creature whom she had worshipped since childhood had been awfully misrepresented in the Brook-Carriere version. In Carriere's early scripts Draupadi 'had been portrayed as a wimp'. Both men were 'white' and did not understand 'the violence of an Indian woman and how, historically, women have never been secondary to men'. Particularly of significance, she found, was the ommission

Abhimanyu in Drona's iron disk

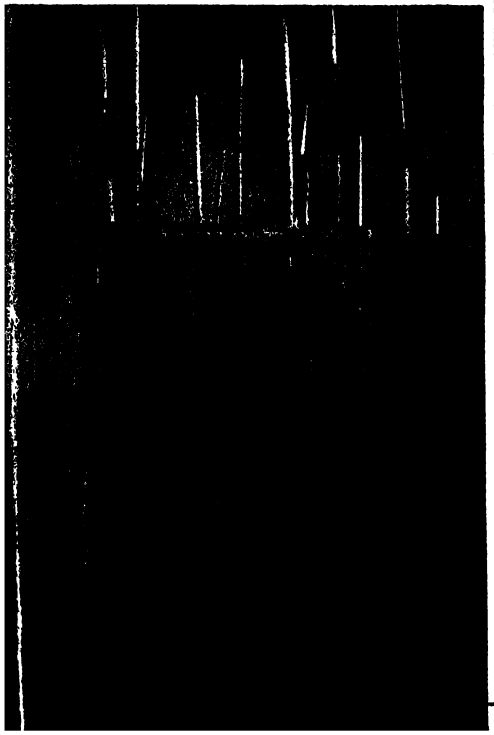




of *shakti*, the female principle without which the world does not function. She questioned why Draupadi had so little to do, why many of her scenes had been omitted, in favour of the dramatised 'masculine warrior side'. Brook and Carriere would not at first let her utter the curses on the Kauravas nor wash her hair in blood: 'Sometimes they were open and sometimes they were not.' She argued her case passionately.

There were heated differences during rehearsals. 'You know,' Brook told her one day, 'working with you is like working with Princess Margaret.' 'I said "Why, have you ever worked with Princess Margaret?"' 'Don't stand there like a dancer,' he reproved her at another time when they clashed. 'When Peter gets angry he goes very red in the face and very silent. He goes redder and redder as if he would burst.' She resisted his will, but had the 'strong feeling that someone has to be broken down and recreated'.

Just before opening in Avignon, she related, Brook gave way to her demands and allowed Draupadi her full stature. In the preparation work she would have liked to see more of *ananda*, which is Sanskrit for bliss at the deepest level the bliss of creation.but she still felt at the end, after some hard tussles and differences of opinion, that Brook had made her a better actress. 'He taught me to peel away my character like an onion and find the nothing that is there at the centre.' She and Brook together were what another actor in *The Mahabharata* called 'the rubbing together of two sticks to make a spark', while Brook's assistant pointed out '*cette friction aide*'.



Sarabhai was staggered, while they were playing *The Mahabharata* in Perth, when, at a meet-the-artist conference a spiky-haired young woman denounced the play as patriarchal, sexist literature. Her impassioned rebuttal of this brought wild cheers from the audience. 'One Indian person, a woman, at the centre, is of great value,' Brook had pronounced. As the sole Indian in the cast she delivered her final judgment. 'I am proud as an Indian to be in the play. Had I not thought it was a proper representation of *The Mahabharata*, the product of a loving and true attitude, I would not have taken part.'

Like Yoshi Oida, Vittorio Mezzogiorno was famous in his own country as a film star before he joined Brook. When he originally rehearsed with Brook for the French version of *The Mahabharata*, he had, to begin with, no key to understanding the character. He complained that as the central warrior-god, Arjuna had no psychology: 'Perfect, beautiful, strong, good, without problems..' Confronted with these demands he completely lost confidence in himself.

In the end he felt he could only be himself. The trip to India made a great impression on him, for he felt how ancient the country had remained, and how there was religiosity everywhere: it put him in touch with the gods. But it was not until near the end of the English-speaking tour, in Glasgow, that Mezzogiorno relaxed and felt at one with Arjuna.

Miriam Goldschmidt (Kunti), a West German national, read Brook's book *The Empty Space*, sold her late mother's wedding-ring and bought a one-way ticket to Paris, where she insisted on becoming a founder member of the Centre. An intense actress, she projects, off-stage, a complete lack of inhibition about her feelings of enthusiasm towards Brook.

Trying to capture the invisible, Brook never lost touch with common sense. The use of the story-teller, Vyasa, encouraged the spectator's belief, and this device extended into Vyasa having a child-companion to whom the whole story is told. As Brook said, 'The onlooker is a partner who must be forgotten and still constantly kept in mind.' •

Krishna is a highly ambiguous figure—he sees people piercingly, is unscrupulous and resorts to tricks and lies to save the principle of harmony in the world



The 'raccord'—adjusting Ghatotkatcha's make-up

The Mahabharata by Garry O Connor Hodder & Stoughton Distributed in India by Arnold Publishers Price Rs 375

"I was impressed when my doctor said Keo-Karpin Hair Vitalizer really stops hair loss.



But I was convinced when I used it."



"My doctor told me Keo-Karpin Hair Vitalizer* is a unique scientific formula based on extensive research. He also told me it provides all the essential proteins, co-enzymes and vitamins for strengthening hair roots.

All I know is that it has certainly stopped my hair from falling and checked dandruff."

Here's an excerpt from the research report :

"66.66% gave excellent and 33.33% gave good results with complete disappearance of dandruff in all cases and nearly cent per cent stoppage of fall of hair... So, success rate with Keo-Karpin Hair Vitalizer may be stated to be cent per cent."
Indian Medical Gazette 118, 223 (1984)

The proven scientific way to prevent hair loss and dandruff.

Dey's® **Dey's Medical.Care you can trust.**

* It is not a toilet preparation.

TSA-C/DMHV/189

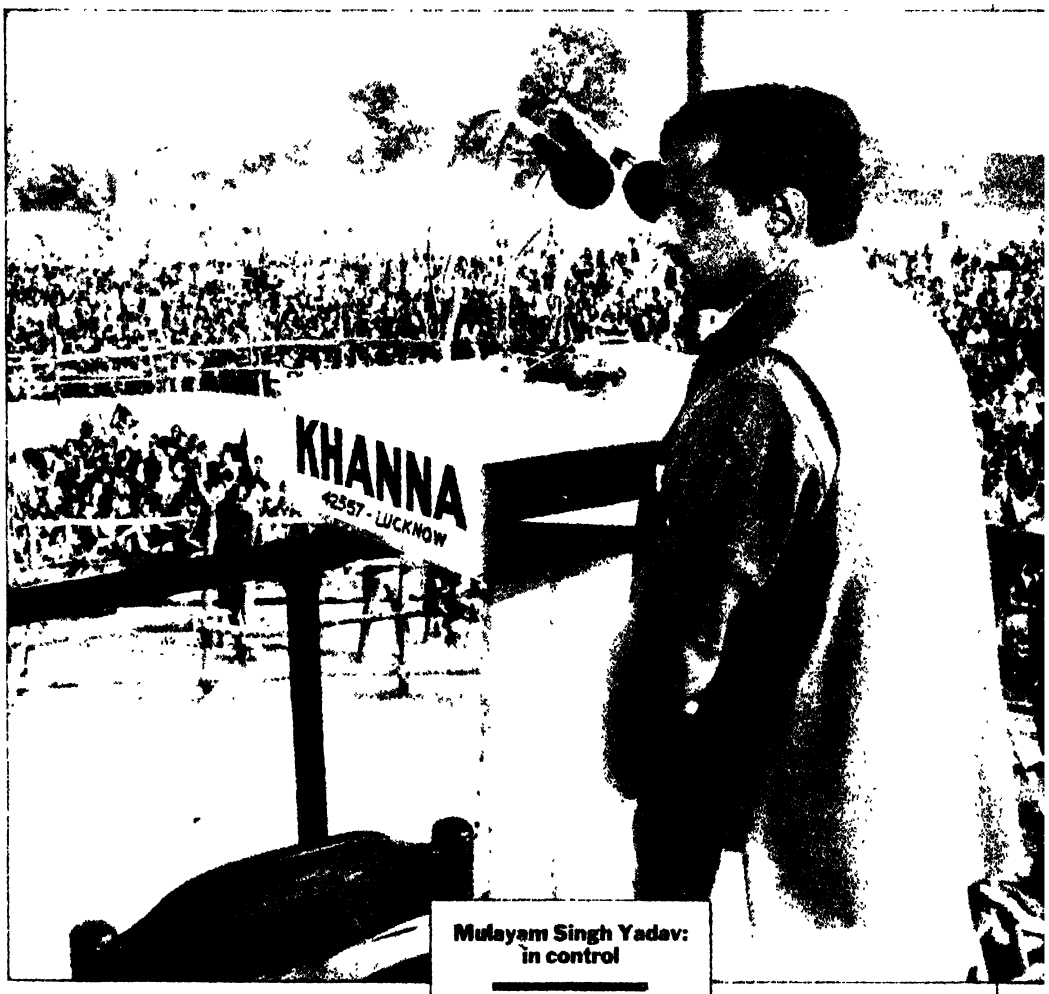
Taking charge

Mulayam Singh Yadav reigns supreme in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's biggest achievement in his first 60 days in office is his success in politically isolating his arch rival, Union industries minister Ajit Singh. Mulayam Singh Yadav's election to the leadership of the UP Janata Dal unit had been bitterly opposed by Ajit Singh and Janata Dal heavyweight Arun Nehru. But today Mulayam Singh has outwitted both and is fast emerging as the undisputed leader of UP.

Today, Mulayam Singh Yadav's group claims to have won over as many as 40 MLAs who were earlier in the Ajit Singh camp. The UP chief minister is considered strong in eastern UP and is reported to have the complete support of backward castes. In western UP Mulayam Singh's grip is still weak because Ajit Singh still controls the powerful Jat lobby. But the UP chief minister, with the help of deputy prime minister Devi Lal, is determined to capture the Jat lobby as well.

The stakes for Mulayam Singh Yadav are high. Unless the influence Ajit Singh, who has unsuccessfully tried to become the chief minister of UP, is neutralised, Mulayam Singh knows his seat will never be secure. His trump card is the 100-odd ministerial and other appointments he can gift to his supporters. He can induct as many as 60 MLAs in his Cabinet and another 40 can be accommodated as chairmen of various corporations. Ajit Singh's supporters are clearly on the backfoot. After his defeat for the leadership, Ajit Singh did not visit the state capital, Lucknow for a month. This demoralised his supporters and Mulayam Singh lost no opportunity to humiliate them at every step. Not surprisingly, most of them have crossed over to the chief minister's camp. Luck too has played a major role in Mulayam Singh's remarkable ascendency. In the last one year, most of his rivals have lost out and can no longer pose him any real threat. Former chief minister and Janata Dal leader, Ram Naresh Yadav, for instance, was rallying opposition against Mulayam Singh a year ago but that ended when Ram Naresh crossed over to the Congress(I). Two other Janata Dal leaders who could have laid claims to the chief ministerial post, Satyapal Singh Yadav and Rajendra Singh (Ajit group), lost the Assembly elections.



Mulayam Singh Yadav: in control

Today, Mulayam Singh is the undisputed Janata Dal overlord in UP and does not take orders from his superiors in New Delhi

"There is no threat to my government"

The UP chief minister on the prospects of his party

SUNDAY: Are there still some differences between you and other Janata Dal leaders after your election as the chief minister of UP?

Mulayam Singh Yadav: There are no differences. We are working together. I am getting the cooperation of all the groups. There is no resentment in the party. All that is written about is only media propaganda. In fact, both the Prime Minister and the deputy prime minister are happy with the performance of my government.

Q: Do you foresee any threat to your government in near future?

A: There is no question of any threat to my government. This government will last five years. We have learnt from our mistakes of 1979 and are not going to repeat them. Our mistake led us to a political exile for nine years. And if we commit the same mistake, people will sentence us for life imprisonment.

Q: There is some controversy over the induction of Mohammad Azam Khan in your government who is also the general secretary of the Babri Masjid Action Committee.

A: There is no controversy. It was all propaganda. Moreover, Azam Khan has denied that he had ever said any derogatory words on India.

Q: There are some allegations against you that you have given protection to criminals.

A: I never give protection to criminals but I am in favour of changing their hearts. When Jai Prakash Narayan and Arjun Singh can change hearts of dacoits why can not I do the same? Can you name some criminals with whom I have links? These are all fabrications being levelled by several people with vested interests.

Q: Are you really going to write off loans up to Rs 10,000 in the state?

A: We are busy finding a way out. This is our commitment and we will fulfil it.

Q: How will you solve the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue?

A: This is not the issue of Ram Janmabhoomi or Babri Masjid. In fact, the issue of Hindu and Muslim has a historical basis which is very old. The Muslims of India will have to accept Babar as an attacker and nothing else. Their ancestors Akbar and Razia Begum have served the country very well. Both the communities will have to be educated in this matter. The need of the hour is communal harmony in every part of India.

"Both the Prime Minister and the deputy prime minister are satisfied with the performance of my government"

Sanjay Singh, who is V.P. Singh's great supporter and possible chief ministerial candidate, was defeated in the Amethi Assembly polls as well.

Interestingly, two of the chief minister's prominent Congress(I) rivals, Balaram Singh Yadav and Darshan Singh Yadav, too have been sidelined. Balaram Singh, for instance, has been removed from the presidentship of the UP Congress(I) committee and Darshan Singh has lost the Assembly elections. Mulayam Singh, all the same, is not banking on fortune. He is determined to build a solid political base for himself.

This he is doing by claiming to be



The Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid : pressing problem

the true inheritor of Charan Singh's legacy. K.C. Tyagi, MP and All India secretary of the Janata Dal, says: "I had been very close to Charan Singh during his last days. One day he told me that if he had made Mulayam Singh the UP chief minister in 1977, instead of Ram Naresh Yadav, then the entire political scenario of UP would have been different." Charan Singh, adds Tyagi, felt that Mulayam Singh was his real successor. The UP chief minister is carefully playing the Charan Singh card and to convince his supporters, keeps Charan Singh's portraits in every room.

Mulayam Singh's other big advantage is his alliance with Devi Lal. The UP chief minister and the deputy prime minister have launched a programme to capture the entire

vote bank of the backward classes in north India. The "Yadav" votes by and large are with Mulayam Singh not just in UP but in Bihar as well. Mulayam Singh, in fact, has been appointed the Janata Dal observer for Bihar. The UP chief minister consequently will have a major say in the choice of the candidates for the Bihar Assembly elections. More MLAs mean more clout and Mulayam Singh's frequent visits to Bihar prove that he is not going to confine his base to just UP. The "Yadav" leader of Bihar, Lallu Prasad Yadav, has thrown in his lot with the UP chief minister, who now wants to begin exercising his influence in national level politics.

Today, Mulayam Singh is the undisputed Janata Dal overlord in UP and does not take orders from his superiors in New Delhi. He can do precisely as he pleases in his state. The only central leader he listens to is Devi Lal. But Mulayam Singh's battle is not quite over. For, the Janata Dal hangs on to power on the slim majority of six MLAs. He consequently has to be on his toes and make every effort to raise his party's strength in the Assembly. So far he has managed to bring over three Lok Dal (B) MLAs and is reported to be busy wooing independent MLAs. But what really scares Mulayam Singh is the possibility of a coup attempt from within his own party. He knows that his rivals, Ajit Singh and Arun Nehru, are going to make many more attempts to dislodged him. But if his first 60 days in office is anything to go by, Mulayam Singh will not pull his punches. •

Rajiv Shukla/Lucknow



Ajit Singh



Arun Nehru

Mulayam Singh Yadav has certainly outwitted both Arun Nehru and Ajit Singh for the post of the state leadership. But he knows well that they are going to make many more attempts to dislodge him



The last hurdle

Will P.T. Usha give in to parental pressure to quit before the Beijing Asiad?

At 25, P.T. Usha is the most accomplished athlete in the history of Indian track and field and the best in Asia in the 400 metres hurdles. Criticised, humiliated and written off after her disappointing performance at the Seoul Olympics, the Golden Girl of Indian athletics made a great comeback in the recent Asian Track and Field (ATF) meet in New Delhi. Usha ran away with four gold and two silver medals and emerged as the fastest woman in Asia. But at the pinnacle of her career, Usha faces perhaps the most difficult hurdle she has yet encountered: to quit or not to quit.

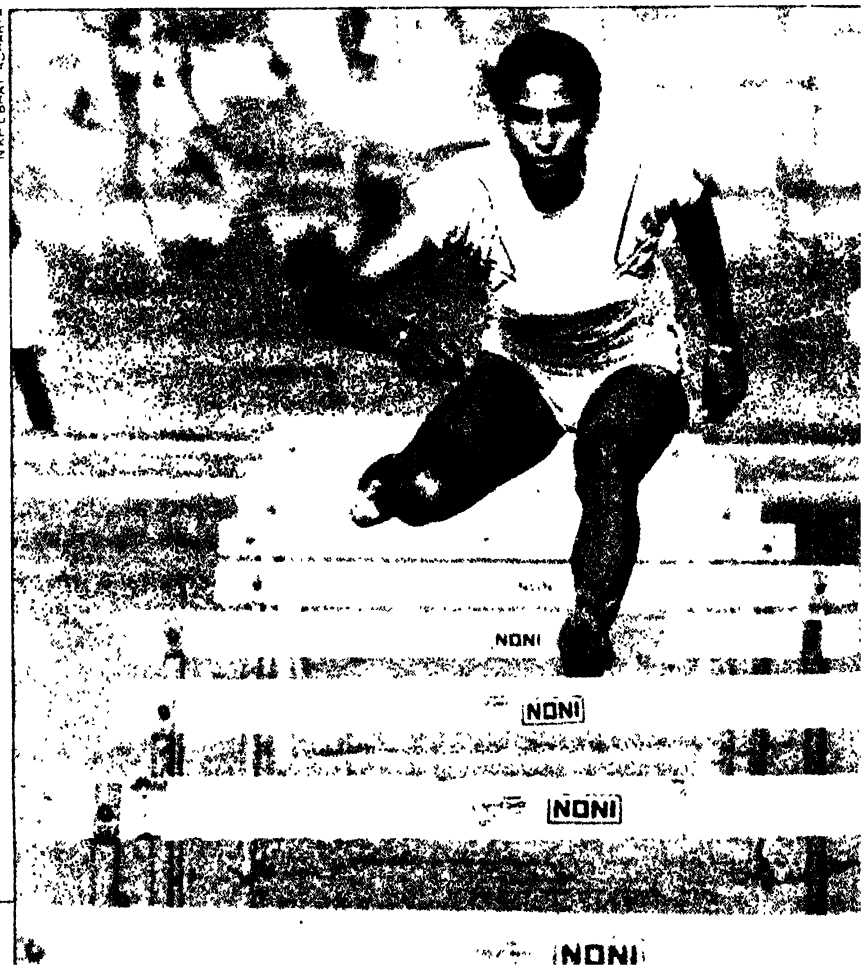
Her decision has become all the more difficult because of the conflicting views of her parents and her long-time coach O.M. Nambiar about her future. Perhaps for the first time in her life, the fleet-footed runner is unsure about her next step. In fact, in Hyderabad, where she had gone to participate in the Inter-Railways Athletics Meet, she announced her decision not to participate in the Auckland Commonwealth Games and was evasive about taking part in the September 1990 Beijing Asiad.

Back in her native village Payyoli, 40 km north of Calicut, a depressed Usha told SUNDAY: "I am in a dilemma. My parents want me to retire and get married in September, while my coach and mentor Nambiar 'Saar' would like me to participate in the Beijing Asian games to be held at the same time." This prompted her mother T.V. Lekshmi, to intervene: "It took us months to fight the nightmare of the Seoul Olympic fiasco. Posters vilifying Usha and Nambiar appeared even in Payyoli. I would like me daughter to quit now after her ATF triumph." Her father, E.M. Pythae, a textile shop owner at Payyoli, added: "My daughter has suffered after her Olympic nadir mainly because of an injured heel. She has brought the family fame and wealth we could never dream of. Now we would like to get her married at the earliest and put a stop to her athletics career."

That could mean a big loss. In terms of gold, Usha remains India's best bet for two or three individual gold medals at Beijing.

While Usha is at present sulking in her house, 'Ushaas', gifted by the Kerala government, her coach Nambiar, who lives nearby, made it clear that he would persuade her parents to change their mind to enable her to take one last fling at the gold medals at Beijing (*see interview*). Nobody can forget Usha's brilliant performance at a number of Asian events at Seoul and Jakarta. Of India's tally of five medals at the Seoul Asiad in 1986, Usha won three and shared a large part of the credit for the fourth, the 4×400 relay. In the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, she missed the bronze medal by a fraction of a second. Confessed Usha: "My only disappointment in life has been that I have not been able to bring home an Olympic medal. It's too late, because I will probably have retired and may be leading a happy married life by the 1992 Barcelona Olympics."

There are many who do not agree with Nambiar. According to Rajagopal, a sports writer who has covered all of Usha's international meets, "This is the right time for Usha to call it a day. She is being misled by Nambiar who is living on her glory." There is a strong belief in sports circles that had Usha undergone training abroad under a foreign coach, her results would have been much better.



The main complaint of sports critics is that Nambiar and Usha haven't yet realised the need to focus on a single event, as world class athletes normally do. Little was done to improve her high-knee action and hurdling technique. The emphasis has all along been on raking in the medals by running in as many events as possible. Nambiar, an ego-maniac according to many, wanted to prove that she was the 'ultimate' because of his training. But the returns to Usha herself have been considerable – about Rs 30 lakhs, including a two storeyed posh house in Payyoli, a shining red Standard 2000 (both gifted by the Kerala government) and a blue Maruti given by her employers, Indian Railways. Added to that, she has been showered with gold by her ardent fans, mainly in the Gulf. Says Rajagopal: "She has made more money than all other Indian athletes put together. But to be fair to her, she has not blown it up.

What now is to become of the ace athlete? Says an anguished Usha: "I am caught between the devil and the deep sea. I have to respect my parents' views. At the same time I should not let down my coach." Usha is likely to announce her future plans at the ATF award ceremony in New Delhi, slated to be held in the middle of February. The NIS camp for the Beijing Asiad has already started in Bangalore, and Usha and Nambiar have not reported so far. Huddled with her close relatives and Nambiar, Usha will have to work out a compromise, which will enable her one last chance to bring more Asiad medals from Beijing. Her father, meanwhile, is looking for a groom worthy of her. But for Usha, if she does go to Beijing a few months from now, the pressure on her is going to be higher than ever. •

Sreedhar Pillay/Payyoli

P.T. Usha training in her favourite event: will she clear it this time?



"I won't stand in her way if she wants to retire"

Coach Nambiar on his protégée Usha



SUNDAY: Any comments on Usha's premature retirement plans?

Nambiar: Her family is putting pressure on her to call it a day. I feel the girl has enough in her to last till Barcelona. Still, I won't stand in her way if she wants to retire. But only Usha can decide on her athletics future, other people should not influence her in any way.

Q: What made her think of retirement when she is at the top today?

A: There has been a witch-hunt following the Seoul Olympics disaster. Nobody realises that she had an injured heel then. After Seoul it was a nightmarish experience for the young girl. An angry mob near Calicut almost lynched me. Now after the ATF she has sent her bitter critics scurrying for cover. So, she now feels it is the right time to quit.

Q: Do you think she can maintain her form and win some medals in Beijing?

A: I am confident that she can win at least two gold medals with ease. If she wants, after that she can quit, though personally I feel she can try for the elusive Olympic medal at Barcelona. But now I will try to convince her parents.

Q: A lot of people feel that you are exploiting Usha and ruining her career.

A: Every other coach and sports administrator want my head on a platter. Because they are jealous of my success. Let me make it clear that I am largely responsible for her having reached such dizzy heights. What have other coaches who criticise me done? My detractors like Suresh Babu, a fellow Sports Authority of India (SAI) coach, under the talent-hunt scheme, coached two girls, Shalini and Kavita. Where are they now?

Q: You have been accused of making money out of Usha's success.

A: Till very recently I was hardly getting Rs 2500 as her coach from the Kerala Sports Council. But now, being a SAI coach enables me to get around Rs 4000. I may definitely have got some trinkets out of Usha's achievements. After the Seoul Asiad, the state government gave me Rs 1 lakh, and later I got the Dronacharya Award which fetched me Rs 25,000. I have never made money out of Usha.

Q: What do you feel is the reason for Usha's success?

A: It's her professional approach to her game that has made her reach such heights. She is totally committed.

Q: What about your future plans, after Usha retires?

A: I have three more years as a coach with SAI. After Usha retires I'd like to go back to the Cannanore sports division where it all started and look around for fresh talent. Later probably I may write a book on the making of P.T. Usha. •

Ambanis get *Patriot*?

Rumours are rife that Dhirubhai has got a stranglehold on the Delhi-based paper

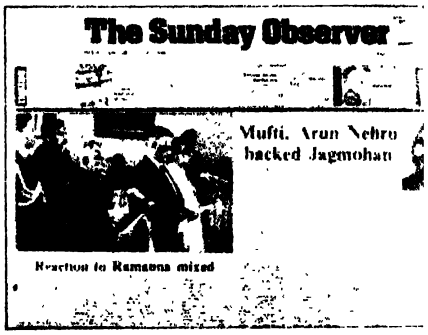
The Ambanis have indeed learnt a lesson from the drubbing they received at the hands of Ramnath Goenka's *Indian Express* which carried on a relentless campaign against the Reliance group for almost three years. There was no reason why, with all the money and resources at their disposal, they should not create a power bloc in the fourth estate and be in a position to take on their adversaries on their own home ground. So, they went on a buying spree and first grabbed, *Commerce*, and later, *The Sunday Observer*. Their latest acquisition is not a newspaper or a magazine but a senior journalist, R.K. Mishra, editor-in-chief of the pro-Moscow English daily from the capital, *Patriot*, who has been made chairman of the Ambanis' new company, the Observer Group of Publications. And it's not surprising that it has given rise to rumours that formally or informally, *Patriot* is going to be taken over by the new media baron.

A well-placed source in the Ambani camp straight away denies this and says that *Patriot* will continue to be an "independent paper" and the two apex bodies—A.V. Baliga Trust and A.V. Baliga Foundation—which between them hold the shares of United India Publications, would continue to be in command. Apart from *Patriot*, United India Publications brings out an English news weekly, *Link*, and the sprawling Link House on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, the capital's own Fleet Street, is owned by the two trusts associated with the late Dr A.V. Baliga.

However, with the same source adding that the relationship between Link House and Observer Group of Publications is still evolving, there is intense speculation about a take-over. "It is an association of minds on the basis of identity of objectives," is his cryptic comment. While he insists that there is no financial relationship at the moment between the two organisations, he does not rule it out for all times to come.

And here lies the real story, say sources in Link Hosue who, for obvious reasons, are not willing to be identified. It is said in hushed tones that Dhirubhai Ambani has offered to meet the financial liabilities of both *Patriot* and *Link* which run into several crores of rupees. When a few years ago, *Patriot* was revamped and the latest printing technology introduced, it came as a surprise to media circles as neither *Patriot* nor *Link* enjoyed a good circulation. It is said that a hefty loan was taken from the Central Bank, but with circulation of the new-look paper not picking up, the group found itself in a financial soup. This clearly provided the Ambanis with an ideal situation to step in. Discerning readers have not forgotten that during the day of the anti-Reliance campaign, *Patriot* had carried avowedly pro-Ambani news items and articles and the nexus, howsoever nebulous it may have been, had come into the open even then.

Mishra describes as "totally baseless" the rumour that the Ambanis have informally taken over the *Patriot*. According to him, "the Ambanis have neither shown an interest in this regard nor did the question ever come up for discussion" When asked if there was any financial tie-up between the Patriot Group and the Observer Group, Mishra denied it saying, "Much more important than the speculated financial relationship is the fact that Indian journalism must grapple with the issue of relationship between investor, management and editorial. The fact that I have been invited to be the chairman of the Observer Group is an indication that the investors have opted for a professionalised management." He adds, "Indian journalism is entering a phase where the investor, management and editor will have to evolve a relationship based on mutually acceptable norms."







Dhirubhai Ambani: the new media baron is all set

A far-sighted political strategy too is said to be behind the tie-up between R.K. Mishra and his *Patriot* group and the Ambanis. It is well-known that Mishra has for a long time been very close to Union commerce minister Arun Nehru. It is also known that Nehru does not entertain the kind of animus V P. Singh has for the Reliance group. Moreover, the utility of a mass-circulating newspaper to a politician has been amply demonstrated by the way *Indian Express* carried on its untiring campaign in favour of V.P. Singh. So. Arun Nehru and his close associates like Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in the Union Cabinet would like to have a newspaper on which they can totally rely. And who can offer reliance better than the one and only Reliance Group.

So, the story goes, it is Arun Nehru who has really got Mishra installed as the chief of the Ambanis' media company—the Observer Group of Publications Mishra is also said to be lobbying for Ambanis' interests with the West Bengal government using his contacts among the left parties. While the Ambanis are out of the Haldia project, they are trying to get a contract for captive power generation in the state, much along the lines of the Tatas in Bombay.

A look at the Ambani plans is enough to convince that he means business, the only difference being that this time, instead of polyester, it is information that he is dealing in. No wonder then that his aides prefer to talk of "information business" rather than just newspaper industry. After a dizzy growth, the Reliance group has joined the Tatas and Birlas at the top of the Indian corporate world. With nearly three million shareholders, the group has the second largest number of shareholders in the world and the largest market capitalisation in the country. And the Ambanis know that in the coming decades, information is going to be the single most crucial input in the growth of society, economy and culture.

So, what is intended to be created is a vast information empire to cater to the needs of the Reliance group as well as of those who choose to become its clients. The Commerce Research Bureau, which possesses perhaps the best reference library on corporate information in the country with 80-year-old records, is planned to be expanded into a very large computer data centre which will store information on international finance, banking, technology, trade, policy and strategic planning.





***Patriot*: an Ambani acquisition; (inset) R.K. Mishra: new role**

Print media will form only a part of this burgeoning information business. *Commerce* has been renamed as *Business and Financial Observer* because it was felt that "commerce" was a nineteenth century concept and did not convey the totality of the present-day economic reality. *The Sunday Observer* is going to be brought out in Hindi shortly and very soon, editions in other languages such as Gujarati and Marathi will follow. Both the *Business and Financial Observer* and *The Sunday Observer* are being planned as multi-centre ventures. Even the Hindi *Sunday Observer* is expected to be a multi-edition newspaper.



"Indian journalism is entering a phase where the investor, management and editor will have to evolve a new relationship"
—Mishra

A source close to the Ambanis makes it clear that each newspaper would be free to pursue its own editorial policy and the Reliance group as a whole will not try to sell a particular line. The top editorial line-up is already ready. While Vinod Mehta is back with *The Sunday Observer* the paper he had himself started, Prem Shankar Jha will continue as editor of the *Business and Financial Observer*, and Udayan Sharma will hold charge of the Hindi *Sunday Observer* Mishra is unlikely to interfere in the editorial functioning of the various projected publications. As Mishra himself says, "It would be my responsibility to evolve, in consultation with the other editors, a mutually acceptable editorial policy. However, the editors may decide to agree on certain basic points and to disagree on certain others."

Then what is holding them up? Despite various deadlines, none of these have been able to come out so far, leading to speculations in media circles. Insiders attribute the delay to the fact that the photo type-setting equipment has not been delivered so far. The Ambanis have gone in for state-of-art technology and are importing the equipment from Britain. The use of such sophisticated technology on such a large scale is by itself revolutionary in the Indian context. Photo type-setting staff will be dispensed with, and so will paste-up artists. All editorial operations will be performed on computer terminals including layout and design. The final output will also be given by the computer. And all the publication centres will be linked to each other through modems.

Whenever the Ambani publications come out, one thing is certain: the face of Indian journalism is not going to remain the same. They have already pushed salaries of journalists to levels which the newspaper industry had never dreamt of. But, then, is all that glitters, gold? •

Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi

The Nehru Cup farce

Soccer fans virtually boycott this premier international tournament

If one cares to find the reason behind the success of the Calcutta 300 festival, one will know exactly why the Nehru Centenary Soccer tournament was a failure. The city jubilee is being held at the Yuba Bharati Krirangan. The only way people could get there regularly and in great numbers is through special transport arrangements. Since a former Congress(I) minister was conducting the football tournament, the West Bengal government may have chosen to ignore the pleas to beef up the bus service, as a result of which very few people turned up to see the football matches.

But the callousness of the state government couldn't possibly be the only reason why Calcuttans so uncharacteristically spurned soccer. The way local football has been conducted here for the past two years was another reason. Things have come to such a pass that the 1989 league and the prestigious IFA Shield competitions have still not been completed. People just seemed fed up.

Another reason why the Nehru soccer flopped was the frequent change in the dates of the competition. First, this international competition was billed for October and then November. With the general elections being announced, even dates in December were altered and, finally, the second and third weeks of January were decided on. These changes had the effect of dampening the enthusiasm of football lovers who felt the whole tournament would be a farce.

Such a belief was strengthened by the frequent changes in the names of the foreign teams taking part. The organisers—the All India Football Federation (AIFF)—insisted for quite some time that teams from countries like West Germany and England would take part—perhaps even from Italy, where some of the best players of the world congregate. Ultimately, only two worthwhile teams turned up, along with one which came from the USSR for a lark, another from Denmark without any practice and a third as a national side in a club-level tournament.

FIFA sanctioned this as a one-time tournament purely because Nehru's name was associated with it. And the central government, then going through a centenary mania, readily sanctioned as much as Rs two crores in foreign exchange for this competition. Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, the AIFF president, was then commerce minister, so promises for sponsorship also flowed in.

But Das Munshi went out with the Congress(I) ministry and the cash flow immediately stopped. Organisations like the State Trading Corporation (STC), which had promised sums up to Rs 35 lakhs for each team, pleaded other commitments and backed out. When Das Munshi attacked them in print, they came out with lame excuses like "the change in the dates of the competition" to hide the fact that they were not prepared to get involved with a ship that had sunk.

Sports ministry officials went to the extent of questioning the foreign exchange sanction, saying that since the tournament was postponed twice, the sanction may be withdrawn. They stopped bickering only when the organisers told them the sanction was for the tournament and not for any specific dates.

Only a very small part of the foreign exchange spent on the competition was realised. That, too, in fits and starts as the two top teams played patchily up to the final. It was only in the last round that one got to see some really world class soccer.

The Soviet side, Metalist Kharkov, was a big disaster. Coming from a

NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA



The victorious Olimpia team captain with the Nehru trophy

country which has had an excellent record of triumphs both at club and national levels in India, this team disappointed soccer fans. They drew with both the Argentinian team, Gimnasia Esgrima de La Plata, and with the Zambian side. The latter, too, was a big disappointment. Having reached the quarter-finals of the Seoul Olympics, they raised a lot of expectations at the Yuba Bharati Krirangan. But, despite their smooth approach work, they were totally bereft of ideas when it came to shooting.



Mohammedan Sporting playing Metalist (USSR): good show

From the Indian point of view, the redeeming feature of this competition was the performance of Mohammedan Sporting. The simultaneous sacking of coach Syed Naeemuddin and the induction of Nigerian Emeka Izeugo, seemed to have transformed this team. One has to admit that luck was on its side in the matches against both the Zambian team and the Soviet side. But the fact remains that for large periods in both the matches, the local side looked superior. Actually, it was a combination of guts and go that got this team to the semi-finals despite the loss to Gimnasia in the pool league.

For the first time, one saw an Indian team not losing a match before getting on to the field. The resignation with which Indian players face foreign opposition was totally lacking. In almost every match, Mohammedan Sporting played an open game and carried the fight into the "enemy" territory. This paid them rich dividends because, once shorn of the natural impediment of fear, the players were able to play their natural game. Teamwork was superb and the opportunities well utilised.

The only unfortunate part of this success was that it made hopes soar far too high as Mohammedan Sporting faced Olimpia in the semi-finals. Club supporters, who by their presence in thousands raised the organisers' hopes of breaking even if the locals reached the finals, went berserk when a penalty was converted against them. Missiles were flung on the ground, chairs were uprooted from the stands and the game held up for a good 15 minutes. Thereafter, the team played well but could not score against the better-equipped Olimpia. The team from Paraguay played cool but the match was keenly fought by Mohammedan Sporting.

But unsporting behaviour reached an all-time high as far as India was concerned when the Argentinian team displayed the worst aspects of today's professionalism in their semi-final encounter with Lyngby. They literally tore the opposition apart every time the Danish players worked up a rhythm and, aided by very soft supervision by an Indian referee, kept making off-the-ball fouls and disrupted the proceedings by arguing needlessly with the referee and the opposition. Things came to a head when a player from the reserve bench went in to manhandle one of the Danish players and the team doctor also entered the playing area to try and waste some more time. Quite naturally, a spokesman of the Danish club remarked that his team lost to "the South American animals".

But severe warnings from the tournament committee and the prospect of possible penalties by FIFA sobered the team and they played clean football in the final with Olimpia. And once they did that, their shortcomings were thoroughly exposed. Without 'match-disrupting' tactics, the players seemed to run out of ideas, especially when trying to contain the marauding Olimpia players. The latter played superb football, with stamina assisting the remarkable fitness and footwork, coupled with uncanny understanding among the players. They played vintage football to take home the Nehru trophy.

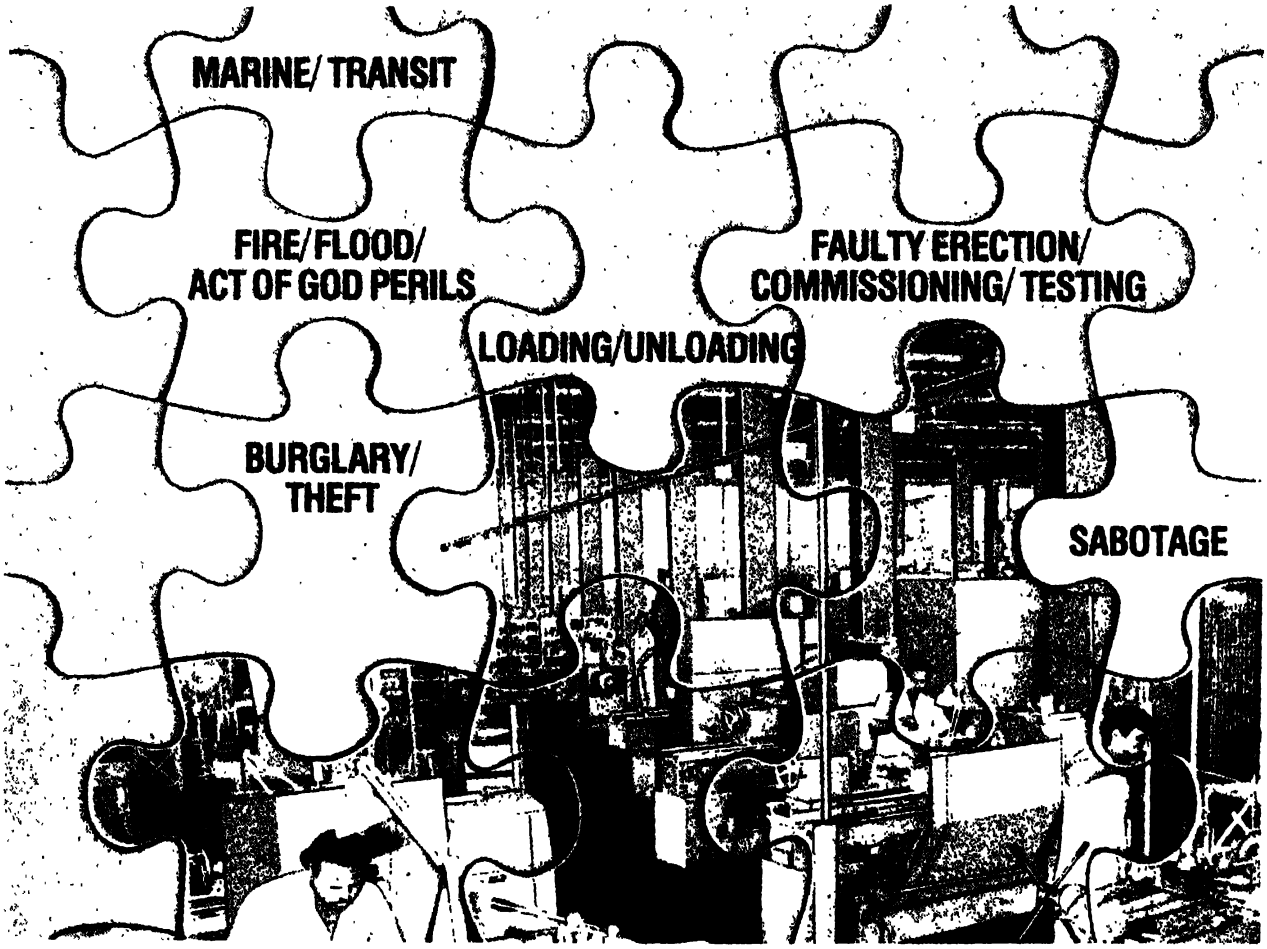


From the Indian point of view the redeeming feature of this competition was the performance of Mohammedan Sporting

But the lack of transport, the disgust with local football and the International Film Festival which was on simultaneously in the city robbed Calcuttans of some great moments of soccer. The net effect may well be the end of top-level international tournaments in the city where, on some days, the gate collections were as abysmally low as Rs 1000! No organisation can sustain such loss—the AIFF lost a good Rs 43 lakhs on this misadventure. •

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

WE COVER VARIOUS RISKS FOR YOUR PLANT AND MACHINERY.



As an industrialist, you may be setting up a new project. Or modernising your production capacity with new machinery and equipment. Or expanding your plant for higher capacity

Subject to certain exclusions, New India's Marine-cum-Erection Policy provides comprehensive cover for new machinery and equipment under installation. The cover starts from the time the plant and machinery leave the manufacturer's warehouse to the time they reach the site of erection. Thereafter, the policy covers risks of storage (pending erection), as well as risks during erection, testing and commissioning.

At an additional premium, the policy also covers risks of third party liability, surrounding property damages, express freight, additional customs duty, and escalation in price of plant and machinery.

So, get in touch with your nearest New India Office for further information. You'd be settling for the services of India's largest international insurance company.

NEW INDIA ASSURANCE

A Subsidiary of the General Insurance Corporation of India

1919 1989

BORN TO LEAD

MARINE-CUM-ERECTION POLICY FROM NEW INDIA.

CONTOUR ADS-NIA-251D/89

ODDS AND TRENDS



D P SINHA

Amjad Ali Khan inaugurating the Ikebana exhibition

Sepal spring

■ The selfish giant won the hearts of children with flowers. S. Ali is all set to win the hearts of the people of Calcutta with flowers. His boutique 'Sepal', at the Royal Living Exhibition at Park Hotel, has 60 different kinds of flowers to offer to the public. 'Sepal' is the only stall for artificial flower decoration known as Ikebana. This exquisite handicraft is Ali's fertile imagination. He has worked round the clock to make it a success. Ali hopes that his efforts will surely not go waste if the Calcuttan responds wholeheartedly with all his idle curiosity and enthusiasm. With winter on the wane, the flowers of 'Sepal' can welcome the spring.

Airline surprise

■When you're travelling by an Indian Airlines flight you should be prepared for a shock or an irreversible trauma. A person who was travelling by an Indian Airlines flight from Delhi to Madras had a bad and unpalatable experience so far as the food served on the flight was concerned. He ordered non-vegetarian food. Soon a smiling air hostess brought a tray containing the sealed food. He opened the packet thinking that it would contain hot and sumptuous stuff as the packet bore the seal of a five-star hotel's catering unit.

The quantity of food was okay and so he started off. Quietly enjoying his dinner he was suddenly struck by something odd when the spoon picked up some foreign matter. Guess what? It was a *beedi* stub. He was



shocked that such a thing could occur on a flight and that too an expensive one. Well if this had happened on the railways one could have believed it but it was hard to digest that the country's premier airlines would serve food which contained such an abominable thing as a *beedi*. The man has taken a vow that he will never travel on an Indian Airlines flight again

THIS INDIA

GHAZIABAD: The thesis papers of three PhD students of Meerut University found their way to a wastepaper seller even before degrees could be awarded to them. The research papers submitted by Nandini Singh, Maya Devi and Veena Khera were discovered at the shop of a wastepaper seller Anis, in Muzaffarnagar. Anis used to buy wastepaper from the university and the research work might have been sold to him by mistake. The three candidates are yet to take their oral examinations for the awarding of degrees. Prominent educationists have demanded an enquiry into the incident and called for action against those responsible—*The Hindustan Times* (Babu Vellera, New Delhi)

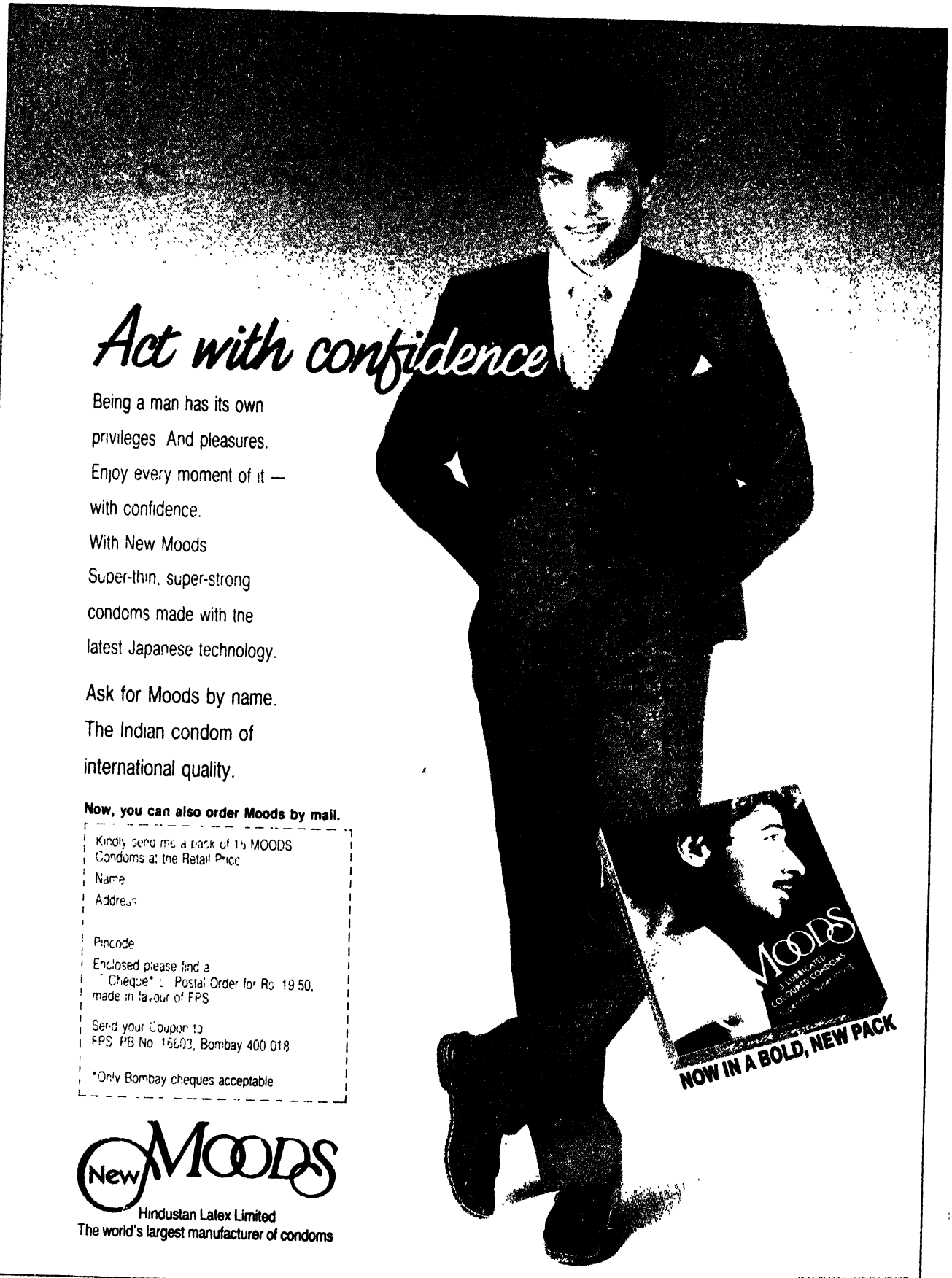


ILLUSTRATIONS DEBASHIS DEB

MADRAS: Balasubramaniam alias Mani, who used his collection of 44 ration cards to buy commodities from ration shops in the city and make a profit by selling them in the open market for a higher price, was arrested. He was trapped by the police at a ration shop in Korukkupet, as part of a drive to check interference of touts and anti-social elements in the distribution of commodities at ration shops. Belonging to Cheriyan Nagar, Mani had 44 ration cards made out in the names of various persons using which he could draw ration from 11 shops in north Madras—*Indian Express* (S. Siva Kumar, Madras)

AGARTALA: An attempt to save the life of a pet goat cost a woman her life when she challenged miscreants who were butchering it in a nearby jungle in Mandari village in Belonia sub-division. The woman was seriously injured in the skirmish that followed and succumbed to her injuries in the hospital. The police arrested two persons in this connection—*The Telegraph* (D.J. Patro, Bhubaneswar)

INDORE: Swayamvaram, the ancient practice of groom selection, came in handy for a young girl from Naliheda town in Madhya Pradesh, when she was allowed to choose her life partner at a "parichay sammelan" (introduction conference). 20-year-old Seema was among scores of young, eligible women and men who had assembled at the sammelan. She caught the fancy of two boys' families. The dilemma was sorted out when she was asked to choose her mate. Seema chose Brijmohan of Sahore district, and her parents readily offered Re 1 to the boy as a mark of acceptance—*The Telegraph* (Roy George, Dimapur)


Act with confidence
Being a man has its own
privileges And pleasures.
Enjoy every moment of it —
with confidence.
With New Moods
Super-thin, super-strong
condoms made with the
latest Japanese technology.
Ask for Moods by name.
The Indian condom of
international quality.
Now, you can also order Moods by mail.
Kindly send me a pack of 15 MOODS
Condoms at the Retail Price
Name
Address
Pincode
Enclosed please find a
Cheque* / Postal Order for Rs 19.50,
made in favour of FPS
Send your Coupon to
FPS PB No 16603, Bombay 400 018
*Only Bombay cheques acceptable
MOODS
3 LUBRICATED
COLOURED CONDOMS
NOW IN A BOLD, NEW PACK
New MOODS
Hindustan Latex Limited
The world's largest manufacturer of condoms
R K SWAMY/HLL/7457

BEGINNING 4 FEBRUARY 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



Your income will increase commensurate your expenditure. Do not lend money for it will be difficult for you to get it back. An elderly relative might create problems. There might be problems on the domestic front.

Good dates: 4, 7 and 10
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Do not sign any document before giving it a thorough check. Important papers should be kept in safe custody. An unexpected event might upset your plans. Check extravagance. A favourable time for marriage.

Good dates: 6, 8 and 10
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 8
Favourable direction: North

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



The financial front looks bright and prospective. Students might secure foreign scholarships. You can start on a new venture. The time is ripe for romance. Avoid taking hasty decisions. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 8
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: East

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



You might have to undertake a journey which may provide you with a likely solution to a nagging problem. Those in service are likely to get promotions. This is a good time to seek favours from your superiors.

Good dates: 7, 8 and 9
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: South

LEO (21 July—20 August)



A pleasant surprise is in store for you this week. You may, however, incur some financial losses. Matters relating to the heart are not well indicated. Avoid making fresh investments.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 6
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: South-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



The week is not a good one for you. The time is not favourable for entering into new business ventures. You may have to go in for loans. However, love and matrimonials are well indicated.

Good dates: 5, 7 and 9
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: West

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



Your determination and perseverance will help you to tide over your problems this week. Do not indulge in speculation or gambling. Your seniors and superiors will be helpful to you.

Good dates: 4, 9 and 10
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: North-east

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



A successful week lies ahead of you. A good friend will help you solve a problem that has been worrying you for long. Keep a close watch on your health. Be careful in your dealings with the opposite sex.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 9
Lucky numbers: 4, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: South

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is going to be a good week for you. New ventures are likely to make steady progress. Be cautious on the domestic front Be careful in the dealings with your near ones. A past error might take its toll on you.

Good dates: 8, 9 and 10
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: East

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



Your ambition and ability to work hard will bring you success. Secret matters will make steady progress. Intellectuals will contribute to your happiness. You will gain new friends. But avoid straining yourself too much.

Good dates: 7, 8 and 10
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North-east

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



A fair measure of good fortune is in store for you. But avoid taking hasty decisions, risks and loans. Postpone your plans for the future. You are advised to be on your guard against deception.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 9
Lucky numbers: 1, 2 and 4
Favourable direction: South

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



You will undergo a lot of physical and mental strain this week. Your efforts may not bear fruit. Lawsuits might cause anxiety. Politicians should be extremely cautious. Your domestic front will be peaceful.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 7
Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: LIBRA—ARIES

Both the partners should be careful not to make their relationship a drab, mundane affair. Though mutual attraction exists, the Libran's brooding nature might clash with her husband's practical sense. So, the union will go perfectly well, if the couple is willing to exercise discretion. ●

Invest in a future of total comfort

TIRUPATI TEXKNIT LTD.



Public Issue of Rs. 27,50,000 Equity Shares of Rs. 10/- each for cash at a premium of Rs. 2/- per share aggregating Rs. 3.3 crores.

Premium Issue Opens on 12th February, 1990.

T.T. – ***the mark of excellence for over 25 years.***

For application form, Please contact Share Brokers or Bankers to the issue

Standing guard

For all the Raja's protestations (he was going to be treated like any other ordinary citizen, traffic should not be stopped for him, etc.) he has become as much a prisoner of his security apparatus as his predecessor.

And what's more, so has his family. Recently, a bunch of Special Protection Group (SPG) guards landed in Calcutta to provide security for V.P. Singh's granddaughters. Their duties: to escort the young girls to school and back, and hang around while the little ones attended classes. (In the original arrangement, the Calcutta Police would look after the security of the Raja's brood.) The Prime Minister's daughter also came in for special attention: a security cordon was thrown around her apartment, and the



V.P. Singh: prisoner of his security apparatus

SPG stood guard outside her door at all times.

Apparently, all these special arrangements are only a fall-out of the Rubaiya Sayeed kidnapping. The administration is taking no chances this time around.

Lal sees red

We weren't joking when we asked you not to laugh at Chaudhuri Devi Lal. For, you might just end up laughing the other side of your mouth.

HEARD IN KRISHI BHAVAN

After Devi Lal became agriculture minister, we realise that even Bhajan Lal would have made a better choice for the post. This man just doesn't listen.

A MINISTRY OFFICIAL

As K.R. Puniya has been doing of late. Even when Puniya led a mass resignation bid of Haryana ministers immediately before the general election, it had been obvious—to those who know the Chaudhuri—that he would be made to pay. I would have made him the President of India, the Chaudhuri had declared in his inimitable style. He has committed the mistake of his lifetime by betraying me.

Puniya took this as the empty boast of an old and foolish man. But Devi Lal may well manage to make good his threat. For, K.R. Puniya has a younger brother: P.L. Puniya, an IAS officer and managing director of the State Industrial Finance Corporation.



Devi Lal: hell hath no fury...

The Chaudhuri has, apparently, decided to extract revenge on his former minister by ruining his sibling's life—or at the very least, his career. He has already met Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, in this connection, to ask him to confer a punishment posting on the officer.

Bhure Lal, who is a good friend of the man, has managed to protect him until now But the Chaudhuri's malignancy may well prevail.

THERMOMETER

All the candidates for the Bihar chief ministership

- **Lallu Prasad Yadav:** Former leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, he is now a Janata Dal MP. But the Devi Lal-Sharad Yadav lobby would rather have him back in the state as chief minister.
- **Ram Sharan Das:** Former chief minister of Bihar and now president of the state unit of the Dal. He has the support of the Ajit Singh group in his bid for the chief ministership.
- **Ram Bilas Paswan:** Even though he has been awarded a Cabinet berth at the centre, he still wishes to take over government at the state level. Is banking on the Raja's support in this attempt.
- **Raghunath Jha:** Was removed from the presidentship of the state Janata Dal unit. His ambitions are, however, intact. Wants to become chief minister with Chandra Shekhar's blessings.
- **Shatrughan Sinha:** Though a relative newcomer in state politics, he is lobbying hard for the CM's post. The V.P. Singh camp will probably support his candidature, as well as the BJP.
- **Kalieshpati Mishra:** If seat adjustments in Bihar are such as provide for a BJP chief minister, then he will get the nod.

Legality be damned

Arbitrary appointments there have been many. But the elevation of Arun Jaitley to the post of additional solicitor general last week had Supreme Court circles abuzz. Jaitley, a former ABVP student leader and Supreme Court lawyer was denied a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket in the last elections, even though he is, reportedly, a member of that party's charmed circle. He has, however, now been adequately recompensed.

While most such appointments are political, what is alarming about this case is that the articulate lawyer-politician was not even designated a senior counsel by the Supreme Court, and yet, considered suitable for the post. Hours before he was appointed to his new office, there was a hurried full court meeting of the High Court, to elevate Jaitley to the exalted category of senior counsels.

Clearly, the BJP wins every time, and the so-called independence of the judiciary is no exception. •

Imperfect ten

A few months ago, Dr Karan Singh had gone hoarse complaining to all who would listen that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was proving all too elusive. That, no matter how many requests he put in for a meeting, he never managed to get an appointment.

This, coupled with the fact that the Raja had visited him off and on during his political exile, made Dr Singh reasonably sure that he would retain the ambassadorship to the United States



Dr Karan Singh: the call cost him dear

The poet-politician had another guess coming. When he came down to New Delhi last, he asked for an appointment with the new Prime Minister Only to be kept waiting for two days by V.P. Singh. In the meanwhile, the ambassador decided to pay Rajiv Gandhi a courtesy visit. He was summoned to Gandhi's Parliament House office almost immediately and exchanged pleasantries for around ten minutes.

That was enough. Intelligence sources reported the meeting to the Raja, who, in a fit of pique, refused to grant an audience to the unfortunate Singh And no sooner did the envoy reach Washington than he was informed that he should resign, or else...

Dr Singh was left with no option but to quit.

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL.

It was Mera Bharat Mahan then. It is Mera Bharat Mann now.

A NATIONAL FRONT MP

No technocrats required

The country may rejoice that merit has finally been rewarded. But Janata Dal MPs are very cross at the appointment of such non-political persons as Dr M.G.K. Menon and Dr Raja Ramanna to the Union council of ministers.

There is little sense, argue party members, in appointing these people when political heavyweights such as Vidya Charan Shukla, Raj Mangal Pandey Yashwant Singh, K C. Tyagi and Janeshwar Mishra remain unrewarded with ministerial berths



Dr Raja Ramanna: the PM's choice

It technocrats need to be inducted into government at all, surely they can be designated advisers to the Prime Minister, with Cabinet rank? This was what Rajiv Gandhi had done and there's no reason why the Raja cannot emulate him on this score. At least this would obviate the need for finding Rajya Sabha seats for them.

But the Raja refuses to see reason. And the latest rumours doing the rounds in the capital have it that Vinod Pande and Bhure Lal will also be joining the ministry very soon!

Going places?

Yet another journalist to be all set for a career switch. Kuldip Nayar's name, say informed sources, is being suggested as the next Indian high commissioner to Pakistan.

Apparently Nayar's name was first suggested for the governorship of a state, but the veteran journalist made his disinterest clear. He'd rather be envoy to Pakistan, he said. Good friend Inder Kumar Gujral, evidently, agreed that this was a good idea.

So, the next couple of years might just find Nayar stationed in Islamabad.



Kuldip Nayar: bound for Pakistan ?

BAROMETER

How the filmi *groupies rate at the Raja's durbar*



Raj Babbar: His fund-collection sprees for the Dal and his campaigning during the recent election have ensured his place in the durbar. Called to Delhi for consultations every week, Babbar may well be granted a Rajya Sabha seat. Is specially close to the Rani.



Shabana Azmi: Used to be a Raja favourite until a few months ago when V P. Singh made it a point to visit her on every visit to Bombay Now, however, she finds it difficult to wanglean audience.Rumours have it that the Prime Minister'sOffice is also delaying her appointment as chairman of the Children's Film Festival

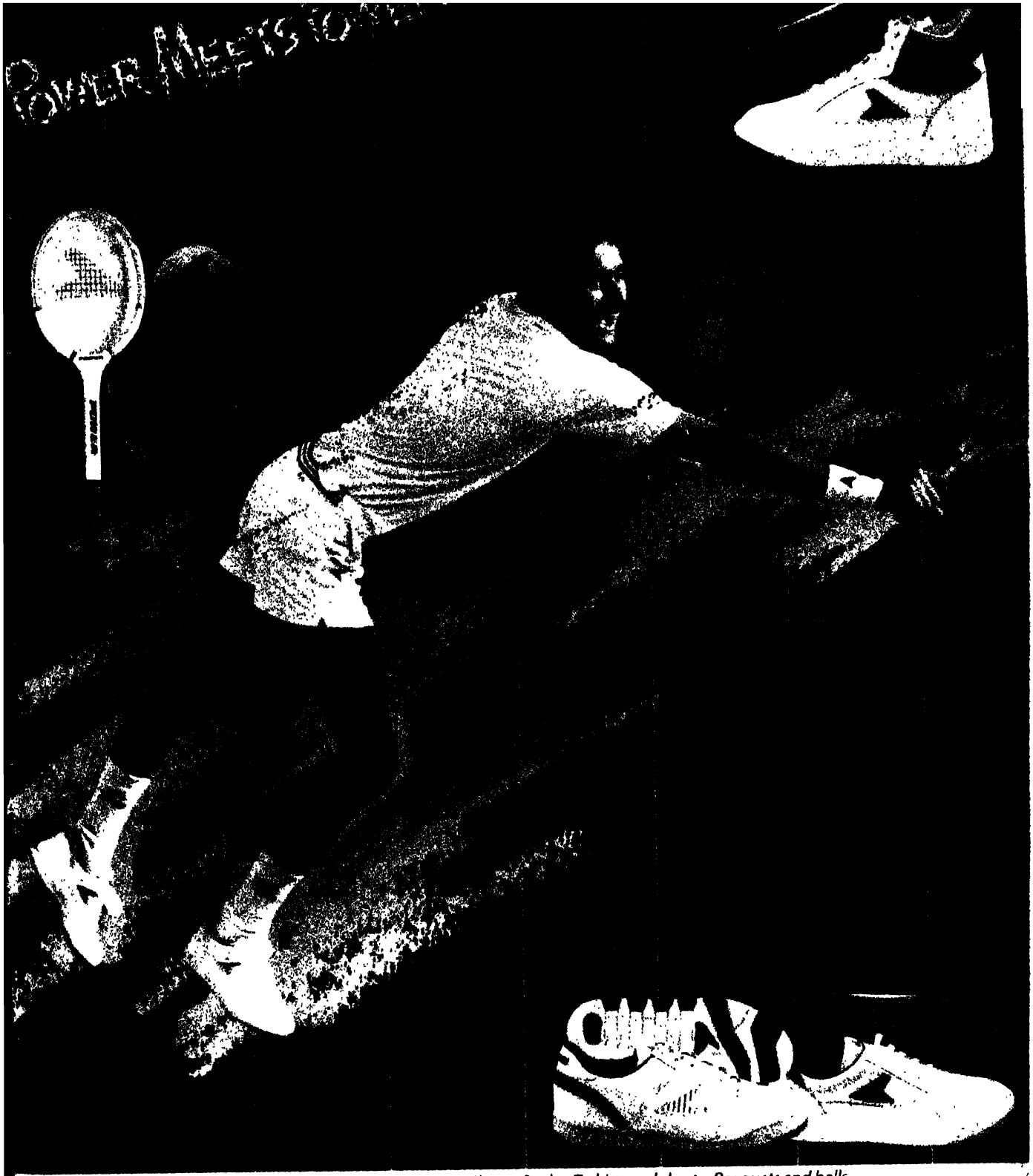


Shatrughan Sinha: His influence remains undiminished, with government officials lining up outside his door to get recommendation letters. The latest is that the Dal is seriously considering making him the chief minister of Bihar.



Mithun Chakraborty: Though he has thrown in his lot with the Opposition, he doesn't have much access to the Prime Minister, allegedly because of his closeness to the communists.

Uttarpara Public Library



Zeeshan Ali meets Power. Power Tennis Gear. Tennis Shoes. Socks. T-shirts and shorts. Rackets and balls. The champion's range. Wear the Power. Feel the Power. And gear up for that awesome performance.

Available at select **Bata** *and* **POWERSPORTS** *stores*

POWER.

LINTAS:CAL/BAP/112/2719

MAKE YOUR INTERIORS
A PERMANENT SHOWPIECE OF INTERNATIONAL ART

Imagine creating interiors as classy as European art galleries! All you need is Art Concept. 'International Art' laminates for the first time in India. With designs admirably painted by French, German and Italian art-maestros. Conceived in collaboration with the most aesthetic innovators in interiors, Dekodur of West Germany.

Art Concept. So imaginative, no two sheets are absolutely identical. However, sheets of a given art motive are similar in colour and pattern. For authenticity, each sheet is signed by the artist rendering the masterpiece. The sheer exclusivity qualifies Art Concept for very selective and intelligent use.

Art Concept is created for your exclusive lifestyle by Caprihans — The people who give you Sungloss 1.5 mm and 1 mm laminates, besides unique, new surfaces like Sungloss Metallica, Sundekor furniture film and Sunlip edge banding. All fine art!

SunGLOSS
Art concept
STUDIO SERIES LAMINATES

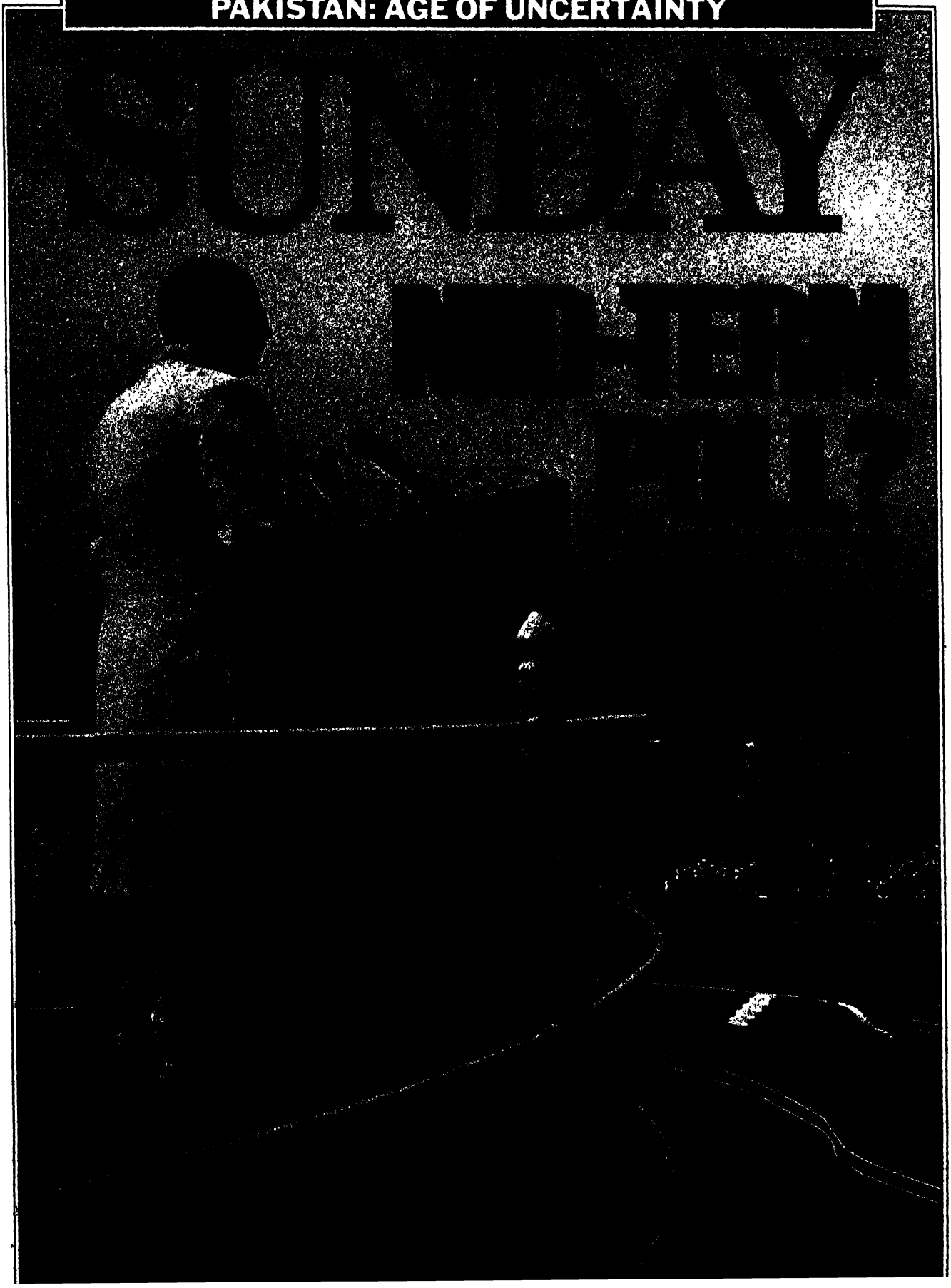


Only from
caprihans
The Pioneers

H... 25575, 52062 ... Bangalo... Tel: 680334, ... Calcutta Tel: ... 729 ... Cochin Tlx: 0... 02... IN

26 AUGUST—1 SEPTEMBER 1990 □ AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION □ RS 7.00

PAKISTAN: AGE OF UNCERTAINTY



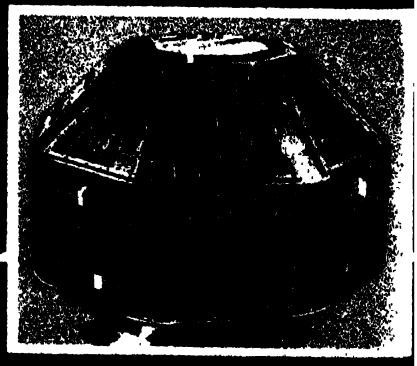
Millions of years ago this immense mass took shape as a planet we call EARTH



The history of Zinc in India dates back to over 2500 years, when mining took place in Zawar, Rajasthan. Now once again, India is exploring new horizons in this field and is poised to join the world league of major zinc producers.

Hindustan Zinc Limited, a Government of India Enterprise, came into being in 1966. Today, HZL is a multi-unit, multi-faceted company with a nationwide network of sales offices and stock points. Its new mining & smelting complex, now under construction in Rajasthan, will double HZL's metal output by 1991-92, to vastly improve the demand satisfaction for strategic base metals and allied products.

Millions of years later Man flings it back into outer-space on spaceships and satellites He calls it ZINC



SILVER JUBILEE YEAR (1966-1991) Hindustan Zinc Limited

(A Government of India Enterprise)

Growing to meet the challenges of growth

Newfields

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 34 □ RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
26 AUGUST –1 SEPTEMBER 1990



24
COVER STORY
Mid-term poll?
Prime Minister V.P. Singh's Independence Day speech gave ample evidence that he was willing to go to the people.

14
NEWSWATCH
Rallying the farmers
With Devi Lal out of the government, the Congress(I) makes a serious bid to woo the peasants.

15
INTERVIEW
"We will not yield to pressure"
Union labour minister Ram Vilas Paswan on the anti-reservation stir.



50
HERITAGE
Art in the times of decay
Three hundred years and still going strong. That's Calcutta's cultural history.



58
BUSINESS
Exit Lakshman
The ITDC chairman-cum managing director resigns.

72
TRENDS
Follow the leader
More and more filmstars and celebrities are taking to modelling.

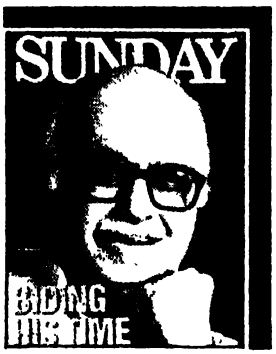
78
EXTRACT
War
An imaginative account of what might happen in the event of an India-Pakistan conflict.



LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
COUNTERVIEW 10
MANI-TALK 16
SOUTH BLOCK 19
CAPITAL MATTERS 23
NEWSWATCH 41
Battle for Bombay
FOCUS 43
A crown of thorns
SPOTLIGHT 44
KHAAS BAAT 71
GUEST COLUMN 75
MEDIA MUSINGS 76
THE TUBE 85
MILESTONES 86
SUNDAYWEEK 87
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency:
Shooter

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise North-eastern states: 30 paise



Waiting in the wings

The cover story (*Biding his time*, 5—11 August) was well-written. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—perhaps the only disciplined party in India—is capable of lifting the country out of the present morass. Despite the National Front government's several drawbacks, the BJP is still lending it support.

The Janata Dal is not functioning all. It is plagued by infighting and internal squabbles. Punjab and Kashmir are burning, and inflation seems to have reached an all-time high. The latest reservation policy speaks volumes of the so-called secularism of the front regime. Therefore, the BJP, minus the RSS, might be a good bet after all.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

■ It has been an excellent assessment of the goings-on in Delhi. The Prime Minister's offer to resign followed by the unceremonious dismissal of the deputy prime minister has shaken the foundations of the National Front government. At present, the nation seems to be in the throes of a deep crisis. Even during the last days of the Janata Party government in the late Seventies such things never happened.

Hence L.K. Advani's advice to his partymen to be prepared for a snap poll seems timely. The Congress(I) is also thinking along the same lines. It is high time that the Centre got down to the business of governing, for the BJP might not tolerate its dithering any longer. Therefore, the BJP is doing the right thing by adopting a wait-and-see policy and at the same time gearing itself up for a mid-term poll.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta, (West Bengal)

Raring to go

In tennis, Leander Paes seems to be the only hope for India. He has done the nation proud by bagging the junior Wimbledon crown (*Game, set and match*, 22—28 July). However, what is distressing to find is that he is unable to take part in all tournaments. Whenever Ramesh Krishnan plays any match abroad, he is given free passage by Air India to the venue. If Paes is also extended similar facilities, it will be easier for him to attend tournaments abroad and gain more experience.

A. Srinivasa Murthy, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

L.K. Advani (extreme right) : a credible alternative ?





Paes: India's only hope

Taking a stand

The article by Shrabani Basu on (*Off the stands?*, 29 July—4 August) was truly flattering. It was more so because for more than a quarter of a century, the Indian press corps stationed in London have tended to ignore the *India Weekly*.

She says that the paper is broadly recognised as a Congress newspaper. Though this is largely true, her observation is not entirely correct. If we have supported the Congress, despite its present problems, it is because we believe that it is the only organisation that can ensure the unity and integrity of the country. A more effective party may be forged one day; but till that happens, it would be unwise to destroy or throw away the instrument that we have in hand.

Iqbal Singh, New Delhi

Way ahead

With reference to the article (*Whisper and stayfree*, 15—21 July), I would like to draw your attention to certain factual inaccuracies.

The retail audit by ORG puts Johnson and Johnson's market share at 80 per cent and not 65 per cent as stated in the article. The statement that J&J is overreacting to Procter&Gamble's entry in the market is not true, for over two decades, J&J is constantly providing women with the right kind of sanitary protection—hygienic and innovative. A visit to the nearest chemist will provide enough evidence of Johnson & Johnson's wide range of feminine products.

Johnson's Stayfree guarantees a natural feeling, which is most essential in our warm and humid climate. It is also disposable, unlike other feminine hygiene products.

By investing huge amounts in research and development, J&J has emerged as the pioneer in meeting the growing needs of women. So it really doesn't matter to Johnson & Johnson as to who competes with them—as they are way ahead of others, armed with a wide range of products, which offer the consumer a wide choice.

Rahul Kansal, Bombay (Maharashtra)

■ The article on sanitary napkins seems to be one-sided. One is really surprised to find that the single most important shortcom-

ing of this new product—that it is not disposable by flushing down the toilet—has been omitted. To this, people like me will simply have to say, "No thanks!"

Amrita Halder, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ Pinkie Virani's article on personal care was very interesting. Proper care should be taken in the disposal of used napkins. Lately, a company is providing disposable bags along with their napkins. Most women throw used ones into the streets. Children also ask curious questions about them. A more discreet method of disposal should be thought of by the manufacturers.

C.K. Ramani, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

Frozen frames

Raghubir Singh's perspective on (*Kashmir, then and now*, 8—14 July) was a tremendous job. The photographs, particularly the one showing an old woman weeping, is the best. Today, Kashmir is aflame and the situation is turning from bad to worse. It is time the powers that be woke up and thought of something constructive to solve the Kashmir problem.

Fayaz Mir, Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir)

Nowhere to go

One really feels sorry for the Kashmiri migrants (*The exodus*, 15—21 July) who had to flee the Valley. The government has treated them callously so far. The government should realise that the problem cropped up after the removal of Jagmohan. The situation has come to such a pass that if suitable measures are not taken, the whole nation might have to suffer. The migrants can neither return to their homes nor stay at the



Kashmiri migrants: homeless in their own land

camps they have been put up in indefinitely. Their future seems to be very grim indeed.

B. Nithyananda Rao, Tezpur (Assam)

Their problems, our problems

Inder Malhotra's observations in (*Big brother backs out*, 5—11 August) were rightly timed. It is high time the present regime at the Centre gave a second thought to its stand relating to strife-torn Sri Lanka.

With Karunanidhi accusing the IPKF of genocide, V.P. Singh remaining silent on his partner's allegations and the LTTE going on the rampage even on Indian soil, President Premadasa of Sri Lanka got the much-needed opportunity to internationalise the issue. This gimmick of Premadasa may spell disaster for all sides concerned.

Krishnendu Chakrabarti, Howrah (West Bengal)

Premadasa: blaming India



A true saint

The piece on Deoraha Baba (*Death of a Godman*, 15—21 July) has cast aspersions on one of the true saints of our time. He was a plain and simple man who tried to awaken the goodness in all who came in contact with him. He blessed anybody and everybody who happened to seek his blessings. His ashram was open to all and sundry irrespective of caste, creed and colour. He never owned any property. In fact, every offering made to him was distributed as *prasad* among his devotees.

Sachchidanand Pandy, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)

The infighting continues

The cover story (*Friday the 13th*, 22—28 July) was interesting. The repeated crises within the Janata Dal have shaken the people's confidence in the National Front government. The Prime Minister's resignation drama was a big blunder. V.P. Singh should have realised that the nation would only accept him as the Prime Minister, and nobody else.

B. Nithyananda Rao, Tezpur (Assam)

A shattered dream

The article on Maneka Gandhi's resignation (*A quiet protest*, 29 July—4 August) was quite absorbing. It seems that Maneka's educational background, youth and personality went against her. It is apparent that nobody is willing to work and she was perhaps



Maneka : unfortunate

one of the few who was trying to get things done. She had a purpose in whatever she was doing. In fact, India needs more dynamic persons like Maneka at the helm of affairs to change the face of the nation.

P.N. Banerji, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

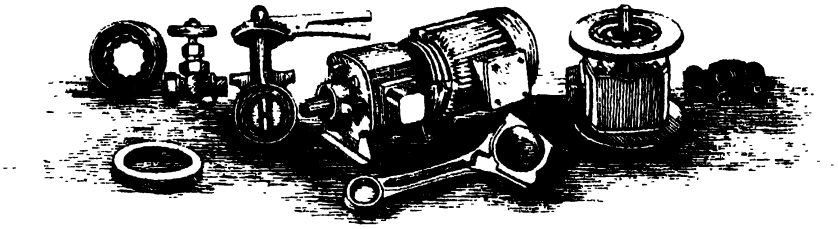
The lost cause

There are doubts about the National Front government lasting its full term as it is losing its credibility day by day (*The aftermath*, 29 July—4 August). The government seems to have been immobilised by infighting and factionalism. It is least bothered about the people as is clear from its forgotten promises.

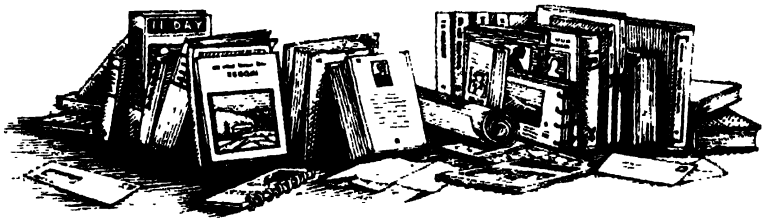
Balia Das, Vani Vihar (Orissa)



IN THE LAST 21 YEARS, WE'VE DELIVERED MILES OF GARMENT SAMPLES.



TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SPARE PARTS OF EVERY TYPE AND SIZE.



HUNDREDS OF TONS OF PRINTED LITERATURE.



AND MILLIONS OF OTHER CONSIGNMENTS.

WHATEVER GAVE YOU THE IMPRESSION WE ONLY CARRY DOCUMENTS?

RAKA:3150:A:90

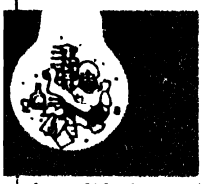
21 years ago, we pioneered the air express industry. Since then, we've been carrying shipments of all types, shapes, sizes and weight. From the ordinary – such as garments, leather samples and printed literature, to the unusual – such as blood samples and even the occasional pregnant cow. Hundreds of thousands of consignments, door-tc-door, everyday. And always, through one network, with one service, and one all-inclusive invoice. The next time you have a shipment to send, why not call us for an immediate pick-up?

We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories.

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS®
DHL THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Violet Dias Lannoy



I take great pleasure in introducing an Indian author unknown outside her circle of friends because very little of her writing was published during her lifetime. She wrote one long novel, some novellas and short stories. Most of the stuff she sent to publishers was returned to her. "Paper the walls with your rejection slips but never lose hope," wrote the celebrated black American novelist Richard Wright, who admired her work. So she persisted with her writing. At long last, her *Pears From the Willow Tree* was published some years after her death. The title was taken from an Indian proverb: "When a man is confused, he expects pears from the willow tree."

Violet Dias had good reason to be a very confused person. She was one of three children of Jose Vicente Dias and Maria Clara, Goan Catholics, born in 1925 in Mozambique, then a Portuguese colony, where her father was working as a civil servant. She spent her childhood years in Laurence Marques, the capital of Mozambique. At the age of eleven, she returned to her native Goa before moving on to Belgaum for her schooling. She was an exceptionally bright student, topping her class in every examination and won a scholarship to Santa Sophia school and later St. Francis Xavier College in Bombay. By then she was no longer a practising Catholic and was caught up in the freedom movement as an ardent devotee of Mahatma Gandhi. She never accepted his views on celibacy and non-violence in all circumstances but wholeheartedly supported his dedication to work amongst the lowliest of the low. After Partition of the country, she gave up further studies to work in the Kurukshetra refugee camp. It was there she met the Mahatma who was by then, she recorded "a broken man living in the ruins of a shattered dream". His assassination, a few months later, left a deep scar on her mind and she decided to propagate Gandhism as best as she could.

Violet married a Parsi, Behram Warden, and the two worked among slum dwellers in Bombay. In 1951, Behram died suddenly leaving her some ancestral property. It took her ten years of litigation to establish her claim over it. And when she got it she put it in a trust fund for poor students. For some years she taught in a school in Goa. She won a Tata scholarship and proceeded to London to study educational psychology at the University College. Even in England she involved herself in the Goan liberation movement but when the Indian Army moved into Goa, she protested vehemently because it was not the Gandhian way of doing things. For some years she made her home in Paris and Israel. Despite her deep sympathy for Jews she did not accept their setting up a state by confiscating Arab lands. It was in Israel that she met the English photographer, Richard Lannoy, whom she married later. They travelled together extensively over Africa and India. It was not till she was 32 that she took to writing but with little hope of getting her works published. In a private journal she maintained she wrote in 1971:

"Where has my mistake been? In forgetting that one needs a community of people? In believing that man lives by ideas? That sincerity matters? Truth is in life, in the process of living; hence Chandidas: 'There's no truth higher than man.' In the vapid round of parties, in accepting people one despises? Social solidarity? At least they are saved from the sheer desolation of Midnight Cowboys.

Violet Dias is unknown because very little of her writing was published during her lifetime. She wrote one long novel, some novellas and short stories. Her *Pears From the Willow Tree* was published some years after her death

"The root of the trouble with me is that I want to write—and haven't succeeded...Writing is a way of life—like being the traditional story-teller—hit requires a certain personality, lifestyle and pace of living—can't sustain it while holding an alienating job in an alienating human environment (Nairobi, not Kenya)...The trouble with me is that I am only an aspiring writer—and so don't have the confidence of my position. Actually a failed writer. But my personality, the real me, still remains that of a writer, the outsider—that's my *dharma*...But I was not confident nor aware enough to turn to creative writing early on—too many layers of mediocrity in my background, as a Christian and a Goan—and a colonial subject: having to succeed in society and on the other hand scorning it."

Her last active years were spent in doing assignments for UNESCO, which took her to Kenya and Uganda. She was taken very ill and returned to England to be hospitalised. Her last visit to Goa was in 1972. She spent her time painting in the verandah of her parents' bungalow. It was there that she quietly faded into death. Following her own wish her body was cremated and her ashes scattered beside Old Goa's white cupolas and on Vagator Beach.

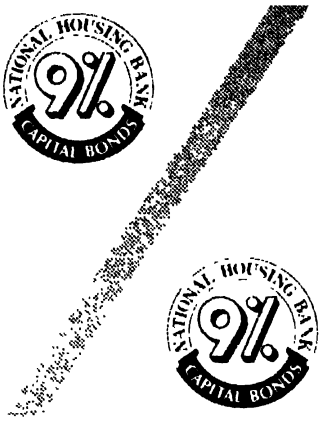
Violet Dias Lannoy's *Pears From the Willow Tree* may soon be published in India.

Sporting minister

A minister after giving away prizes at a football match made a hard-hitting speech: "Ladies and gentlemen, for the last one hour I have been watching the match. I am sorry to say that even after 43 years of Independence, the federation could provide only one ball to 20 players and the poor players were left with no option but to kick it from one side to the other. I would request the government to give a good grant to the federation so that they could provide one ball to each player so that they can play it the way they like.

(Contributed by Promode Kapoor, New Delhi) ●

Uttarakhand Jankaushal Vishwavidyalaya Library



The simplest, most profitable route to tax exemption on Capital gains.

Get 100% tax exemption on your capital gains from sale/transfer of long-term capital assets such as land, buildings, shares and securities, jewellery, etc.

NHB 9% Capital Bonds have benefits in store for you – and your capital.

- Your investment earns 9% per annum payable on a six-monthly basis.
- Or, you can opt for advance payment of interest at the rate of 9% per annum for the full period of 3 years on a discounted basis, at the rate of Rs. 240 per Rs. 1000 invested, payable 3 months from the date of investment.

  This takes into account the interest for the intervening period of 3 months in full – so, you do not lose interest even for a single day.
- And yes, there is no deduction of tax at source on the interest earned.
- Exemption from Capital gains tax U/S 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Exemption from Wealth Tax U/S 5(1)(xvic) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957.
- Exemption of interest U/S 80L of Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Remittance charges borne by NHB.
- Available at par throughout the year. At more than 130 outlets all over the country.
- With NHB 9% Capital Bonds, you have this added satisfaction - your investment will contribute to the betterment of housing in the country.

Application forms available and accepted at:

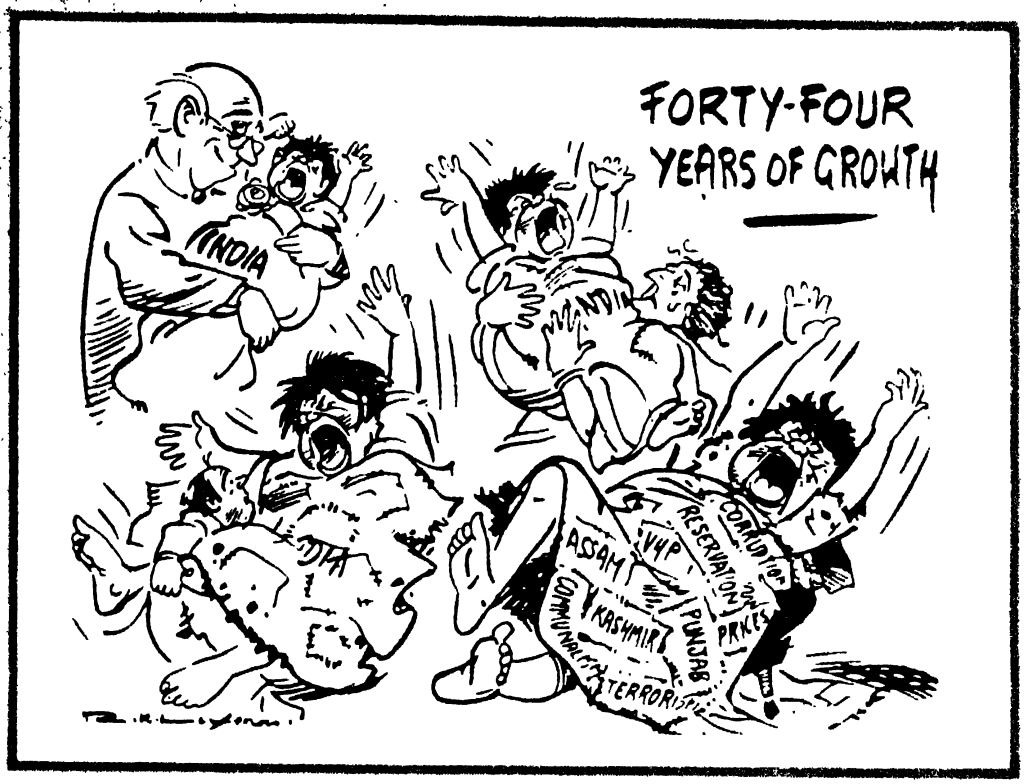
National Housing Bank offices (Bombay & Delhi) • CANFINA offices • 125 branches of the six bankers to the issue: Allahabad Bank • Bank of Baroda • Canara Bank • Citibank (Sakhar Bhavan, Bombay) • Punjab National Bank and Vysya Bank Ltd.

Managers to the Issue: **Canbank Financial Services Limited**

NATIONAL HOUSING BANK
(Wholly owned by the Reserve Bank of India)

Opening New Doors On The Home Front.

National Housing Bank: Bombay Life Building, 3rd floor, 45, Veer Nariman Road, Bombay 400 023



R K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ We will win Punjabis with love and defeat anti-Indians with the use of force.

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister*

■ Instead of working on plans to isolate him, attempts should be made to win him over.

MULAYAM SINGH YADAV, *Uttar Pradesh chief minister, on Devi Lal, former deputy PM*

■ Kashmir today gives the look of hell.

DR FAROOQ ABDULLAH, *former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister*

■ All citizens may be equal, but non-Hindus are more equal than Hindus.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president, on what Indian secularism means today*

■ You cannot keep all prices down when you have increased the price of fuel.

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister, justifying the recent hike in bus fares and transport charges*

■ Our society seems to be degenerating to barbarism.

R. VENKATARAMAN, *President, on the recent spate of violence in the country*

■ You despise a politician, you have an ambivalent attitude towards him, yet you want him at your gatherings and functions.

I.K. GUJRAL, *external affairs minister, commenting on politicians gracing social occasions*

■ Their acts of killings and kidnappings do not project them as revolutionaries.

PRAFULLA MAHANTA, *Assam chief minister, on the ULFA*

■ Even though, I personally believe that people have the right to know, it is also not advisable to make people see ugly things taking place in the House.

H.A. HALIM, *West Bengal Assembly Speaker, commenting on whether photography inside the House should be debarred*

■ If you were to use everything he says it would create mayhem.

PRITISH NANDY, *editor of* The Illustrated Weekly, *on Devi Lal*

■ I like Bal Thackeray because he's a blunt man and says what's on his mind.

NANA PATEKAR, *actor*

■ Here, the emphasis is on glamour, not acting.

SRIDEVI, *actress, on the Bombay film industry*



VINOD MEHTA

Another Hitler?

It suits the West to portray Saddam Hussein as a dangerous lunatic to justify US military presence in the Gulf



"Butcher of Baghdad", "Middle East Hitler," "Sadist Saddam", "Third World psychopath"—the insults are coming in fast and furious as Western media sum up the President of Iraq. A quality London paper, *The Observer* went to the extent of describing Saddam Hussein as "mentally deranged", a person who frequently suffers from epileptic fits. Unfortunately, little medical testimony was provided to substantiate these conclusions.

Less than two years ago, this same Western press and these same Western leaders were privately and publicly patting the "epileptic," urging him to continue fighting Iran, thus keeping the communalist nordes at bay—of course then, Saddam was a paying customer and countries were lining up to sell him everything from howitzers to frozen food to uniforms. The Americans and the Europeans didn't seem particularly worried about "stability in the Gulf" as the Iranian and Iraqi armies massacred each other. No bombs were dropped on Baghdad when Iraq used poisonous gases on its adversaries. Certainly we had outrage, but it was entirely verbal.

The Americans need to fit Saddam Hussein into the dangerous lunatic mould if they are to achieve a long-cherished goal—a goal that was first enunciated during the Eisenhower era. Fifty per cent of American oil supplies come from the Middle East, so, understandably, the Persian Gulf is of "vital interest" to the United States. However, since the region is perpetually in turmoil, and could be taken over by hostile powers, the Americans have desperately wanted more than just a diplomatic foothold in the area. Until Iraq invaded Kuwait, the justification for that extra foothold was absent. The real "crime" of the Iraqi President, according to seasoned Levant-watchers, is not that he violated the territorial integrity of a friendly neighbour, but that he presented the Americans with an opportunity to establish a short and long-term military presence in the region on a platter.

I am not an apologist for Saddam Hussein. He is a deeply unattractive figure; a tyrant who by ruthless oppression has managed to retain and consolidate power. Amnesty International is wasting its time compiling human rights violations in Iraq. They are just too numerous and too routine for anyone in Baghdad to care.

But is he also a mad man? A Hitler out to conquer the entire Middle East? The West would have us buy this thesis, because unless Saddam Hussein can be portrayed as a crazy despot who will first gobble up Kuwait, then Saudi Arabia, then Syria, and then the smaller kingdoms, there can be no justification for injecting 250,000 troops backed by a mind-boggling array of naval and air power. I hope the editors of *The Guiness Book Of Records* are alert because the lightning speed with which the Americans managed to deploy their forces in Saudi Arabia may qualify for an entry into their hallowed tome.

Even after consuming reams and reams of newspages full of reportage and comment, I am unable to understand why Saddam Hussein began the admittedly bold, but eventually suicidal, invasion of Kuwait. If he merely desired a few billion dollars or a few hundred kilometres of disputed territory, it surely could have been arranged, courtesy the good offices of King Husain, Hosni Mubarak and Yasser Arafat. My own view is that Saddam Hussein miscalculated and, what was supposed to be bluster and bluff, escalated through unstoppable momentum into full-scale invasion. With most of the "civilised" White world led by the Americans ganging up against him, Saddam couldn't afford to back off.

We should be careful not to misread the reasons why King Husain and

America made sure that even while President Mubarak was hosting a crucial Arab summit, its troops were moving into **Saudi Arabia**



Yasser Arafat have distanced themselves from moves to isolate Iraq militarily and diplomatically. Husain and Arafat have made it clear that they do not condone what Saddam Hussein has done, they do not want the annexation of Kuwait to be legitimised, but they deplore the fact that the Arabs were not given enough time to sort out their problems among themselves. Once American military presence was established within Saudi Arabia, there was no chance for internal Arab diplomacy to succeed.

All of which explains why the Americans were in such a tearing hurry to get into Saudi Arabia. If Arab efforts to talk sense into Saddam Hussein seemed to be making progress, the justification to militarily intervene would disappear. It was an opportunity no American President, especially one who has an eye on re-election, could miss. Accordingly, George Bush made sure that even while President Mubarak was hosting a crucial Arab summit, American troops were moving into Saudi Arabia.

Evidence is slowly emerging of a massive disinformation campaign orchestrated by the Americans to convince the Arabs in particular and the world in general that Saddam Hussein was amassing large forces on the Saudi border. There may have been some troop movements, but the Iraqis insist that they had no intention of invading Saudi Arabia or launching attacks from their side of the border. Would they, they ask, be crazy enough to open a second front when they had barely consolidated their annexation of Kuwait? Would they be crazy enough to give Washington an excuse to bomb Baghdad?







With Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, **Saddam Hussein** (right) has presented the **George Bush** administration with an opportunity to establish a military presence in the region on a platter

Saddam Hussein may suffer delusions of grandeur but, they emphasise, he is first and foremost a military commander well-versed in elementary tactics. These do not include hara-kiri.

The hypocrisy of the Americans is unconcealed. They are not concerned with stability in the region. If they were, they would not have been idle spectators to the decade-long carnage in Lebanon or the two-year *intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza. Arabs can butcher each other till Kingdom come (indeed a little warfare is good for business) and the US will not lift a finger, but if America's vital economic interests are in jeopardy, stability in the region becomes a sacred mantra.

India's response to the crisis has been both measured and sensible. We must not allow ourselves to be hustled by the Americans into supporting blockades, searches, sanctions and freezes. Support must be strictly within United Nation resolutions and only those measures which have the stamp of the Security Council should receive our backing. Already, there is deep disquiet in the UN over the manner in which the US is manipulating *post-facto* approval for unilateral actions. At some stage, the United Nations' diplomatic machinery will have to throw its full weight and majesty in order to get Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the negotiating table. India is ideally placed to play a helpful role in getting that machinery moving. The Secretary General of the United Nations must be desperately looking for mediators who the warring parties can trust. India is surely on top of that short list.

Although, apocalyptic visions of the tyrant raping the Levant are being sketched out in the West, my bet is that Saddam Hussein will withdraw very soon. The annexation of Kuwait will be annulled and the deposed Emir reinstated. Iraq might have to be financially compensated and the border might require new goal posts, but that is a small price to pay for restoring peace and normalcy. Whatever the terms, the Arabs must ensure that they are finally hammered out by the Arabs themselves with the UN possibly setting the pace for negotiations and providing the infrastructure for monitoring decisions reached.

Naturally, once they have established their presence, it will be difficult to get the Americans out of Saudi Arabia. Pleas for a residual or contingency force to be maintained (20,000 strong?) after the crisis has been defused will be strenuously made, and given the profound divisions among the Arabs, will find ready ears. The residual force may be in place for 5, 10 or even 20 years. The Arabs must resist these time bombs. There are enough disputes, wars, insurgencies raging in the region to last this century and beyond. Without exception, the presence of American troops is deeply resented throughout the Arab world, it is an affront to their sovereignty and growing sense of nationhood. All those who sincerely wish peace in the region must ensure that after Saddam Hussein packs his bags from Kuwait, not a single American soldier remains on Saudi soil. •

The friendly Man from Eureka Forbes is about to demonstrate the most convenient way to keep your home free of dust and dirt.

One of these days the friendly Eureka Forbes salesman will ring your doorbell and introduce himself with his identity card.

This man inspires confidence – which is only natural. Because he is a member of the largest, most successful sales organisation of its kind in India. Backed by dependable after sales service.



He will introduce modern home products to cope with today's problems – dust, pollution, contaminated water and the lack of domestic help.

He has two unique products to demonstrate: EUROCLEAN all-purpose cleaning system, which is much more than a vacuum cleaner, and AQUAGUARD on-line, water filter-cum-purifier.

EUROCLEAN removes minute specks of dirt and dust in your home effortlessly. Even dust you didn't know existed. AQUAGUARD gives you clear, safe drinking water on tap – at the flick of a switch – even if the raw water has high bacterial contamination.

The Eureka Forbes salesman will show you – in your own home – how these products can bring the advantages of modern cleanliness and hygiene to your family. Making it a cleaner, safer world for you.

You need not wait till his rounds bring him to your doorstep. Do contact Eureka Forbes at any of the following locations for an early visit. Or, write to Eureka Forbes Limited, P.O. Box 936, G.P.O., Bombay 400 001.

Euroclean Mitey Vac Sales & Service Centres are located all over the country. Check the list for the one nearest to you.

BOMBAY*: Head Office: Forbes Building, 4th Floor, Charanjit Rai Marg, Fort Tel 2047870 (5 lines) • **DELHI*:** 401/402, Archana Commercial Complex, Greater Kailash Part I Tel 6416143, 6463606 • **CALCUTTA*:** Priya, BD-9, 1st Floor Sector 1, Salt Lake City Tel 347799 • **MADRAS*:** Mount Chambers, Block No. A B, F & G, 1st Floor 758 Mount Road Tel. 8250854. • **BANGALORE*:** Parvathi Plaza, 204/205 Richmond Road. Tel 211738, 213125 • **AHMEDABAD*:** 15, Madhuban Society, Opp Gujarat Vidyapith, Ashram Road. Tel 446982, 466821, 465320. • **ALLAHABAD:** United Tower, 2nd Floor, 53 Leader Road. • **CHANDIGARH*:** Sector 7-C, S.C.O. No. 14, 2nd Floor, Madhya Marg. Tel: 26735. • **COIMBATORE*:** No. 61 West T.V. Swamy Road, R S Puram. Tel: 43180, 49648. • **HYDERABAD*:** 101 Kala Mansion, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad. Tel: 844128, 840183, 840206. • **JAIPUR*:** 22-23 Central Market, Bapu Nagar. Tel 70205 • **JAMSHEDPUR:** Talwar Building, Flat D, 1st Floor, 1 Inner Circle Road,



Euroclean Aquaguard

EUREKA FORBES LIMITED

Pioneers in modern cleanliness and hygiene.

The all-purpose cleaning system which is much more than a vacuum cleaner.

On-line, water filter-cum-purifier.



Aquaguard is also available at the locations marked with an asterisk.

C Block, P.O. Bistipur. Tel: 24470, 25351. • **KANPUR:** 306/307, 3rd Floor, City Centre, The Mall. • **LUCKNOW*:** C-414 Sector B, Mahanagar Tel: 77296 • **MANGALORE*:** 3-33-2951/52 Pintos Lane, Kadri Kambla, Ground & 1st Floor. Tel: 32445. • **NAGPUR:** Paul Commercial Complex, 4th Floor, Ajni Square, Wardha Road. Tel: 533153. • **PATNA*:** No. 103 A/1 Ashiyani, Ground Floor, Off Boring Road, Nageshwar Colony. • **PUNE*:** Mubarak Manzil, 2nd Floor, 1 Dhole Patil Road. Tel: 667968, 668773, 667016

• **RANCHI:** Shyam Lila, 1st Floor, 59/B Circular Road P.O. Lalpur Tel: 27681 • **ROURKELA:** Ground Floor, Flat No. D 257, Koelnagar, Dist. Sundergarh. • **SILIGURI:** 521 Ward No. 16, Swami Sarani, 1st Floor, Hakimpara, P.O. Siliguri Dist. Darjeeling • **TRIVANDRUM*:** T.C. No. 42/88 Pankaja Bhavan Kalipankulam Road, Maracaud Tel: 79570 • **VIJAYAWADA*:** 33-13-14 Venegellavan Street Seetarampuram, Ground Floor, Tel: 475964 476742

everest/90/EFL213-CAL-SNL

Rallying the farmers

The Congress(I) makes a serious bid to woo the peasants

Has the Congress(I) been able to capitalise on the Janata Dal leadership's alienation from Mahendra Singh Tikait's Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU)? How high is the party's stock among farmers today?

Take a hint. Of the 70-odd farmers' rallies former Union surface transport minister Rajesh Pilot—he is the Congress(I)'s answer to the likes of Devi Lal and Tikait—has addressed all over the country, as many as ten were held after his defeat in the Lok Sabha election from Bharatpur in November 1989. Four of these were in Haryana—in Sohna and Rewari (April), Gurgaon (May) and Faridabad (July)—two in Guntur and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh (July), one in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan (March), one in Kota, Rajasthan (June), and one in NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh (July). The latest of these was held in August at Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh, where former Congress(I) MP Meera Kumari and former minister Mohsina Kidwai were also present. The crowd was close to 20,000—impressive enough for a sleepy small town.



Rajesh Pilot addressing a rally in MP: making a dent

The succession of Congress(I) farmers' rallies since 1988 has covered Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh. Almost all of them were well-attended. Among those who shared the dais with Pilot were Farooq Abdullah, Bhajan Lal and Narain Dutt Tiwari.

"Since farmers everywhere are rarely busy all the year round, what they need desperately is agro-based industries, which can provide them employment through a major part of the year when they have no work in the fields," Rajesh Pilot says. "This is what we talk about in our rallies." A regular monthly income from such industries could sustain them, and when they earned a bounty from a good harvest, it could go into better agricultural inputs, or be used for major expenses like studies, marriages etc. Also, Pilot points out, there is a dire need for better roads and communication links with rural areas. "Give a village a good road and proper transport and you will find the quality of life around it changing drastically," Pilot says. "People can sell their products more easily because of access to wider markets," he explains. "But this government is not paying much attention to these needs," Pilot claims.

Pilot and his men are now getting ready for two more rallies—one at Hindwa in Madhya Pradesh and another at Champaran in Bihar. The meetings in Haryana were a big success. The rally at Sohna, which drew a crowd of over 20,000, was addressed by leaders of the Disneyland Virodhi Morcha like Swami Agnivesh, besides Pilot. The villagers there decided not to allow any farmland to be acquired for former Haryana CM O.P. Chautala's "fun-city" scheme. The Haryana government now appears to be going slow on the acquisition of land, even though the notice to acquire some 36,000 acres hasn't been withdrawn. "But it was clear that the people have won the war against the Haryana government," Pilot says. The movement against the Disneyland project has given a tremendous boost to Congress(I)'s hopes in the state, where elections are due in 1992 but are likely to be held earlier.

Congress(I) leaders feel that owing to popular disenchantment with Tikait's confrontationist tactics and Devi Lal's ignominious ouster from the National Front government, farmers may want to side with the Congress(I). Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced from the ramparts of Red Fort on Independence Day that the Nineties was the decade of the farmer. But the government has failed to protect the interests of the farmers: it is only paying attention to the demands of rich farmers, not peasants and small farmers who make up a majority of the farming community. What is more, the present regime is actually spending less on agriculture and related sectors than the pevious government. And in Andhra Pradesh—where it is not in power—the central government has gone back on its commitment to help farmers and has refused to pay compensation for paddy demaged by the recent floods. Moreover, V.P. Singh was himself against the crop insurance scheme when he was finance minister under Rajiv Gandhi, and this is something many farmers are not willing to forget.

The Congress(I), however, has divided the farmers along caste lines. While Rajesh Pilot woos the Gujjars of western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and other states, former Speaker Balram Jakhar tries to project himself as a leader of the Jats.

Ultimately, the Congress(I)'s chances of providing a more stable—and credible—government is what will decide its rating among farmers. Both the rural rich and poor have realised that it is easy to make promises. What they will be looking for in the coming months from the National Front government is results. So far, the V.P. Singh regime has done precious little for them. •

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

"We will not yield to pressure"

Union labour minister **Ram Vilas Paswan** on the anti-reservation stir and the challenges before the government

BY NIRMAL MITRA



SUNDAY: The acceptance of the Mandal Commission report means that backward castes have been accorded the same status as Harijans and tribals. How do you justify this?

Ram Vilas Paswan: Under the Constitution, they have the same status. Constitutionally, the backward castes are treated as socially and educationally backward, just as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are. Only, while scheduled castes were treated as untouchables, the backward castes weren't. The Constitution itself provides for reservations for SC/STs. Later, several commissions were set up to go into the demand for reserving jobs and seats for the backward classes. There was the Kaka Kalelkar Commission. Later, the Mandal Commission was set up in 1977, and it submitted its report in December 1980. It said that backward castes formed 52 per cent of the population but it recommended 27 per cent reservations for them. Normally, reservations should be equal to their proportion in the population. But the Mandal Commission said it was suggesting 27 per cent reservations to prevent the commission's recommendation from being challenged in court, because the Supreme Court had laid down that more than 50 per cent reservations would be unconstitutional. However, nowhere has it been written in the Constitution that more than 50 per cent reservations were not allowed. Even today, Tamil Nadu has 69 per cent reservations. So the Mandal Commission's recommendations are perfectly in keeping with the Constitution.

Q: But the backward castes in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are socially and economically stronger than the SC/STs. As a result of the Mandal Commission's recommendations being accepted, in many cases the landowner and the landless labourer will be on the same level as far as job reservations are concerned.

A: It is not a question of whether they are well off or not. The question is whether they are socially backward or not. If backward classes can enjoy reservations in states like Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, why can't they have reservations in the central government jobs too? Besides, the Constitution does not mention economic criteria anywhere. We are not opposed to economic criteria. We are ready to provide jobs to economically backward people. And even if we enact a law reserving jobs for those below the poverty line, these anti-reservationists would continue is agitate. The reason is that none of them are below the poverty line. The anti-reservationists come from rich homes. They don't know what is economic hardship.

Q: But the government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission report has drawn widespread protests. Students and jobless youths are on the rampage, blocking and burning trains in Bihar. The trouble is bound to spread.

A: I find the destruction of railway property deplorable. But then, this is the fate of all bold government decisions. Interested sections will definitely resist them. But then, the agitators need to be told that they cannot deprive a section of the people of their legitimate rights by resorting to agitations.

Q: But in the years since Independence, caste has become a less important factor than class. What bothers people today is how much they can earn, not what caste they belong to. Isn't the Mandal report putting the clock back?

A: If caste is not an important factor, why are all these anti-reservationists protesting? This agitation is proof that the caste factor is alive. And, as I said, even if you apply the economic criterion, these people would agitate because none of them are from a poor background. It is people from lower castes who are poor, not them. I would like to mention another factor. The anti-reservationists have been saying that merit would suffer as a result of the fresh reservations. Why don't they hold agitations against capitation fee colleges and institutions, where rich people send their incompetent sons and daughters to become doctors and engineers?

There is no question of the government yielding to any kind of pressure. As far as the rights of the poor and the interests of the backward classes, scheduled castes and minorities are concerned, we are committed to protect them. ●

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Independence Day blues

The adhesive that held the National Front government together seems to be coming unstuck



And so, we have scraped through the 43rd birthday party of Independent India. With a non-*kisan* unfurling the flag. The Tau, nevertheless, in attendance. And the longest-ever speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort by one who promises to be the shortest-ever lived Prime Minister of India. Truly, empty vessels make the loudest noise.

It was a brave effort, though. The costume stitched to perfection. The rose petals disposed around the shoulders with just the right touch of casualness. The gestures well-rehearsed. The dialogue delivered with panache ("*Daata-paata ka naata*", etc. *Wah! Wah!*). The matinee shot through with all the sincerity of repertory theatre. A sterling performance by a used car salesman. Not an Independence Day address to the nation. But an election manifesto of a government that has confessed to itself that it has not four years left to serve, but just four months left to run.

Like a chief guest distributing sweeties to the kiddies at a school function—one each for each child—the Prime Minister doled out one little goodie for each good little child: reservations for the backwards, reservations for SC/STs, reservations for women, reservations in Parliament for the poor (who, presumably, will cease to be poor the minute they draw their first month's salary as MPs!)—a government of reservations, over which all of us have our reservations! A compulsory holiday on the Prophet's birthday for the Muslims (who were, in any case, taking the day off all these years as a reserved holiday). A Decade for the Farmers (presumably to mollify the Tau while capturing his power base—in yet another delightfully honest display of the stiletto in the ribs by our most value-based practitioner of the art). A pie-in-the-sky promise for the youth of the country. And yet another promise of one rank-one pension for ex-servicemen (by a government already sinking under the fiscal burden of its populist follies).

I never thought the day would dawn when I would quote with approbation from the *Indian Express*. But Because The Truth Involves Us All, here goes. The Prime Minister, says the *Express*, "is *now* revealing an electoral strategy which is nothing but a cobbling together of sectional and parochial interests". *Now*? And what, might one ask, is so new about all this? When the caste groupings of the Lok Dal got together with the telephone tappers of the Janata Party and the defectors of the Jan Morcha to initially form the Janata Dal (JD), was it not then a "cobbling together" of "sectional interests"? And when they cobbled together the regionals and themselves into the National Front was it not then a pandering to "parochial interests"?

If, as the *Express* says, "what is being done is not just populism (and)

THE FOUR CIVIL WARS



MAJORITY VS MINORITIES

The Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue threatens to set the country aflame



THE CASTE WAR

V.P. Singh is now planning to out-Tau the Tau. The casteist cauldron is being stirred till it boils over

not just electoral calculations (but) to give politics at the national level the parochial and therefore disastrous character which has brought Bihar and UP to the present pass"—that is all because, in nine short months, the National Front, with the BJP as midwife, has delivered the country to this pass. The original sin is not in the making now. It was present at the less than immaculate moment of conception of the National Front (NF). The JD and the NF were always a cobbling together of sectional and parochial interests. The chickens are merely coming home to roost.

The adhesive is coming unstuck—precisely because the only thing that held the JD/NF together was the coalition of sectarian and parochial interests. The countdown has now commenced. "Things fall apart/TheCentre cannot hold." The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has already withdrawn its support to the Mulayam Singh Yadav government in Lucknow and is in a rage over Laloo Prasad Yadav's *bhaiyas* having blackened the face of one of their legislators in Patna. (I'm neither speaking figuratively nor making that one up—it really did happen!) The BJP is ostentatiously distancing itself from the government at the Centre, recognising that any further tainting of its image through its continued association with the NF will only damage irretrievably its electoral prospects this winter.

The Mouse in Autumn nurses ambitions of becoming the Lion in Winter.

The crunch is over the precise location of Lord Ram's site of birth: a matter which L.K. Advani insists is not a question of fact but of faith (how electorally convenient!). With becoming generosity, Advaniji affirms that if the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) claim to Ram Janmabhoomi is conceded without further fuss, he for his part, will magnanimously relinquish the Hindu claim to Krishna Janmabhoomi. The birthplace of Lord Krishna is thus, it would seem, a question of faction, not of fiction! Why such magnanimity is not possible in Ayodhya, we are not told. Unless it be that the BJP is so influenced by an alien monotheism that it prefers to take one God at a time, even as elections are taken one at a time. And thus the Krishna *bhaktas* are pitted against the Ram *bhaktas*, adding a fifth civil war to the four already launched by the Janata Dal, with the full (if, increasingly, less than wholehearted) support of the BJP and the Left Front.

And what are these four civil wars?

First, of course, we have the majority community being roused against the minorities—and all in the name of "positive secularism", which, it would appear, is unable to secure "justice for all" until it first gets "appeasement for none" on the road. On Vijayadashami Day, 29 September, lakhs of VHP-organised *mashaal* processions will start setting the country to the torch. To his eternal credit, my *hamshakal*, Mulayam Singh Yadav, has made it unambiguously clear that he will not permit the lawless pulling down of the Babri Masjid. Yet, the problem is not for the city police in Ayodhya or the district authorities in Faizabad or even the state government in UP alone to tackle. It is a national and nationwide problem.

Mulayam Singh Yadav is doing no more than his Congress predecessor, Narain Dutt Tiwari, did to preserve law and order in the vicinity of the Masjid/Mandir. It was what happened outside UP—in places like Khandwa and Indore in Madhya Pradesh and, above all, at Bhagalpur in Bihar—that last year's *shilanyas* processions led to mayhem and massacre. But at the *shilanyas* processions, it was only bricks that were sported. This time round, it is the lighted flame that is to be carried aloft. Not just around Ayodhya, but from lakhs of villages and thousands of towns all over the country. Last year, out of something like 2,80,000 processions—almost entirely in Congress-run states—it was the Congress commitment to secularism and law and order which ensured that all but a bare dozen or so of these lakhs of processions passed off without incident. Yet, just these half a dozen serious breakdowns of peace were enough to spell doom for the party.

Now the torchlight processions will pass through BJP-run Madhya Pradesh and BJP/JD-run Gujarat and Rajasthan. Those who incited the trouble last year are now in charge of confronting the incitement all over western and central India. How can the inciters possibly stop the incited? Either the minorities will cower in fright. Or they will stand up and fight. Either way spells disaster for communal harmony in the country. Therefore, some time between 29 September and 30 October, BJP-fomented communal strife in the country will



RURAL VS URBAN

This war is Devi Lal's invention. But Kisanistan is quite as dangerous as Khalistan



THE ANTI-ENGLISH BATTLE

Mulayam Singh Yadav continues his campaign to rid the country of one of its own languages

force the cruel choice on V.P. Singh: to dissolve the Lok Sabha and go to the country or to wait till the Lok Sabha convenes for its winter session in early November for the BJP to withdraw its support to the NF government and force through a mid-term poll.

The second war is the caste war. It is the calculus of caste that sent the Index of Opposition Unity soaring. It is the politics of caste that brought the JD/NF to governance. It is the crisis of caste that now threatens the continuance of that government. For, it is pure *Express* illusion to believe that V.P. Singh would ever "address national issues from a national perspective".

The Chanakya of *jaath-paath* has a ready casteist lolly for every caste grouping. Tutored by the late Tau in the mechanics of cobbling together sectional and parochial groupings, V.P. Singh is now busily attempting to out-Tau the Tau. He has hung a portrait of Dr Ambedkar in Central Hall and declared his birthday a holiday. That he thinks brings on board his ship the Scheduled Castes. Islam doesn't permit the hanging of portraits anywhere, but it doesn't say no to holidays. So the Prophet is pressed into the cause. And the Muslims—so the theory goes—will also come on board. The backwards are not even identified—but assured that 27 per cent of government jobs are theirs for the asking. Campuses all over the country go up in flames And by the time the backwards get around to discovering that most of them are not even categorised as backward, and that, in any case, reservations amount to no more than a few hundred Class I and Class II jobs for the crores of backward aspirants, the elections would be over—and VP has never been one to be bothered by much other than the next election. Meanwhile, the Tau, not to be outdone, is rounding up *his* Jats against *their* Jats, while elsewhere the Jats slog it out with the Jatavs, the Thakurs take up cudgels against the Harijans, the forward backwards push back the backward forwards—and the whole casteist cauldron is stirred till it boils over.

The third war is Devi Lal's invention, now neatly pinched by his once-upon-a-time *bhanja*. Instead of stressing the rural-urban continuum which is the true reality of development, instead of reinforcing the sym-



The BJP is ostentatiously distancing itself from the government at the Centre. The Mouse in Autumn nurses ambitions of becoming the Lion in Winter

biotic inter-dependence of town on country and country on town which is the essence of economic growth, instead of promoting urban agglomerations in every district to boost the rural economy and reduce the insane rush to the metropolitan cities, instead of facilitating the smooth transition of a labour force which is over-dependent on an under-productive agriculture from farm to non-farm occupations and from rural to urban employment, instead of uniting the *kisar* with the *mazdoor* and town folk with country folk, the Devi Lal School of Thought (new Principal Chowdhary V.P. Singh) has decided to pit rural against urban, create a conflict of interest where none exists between town and country, undermine all the linkages of modernity which bind village and *mohalla* in a common cause, and start a totally artificial and wholly unnecessary war between the rural and urban people of India. Devi Lal might resort to all the contortions he wishes in describing the urban poor as "rural". And V.P. Singh might get up to his usual conjuror's trick of pinching the other player's trumps and aces, but the fact remains that the rural-urban divide is quite as bogus a divide as the communal divide that plunged us into the vivisection of the country in 1947. Kisanistan is quite as dangerous as Khalistan.

And finally the fourth war: the authentic Lohia/Raj Narain destructionism of Mulayam Singh's campaign to rid the country of one of its own languages, English. The only root languages truly native to the soil of our civilisation are probably Brahui (spoken now only in pockets of Baluchistan and Sind) and its Dravidian sister-tongue, Tamil. Sanskrit was a foreign language imported into this country by the Aryan conquerors. Greek influenced the development of Pushto and Kashmiri. Chinese is evident in the dialects of much of the north-east. Urdu is the synthesis of Amir Khusro's Hindawi with Arabic and Persian. English is but the last of a long series of languages to lap the shores of our country from abroad. And so effectively have we mangled our version of the Queen's tongue that Hinglish is perhaps a more accurate description of the language that roughens the otherwise *mulayam* visage of the chief minister of UP.

But more dangerous even than the language of politics is the politics of language. Twenty-five years ago, Tamil Nadu almost broke away from the Union on the question of language. Now, as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) takes over the sovereignty of the Tamil Nadu coast with the connivance of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), any Indian capable of seeing that there is more to our country than Etah has to offer would recognise that this is the worst possible moment to restart a north-south war over language. Mulayam Singh might imagine that a few more of his kith and kin might get central government jobs if Hindi replaces English as the dominant language of governance. But if the minority of Indians who speak Hindi were to get an unfare dominance over the majority of Indians who don't, that is what could lead to the country being put to the torch.

The end is nigh. It isdarkest before dawn. We'll all be better off come the next Independence Day. For we can then celebrate the final triumph of the First War of Independence instead of worrying ourselves sick over the four wars after Independence launched by this lot in their last desperate bid to cling on to power at any cost. ●

(The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.)

INDER MALHOTRA

Laid-back diplomacy

The Raja's regime has done precious little in the area of foreign affairs



For quite sometime now, South Asian experts the world over, most of them quite friendly to this country, have been moaning that India has practically disappeared from the world stage where it used to be so active for so long. Perhaps they are making their point a shade too strongly, but what they are saying is essentially true.

And the truth hurts the Janata Dal and its many supporters, who particularly resent the comparisons between the relatively withdrawn style of the V.P. Singh government and the high-profile diplomatic forays of the Rajiv regime. The contrast between the two situations is indeed conspicuous.

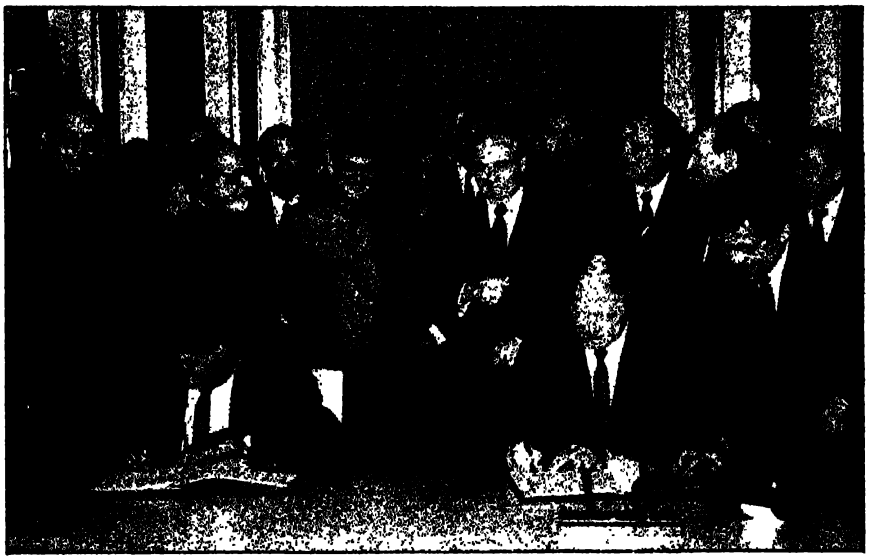
On winning his massive mandate at the start of 1985, Rajiv Gandhi lost no time in holding in New Delhi a summit of the six nations, representing all continents, who, under his mother's leadership, had taken the famous initiative for 'nuclear sanity'. And, thereafter, he did not let up. He travelled far and wide, making no fewer than four visits to Moscow and three to the United States. At a conference of the Commonwealth heads of government, he quarrelled with Margaret Thatcher over sanctions against South Africa. At Harare, he put forward suggestions for setting up the Africa Fund and at the 40th birthday party of the UN, he unfolded a three-phase plan for ridding the world of the menace of nuclear weapons by 2010. And so on.

During the nearly nine months since coming to power the Raja had done little in the diplomatic department. He has travelled only to the Maldives, Namibia (to celebrate its independence and the release of Nelson Mandela) and the Soviet Union. The only international gathering he has attended so far was the first meeting of G-15, the poor nations' answer to G-7, the club of the super-rich countries, which was formed, ironically, as a result of one of Rajiv's initiatives. The G-15 was held at Kuala Lumpur, where V.P. Singh cut a rather nice figure. But this did not earn India a place on the standing committee the G-15 chose to set up.

There are two important reasons for this unhappy state of affairs. One is that the Janata Dal government has got bogged down in internal squabbles sooner than might have been expected. Sadly, the Prime Minister could not get even the credit for his successful mission to Moscow because by the time his aircraft landed at Palam, the crisis created by the Tau had overshadowed everything else in this country.

Secondly, and this is in some ways more important, from the word go the Janata Dal government was determined to restrict its sights to India's immediate neighbourhood. It had been virtually forced by its several think-tanks into believing that it would earn a place in history by overnight transforming the strife-torn and tension-ridden South Asia into an "area of peace and cooperation". Pakistan converted this dream into a nightmare almost instantly. But the government does claim credit, with some justification, for having improved relations with other neighbours. Today's relative harmony with Bangladesh is due largely to Inder Gujral's strenuous efforts. But the sea change in the relationship with Nepal has been made possible only by the triumph of the democratic forces in the Himalayan kingdom.

The Janata Dal government was right to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka on 31 March last. But its fond belief that this had solved the problem with its southern neighbour and ushered in an era of bonhomie between the two countries has been rudely belied. Refugees from the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka are again pouring into Tamil Nadu and this cannot but have disastrous consequences.



V.P. Singh in Moscow: a withdrawn style of functioning

All this is nothing, however, compared with the Indian government's prolonged inaction over the crisis in the Gulf and West Asia after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the landing of US troops in Saudi Arabia.

No one should, of course, underestimate the Indian government's dilemma when the only Arab country to stand by us over Kashmir and in which our economic stakes are enormous, puts itself in the wrong and is sought to be penalised by the rest of the world united as never before. To take a clear-cut stand is not easy. But because the situation is so delicate and so vital to us is reason enough for a quick and imaginative action. ●


Dreams
for sale...
OFFER OPEN

CANSTAR

Earn 50% or more return per annum for a lifetime on initial investment after 10 years

Canbank Mutual Fund has, since its inception, built up an excellent track record. The best of professional skills, financial acumen and intimate knowledge of the corporate world combine to bring to you high return, yet safe investment opportunities. Scheme after scheme, launched by us, has succeeded in turning market opportunities into lucrative returns. Look at the total payout of **CANSHARE** alone – over 100% in less than 30 months excluding market appreciation (Market price Rs. 22.50 as on 31st July, 1990).

HIGHLIGHTS

- A well established Mutual Fund with the largest investor base
- Professionally managed with proven track record of success
- Tax benefit under Section 80L of the Income-tax Act, 1961 upto Rs. 10,000/- or Capital Gains* benefit under Income-tax Act
- Easy encashability – to be listed on Bombay and other Stock Exchanges after one year
- Buy back any time after three years
- Easy Transferability

* Separate application forms available

Minimum Repurchase price for 1000 Canstars:

A. On completion of:

3 Years	–	Rs. 15,150
4 Years	–	Rs. 17,400
5 Years	–	Rs. 20,000
6 Years	–	Rs. 23,000
7 Years	–	Rs. 26,500
8 Years	–	Rs. 30,500
9 Years	–	Rs. 35,000
10 Years	–	Rs. 40,000

B. Option on completion of 10 years
Receive monthly income @ 12.50% p.a. calculated on accumulated amount
and
Receive an annual bonus/appreciation from the 11th year onwards

CANBANK MUTUAL FUND

Orient House, Adi Marzban Path (Mangalore Street), Bombay 400 038

Principal Trustee : CANARA BANK

Always a step ahead

Concept


BOMBAY DYEING

MID-TERM POLL?

Is V.P. Singh preparing to go to the country?

In the end, it *was* Vishwanath Pratap Singh who unfurled the tricolour from the Red Fort on the 44th Independence Day. All of Chowdhary Devi Lal's predictions that it would be the son of a farmer who performed the honours this year proved incorrect and scores of astrologers found that their crystal balls had let them down.

But it might as well have been somebody else who addressed the nation from the ramparts of that historic fort. Gone was the Vishwanath Pratap Singh who had won the nation around to his brand of value-based politics and sold a vision of a new India to an eager electorate.

In his place was the classic Hindi-belt demagogue. In a 75-minute-long speech, he used poetry, populism and platitude to dramatic effect; threw in references to the poor in every sentence; borrowed his rhetoric from Salim-Javed; and outlined a brand new scheme to seize the initiative from his rivals.

There were the predictable references to the Mandal Commission report and the bizarre—if not entirely unexpected—claim that the way forward for India lay in extending job reservations and ensuring that caste rather than merit became the basis for government recruitment.

But there was more. In the course of his speech, the Prime Minister pulled out a populist plum for nearly every section that had access to a ballot paper.

- The farmers were wooed rather blatantly with the promise of turning the 1990s into a 'Kisan Decade'. This apparently means that farmers will get remunerative prices for produce, loan waivers (though he cautioned that these had to be one-offs) and other incentives.
- Muslims were told that henceforth, the birth anniversary of the Prophet Mohammad would be declared a national holiday.
- Harijans were reminded that the National Front government had unveiled Dr Ambedkar's portrait in Parliament. Why, asked the Prime Minister significantly, had no other party done this before?
- Women were promised that legislation would be passed this year to reserve 30 per cent of the seats in *panchayats* for them. A commission would soon be set up to examine the lot of women.
- As for youth, this year the government had set aside Rs 265 crores for them. Of this, Rs 120 crores will be spent on loans to the educated, Rs 50 crores for educational loans, and Rs 70 crores for rural employment schemes. (This adds up to Rs 240 crores; he did not say what would happen to the other Rs 25 crores.)
- The backward classes (a Hindi-belt term for various politically-significant castes) had always had a bad deal, but now, after the Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented, the 52 per cent of the population that belonged to these classes would find it easier to get jobs.
- But the real lollipop was reserved for that ambiguously defined group: "the poor". Most governments treated poverty as an economic issue but, said V.P. Singh, he would make it a political issue. "I have the guts to give the poor real power." It turned out that this meant that he would reserve 40 per cent of parliamentary seats for them.



JAGDISH YADAV

And so it went, with promises being scattered in all directions and mawkishly emotional

platitudes being hurled at the voters.

It was, by any standards, an astonishing performance. As even the *Indian Express*, the Prime Minister's strongest supporter in the media, editorialised the next day: "It is indeed sad that a leader who had been elected Prime Minister because it was perceived that he would address national issues from a national perspective is now revealing an electoral strategy which is nothing but a cobbling together of national and parochial interests."

That the *Express*—like the rest of the media—was appalled was clear. But more significant was its conclusion that the demagoguery only made sense if an election was on the cards. "But," it cautioned, "what is being done is not just populism. It is not just electoral calculations. It is to give politics at the national level the parochial—and therefore, disastrous—character which has brought Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to the present pass."

The Independence Day address provided the most compelling evidence to date that the Prime Minister was preparing to go to the country. But there had been other indications before that. There was, of course, the decision to accept the drastic—not to say, disastrous—recommendations of the Mandal Commission whose report had been gathering dust for around a decade. But there had also been attempts to cultivate Harijans through such gimmicks as the unveiling of the Ambedkar portrait and the launching of a drive to fill the Scheduled Caste quota in government jobs.

Moreover, V.P. Singh seemed to have also taken a decision to make a determined bid for the Muslim vote. Whereas earlier, he had vacillated on such crucial issues as Ram Janmabhoomi, he now seemed to be throwing his weight behind UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's position that he would abide by the court judgement and not let either the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) proceed with the construction of the temple.

During the Independence Day speech, the Prime Minister reasserted this position, but his earlier statements had already made it clear that though the BJP kept his government in office, he was still going to aim for the Muslim vote.

All this made sense only if V.P. Singh was cobbling together a coalition consisting of the backward classes, the Muslims and the Harijans.



Traditionally, such a coalition—or, at least, some elements of it—has swung the election in the crucial states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. But while the Muslims and Harijans have usually voted for the Congress (with some notable exceptions), the backwards have been divided, with a chunk of their vote going to the Lok Dal.

Now, V.P. Singh hopes to construct his own vote-bank, comprising the backward classes, the Muslims and the Harijans. Traditionally, such a coalition has swung the elections in the crucial states of Bihar and UP

Now, V.P. Singh hoped to construct his own vote-bank, one that not only built on the Congress' traditional areas of support, but extended its boundaries by borrowing from the non-Congress parties as well.

It was an audacious strategy and one that seemed certain to cement his status as the Indian political phenomenon of his times.

If there is to be a mid-term poll, then what is the most likely date? Rajiv Gandhi told SUNDAY that the Congress expected one early next year. The BJP appears to be aiming for next summer. And both would probably be happiest with the autumn of 1991. But now, the initiative has been wrenched from them by the Prime Minister's new caste-based strategy. The timing of the next election, consequently, de-







THE MUSLIM VOTE

V.P. Singh seems to have decided to make a bid for it. He has now thrown his weight behind UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue

pends on Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

Some things, however, are clear. There can be no election much before November 1990. The process of raising money, strengthening the party organisation, etc., will take at least that long. But, on the other hand, if V.P. Singh intends to use the Independence Day speech as the blueprint for his electoral strategy, then he must go to the country within the next seven months. That calculation yields an outside limit of March 1991. The most likely date, according to Delhi's political pundits, however, is January 1991, just over a year after V.P. Singh became Prime Minister.

All this speculation leaves a crucial question unanswered. In many ways, V.P. Singh's government is no more unstable today than it was when it was first elected. So what would the Prime Minister gain by calling an election so early?

There is no single, simple answer to that question, but V.P. Singh does have many reasons for not waiting. Some relate to the state of his own party; others to the attitude of the Janata Dal's allies.

When V.P. Singh sacked Devi Lal, there was a chorus of approval from the press, but many of the Prime Minister's advisers warned that history could repeat itself: Morarji Desai had also won plaudits when Charan Singh left the government, but the end result was the collapse of the 1977-79 Janata experiment.

The Prime Minister knows that Devi Lal is a wrecker and that, given time, he will do his best to bring the government down. Moreover, the Tau has the support of at least three key chief ministers: UP's Mulayam Singh, Bihar's Laloo Yadav and Gujarat's Chimanbhai Patel. At present, none of them has come out openly in favour of Devi Lal, but in the coming months, it is entirely possible that one or more of them will break ranks and back the Chowdhary in public. Moreover, the national leadership of the Janata Dal also suspects that Orissa chief minister Biju Patnaik will form a regional party

Therefore, V.P. Singh really does not have much time. If he waits, the cracks will become apparent. If, on the other hand, he calls an election in the next few months, then everyone will fall in line.

There are problems too with the allies. During the last parliamentary session, the left parties demonstrated a notable unwillingness to come to the government's aid and since then, the CPI(M) has been even cooler in its attitude to the regime. There is no danger yet of the left withdrawing support, but V.P. Singh recognises that he can no longer take the communists for granted.

More crucial is the attitude of the BJP. While the two parties are allies in Parliament, they are also rivals throughout the Hindi belt. Consequently, the BJP has walked a tightrope between backing the regime and yet, consciously distancing itself from its failures. This state of affairs cannot endure. At some stage, the BJP will have to withdraw support. Presumably, it will do so at a time when the Janata Dal is at its weakest and the BJP is at its strongest if it is to be sure of ensuring gains in the election that must inevitably follow any such move. Realist that he is, V.P. Singh recognises that this situation is unacceptable: far better that he calls an election when the Janata Dal is ready and the BJP is still unprepared.

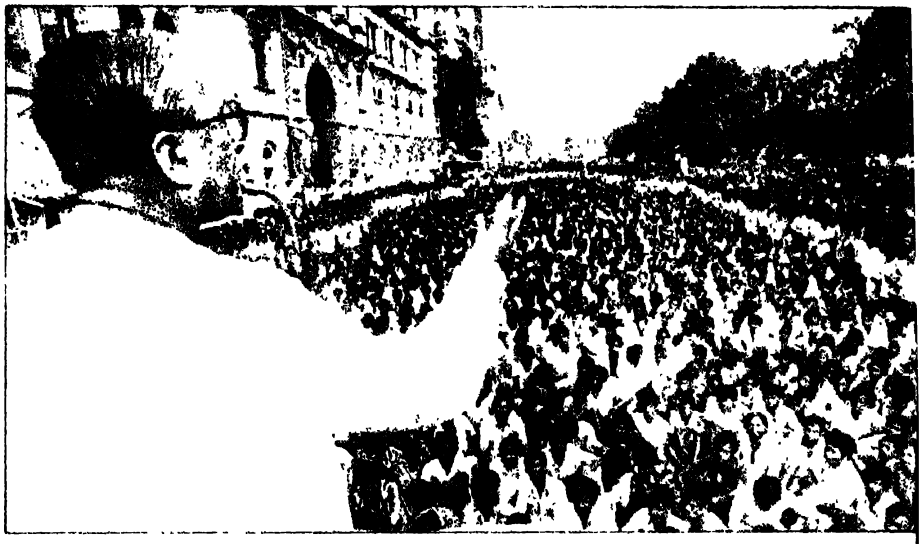
The betting in New Delhi is that the BJP may withdraw support over the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. The Congress has already indicated that it will launch a mass movement to counter the VHP's. Where does that leave the Janata Dal? It has two options. One: it can tacitly back the VHP in which case it will only strengthen the BJP. Or two: it can hope to wrest the Muslim vote away from the Congress. The latter is the more attractive option as many Muslims deserted the Congress

at the last election any way and as Mulayam Singh Yadav has built up an impressive minority base for the Janata Dal in UP.

So, from V.P. Singh's point of view, it would make perfect sense to oppose the VHP over Ram Janmabhoomi, let the BJP withdraw support and then go to the country on a 'secular' platform.

The new Vishwanath Pratap Singh seems essentially different from the old avatar. Crucial to the Raja's success in the years since he left the Congress was the support of the middle class. Because he was perceived as an honest—if somewhat indecisive—idealist in the midst of a political system gone crazy with cynicism and opportunism, he also won the support of the media

But now, V.P. Singh recognises that the old avatar simply does not stand up to scrutiny. With the over-expectations created by the Bofors investigators rebounding on the regime, the Raja has stopped harping on corruption in his speeches. He has abandoned hopes of extending his popularity south of the Vindhyas (he has avoided addressing public meetings in the southern states since he became Prime Minister) and has recognised that while middle class support might flatter his vanity, it does not necessarily win elections.



The new V.P. Singh, however, is a formidable electoral entity. His calculation is based on the following factors:

- The Janata Dal cannot win the south, but over the last few months, the Congress(I) has lost support in Tamil Nadu and Andhra. So, the Telugu Desam and the DMK—both constituents of the National Front—will benefit.
- The Bharatiya Janata Party will do well, but it is unchallenged only in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh: both states in which the JD is weak and the Congress is still to recover.
- In Gujarat and Rajasthan too, the Congress has still not recovered, so the real battle will be between the Janata Dal and the BJP
- The states that will decide the election will be Bihar (54 seats) and Uttar Pradesh (85 seats) which, between them, account for 139 seats.
- The Janata Dal's aim, therefore, must be to sweep Bihar and UP and to contain the BJP in Rajasthan and Gujarat. In these four states, the new

THE SCENARIOS ■ *What could happen over the next six months*



TRIUMPH

V.P. Singh calls an election on caste calculations and wins a majority



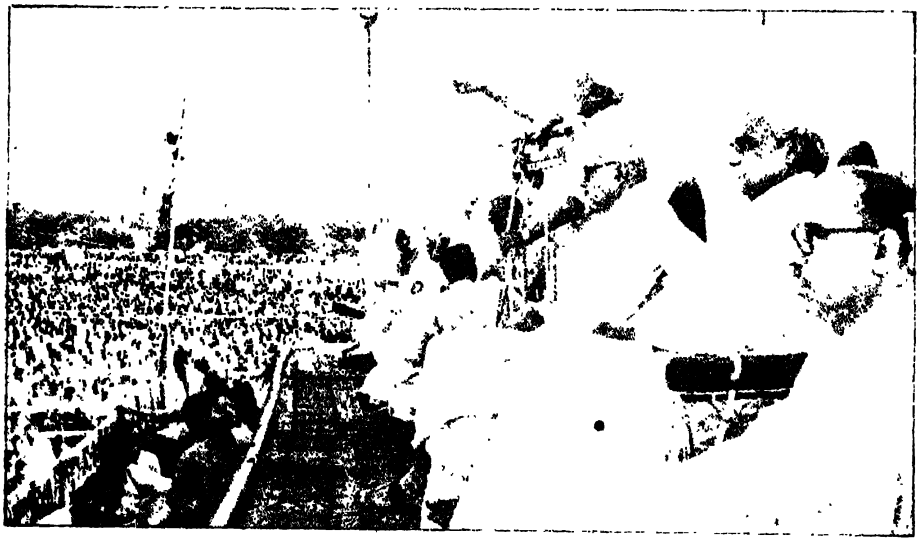
VICTORY

The Janata Dal improves its position and can form a government with CPI(M) support



DEJA VU

The results are the same as last year. So V.P. Singh continues in office



THE ALLIES

The PM has realised that he can no longer take the communists for granted. And the BJP, it is now clear, is bound to withdraw support sooner or later

backward caste-minority coalition should prove unstoppable. Around 50 per cent of the population belongs to backward castes and another 16 per cent is Muslim. That alone gives the JD 66 per cent. Plus Rajputs, who identify with V P Singh, will also support the Dal.

• The Harijan vote is also up for grabs. Last time, the Congress lost much of it to the Bahujan Samaj Party. Perhaps this time, some of it will come to the JD and even if it doesn't, it won't go to the Congress.

How foolproof is this calculation? Last week in New Delhi, there were many who believed that V.P. Singh had the next election all sewn up. Even the BJP was worried. Said a leading party MP. "We hope that there will be a Hindu wave over Ram Janmabhoomi, but after the Mandal Commission decision, we will be asking Hindu backwards to choose God over their wallets. Who knows which way they will turn?"

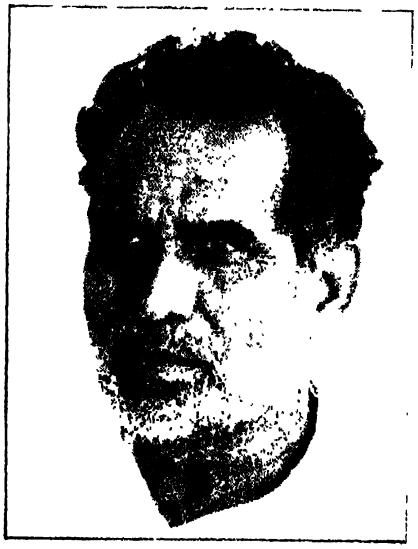
There was dismay too in the Congress camp, where dissidents whispered that V.P. Singh had proved to be the true inheritor of Mrs Gandhi's mantle. "In 1971, she projected herself as the hope of the poor. Now, the Raja is doing the same," noted a party worker. "Rajiv lacks the political savvy to recognise this."

But there were contrary views. Many people were unconvinced that the new alliance would sweep the country in the manner that V.P. Singh expected. Their objections were as follows

• Are general elections really decided on the basis of caste? All the psephological evidence suggests that the Indian electorate is now voting in a homogenous manner. For instance, the Congress lost as many Hindu votes in UP as it did Muslim votes.

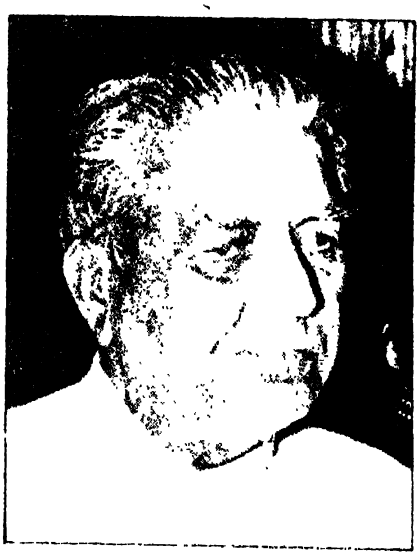
• All backward coalitions in the cow belt are vulnerable to the rigging factor. In 1980, the upper castes were so terrified of Charan Singh that they simply did not let the backwards vote.

• The politics of caste always leads to violence. Add to that the Hindu-



SPLIT

Shekhar and the Tau split the JD and form a government with Congress support



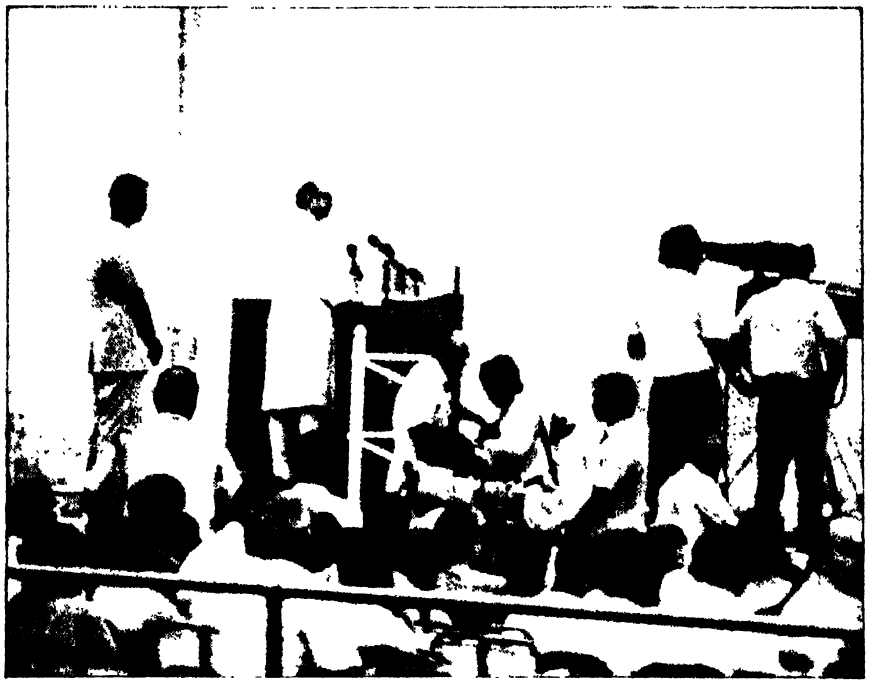
CRACK UP

The election goes ahead but the Tau's faction splits the Janata Dal



FIASCO

V.P. Singh's calculations backfire and Rajiv Gandhi returns to power on a split vote



THE INDEPENDENCE DAY ADDRESS

The Prime Minister pulled out a populist plum for nearly every section that has access to a ballot paper

Muslim factor over Ram Janmabhoomi and you have the makings of a mini-social war. Should violence break out, then the Congress, which harps on stability and the unity and integrity of India, could well benefit.

• Finally, two can play this game. The Congress plans to counter V.P. Singh's Ram Janmabhoomi strategy by declaring that Rajiv Gandhi will lead a march to Ayodhya to stop the VHP from constructing the temple. So, which side will the Muslims eventually prefer?

Shrewd politician that he is, V.P. Singh has worked all this out. But he knows that he probably has no choice but to take the plunge. If he waits till the middle of next year, prices will sky-rocket (particularly after the effects of the oil crunch are felt); the Congress may finally get its act together; his Teflon coating will begin to wear thin; and his administrative failures (Punjab, Kashmir, etc.) will catch up with him.

Consequently, he has resorted to gimmicks which he hopes will impress the electorate in the run-up to the election. The latest of these is the scheduled *padayatra* in Punjab at the end of which, he has said, he will either solve the Punjab problem or be killed, adding, in the finest traditions of Hindi cinema: "If I am killed, then my body should be kept in Punjab."

Rhetoric and demagoguery may be poor substitutes for action, but they might just pull off an electoral victory.

But *can* V.P. Singh call an election? As the leader of a minority government, can he demand that the President dissolve Parliament?

Most constitutional experts are agreed that he can't. All he can do is submit the resignation of his government. President R. Venkataraman is then obliged to ask Rajiv Gandhi as the leader of the Opposition if he is in a position to form a government.

Though the Congress(I) has 193 seats and could get enough support from its allies to raise the figure to 215, it is unlikely that Rajiv will agree to be Prime Minister with left support. So, the chances are that V.P. Singh will get his way and elections will be called.

In his old avatar, V.P. Singh depended on the middle class for support. But now, he has recognised that while this might flatter his vanity, it does not necessarily win elections

But there is one other scenario.

Few Janata Dal MPs want elections. At present, most are unwilling to oppose V.P. Singh openly. But, should he call elections, then many will find their voices.

Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal have both made it clear that they are not in favour of an early election. And Shekhar has said that he does not approve of the opportunistic caste politics that will be the basis of the Janata Dal's manifesto. Suppose they openly oppose the election proposal? VP could probably overrule them and go ahead anyway. But this leaves the Shekhar-Lal combine with two options, both of which involve splitting the party

In the first, around 70 MPs defect. The Congress backs them. And they form the next government with either the Tau or Shekhar as Prime Minister. Shekhar does not rule out this possibility.

In the second option, the Congress refuses to support them and elections are held. But because the party has already split, they fight elections separately. This would mean four-cornered contests in the Hindi belt, the Congress vs V.P. Singh's JD vs the Shekhar-Tau JD vs the BJP (which is unlikely to ally with anybody after Ram Janmabhoomi).

History demonstrates that whenever there is a multi-cornered contest, the Congress tends to benefit. After the 1979 Janata split, Mrs Gandhi returned with a landslide largely because Charan Singh's Janata(S) split the non-Congress vote. (In those days, today's BJP was a constituent of Janata.)

Should either of these scenarios come to pass, then V.P. Singh's elaborately constructed caste coalition could come tumbling down. At present, it looks as though Lal and Shekhar will oppose an early election, so the Raja's scheme could be in serious trouble.

But then, nobody predicted V.P. Singh's latest move. And given the Raja's track record, he obviously has a card up his sleeve, which will once again trump Shekhar and the Tau's aces. •

Rajiv Shukla and Seema Goswami/ New Delhi

"Devi Lal would make a better Prime Minister"

Chandra Shekhar hits out. And talks about V.P. Singh, Dhirubhai Ambani, Chandra Swami and the likelihood of an election

Over the last six months, Chandra Shekhar has been remarkably reticent about criticising the Vishwanath Pratap Singh government on the record. His reticence deepened after the telephone tapping controversy.

But last week, in a marathon interview to SUNDAY, *Shekhar seemed suddenly to have shed his old reluctance.*



NITIN RAI

The economy

SUNDAY: How do you see the economic situation?

Chandra Shekhar: The recent crisis in the Middle East will accentuate an already bad situation. The only hope is that the monsoon will be good and we will get the benefit of a good harvest.

The problem is that now India is regarded as a bad credit risk abroad and not many people are willing to give loans to us. And our debt servicing situation is critical.

Despite all this tall talk about austerity and cost-cutting, nothing much is being done. The people governing this country are not bothered about the seriousness of the situation and in certain areas, where it was possible to mobilise resources, nothing is done.

Q: What areas?

A: I can give you one example. Various manufacturers collect excise from the consumers and then they go to the court to avoid giving the money to the government. Finally, the excise thus collected is often refunded. It should be refunded to the consumers, but because they cannot be identified, the money goes to the manufacturers and traders.

Sometime back, in a case in the Bombay High Court, there was a dissenting note in the judgement and one of the judges resigned on this issue.

Last winter, the full bench of the Bombay High Court gave the verdict

Q If the government had been cheated of money by some people, shouldn't it go for these people?

that the money doesn't belong to the industrialists, but that it clearly doesn't belong to the government either.

The judge came to the conclusion that the money should go to the consumer wherever he can be identified. If the consumers can't be identified, then the government should think of instituting a consumers' welfare fund.

But in March this year, the government has issued a circular that this money should be refunded to the industrialists.

Q: It was probably a bureaucratic decision.
A: This matter was brought to the notice of the finance minister.

Q: How much is the amount involved?
A: A minimum of Rs 10,000 crores per year.

When this circular was produced before the Bombay High Court, the judge gave the opinion that if the government has no interest in the matter, then what can we do?

I'm sorry that this government is talking about small pay-offs when it is ignoring a sum of Rs 10,000 crores!

Q: If you are trying to allege corruption, I don't think the charge will stick because the finance ministry is run by an honest man.
A: But only the finance minister is not running the finance ministry (*laughs*).

A month back, Mr Madhu Limaye wrote a letter about this to Shri (Dinesh) Goswami, the law minister. Mr Goswami said he had referred this matter to the Prime Minister.

Two weeks ago—or maybe more than that—I wrote a letter to Dandavate asking: what are the circumstances? I have not got a reply.

Q: Have you brought this to the attention of the Prime Minister?
A: The judge who resigned has personally called on Dandavate and the Prime Minister. So the Prime Minister knows.

Q: Who does this decision benefit?
A: I don't know. But almost all the prominent industrialists are involved. You can find out for yourself who has benefited after March.

Q: Are you going to raise the issue in Parliament?
A: For what? You people are always saying that I am embarrassing the government. I've had these facts for more than a month. Let me wait for Dandavate's reply.

But I am surprised by this decision. You go on saying, "Our coffers are empty" and "Our situation is critical" and then the industrialists make Rs 10,000 crores!

I can't understand the logic.

Q: Can I come back to what you said at the beginning? Why is nobody willing to lend to India?
A: Just three days back, I was talking to some bankers and they said Japan was willing to give us a loan, but now they have said no ..

Because they have lost faith in our ability to repay.

Q: Why is that?
A: Two reasons. One is...I don't know what was the compulsion for the government to go on making this statement that we are without any money. Our coffers are empty.

It was good to criticise Rajiv Gandhi when we were campaigning for the elections, but after the elections, we can't hang on to that old thing without insulting India.

When you get power, you inherit everything. Not just the plus points. And if Rajiv had no minus points, then why did people vote him out of power?

We have to make the government correct those things. Not keep lamenting them.

Industrial policy

Q: Why are you objecting to the industrial policy?
A: Because I do not want that the area of decision-making for India should be



(V.P. Singh's) Red Fort speech does not make any difference. Speeches are made and reported every day. The Red Fort speech is also the same. It has had no special impact on the mind of the people

A It is legitimate, but at what level? It is the work of a police inspector; it is not the work of a political leader at our level

abridged. Because I do not believe that our policy should be made in Washington by the World Bank. India should be run by South Block and North Block. And both of them can't fit into the World Bank office.

The World Bank says something in December 1989 and you don't even paraphrase it. You just copy the whole thing, para by para,and make it your own policy!

I pointed this out at my press conference. At least, they should have been clever enough to change the language a little.

Q: Do you really believe in this conspiracy theory?
A: You tell me, why is it that in all economic ministries all the economic advisers are from the World Bank?

Q: So what?
A: But why is it?

Q: Because the World Bank is one of the few places where well-educated Indian economists can get good jobs. That's all there is to it.
A: That is true. But why does our government believe that the best economists are from the World Bank? Is there nowhere in India that we can find economists?

Q: The chief economic adviser Deepak Nayyar is not from the World Bank.
A: Only one man And he has recently been appointed

All these people are not government officials. They have not competed for the jobs. They are appointed as advisers After some time, the case goes to the Union Public Service Commission and they claim, "The government can't function without them", and so they are regularised.

There is no dearth of brilliant people in the IAS. Do we need these people?

Q: Isn't your objection to the industrial policy political? Against people like Ajit Singh?
A: You are totally wrong.

All these policies were started by V.P. Singh when he was finance minister. What does Ajit Singh have to do with it?

At that time, Dandavate and others also opposed these policies, but said that they were Rajiv Gandhi's policies. When V P. Singh joined the Opposition, he also said, "It was Rajiv Gandhi's policy Not mine."

After becoming the Prime Minister ...the press goes on writing: "V.P. Singh is taking his policies as finance minister to the logical conclusion."

My only fault is that I go on reminding him that he had disowned those policies Everybody else—including Dandavate—seems to have forgotten.

Not only this. Take the National Front's election manifesto. I had no hand in preparing that. But in that you will read: "Rajiv Gandhi has destroyed the country by bringing multinationals." It is there. Read it para by para.

They have gone back on everything in it

Q: If you claim that even then V.P. Singh followed these 'unacceptable' policies, then why did you people welcome him into the Opposition in 1987?
A: That is a question that I would not like to answer.

Q: Why not?
A: Because you know my views on him. So, I would not like to repeat anything.

Q: That's not a good answer.
A: Even at that time I said, "Let us discuss the policies first." I said, "It is not just a question of trying to oust Rajiv Gandhi. Let us be clear about the policies." I am on record.



This is the first time that a minister (Devi Lal) has been dismissed from the Government of India...It creates problems not just for Devi Lal, but for all of us. We are setting records in political degeneration

Party programmes

Q: So what are the policies of your party now?
A: That you ask Bommai and V P. Singh. Our policies change all of a sudden. It is such a dynamic world

Q Would you like to be Prime Minister?

that I can't keep up with them (*laughs*).

All I will say is that I believe in policies, not personalities. I am not one of those politicians who says I am a saint. I have never given the slogan of value-based politics.

Right from the beginning I have been saying that corruption is not the basic problem. It is a product of the system. And unless you change the system, you can't do anything.

I am not Mahatma Gandhi. And I can't go along with politicians who say that not only are they Mahatma Gandhi, but multinationals are also Mahatma Gandhi.

Q: V.P. Singh?
A: No, it is not personal. Why just V.P. Singh? I am not able to understand the stand taken by Mr Madhu Dandavate on certain issues.

This government is compromising the sovereignty of the country.

Q: Did the Rajiv Gandhi government do this too, because you say that it followed the same policies?
A: *(Laughs)* One day I met Mr Rajiv Gandhi at an official lunch for the Nepalese Prime Minister. By chance, we were sitting next to each other.

I said, "Rajiv, I congratulate you. What your advisers could not get done through your government, they are getting done through our government."

He laughed. But I feel sad about it. Did we fight all our struggles for this?

Q: Do you get on with Rajiv?
A: It is not personal. I have no personal grudge against V.P. Singh and I have no personal grudge against Rajiv Gandhi. Personally, Rajiv Gandhi has done nothing to me. He has never insulted me. He has never...I never had any personal grudge against Mrs Gandhi who sent me to jail.

This is politics. And politics is not for personal vendetta.

For personal vendetta, you can hire some *goondas* and take revenge.

People give you power to bring about change. If power is not used for this purpose, then I have very little interest in how many FIRs are instituted.

You may be very interested to get headlines that today an FIR was filed against three officers and two politicians, but it doesn't interest me.

FIRs/Investigation

Q: You can't say that. You supported the Shah Commission.
A: Even at that time I said don't do it. I said in Parliament don't expel Mrs Gandhi from the House. I am against this type of persecution, whether it is done by Mrs Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi or Morarji Desai or V.P. Singh or by Chandra Shekhar.

Yes, if there are certain irregularities, the law should take its own course. But such things should not be handled at the level of the ministers and the Prime Minister, but by the law enforcement agencies. Such things should be left to the CBI and other officials.

Why should he (V.P. Singh) hold press conferences and say that we are charging this man and the Bofors names will be out within a fortnight? Where are the names, where are the culprits and what happened that fortnight, I do not know.

This kind of thing is ultimately self-defeating and can rebound on you. Also, it has a way of vitiating the political atmosphere.

Q: But you went into the election saying that you were going to find the names of the Bofors agents and root out corruption.
A: I have never mentioned Bofors in my speeches or spoken about corruption.

Q: Do you think the Bofors issue will boomerang on the government?
A: No, I don't think it will boomerang on the government. But it won't harm Mr Rajiv Gandhi either. Now I think even the people are not interested in it.

Q: Do you think the Congress will make it an issue?
A: Yes. And that might be a problem for us.

Q: But if the government had been cheated of money by some people, you don't think it was a legitimate activity on its part to go for these people?
A: It is legitimate, but at what level? It is the work of a police inspector, it is not the work of a political leader at our level. Political leaders should not reduce themselves to the level of a police inspector. This kind of thing is bound to have a political fall-out.


DURGAPRASAD

I know Chandra Swami since 1970. I am not embarrassed by my friendship with him

Dhirubhai Ambani/Chandra Swami

Q: Lots of people have been suggesting for a long time that you are an Ambani man. Is that why you are opposing V.P. Singh?
A: Chandra Shekhar does not have to clarify such matters. Both businessmen and politicians have at one time or another tried to spread such canards against me. But these allega-

A Of course, if I get the opportunity to implement ideas, yes, I would very much like it

tions have never stuck. If they find such pastimes interesting, let them go ahead. I will never contradict them.

Tomorrow, if Ambani were to come and see me, I will meet him openly in the presence of cameramen. I am shocked and surprised that men like Ambani and Rajiv Gandhi don't want to meet in the open. I have met Ambani.

Q: Didn't you meet him at the Oberoi with Chandra Swami?
A: This is an old story. I'll tell you what really happened. Chandra Swami and I were supposed to attend the marriage of Chimanbhai's daughter.

So, I went off to Ritz Hotel (in Bombay). But the *Express* had already set up a man to follow us. When I reached Ritz Hotel, I got a ring from the *Indian Express*. I asked them how they knew about my whereabouts.

Then Mamaji, Chandra Swami's manager, called me to say that Swamiji wanted to see me urgently. I told him that we should be in the same place tomorrow, so what was the hurry?

But he insisted that it was very urgent. I had a dinner engagement to go to, so I tried to beg off. But he insisted that I wait for some time.

I said that I would come to the Oberoi and meet him and then go off to Jayant Malhoutra's for dinner. But no sooner had I reached the Oberoi than Ambani walked in. I met Ambani for the first time. No, once before I had met him at the Delhi airport, where he told me that he had sent some donation through some great leader of the Janata Dal, whom I don't want to name because I don't want to compromise his position.

Q: A minister?
A: Yes, a minister who talks a lot about public morality.

But I didn't know who this man (Ambani) was. Indubhai was with me, so I asked him who this man was, who was behaving so familiarly with me. Indubhai asked with surprise, "You don't know this man?" I said, "No."

Then Indubhai told me that he was Ambani.

By then we were in the bar where Ambani joined us again. And Indubhai is such an idiot, he told Ambani that I hadn't recognised him (*laughs*). So, I hurriedly made up a story, "You know we met for a minute there." That sort of thing.

But there are so many people who come up to you, particularly on flights, to say hello. You can't possibly ask them what, who they are.

So, that was my first meeting with Ambani. And then a year, two, three years later, we met at the Oberoi. But we didn't have a talk or anything. Chandra Swami had something to say to Ambani. But I was hardly there for ten minutes.

I just told Swamiji that I would meet him tomorrow in the plane. When I came down, there was this press reporter and photographer. I just got into a car and went off to Jayant's.

After that, we met once or twice at a couple of places, and I told him that before he was afraid of Rajiv Gandhi and now he is afraid of V.P. Singh. I wasn't afraid of either man. So, I asked him, "How can I possibly help you?"

I don't claim that I only meet saints. I meet all the people who come to see me. I meet everyone at...

Q: Value-based meetings?
A: Others may say so. But I do not think so. So, I am not bothered by any such talk. Let these people say what they want to.

Q: But what is the harm in meeting Ambani?
A: Exactly. That's what I am saying. What is the harm? But the unfortunate thing is he does not meet me. Once or twice I asked him why he was so hesitant.

Q: Did he send intermediaries?
A: No, he just does not want people to know about our meetings. I told him, "If I'm to be harmed, why are you worried?"

"No, no," he said, "you know how people are. There will be so much publicity."

Q: What about Chandra Swami? Is he a friend of yours?
A: Yes. I know Chandra Swami since 1970. He first came to Delhi around 1970-71. That time he was just a young man who was friendly with Indira Gandhi, Yashpal Kapoor and the rest of that gang. Mrs Gandhi was very fond of him.

Q: But the suggestion is that Chandra Swami has been preparing forgeries...
A: No, that I am not prepared to discuss. That is for the investigative agencies to find out. I do not believe that he is doing so.


MUKESH PARPIANI

What is the harm in meeting Ambani? But the unfortunate thing is he does not meet me

Zail Singh

Q: Giani Zail Singh, for instance, disclosed that Chandra Swami offered him money to dismiss the Prime Minister.
A: And he accepted the suggestion and did not take any action *(laughs)*. I am not such a moral man as Gianiji,

Q Have they stopped tapping your telephone?

but I am amazed by people who talk about doing things in return for money – Rs 40 crores or Rs 40 lakhs.

I am not embarrassed by my friendship with Chandra Swami. I am not a moralist.

Let me tell you about a very close friend of mine, who has given me some money in every election, Rs 15,000, 20,000, 25,000, 50,000. In one of the elections, he came to my house, gave me Rs 25,000 and then added that his money should not be used in a particular constituency, where a Janata Party candidate was standing, but where he preferred the Congress candidate.

I kept quiet. But after he left my house, I sent the money back to him.

He came crying to my house again. But I refused to change my mind. I told him, "If you're going to decide whom I should help and whom I shouldn't, then I don't want your money. My acquaintance with you does not mean that you can take liberties with my political life."

This, despite the fact that he has been a very dear friend of mine for the last 30-35 years.

He apologised.

So, I am stunned when people in high positions say that they were offered Rs 30 crores or Rs 40 crores, and that they actually listened to these offers.

But I have nothing to say because Gianiji is also my friend.

The prime ministerial race

Q: There were reports that Ambani was behind your standing for the leadership of the Janata Dal.

A: I did not meet Ambani at that time.

Q: Why did you want to stand for election then?

A: I was opposed to a certain person becoming the leader.

Q: But you must have known that you would lose in a free and fair election.

A: Yes, I might have lost the election. Why should I assume that I would have won?

I don't know what may have happened. But what I fail to understand is why they were so scared of my standing.

Q: You insisted on standing despite the attempts to dissuade you. Why?

A: Look, if I don't consider you the leader of the party, it is my political duty to oppose you. It may be a symbolic or a self-defeating attempt, but it is necessary, so that tomorrow nobody can say that I supported you and am now backing out.

Q: Why did you agree to this deal then?

A: I didn't agree to the deal.

Q: Surely, you were told that a compromise had been worked out and Devi Lal would be Prime Minister. Why did you then agree to withdraw your candidature?

A: Because Devi Lal was acceptable to me in comparison with V P Singh. What is so mysterious about that?

In my opinion Devi Lal would have made a better Prime Minister than V P Singh. I still believe that.

Q: Why?

A: I don't want to go into the reasons.

Q: Is it because you believe that Devi Lal is his own man?

A: I don't want to go into that. You have to come to your own conclusion.

But take the career of Devi Lal. He has struggled long. Yes, he is not educated or sophisticated. In some matters he is not very reliable. But politically, he has always been a fighter, but a fighter for a good cause.

Q: You've always had a weakness for such people. You were the one who brought Raj Narain into the Janata Party.

A: I accept that. These are people who have made great sacrifices for the nation.



I have no personal grudge against Rajiv Gandhi. Personally, he has done nothing to me...This is politics. And politics is not for personal vendetta

A I have not checked. But when I made the allegation I was 100 per cent sure

Q: You are a great believer in the theory of the lovable yokel. He may be crude, unsophisticated, but he's basically a good chap.
A: Yes

Q. But is that enough to be Prime Minister of India?
A: No, but if the choice is limited what does one do?

Q: Everytime you are asked what your objection to V.P. Singh is you turn coy. Why is V.P. Singh not an acceptable Prime Minister as compared to Devi Lal?
A: Devi Lal wouldn't have taken such initiatives as the industrial policy

Q: He probably wouldn't have understood it.
A: That's fine. Sometimes people with understanding do greater damage than those who don't understand

So, if there is a choice between a person who is going to create problems for the nation because of his understanding and someone whose non-understanding will not create any problems, I will choose the latter.

Q: But what really happened? Were you told about the deal? Or were you lied to?
A: No, nobody told me anything. I would have never agreed to the deal. I was betrayed

Q: How come you forgave Devi Lal?
A: But what was the option? If I had created a scene, the party would have split at that very moment

The electoral verdict had been against the Congress. But even after the results, people were speculating whether it would form the government. At that time, it was not expedient, either for the Janata Dal or for me, to create problems. So, I just kept quiet in order to save the party from further embarrassment.

Everyone kept saying that Chandra Shekhar has been outwitted.

What do you mean outwitted?

If at that level you can reduce yourself to behaving in such a manner, if you can treat politics like a game, then I can only feel sorry for you.

But what about the role of the press at that time? Everyone knew what had happened, but apart from a few, nobody objected

Q: But at that point, Devi Lal did a deal with V.P. Singh...
A: I shall not say anything about Devi Lal or V.P. Singh. I just want to give my side of the story

Mid-term poll

Q: There is some talk of a mid-term poll. Would you support such a move?
A: That depends on the circumstances

Q: After the Independence Day speech, there is talk that the Prime Minister will stitch together a casteist coalition and go for elections.
A: I am against any casteist coalition. I am against any opportunistic move

Elections should only be held if they become imperative, unavoidable in implementing the programme we have set in our manifesto



Vinod Pande forgets sometimes that he is a bureaucrat. If he considers himself to be second in command, he will be in trouble

Q: But your government is not implementing that programme. So that is an irrelevant point.
A: Yes. And such governments also become irrelevant.

Q: So, isn't it a good idea to have an election?
A: Yes, then we should have an election. Then it becomes a choice between supporting the move to have an election or supporting the incompetence of my government

I don't support the idea of an election in January. If anyone has that idea he is living in his own wonderland. This will be of no benefit to the nation or the party.

Q:Do you think the Janata Dal will split in the event of an election?
A:I do not think that V.P.Singh is going to be so hasty as to announce an election.

Q:The general opinion is that the longer he waits the worse it is going to get.
A:Well, in my opinion, the sooner he announces elections, the worse it will be *(laughs)*.

At this point the masses are in favour of neither party (Dal or the Congress). The ruling party has not gained any support, but neither has the Congress. So, if you hold elections there will be more confusion.

Even if you manage to win on the basis of caste combinations, how will you be able to manage? People tend to forget that Rajiv Gandhi with 400 MPs failed to manage things. So even if you get a majority of 300-odd seats, it will not improve matters.

The solution to our problems is not to get more seats in the Lok Sabha. The answer is clarity of vision and a clear idea of the destination to which you want to take the country

Q: But V.P Singh's Independence Day speech, with 52 per cent reservation being offered, seemed to indicate that a caste coalition was in the making.
A:Do you seriously think that everyone will hear that speech and join us? The Red Fort speech does not make any difference. Speeches are made and reported every day. The Red Fort

Q Can you say with confidence the party will never split?

speech is also the same. It has had no special impact on the mind of the people.

Do you think people have forgotten that speech when he said that prices will come down within three months? And that within 15 days the Bofors names will be out? Before one month the Punjab problem will be solved?

Because of the Red Fort speech all these slogans have been forgotten by the people, no?

The PM's men

Q:There has been criticism of the PM's men...
A:Vinod Pande is just the cabinet secretary, but he forgets sometimes that he is a bureaucrat and that he has certain obligations to fulfil. If he considers himself to be second in command, he will be in trouble some day.

The man is talking like a fool, giving interviews to the press. Whether he gives the government 13 months or 13 days is not important. But if, with this interview, somebody gets up in Parliament, he will not last 13 days.

He might think that he is very important. But he is so insignificant that nobody is taking any notice of it. Only the Prime Minister has reacted, nobody else.

If anyone had taken serious note of it that man would have been in real trouble.

Q:Have they stopped tapping your telephone?
A:I have not checked. But when I made the allegation I was 100 per cent sure they were.

Q:Do you think you were the only politician whose phone was tapped?
A:No, there were others also.

Q:There is some talk that action may be taken against you for going to the Boat Club rally.
A:Who is going to take that action? Bommai certainly won't.

If somebody in the Prime Minister's secretariat is abusive, will Bommai take action against V.P. Singh *(laughs)*? Everyday the Prime Minister's secretariat briefs the press against me. All dirty, third-rate briefings without any substantiation. Will Bommai take action against V.P. Singh?

Q:Why is the Prime Minister's secretariat doing this?
A:I don't know. But what Pande—what's his name, Vinod Pande—has said in the interview is with the agreement of V.P. Singh. The incident that he has related ..

Q:About tapping, the suggestion is that the practice was prevalent during the Congress regime also. This government had not instituted the practice. It was just a routine thing the Intelligence Bureau (IB) had started a long time ago.
A: How can it be a routine thing? Every third month it is reviewed by the home ministry or the Prime Minister, whoever. I don't think the IB decides.

This is the preliminary thing the government does. If they are not conscious about their responsibilities...

Not only was my phone tapped, but my entire house was bugged. They posted people outside my house.


ASHOK VAHIE

Whether he (Mulayam Singh Yadav) calls me a saint or a devil, my assessment is political, nothing personal. He is doing very well

Q: Why didn't you mention it to the Prime Minister? He is your leader.
A:He is your leader. He is not my leader *(laughs)*.

Devi Lal's ouster

Q:Do you think Devi Lal should have been fired? They could have asked him to resign.
A:This is the first time that a minister has been dismissed from the Government of India in the history of this country.

This is most humiliating. It creates problems not just for Devi Lal, but for all of us. We are setting records in political degeneration.

Q:Devi Lal also made it difficult by refusing to apologise. Don't you think he should have?
A:I don't know. That is for Devi Lal to say. Why should I comment on this matter?

Q:At the Cabinet meeting when the Prime Minister offered to resign, you asked him if there was a deal between him and Devi Lal.
A:No, I said there *was* a deal between them. If there wasn't a deal how could Chautala have become chief minister? How could Deepak become an ambassador?

They both kept quiet. I told them that they were both involved. That there had been some understanding between them. There is some misunderstanding in your understanding, so don't create a crisis for the party.

I told both of them. There is no secret about that.

Q: And did they say anything?
A: No, neither of them said anything.

Q: How are you sure there was a deal?
A: Because V.P. Singh himself told me. The only thing was that he was not so sure that Chautala would be appointed chief minister immediately. He thought there would be a gap.

But he has also said to you people (the press) that he thought Chautala's appointment was a matter for the MLAs.

A Never, I can't say that. Who knows? But the Janata Dal has more resilience

Q: So you think he expected there wouldn't be a hue and cry about Chautala's reinduction?
A: I don't know. After Chautala's election, he said it is for the MLAs to elect the leader.

Q: What about Chautala? The perception is that you thought Chautala should not resign.
A: Now that is totally wrong. I was the first person to tell Chautala that he should resign...

Q: Really?
A: Yes, but I don't go to the press to humiliate our people in order to refurbish my image. I was the first person to suggest that he should resign. But, of course, I support that Devi Lal should not have been humiliated.

Uttar Pradesh

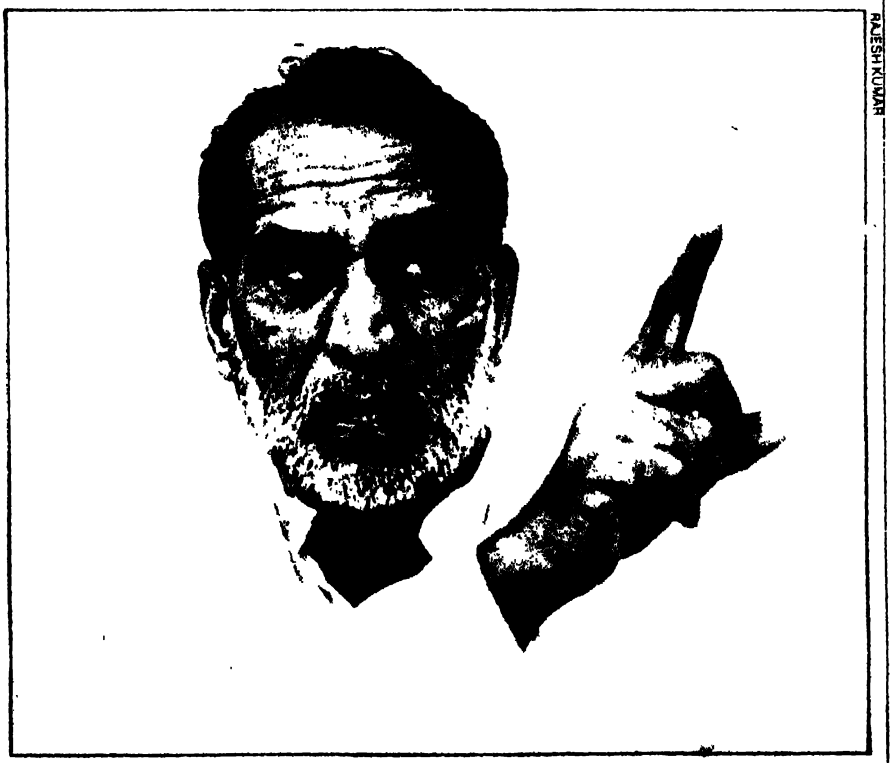
Q: Do you see any threat to Mulayam Singh Yadav's government?
A: No, at the moment, I don't see any threat.

Q: How do you find Mulayam Singh as chief minister?
A: Much better than anybody could have expected. Mulayam Singh's doing very well.

Q: Because he calls you a saint?
A: I don't know, because even before he did, I said that he's good *(laughs)*. Whether he calls me a saint or a devil, my assessment is political, nothing personal. He is doing very well. He's firm, considerate and is sticking to certain principles.

Q: Then why has a signature campaign been launched against him?
A: This is part of the game.

Q: In case of a split in the Janata Dal, will he come with you?
A: *(Laughs)* Why do you people go on forecasting splits? There is no split in the Janata Dal.



RAJESH KUMAR

Ambition does not mean to be Prime Minister at any cost. If that had been my ambition, I would have been one long back

Q: Can you say with confidence the party will never split?
A: Never, I can't say that. Who knows? Can you ever say that a party will not split? But the Janata Dal has more resilience, they will accept any situation.

Ambition

Q: Would you like to be Prime Minister?
A: Of course, if I get the opportunity to implement ideas, yes, I would very much like it. But ambition does not mean to be Prime Minister at any cost or to be minister at any cost. If that had been my ambition, I would have been one long back. I would not have waited all this while.

Q: Were you, at any time, offered the post of deputy prime minister in this government?
A: It is known by all, why do you ask it? It (the offer) was there, but it is in a light vein, because anybody offering me anything does not mean anything. Why should I take it seriously? I have been offered so many things in the past...

Q: Such as?
A: No, I am not going to say anything about it...because this is not material.

Q: Of course, it is material. Because it suggests that V.P. Singh tried very hard to knit the party together, he even offered you the post of deputy prime minister...
A: No, I don't want to say anything. You go and ask V.P Singh and others this question. Why should you ask me?

Q: You have said a lot. Suppose they take any action against you, on this interview, like they did against Devi Lal?
A: What is there in this interview on which they will take action against me *(laughs)*? If they want to take action, they are free to take action. You don't bother about that part of it. You do your job, let me do my job. •

Interviewed by Vir Sanghvi and Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Badminton, anyone?

Sanjay Singh is stuck with the Syed-Amita rap

In life, Syed Modi attracted little attention The badminton champion was a shy, unassuming man, uncomfortable with English and happiest away from the spotlight.

Since his murder three years ago however, Modi's name has rarely left the headlines. It wasn't the gruesome circumstances of the killing that ensured that, but the fact that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) decided that the murderer was Sanjay Singh, the flamboyant prince of Amethi.

By now, the outlines of the CBI's case are well known: Singh had an affair with Amita Modi, Syed's Maharashtrian wife. Modi found out and threatened to leave her. Panic-stricken that the affair would turn into a national scandal, Singh sent his goons to kill Modi.

Sanjay Singh will cope. He has switched sides effortlessly and fought a murder rap. When all else fails, it is the smirk that keeps him going



So far, the CBI has had little success in convincing the media that the case was not filed by the Congress regime to frame Sanjay Singh because of his Janata Dal connections. In recent weeks though, the Bureau has had a little luck in persuading the press that perhaps Singh and Modi were involved, though of course, this is by no means evidence of murder.

Singh has sensed the slight shift in the public mood. Last week, his lawyer went to court to complain about the press to allege that his client was being defamed.

Nevertheless, he continues to approach the case with exactly the same expression that he has maintained for three years: a smirk.

YOU FIND the smirk in pictures taken outside the courtroom. And you find it in video footage of the famous press conference at which Singh dismissed the confessions that implicated him in the murder. ("Give me Rajiv Gandhi for two hours and I'll get him to confess to his mother's murder," he bragged.)

And over the last week, the smirk has been Singh's way of responding to the uproar about him in Parliament. He knows that now that he has got into the Rajya Sabha (perhaps as part of the same deal that would have sent K.K. Deepak to the Seychelles and Chautala to Chandigarh), no amount of screaming by Congress MPs can deprive him of his seat. All it can do is embarrass him.

And Singh is not a man who is easily embarrassed.

Those who knew him in the Sanjay Gandhi days when he promised to deliver Amethi to the rising son are staggered by his confidence -and by the heights to which it has taken him.

In those days he was what the Doscos in Sanjay's crowd called a "*ganwar*" or a "bumpkin".

But if this was so, then he was an upwardly mobile bumpkin. Within months, the "*ganwar*" had taken to wearing safari suits and playing golf When Sanjay died and his snobbish Dosco buddies fell from grace, the man they had once dismissed, survived.

Of course, this had its amusing side. In his haste to ingratiate himself with Mrs Gandhi, he took to calling her "Mummy". (His guiding principle then was "Sanjay see Sanjay do".) She didn't really mind, but Congressmen still recall the time when he tried to introduce his adopted father, the Raja of Amethi, to Indira Gandhi.

"Mummy" he asked "*Aap kabhi* Daddy *se milay hain?*" (Mummy have you ever met Daddy?)

Even Mrs Gandhi had to giggle at that one.

WHEN SANJAY Singh filed his Rajya Sabha papers, it was regarded as certain that he would enter the Cabinet, perhaps as civil aviation minister

But this view ignored the Arun Nehru factor. Nehru and Singh have never got on. In 1986, he was the most vocal of Nehru's critics within the party and approached all of Rajiv's buddies with the same request: "*Yaar,* boss *ko kaho ke is mote ko nikale.*" (Tell the boss to get rid of this fatty.) And he spread the Nehru-is-trying-to-topple-Rajiv theory.

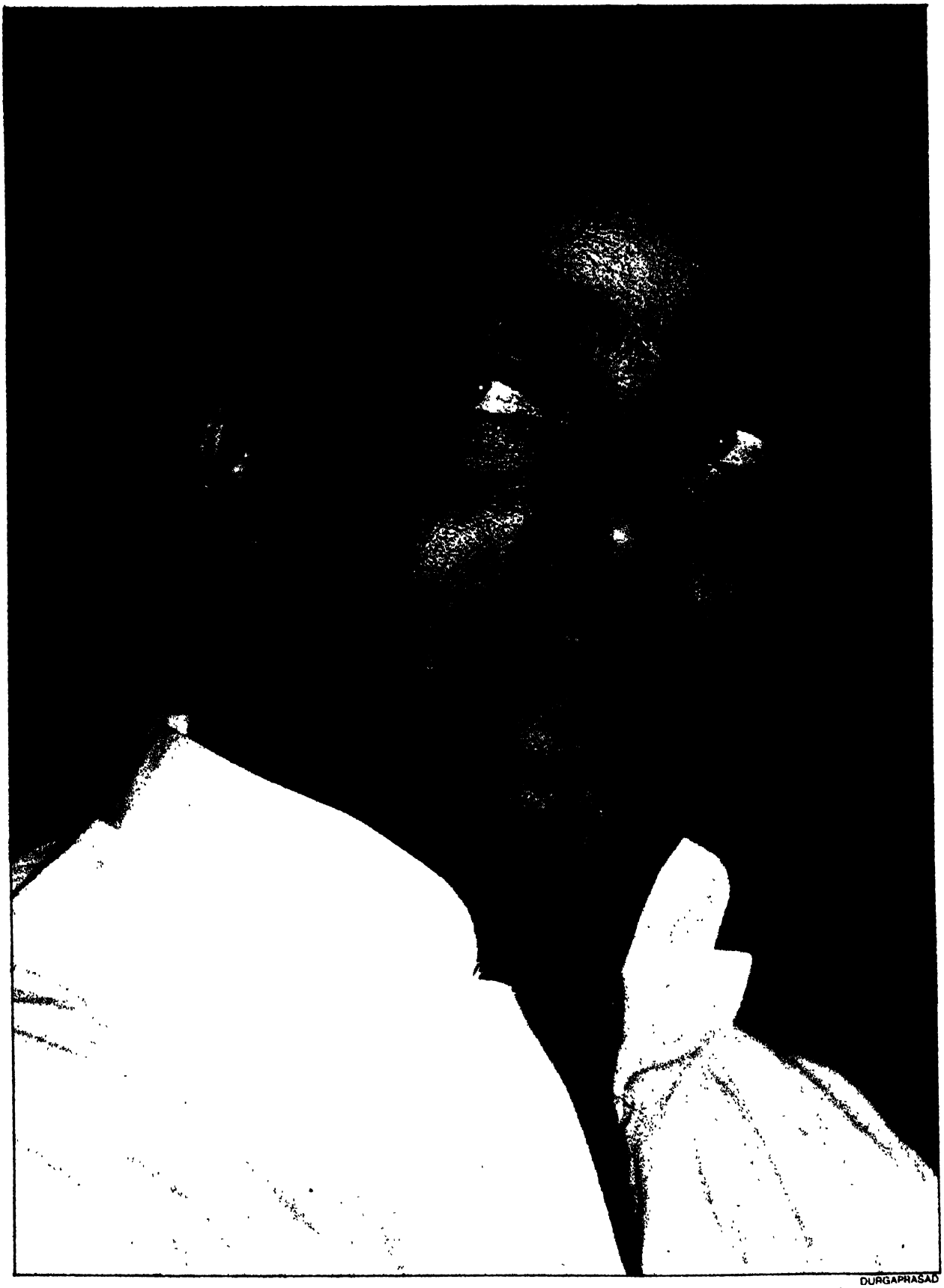
In 1988, Nehru and Singh were briefly reconciled when the entire Opposition rallied to his defence over the Syed Modi case. But the patch-up did not last.

Today, Singh finds that he must contend with Mulayam Singh Yadav in UP and with Nehru in Delhi. Neither will let him rise. And as the Congress(I) continues to make an issue of the Syed Modi case, Singh finds that he is largely friendless.

Even that shrewd survivor V.P. Singh did not rally to his side in Parliament. As the Congress uproar continued, all the Raja would say was: "How can Sanjay Singh be my son-in-law when I don't have a daughter?" (He is, in fact, his brother's son-in-law and, contrary to rumour, neither VP nor Sanjay trusts the other.)

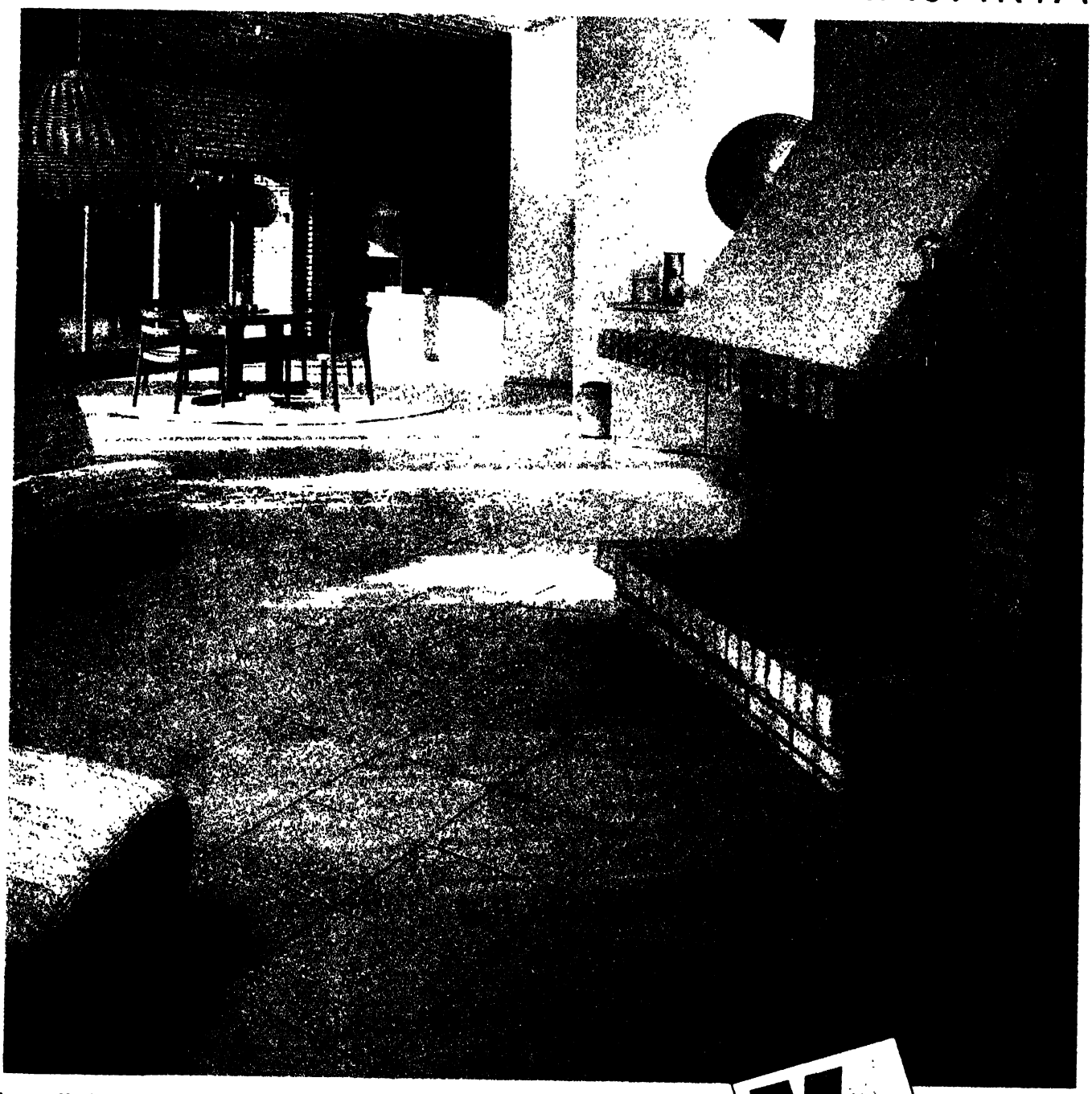
But Sanjay Singh will cope. He has switched effortlessly from Sanjay to Indira to Rajiv to VP; fought a murder rap; ignored gossip about his love life; and recovered from serious bullet wounds.

In the end, when all else fails, it is the smirk that keeps him going. •



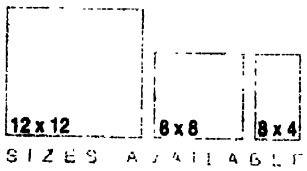
DURGAPRASAD

12x12 FLOOR TILES FROM KAJARIA



in collaboration with TODAGRES Spain

PERFECT FLOORS



SIZES AVAILABLE

Kajaria

Kajaria Ceramics Limited

C-7, EAST OF KAILASH, NEW DELHI-110065.

★ WIDE RANGE OF COLOURS AND DESIGNS ★ MAINTENANCE FREE ★ SIMPLE TO LAY (READY FOR USE IN 24 HOURS) ★ DURABLE ★ EASY TO CLEAN ★ COST EFFECTIVE

Battle for Bombay

Campaigning begins for the prestigious municipal corporation elections

The battle lines are drawn for the control of the multi-crore Bombay municipal corporation. Even as the civic elections—scheduled to be held in September—approaches, chief minister Sharad Pawar is busy trying to tell the people of this metropolis that he really cares. And, not to be put down, the Shiv Sena is offering its own bag of goodies: they have promised to provide *pucca* houses to slum dwellers, rename the Sahar International Airport after Chhatrapati Shivaji and the Santa Cruz Airport after J.R.D. Tata, the pioneer of civil aviation.

Taking advantage of the mounting election fever, several hundred Shiv Sena activists and BJP volunteers courted arrest on 9 August as they took out a procession to the Sahar airport and placed a bust of Shivaji on a pedestal built for a statue of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was during Rajiv Gandhi's rule that the Centre had decided to rename Sahar airport after Nehru, a move that, predictably, drew loud protests from the people of the state. The Union government had even finalised plans to bring the statue from Delhi. The Sena supremo, Bal Thackeray, in one of his defiant moods, vowed to prevent the renaming of Sahar airport after Nehru. It is an emotive issue that even Pawar might find difficult to tackle.

The Maharashtrians also resent the naming of the new satellite port of Nahava Sheva after Nehru. They wanted it to be named Kanoji Angre, after the great Maharashtrian seafaring hero. An irate Thackeray, voicing the sentiments of the people, said at the Vidhan Sabha: "Bengal names their prestigious places after Subhas Bose, Tamil Nadu after Annadurai. It is only Maharashtra that has to have places named after Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and there is even a Sanjay Gandhi national park at Borivili. Enough is enough."

From the emerging strategies of the two sides, it seems that chief minister Pawar has the edge. An Act, reserving 30 per cent of the constituencies for women, is proving somewhat difficult —for both the BJP and the Shiv Sena, who have decided to fight the election in alliance—to cope with. While the Congress may be able to field suitable women candidates from its women's organisations for these reserved seats, no other party, except perhaps the BJP, which has a sprinkling of women cadres—has adequate strength to put up female candidates. And Pawar never misses an opportunity to harp on what his party has done for women. Incidentally, this Act has been passed only in Congress(I)-ruled states, as the directive came from the AICC(I) last year.

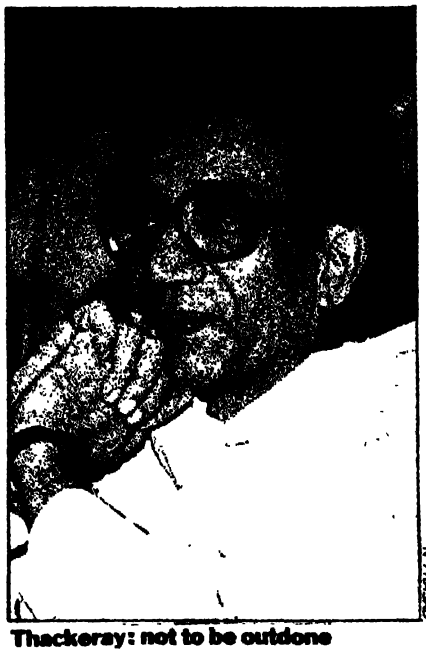


Pawar: ahead of the others

One aspect that is being emphasised by all the parties is housing. The chief minister is planning a scheme that will deal with dilapidated buildings. There are 19,000 such houses in Bombay, and Pawar has decided to take up a renovation programme under the aegis of the Maharashtra Area Development Authority (MAHADA). But the people have little faith in the MAHADA's ability to implement the project. Pawar, however, is depending a great deal on it and is banking on former minister Prabhakar Kunte, who now heads MAHADA, to see it through.

Not to be outdone, the Shiv Sena, too, has evolved an elaborate plan to house 40 lakh slum dwellers. Thackeray's scheme envisages taking over of land on which the slums are built and providing extra floor space index to encourage landlords to build multi-storeyed buildings and sell the tenements after meeting the requirements of the slum dwellers.

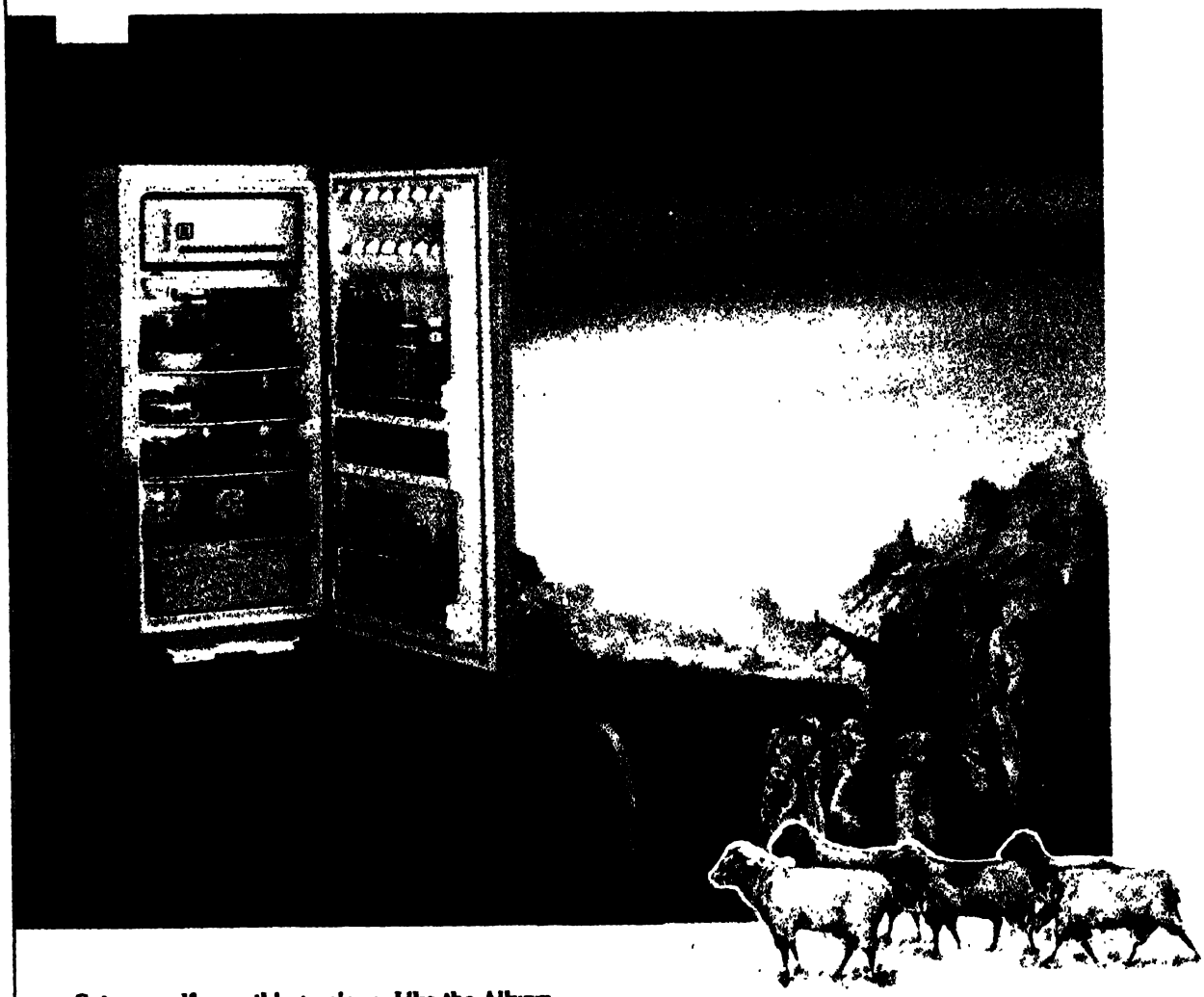
And even as strategies and counter strategies are being worked out, the Shiv Sena is trying to get the basics right. It is busy trying to woo all the Opposition parties to fight the Congress. Even though Mrinal Gore, president of the Janata Dal's state unit, is reluctant to enter into an alliance with the Sena, the latter hopes to convince the president of the Janata Dal, S.R. Bommai, about the need for an Opposition unity at this hour. The Sena has also held talks with the Shetkari Sanghatana leader, Sharad Joshi, who picked out the Sena for attack during the parliamentary and Assembly elections. Come September and the political climate is going to hot up. After all, a municipal budget of Rs 500 crore is at stake—some thing more than the total budget of many of the smaller states in the country. •



Thackeray: not to be outdone

Olga Tellis / Bombay

KEEP AWAY FROM THE HERD



Get yourself something unique. Like the Allwyn.
Quiet, sturdy and reliable.



Allwyn compressor with Hitachi technology for silent and trouble-free working. Tilting bottle racks for easy sliding of bottles. An efficient, quick and non-messy self-draining system of defrost. Leading to an automatic re-start.

Withstands a wide range of voltage fluctuations. (170V to 250V)

Allwyn- Pioneers of refrigeration in India. Available in 165 litres single and 165,300 and 380 litres double door models. Comes with a seven year warranty. And the choice of an additional seven year protection contract.



You can be sure now, that Allwyn will keep you away from the herd.

ALLWYN

QUIET · STURDY · FAITHFUL

Mudra : H : HAL

A crown of thorns

The Archbishop of Hyderabad is accused of entering into dubious land deals

When an Archbishop faces charges of corruption, does he say, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"? Perhaps, if he is the Archbishop of Hyderabad, the Most Reverend Samineni Arulappa.

The Archbishop has been accused of selling church land, violating canonical law and turning a blind eye to shady deals that stuffed private pockets with church money. The leaders of the Catholic Action Committee (CAC) flaunt photocopies of sale deeds bearing the Archbishop's signature. The Archdiocese of Hyderabad received a gift of 90 acres of land from Ramalingeshwara Rao on 5 September 1973. And on 18 September 1989, the Archbishop sold the full 90 acres to a cooperative housing society.

The housing society, based at Barakatpura, paid Rs 67.5 lakh, and about 16 agents are to receive a commission of Rs 31.5 lakh. But, according to the CAC, the most conservative assessment puts the land value at rupees five crore. And since the area, Guttala Begumpet, is adjacent to Jubillee Hills, it has possibilities of becoming a 'posh' neighbourhood in the next few years and the value could easily touch Rs 10 crore. What makes the Archbishop's act all the more suspect is the power of attorney he gave to a court clerk to act as his agent. The photostat copy of the document, endowing C.R. Jaganathan with full powers to act on behalf of the Most Reverend Arulappa, shows that he was allowed "to lease out or sell the land by making plots or to mortgage the said land... to sign, execute all contracts, agreements, deeds, transfers, assignments..." It is not surprising therefore that Jaganathan and his relatives figure prominently in the list of beneficiaries of the Rs 31.5 lakh commission.

And this is not the only scandal the Archbishop is involved in. In a letter to him, Michael Frank, director, Madras zone, of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), refers to certain "illegal sales" where CRS funds had been diverted and warns His Grace that "any stonewalling or attempts to cover up would make matters worse and arouse increased suspicion". In an obvious reference to the Archbishop, Frank adds, "I hope we can settle it as humanely as possible without shirking our responsibility and duty to the donor and the beneficiaries."

And Rev. Arulappa figures again in the St John's Seminary land scam. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of Andhra Pradesh owns land at Ramanathpur, off Hyderabad city, where the seminary is located. As chairman of the committee in 1989, the Archbishop allegedly sold more than 13 acres to a private housing society and about 25 acres to Doordarshan. Leaflets advertising the new land layout are already doing the rounds.

In 1905, the Nizam of Hyderabad gifted over six acres to the church for charitable purposes. A home for the aged was set up. Apparently, the Archbishop coerced the Little Sisters of the Poor, who run the home, Snehalayam, to give up 4,500 square yards so that Snehalayam could set up a working women's hostel. There are two basic problems with this. First, the land was gifted for "charitable purposes" and running a hostel does not fall under that category. Second, the hostel is being run by a non-Catholic.

"The Archbishop has violated the Canonical rubric," says an incensed Saldanha, a former director general of police. Quoting from the Code of Canon Law, he says, "The canons are very clear about the role of the Archbishop. This man has not appointed a finance committee...The canonical law 1292 states that 'the Bishop acting with the consent of the finance committee, the college of consultors...needs the consent of the same persons to alienate goods which belong to the diocese'. As you can see, this man seems to be under the impression that the diocese is his personal fiefdom."

J. Reddy, a firebrand CAC spokesperson, depicts the Archbishop as a latter-day Mephistopheles. And the warring groups show no signs of cooling down. Last month the rebel priests held a protest rally. After a prayer and a service conducted by the rebels, the angry protestors marched to the Archbishop's house and gave him a memorandum.

And in true Christian spirit, at the same time, a pray-in was being held at St Mary's Church—asking forgiveness for the rebels. •



Catholics protesting against the sale of church land: growing discontent

Jagadish Prasad/Hyderabad

KARMA COME ON

He's thinner now: the much-publicised heroin addiction has taken its toll. And those famous locks have been sheared away leaving him with a close-cropped, severe look.

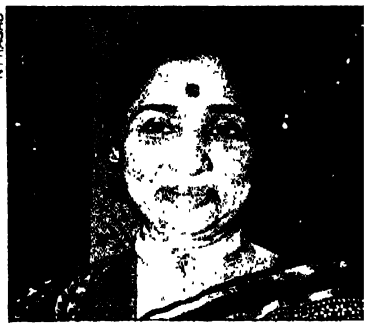
But otherwise, George O'Dowd, better known as Boy George, seems much the same. The Boy is currently recording an album in Bombay as part of a new Indo/pop aggregation called the West India Company. (Geddit?)

Other members of the band are Asha Bhosle, her husband Rahul Dev Burman, percussionist Pandit Dinesh (formerly of Osibisa) and assorted session musicians from London.



Boy George: Hare Krishna, man!

N PRASAD



Asha Bhosle: mad about the Boy

The idea, says the band, is to fuse Western and Indian rhythms together and create a hybrid that will work as well in London and Los Angeles as in Ludhiana.

If all goes well, then the West Indian concept could spread to clothes (a range by Abu Jaani and Sandeep Khosla is rumoured to be in the works) and other marketable concepts. And there is talk of extending the fusion concept to include African

FAST FOR YOUR FIGURE

[redacted] So, Jindal's didn't work!

But the portly general secretary of the AIADMK is nothing if not resourceful.

Jayalalitha: tipping the scales



Last fortnight Jayalalitha declared that she would fast unto death if the key to the sealed headquarters of the AIADMK was not delivered to her custody at once. Nobody seriously believed that she would go through with it, but many wondered if the general secretary's frame would reflect the rigours of her starvation.

As it turned out, the fast lasted just two days. Jayalalitha did not get custody of the headquarters (and no, she's not much slimmer, either) but called the whole thing off in response to an "appeal" by Rajiv Gandhi.

So it's back to square one. And to Jindal's.

LIES, LIES, LIES

They are at it again. A few months ago, when Rajiv Gandhi went to Kashmir, he got into a flaming row with the then Governor Jagmohan. Rajiv gave his version of the argument to the AICC last month. Jagmohan denied it.

And so, Rajiv repeated it at length in his SUNDAY *(issue dated 12-18 August, 1990)* interview, adding that his

Rajiv: he said it, he said it



GAUTAM PATOLE



R.D. Burman: no more *jhinchick, jhinchick*

singer Mory Kante whose *Tama* has been ripped off as *Jumma chumma de de*. (And whose album *Akawaba Beach* has just been released by Music India.)

But why is the Karma Chameleon here? What accounts for the sudden love of Indian music? Apparently, George has found solace in the Hare Krishna movement after his problems with heroin, Marilyn, Jon Moss, the fuzz and his solo career. And so, India makes perfect sense.

INDIA'S RAJIV RIDES AGAIN

You can't keep a good woman down! A year after she made *India's Rajiv*, a series of two TV documentaries, the indefatigable Simi Garewal is at it again.

Garewal's latest venture is another film on Rajiv Gandhi, focussing on the period in exile. She has already shot the leader of the Opposition's trips to various states and hopes to be allowed the same kind of access that she was afforded during the shooting of *India's Rajiv*.

Who knows, this time the timing might work to Garewal's advantage. *Rajiv* was released just as its hero was on the verge of losing the election. Perhaps this new documentary will be ready just as Rajiv is about to make his comeback.



Simi Garewal: celebrity mouthpiece



JAGDISH YADAV

Jagmohan: I did not, I did not



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

Aiyar: It's all in my notes

aide Mani Shankar Aiyar had a verbatim record of their conversation and that Jagmohan not only wanted to hand Kashmir over to the JKLF but also planned on appointing Shabir Shah as his chief minister.

Now, it is Jagmohan's turn again and he has promptly issued a denial through the *Indian Express*. Firstly, he said, Shabir Shah belonged to the People's Conference not the JKLF. And secondly, Aiyar had "manufactured" his account of what had transpired.

Your move, Rajiv Gandhi.

BATS AND BALLS

Yes, they still hate each other.

But no, they are not being as petulant as before.

Last week, feuding cricket personalities Bishen Singh Bedi and

Bedi: cease-fire?



PHIL & GHOTA

Sunil Gavaskar finally strode on to a field together. At a festive cricket match organised by country squire Tim Hudson in Manchester both Bedi and Gavaskar shared bowling honours. The aggressive Indian manager took three wickets while the sulking master batsman took two.

And neither snarled at the other. ●

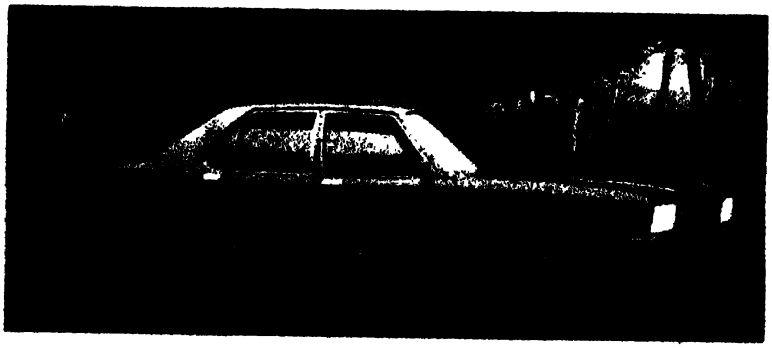


PRABHAKAR PAS

Gavaskar: end to hostility?

One of the few cars on the road that was





Contract HM 22148C

[illegible] shown in the picture
are not part of standard equipment.

A Limousine to every other car

never meant to compete in the rat race.



While the vast majority of people rush around in the frenzy of life, a few people don't.

They insulate themselves from the outside world. Using the Contessa as an effective barrier.

The moment its doors shut with a muted click, and they sink into the soft, non-slip upholstery, their Contessa becomes their sanctuary.

With a fuel efficient 1.8 litre Isuzu engine that effortlessly pulls them away from the hustle and bustle.

With 5 forward gears, including an overdrive, to smoothly place vast distances between them and everybody else.

With a suspension that gently hugs the road, and cushions them from rude shocks.

With an air conditioner that keeps them from getting all hot and bothered.

And with, of course, amazingly responsive steering and power disc brakes to keep them in complete control.

But there's really much more to the Contessa. So why not get in touch with us.

And take a closer look at a superior race of car.

Contessa
Classic 1·8 GL

As soon as we reach one summit, we strive for the next.



Century India's largest exporter of cotton textiles. Now also a leading producer of cement

From a modest beginning in 1975 Century has blossomed into India's largest exporter of cotton textiles Earning more than Rs 100 crore in hard currency in the year 1989-90

Over the years Century diversified into rayon yarn, tyrecord, minerals & chemicals cement pulp & paper and shipping In all these areas the Company has made its mark

In cement, the Company has achieved remarkable success in a short time Cement manufactured at its most modern plants CENTURY CEMENT, MAIHAR CEMENT, MANIKGARH CEMENT is now being marketed in almost all parts of the country

Century is now exploring new avenues to create more productive assets for the country, and more opportunities for our people to better the quality of their lives

CENTURY

300 years ago

The British Library holds an exhibition to mark Calcutta's tercentenary

"This day at Sankraul... (arrived at Chutanuttee) about noon but found ye place in a deplorable condition, nothing being left for our present accommodation and ye rains falling day and night."
Job Charnock.

Language apart, these words could have come from anyone landing in Calcutta in the month of August. Only they are from a 300-year-old diary, meticulously maintained by an Englishman, who was none too happy with what he saw of what is now called the port of Calcutta. But bleak or not, it was a momentous landing for Job Charnock: and one that would lead to the beginning of the British Empire in India.

Three hundred years later, the British—whose love for anniversaries stretches from people and events to cities and monuments—have not forgotten the city which was their first capital in India. And the moods and high moments of Calcutta—founded by Job Charnock in 1690 and consolidated and rebuilt by the British from 1773 to 1858—are captured in the exhibition "Calcutta City Of Palaces", organised by the British Library to mark the tercentenary of the city. The exhibition, inaugurated on 21 June, will remain open until September, reviving Raj nostalgia.

To those who associate Calcutta with overpopulation and poverty, the title may seem a bit of a misnormer. But exhibition organiser, J.P. Losty, of the India Office Library—who spent nine months organising the exhibition and has also written a book on Calcutta—says that he wants to portray the positive side of the city. "I have chosen all the paintings and documents which describe the beauty of Calcutta, the city that stood on the banks of the Hooghly," Losty told SUNDAY. "There was a grandeur about the city and that is what I have focussed on. Unfortunately, it is more the British administration and lifestyles that we have dealt upon, rather than the lives of the local inhabitants. But that is because we had more records about the British."

Paintings from that period by Bayly Daniel, Fraser and other artists depict scenes of colonial life. The minute attention to detail, the paintings of palaces, temples, sprawling greens and the tranquil river, all construct a beautiful and lyrical portrait of a thriving city. The exhibition features archival material from the India Office Library which has never been on display before.

Among the other exhibits are:

- The firman issued by Farrukh Siyar granting the East India Company the privilege of custom-free trade. The records interestingly describe Farrukh Siyar as the king of "Indostan".
- A diary of John Surman who lead the British delegation to the Mughal court in Delhi in the years 1714-17.
- The original letter patent dated 20 September, 1727, with the seal of George I introducing English law to Calcutta and authorising the Company to set up courts in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.
- J.Z. Holwell's account of the loss of Calcutta to Siraj-ud-Duala and his engraving of the Black Hole (where British soldiers were imprisoned) in the *London Magazine*.
- The journal of Phillip Francis giving an account of the duel between Francis and Lord Warren Hastings.
- A copy of the first newspaper in India, *The Bengal Gazette*, which was published from 1780-82 by James Augustin Hickey, described as a "wild Irishman".
- A document in which James Princep announces having deciphered the Brahmi script in 1837. (The key to the script had been lost till Princep deciphered the inscription of Ashoka in Brahmi.)
- A document of the third anniversary discourse delivered to the Society by Jones in February 1786 where he puts forward the theory of affinity between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. Says Jones: "No philosopher could examine all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists." To this group he adds Gothic, Celtic and old Persian propounding the theory of affinity of Indo-European languages.



***A View Of The Scotch Church* by Fraser: a bygone era**

Among the more popular exhibits are the engravings showing the detailed plan of the city as it stood in 1825, by E. De La Combe. The India Office Library has an even more detailed map—18 feet long—which couldn't be accommodated for lack of space.

On the whole, the exhibition is a history lover's treat. A fitting tercentenary tribute to the City of Joy. •

Shrabani Basu/London



RAGHUBIR SINGH

ART IN THE TIMES OF DECAY

Three hundred years and still going strong. That's Calcutta's cultural history

Calcutta, 1942. The famous Roshanara Begum is singing at the Imperial Hall. The auditorium is packed despite the sombre times. The Japanese forces are knocking at the eastern frontier and their bombers have begun attacking the city. But at the Imperial Hall it is showtime. Until all of a sudden, sirens begin shrieking and the hall is plunged into darkness. It is an air attack. Japanese airplanes, unable to find their target in the blacked-out city, dump their bombs over Haathibagan and turn away. After a few minutes the lights come back. Outside, in the streets some people are screaming. Inside the hall, the temporarily stunned audience requests Roshanara to resume singing. And she sings. And sings. All through









RAGHUBIR SINGH

KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

(Clockwise from left) Statue languishing in an old courtyard; Baul singer at a Calcutta art gallery; Shyamanand Jalan directing a play; browsers at a second-hand book shop: aspects of an effervescent culture

the long night till dawn finally breaks over the city.

The story sounds apocryphal. But it is as true as Calcutta's strange obsession with the arts. Today, the city is more ravaged than it was at the height of the Japanese attacks. When the humid, claustrophobic nights close in over the city, large areas are plunged into darkness. But the sirens have long fallen silent. Diesel gensets have taken over, chugging away defiantly against the onslaught of 'load shedding'. And the spirit of Roshanara Begum seems to be re-enacting her routine all over the city: in cramped studios where the painter never tires, in dank rooms where the wheezy harmonium still grinds out old tunes and in flea-ridden movie halls where the greats continue to be screened.

Whatever else might be dead or dying in Calcutta, the arts are not. When Job Charnock dropped anchor off the place that was to become Calcutta 300 years ago on 24 August, he had no idea what he was starting. At that time, not even the most inspired clairvoyant would have predicted that this mosquito-infested swampland would one day grow into the 'jewel of the British Empire', or that even in decay this city of dreadful nights would remain the cultural capital of an Independent India. Economic decline and the centuries might have eroded the city's edifices and washed away past glories, but nothing has been able to dampen the Calcuttan's obsession with the celebration of the arts.

Every weekend, thousands of Calcuttans still throng the theatres, often paying blackmarket prices for a seat. Equal numbers, unable to afford brand new books, spend hours at the second-hand book stores of College Street, browsing through dogeared copies of Kunderas and Dosteoevskys. The book fairs in Calcutta might not net as much in book sales as the ones held in other Indian metropolises but gate money collections are by far the highest here. Calcutta's music festivals, like the annual one held near Dover Lane, still remain the most prestigious of events for the country's best classical musicians. Similarly, the city manages to support, and idolise, scores of writers and poets. Novelist Manishankar Mukherjee, who writes under the name Shankar, is the country's highest selling living author. Many others consider Shakti Chattopadhyay as the best contemporary poet. Some of the country's most promising film-makers, not to speak of the already acclaimed Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen, continue to be spawned here. Even painters, who in the past had been disgracefully neglected by the city, today not only make a good living but also aspire to celebrity status. Art gallery owners estimate that at least 15-odd Calcutta painters, apart from the two major artists, Ganesh Pyne and Bikash Bhattacharjee, earn an average of more than Rs 5,000 per month. This decrepit city, burdened by crippling poverty and hobbling along uncertainly towards the 21st century, seems determined to prove that no matter what happens the show will go on.

This is most evident in the vibrant world of Calcutta theatre. Today, there are more than half-a-dozen major groups or producers regularly staging plays. Theatre halls are booked well in advance and successful plays run for months on end. Yet, it is not as if there is big money in it. There are only a handful of people who can make a decent living out of theatre, and all of them are big names, including actor-dramatist Utpal Dutt, Professor Rudraparasd Sengupta of Nandikar, Kumar Roy, who presently runs Bahuroopee established by the famous Sambhu Mitra, Bibhash Chakraborty, Arun Mukherjee, Ramapra-



TARAPADA BANERJEE



(Left) Ganesh Pyne; (above) one of his works: linked inextricably with Calcutta

sad Banik and Manoj Mitra. The overwhelming majority of theatre actors and technicians are part-timers. "They do it for the sheer love of theatre," says Shymanand Jalan, who runs a small theatre and dance group called Padatik.

Jalan, who takes credit for promoting the celebrated exponent of street theatre, Badal Sircar, and the Hindi actor, Kulbhusan Kharbanda, points out that Calcutta's theatre works against terrific odds. There is, for instance, a government-imposed ceiling on gate money (a maximum of Rs 15 as against Rs 40 in a good Bombay theatre like Prithvi). Moreover, in a city like Bombay, the commercial forces in operation have made the theatre something of a training ground for cinema. "Theatre in Bombay is often a vehicle for advertising talent," says Jalan. "There is intense competition because everybody wants to be noticed and eventually picked up by cinema." Nothing of that sort operates in Calcutta and those who persevere do not do it so much for material rewards.

Actor Kharbanda, for instance, would work in a factory, checking the arrivals of oxygen cylinders, and in the evenings spend time improving his dramatic skills. His big break came when Padatik staged Vijay Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*. The play was highly successful and was running to full houses when the theatre owners refused to allow it to be staged. The play, according to them, was vulgar and objectionable. Jalan then took the play to the annual festival, Bangiya Sanskriti Sammelan, where it was booed down. As luck would have it, Kharbanda's boss was among the audience and he was so outraged at his employee's theatrical performance that he sacked him the next day. A dispirited Kharbanda left for Bombay, where he eventually earned fame.

Collector Raj Kejriwal: the latest in a long line



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

Calcutta's cultural world is full of such tales, each one stranger than the other. The common theme in all the stories is the indomitable spirit of the budding artist. The fact that the arts flourish in the city is a tribute to those individuals who have struggled to find the courage and the means to express themselves in a milieu that either exhausts or overwhelms the average person. The story of Ganesh Pyne, who is today acknowledged as one of the country's finest painters, is a case in point.

Pyne turned to art because that was all he was good at. Right from childhood the ordinary slate to him was a magic board where every fantasy could come alive. While in school he had presumed he would become a botanist, but he had spent more time trying to understand Abanindranath Tagore, a painter whose works captivated him. "Understanding another artist is not merely understanding how he paints but matching his every nerve," says Pyne. "I never met him but I read everything he wrote and felt that I knew him and could visualise how he would behave in any situation." After school, on his uncle's advice, he enrolled with the Government Art College. His examiners were so impressed by his capabilities that they directly admitted him to the second year of the five-year art course.

Art, Pyne learnt, was almost like a science and possessed an intrinsic rigour he had never suspected. All the same, he graduated in a record four years and like all middle class young men began searching for a job. He gave innumerable tests and interviews but never got a job. In the meantime, he did several things to earn money, like designing covers for tin boxes (at



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



(Left) Bikash Bhattacharjee; (above) one of his watercolours: "Calcutta is like a mother to me"

Rs 5 a design) and working on book illustrations. Two years after graduating, he took up a ill-paid, part-time job with Mandar Mullick, who was the pioneer of animation films in Bengal. "It was very laborious work but it taught me the virtues of patience and diligence," recalls the artist. During that period, he made an animation film for children called *Kalo Beral* (Black Cat), which today is filed somewhere in the Pune Film Archives. But the period from 1959 (the year he graduated) to 1979, when he first won recognition as a major Indian artist, were traumatic years for Pyne.

The stigma of being jobless, the constant search for money and the tramping down dismal streets, almost completely wore out Pyne's spirit. In 1978, in desperation he applied to the Kesoram Cotton Mills for a job as a textile designer. After he had submitted his testimonials and samples of his work, the man who would be his boss, Dr Vyas, called him and requested him to think twice before taking up the work. Dr Vyas told him that he was essentially a creative artist and the work as a textile designer would destroy him. The next day when Pyne decided against taking up the job, Vyas was thrilled and urged him to struggle on. That seems to have been the turning point in the artist's life.

"Painting had always been a very personal process for me," says Pyne. "I would paint during the period I never had money or a job, I would paint to forget the terrible world outside." As it turned out his paintings, once they were noticed, became more than one way of escape. With recognition came money. Today, a Pyne tempera painting sells for more than Rs 75,000 and there is a huge queue of collectors waiting to snap up anything he produces. Pyne, who is considered the least prolific of the major contemporary Indian painters, produces between 3-6 temperas and about 10-15 smaller works (ink, pastel, water colours etc.) every year. His patrons would, however, like him to work faster. He could earn a small fortune every year. "But I can't paint mechanically...I don't claim that I am completely free but at least I must try to be as free as possible," he explains. And Pyne's secluded life retains a storybook flavour: fame and the flush of wealth has hardly changed his lifestyle. He still lives in a joint family in one of the old lanes of central Calcutta, in a house with ancient mirrors and rexin sofas, serving tea when friends and wealthy patrons turn up. From the windows in the upper stories of his house, he watches a decaying Calcutta of monsoon-stained buildings sprouting peepul trees and knows that his dreamlike works could only have taken shape in the unreal world of this blighted city.

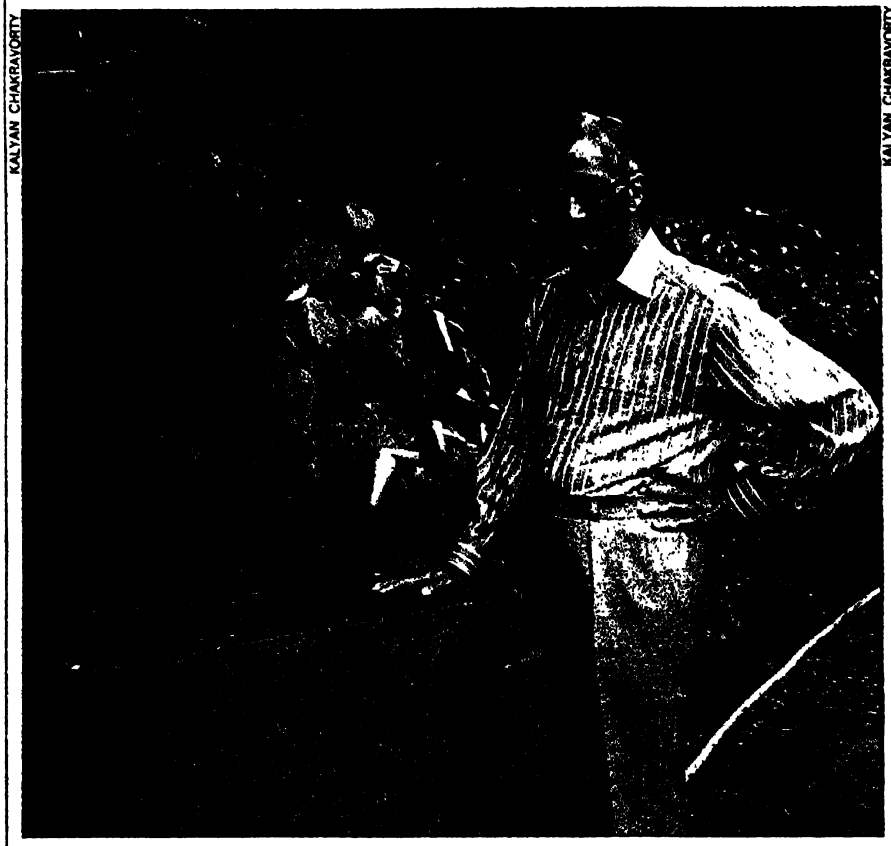
Poet Shakti Chattopadhyay: the best among contemporaries



RAGHUBIR SINGH

Virtually every Calcutta painter,

KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



(Left) Industrialist B.K. Birla; (above) *bhajan* singer Vinay Bapna: art comes above money

film-maker, writer, poet and dramatist, no matter how much they might hate the city, cannot but acknowledge that their sensibilities have been shaped by the city. Just as Ganesh Pyne says that some enduring umbilical cord ties him to the city, painter Bikash Bhattacharjee declares that "there is no question of me leaving Calcutta". Bhattacharjee, whose paintings are a rage among art collectors today, admits that he has received many offers to live outside the city and that artists living in metros like Delhi and Bombay have a better chance of making it big. "But Calcutta, particularly north Calcutta where I have grown up, is the source of my creativity," he explains. "Had I grown up anywhere else, I would not have been myself. I would have been something else."

It is not as if artists like Bikash Bhattacharjee view the city with tinted glasses. Bhattacharjee, for instance, despairs at the continuous deterioration of Calcutta's civic services, the declining sense of humour of its inhabitants and the increasing doublespeak resorted to by the city's caretakers. "Whenever I return to Calcutta, I feel bad...the lights here seem to burn so dimly," he laments. He is equally indignant when he recalls how the city initially treated painters like himself and Pyne. "Nirode Mazumdar once called Calcutta painters a bunch of 420s (frauds)!" Bhattacharjee recalls with emotion. "And if people like me and Ganesh Pyne have made it, it is because we had faith in ourselves."





(Above) Suresh Neotia; (right) a music soiree at his residence: one of Calcutta's oldest patrons

At the same time, Bhattacharjee knows that there is much more to the city. There is, for example, a great heritage that the city preserves in its collective consciousness. "The influence of our literature, our great lyrical tradition and great filmmakers like Satyajit Ray have all helped us", he acknowledges. Filmmaker Goutam Ghosh adds: "Even the contradictions in this city enriches us..the city is possessed with an undefinable streak of wonderful madness." Ghosh says that Calcutta reminds him a bit of Naples and a

bit of Manhattan, and all the influences that shape this crazy pastiche of a city seep into the artist to shape his consciousness.

The culture that this city exudes is not confined to the practitioners of art but also the dabblers, the patrons and the charlatans who live in its penumbra. Vinay Bapna, a young and highly successful city builder, after making a fortune has taken to singing *bhajans* and has become well-known throughout the country, thanks to the patronage of Basant Kumar Birla, the Calcutta-based industrialist who happens to be the city's biggest patron of the arts. Bapna says it is impossible to be unaffected by the culture of Calcutta. "Today, it is cheap to talk about wealth, that is not what makes me proud," he says. Singing has given him far more prestige and personal satisfaction than all the money he has earned. "Now I understand why all the great musicians claim that the pleasure of performing in Calcutta is unparalleled," he says.



Film-maker Gautam Ghosh: "It is the memories that keep me going"

"There are more wealthy families in one colony of Delhi than in the entire city of Calcutta and yet artists are thriving in this city," says Suresh Neotia, one of the city's oldest art collectors. In the pre-independence period, the arts were patronised by foreigners and by rich *zamindars*. Today, the foreigners have departed and the *zamindars* have all but disappeared—the Mullicks of Sovabazar being one exception. Today's biggest patrons are big businessmen, inspired by a handful of Marwaris who began patronising Indian art from the 1950s and 1960s. One of the first to start was Basant Kumar Birla, whose residence in Birla Park is something like a museum with over 2,000 examples of ancient Indian carvings, Persian and Rajasthani miniatures, and bright contemporary canvases.

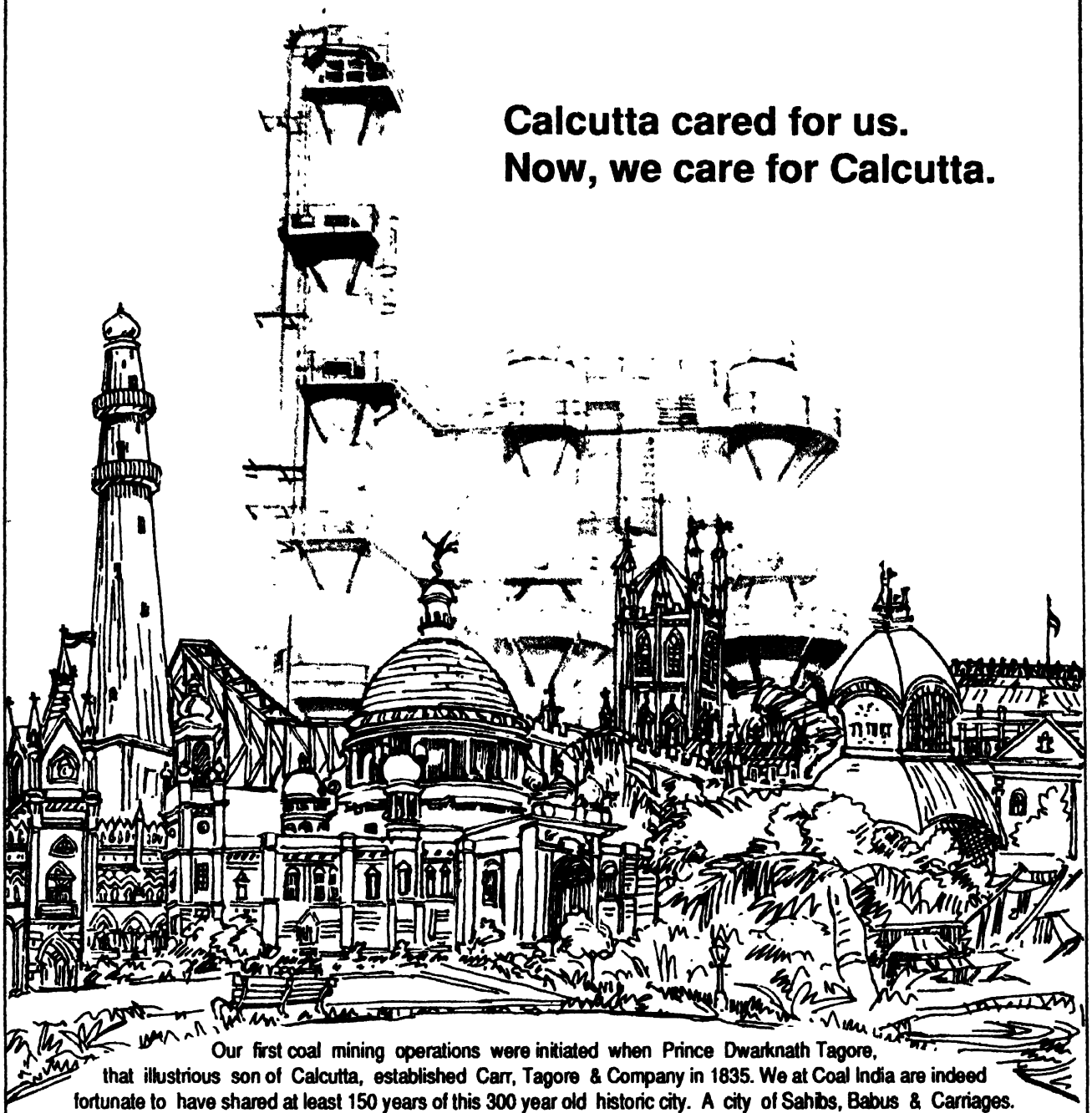
"Even five years ago painters in Calcutta found it hard to recover their money," says B.K.Birla, who started buying Indian paintings as far back as in the late 1950s. "But today everything has changed, paintings have become a status symbol, it has become a fad and there is a lot of corporate buying." Birla has a finger on the pulse of the art market and picks up scores of paintings and sculptures every year chiefly for Birla Academy, the art museum he has established in Calcutta. In early August this year, the Birla Academy exhibited 101 paintings on Calcutta by famous and by unknown Calcutta artists and over 12 of them were picked up at prices ranging from Rs 20,000 to over a lakh (for a painting of Bikash Bhattacharjee). Birla feels that Calcuttans tend to buy paintings more for the love of art than for commercial reasons. "One has to have a madness in whatever one does, whether it be business or collecting paintings, or it is not worthwhile," he declares, adding with great satisfaction that his grandson, Kumaramangalam, is possessed with a passion similar to his.

B.K Birla is justifiably proud of the fact that the trend towards collecting art objects was started by his father in the earlier part of this century. His father had inspired a few friends, like Inderkumar Kejriwal's father. For that reason, I.K.Kejriwal today has the largest collection of Rabindranath Tagore's paintings outside Vishwa Bharati University, priceless sculptures like the Gupta period Gajalakshmi and dozens of contemporary works. Inderkumar's son, Raj Kejriwal, has inherited both his father's collection and his passion. The enthusiasm of the Birlas and the Kejriwals is shared by scores of other Calcuttans, almost all of whom would not dare to compete with them. Yet, for the first time, even company executives are beginning to buy expensive paintings. ITC's Nari Narayan, Tisco chairman Rusi Modi, Sonodyne's Ashok Aikat and Tractor India's Abhijit Mazumdar are among the well-known executive collectors.

"Jamini Roy was the Henry Ford of Calcutta art. He wanted to make art affordable to everybody," says Suresh Neotia. Jamini Roy could not, of course, succeed but the idea in some form seems to have caught on. The middle class might not be able to afford to buy a Ganesh Pyne or even a Jamini Roy but they can afford prints, they can still buy books and on occasions hire a lesser-known singer to perform at their homes. Those who have the money can of course do it in style. Neotia, for instance, every year before Holi invites the country's best classical musicians like Bhimsen Joshi, Girija Devi and V.G.Jog to perform on the lawns of his sprawling south Calcutta residence. This has been going on for over a decade and every year as many as 1,500 people congregate at his place for the musical event.

"People have even started gatecrashing and I can do nothing about it," laughs Neotia. But then that is part of the spirit of Calcutta. "You cannot imagine anything like it in any other city," says Gautam Ghosh, who maintains an open house where even stran-

Calcutta cared for us.
Now, we care for Calcutta.



Our first coal mining operations were initiated when Prince Dwarknath Tagore, that illustrious son of Calcutta, established Carr, Tagore & Company in 1835. We at Coal India are indeed fortunate to have shared at least 150 years of this 300 year old historic city. A city of Sahibs, Babus & Carriages. Nationalism and Patriotism. Struggle and Freedom.

The pages of Calcutta's history are now getting blurred.
Pollution hovers like a killing spirit over the age-old city.

Dankuni Gas from Dankuni Coal Complex. Coal India's gift to the pollution stricken Calcuttans. To be supplied through pipeline to both commercial and domestic sectors. Supplemented by CILCOKE produced by the same complex. It replaces smoky coke for a cleaner environment of Calcutta.

कोल इण्डिया लिमिटेड
Coal India Limited.
(A Govt. of India enterprise)
10 Netaji Subhas Road, Calcutta 700 001.

INTERPUBCAL/CAL300/90

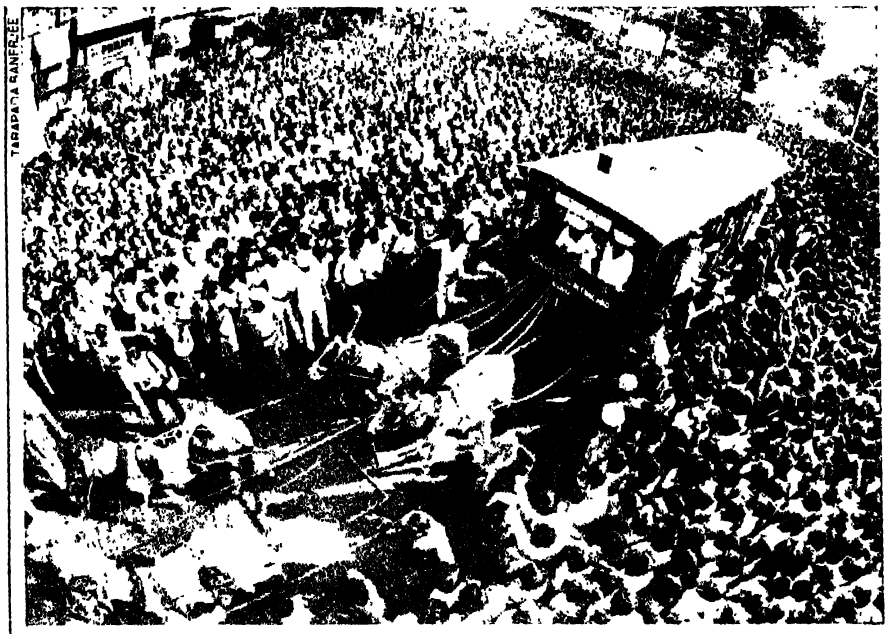
Coal India. In search of a breath of fresh air for Calcutta.

gers drop in for a chat. Celebrity status and humility go hand in hand. Even Satyajit Ray, till the time his health deteriorated, was easily accessible and Mrinal Sen remains approachable for favours and advice.

But as the city's tercentenary celebrations show, there is a smell of death even in Calcutta's cultural atmosphere. People are increasingly turning to the past for inspiration. Neotia's great tercentenary project, Homage, for instance, looks back at the ten great souls produced by Calcutta in the past. Bikash Bhattacharjee has been commissioned to do 20 paintings on people like Ram Mohun Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Swami Vivekananda. The paintings will be exhibited all over the state to remind people of the city's past after which they will be auctioned off to big industrialists by chief minister Jyoti Basu. The proceeds, after deducting Bikash Bhattacharjee's charges, will go towards the creation of a square, along the lines of London's Trafalgar Square or a mini Hyde Park, for the benefit of budding artists. But the uncertain part is whether the cultural spirit of Calcutta will survive the depredations of contemporary realities.

For, at the end of 300 years of a chequered history, the city has grown increasingly schizoid: on one side, the city is being brutalised by poverty and politics, while, on the other, gra us patrons still organise art shows and music conferences. Many of the city's sensitive citizens are flabbergasted by the dichotomy. "The tercentenary celebrations are too vague, they don't make sense," says film-maker Gautam Ghosh. "They don't reflect anything. It's only an opportunity which the media and government are cashing in on." Painter Bikash Bhattacharjee is equally indignant: "Apart from ITC, which has built a lovely park near Birla Planetarium, none of these tercentenary projects have done anything for the city."

Almost every artist is particularly critical of the state government's meaningless programme's, like the *tamasha* involving a horse drawn tramcar or the use of a tercentenary logo designed by Satyajit Ray for trashcans that are hardly used. Painter Ganesh Pyne points out that not only has Calcutta very little left to be proud of but also that in all the years since Independence, the rulers of Calcutta have not been able to produce a single symbol that is not colonial. Even today, he says, the landmarks associated with Calcutta, like the Victoria Memorial, Howrah Bridge and the Octerlony Monument, are all British. After 300 years, Pyne concludes, the only things the city can boast of are antiques and ruins of old palaces.



TARAPADA BANERJEE



NIRMAL PADUCHATTERJEE

(Above) Calcutta's tercentenary celebrations get underway; (left) Utpal Dutt's drama troupe: glimpses of the Calcuttans' obsession with culture

Calcutta's obsession with culture seems to be a symptom of subconscious anguish. Some people lament that because Calcuttans are so absorbed in culture, they don't care for anything else. Not true. Calcuttans, like everybody else, want progress, the glare of neon lights and modern technology to transform their lives. Look how they revere the Metro. But all hope of a dramatically better future has almost completely been extinguished. Somewhere, a futuristic chime seems to be ringing the ultimate end of their little civilisation, established exactly 300 years ago by the swampy banks of the Hooghly, courtesy Job Charnock and company.

What is left is mainly nostalgia. "I remember how the streets used to be hosed every morning and evening," recalls film-maker Gautam Ghosh. "I remember the band playing every Sunday morning at the bandstand on Outram Ghat. I remember the immaculate streets and the gleaming cars and a Calcutta that had magic. Those memories keep me going. But everything is crumbling and today only some inner sparks remain. I suppose that too will die out." And then perhaps the only sound left will be of gensets marking time to a darkening civilisation. ●

Indranil Banerjie/Calcutta

Present tense

Only elections can end the phase of political uncertainty in Pakistan

The flag-hoisting ceremony on 14 August, Pakistan's National Day, was a solemn affair. The feeling of triumph of those gathered was tinged with uncertainty. The top echelons of the army and the bureaucracy may have wrested power from the democratically-elected government, pulling off a virtual constitutional coup, but they haven't yet secured their position. If the President keeps his word and holds elections on 24 October, those in power now will need the sanction of the people to continue.

Even as the world hotly debates whether or not the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, had been wronged or had merely paid the price for her mistakes in 20 months of office, the atmosphere of the Pakistani capital at the foothills of the Margalla Hills is charged with tension and uncertainty. The administration has virtually come to a halt as all important decisions have been put off until "after the elections". The newly-appointed Cabinet is now busy familiarising itself with the altered power structure.

Beneath the deceptively quiet anarchy that characterises the interim government's functioning is the feeling that the source of the so-called civilian government's strength is the army. That ultimately it is the generals who call the shots. "What remains to be seen is how far the army is willing to allow the democratic process to develop, and what opportunities the people will seize to ensure a better polity," says a senior member of the Combined Opposition Parties (COP). "The army may be a part of the reality in Pakistan, but if the people want it, they can achieve a great deal of freedom. Benazir committed political suicide," he adds.

But while most of the world seems to think that even an inefficient Benazir Bhutto's was better than the rigours of martial law, the ordinary people on the streets of Islamabad and Karachi are hopeful that a free and fair election would allow them a chance to vote a popular government to power. But, understandably, many people are doubtful whether elections will be held on 24 October. There is a feeling that the interim Cabinet will eventually usurp all powers and the rulers will not risk going to the people. And there are enough reasons to be suspicious about the present government's intentions: after all, Benazir's ouster and the dissolution of the Assembly cannot possibly be hailed as the most democratic of actions. Members of the interim Cabinet, however, are trying hard to dispel doubts of this nature. "Inshah Allah, elections will be held on time," asserts Syeda Abida Hussain, the firebrand crusader of the Opposition who has been appointed information minister. "This is the firm and irrevocable commitment of the caretaker government," he says. "There is no question of postponing elections," affirms Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi. But, as a member of the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) points out, "A country which has been dominated for two-thirds of its political life by army rule, the assurances of a pliable Prime Minister cannot be taken for granted There are earlier instances of election promises being broken."





The odds are weighed heavily against Benazir. Her party is divided, PPP workers are a disillusioned lot and the present regime seems determined to finish her off

But even if elections are held on schedule, what can Pakistan's fractured polity hope to offer the people? The country's politics has long been a web of intrigue, dominated by factors such as religion and regionalism. The present caretaker government, say allies of the former COP (now in power), comprises a motley group of ministers, many of whom were appointed only because they have at one time or another opposed Benazir—their track records are no better than their predecessors. "It is the system that has to change," insists Mumtaz Bhutto of the Sindh National Alliance. The composition of Jatoi's Cabinet, though it has a few ministers of the calibre and integrity of Syeda Abida Hussain, is essentially "old wine in new bottles", as one observer put it, and can hardly be expected to change the nature of Pakistani politics overnight.

President Ishaq Khan (left) administering the oath of office to PM Jatoi: in the shadow of the army

Political observers feel that it would be a blunder not to hold elections. For, this is the right moment to strike at Benazir

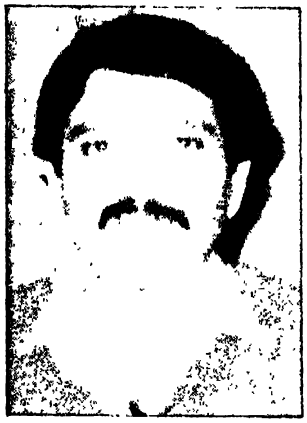
Take, for example, the two former PPP leaders who were rewarded for their anti-Benazir stand Rafi Raza, a close aide of Zulfikar Bhutto and a staunch US supporter, was in the political wilderness until his "research" on the previous government became invaluable to the present establishment. Ghulam Mustafa Khar, one of the key members of the present Cabinet, is as controversial as Asif Zardari. But those in power have chosen to turn a blind eye to all the charges against him -for the moment, at least.

Zia loyalists form another controversial group in the government—Elahi Baksh Somroo, who was a minister during the days of Matrial Rule but who lost the 1988 elections, and Senator Sartaj Aziz, a Pathan technocrat who was known for his loyalty to Zia, have all been accommodated in the Jatoi ministry.

The composition of the caretaker government shows that, for all practical purposes, the Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), or the Democrat Alliance, has taken over the reins of power. And, significantly, giant hoardings displaying a smiling face of General Zia have come up in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. What is more, on 17 August, the Muslim League held a massive rally to commemorate the second death anniversary of Zia. The thousands of people who gathered at Rawalpindi's King Faisal mosque patiently listened to the speech of Zia's son, Ejaz.

The Zia factor may be important, but then the IJI is a divided house. In a way, this is a good sign for democracy—elections are more likely to be held if splinter groups vie for power. In the coming months, however, the caretaker government is likely to bury its internal differences and concentrate on destroying the PPP. The present government's two-pronged strategy to contain Benazir and her party includes a campaign to discredit her, while at the same time engineering defections from her party. Most experts believe that the dismissal of the PPP government may result in a virtual decimation of the party. Certainly, the PPP is faced with a bigger challenge than in 1988. Like Rajiv Gandhi, Benazir too was swept to power by a strong sympathy wave for her father. But much of the sympathy has vanished today—it has been replaced by a feeling of betrayal, that the daughter of the East had sold out to her husband's greedy designs.





Ejaz Haq, General Zia's son, delivered an emotional speech on the second death anniversary of his father. For the first time in two years, people were eager to listen to him

In a country where corruption is endemic, the current fuss about misusing powers seems geared wholly to discredit the previous regime, and ensure that the PPP is wiped out in the forthcoming elections. "We may have



General Zia-ul-Haq: his legacy has not been forgotten

had corruption, but never at this level. Benazir's husband has surpassed the worst thugs in our society. He institutionalised corruption," accuses a senior lawyer.

Even if the army permits elections to be held in October, it seems unlikely that the generals will allow Benazir to come back to power. And one way to sideline Benazir Bhutto once and for all is to ensure that she is not allowed to contest the elections. Sources close to the former PM admit that there is a chance that this might even happen. "But this will only prove what we are trying to say: that the present regime is not interested in encouraging the democratic process," says a PPP worker. "Even Zia-ul-Haq kept postponing the elections on the pretext of accountability. But we will fight to ensure that elections are held on time. It seems a joke that these people should hold us accountable when they are so corrupt themselves."

But, giving the army and the establishment the benefit of the doubt, if there is a one-to-one contest, it seems unlikely that the PPP will get the better of the combined Opposition parties in the present scenario. Taking provincial factors into consideration, the PPP has a tough time ahead in both Sindh and the Punjab, and is unlikely to romp home even in the North West Frontier Provinces. The former Punjab chief minister, Nawaz Sharif, who was dismissed by Benazir, is likely to support the present regime. And with his clout, the present rulers will definitely gain some ground in Punjab. In Sindh, the caretaker government is headed by Jam Sadiq Ali, a PPP heavyweight who switched sides when it suited him. Already, the crafty leader has elicited the support of the extremist Sindhi and Mohajir nationalists as part of the strategy to isolate the PPP. According to political analysts, the polarisation between the rural and urban vote banks in Sindh is even sharper than it was during the last elections. The PPP's traditional stronghold has been the villages, identifying itself as it does, with the native Sindhis. But with Ali's defection, the PPP is threatened here too. What is interesting is that Ali has included in his Cabinet ministers who have openly advocated the cause of dividing the province. Ali has also included some affluent landlords in his ministry, and seems hell-bent on destroying the prospects of his former party. And with the implicit support of the powerful Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) lobby, there is every likelihood that he will win.

Nawaz Sharif: crucial support



The Sindh National Alliance (SNA) has already announced its plans to contest the elections. Mumtaz Bhutto's Sindh National Front too is in the race. While it is premature to predict electoral alignments at this stage, the various anti-PPP groups are likely to get together on a common platform to make things difficult for Benazir.

In the Punjab, the PPP's chances are equally bleak. Here, the present alliance is expected to do better than it did in the previous elections, which it fought as separate parties. Moreover, the PPP is divided and sub-divided into warring factions in the state. And with Ghulam Mustafa Khar having crossed over, the PPP's chances of doing well in the Punjab are remote.

In Baluchistan, Akbar Bugti's National Alliance will side with the IJI in the forthcoming elections. In the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), the IJI combine is not on steady ground. With the Muslim League splintered and the Awami National Party virtually out of the race, the PPP might pose a real threat. Political observers point out that it would be foolish to underestimate the PPP, or to write it off totally. It would be a bigger blunder not to hold elections. For, the image of Benazir and the PPP is at an all-time low and party workers are a disillusioned lot. There couldn't be a better time to strike. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/Islamabad and Karachi

MANEKA VERSUS EVERYBODY

The green minister's problems have everything to do with personality clashes and very little to do with environmental issues

When Maneka Gandhi was first appointed minister, there was a general feeling that environment would be to this government what culture was to Rajiv's. And with the rapid degradation of our biosphere—denudation of forests, depletion of wildlife, pollution of waterways—we needed a strong minister like the other Mrs Gandhi at the helm.

But even before the green dream could flower, work at the environment ministry ground to a halt—because of the squabbling between the minister of environment, Nilamani Routray, and his minister of state, Maneka Gandhi.

The sagacity of Gandhi's environmental policy was never called into question. The minister's commitment to the cause and sincerity were beyond doubt. And because she came from the same cultural background as most of the media, Maneka received better press coverage than any other member of the government. Cabinet minister Routray, on the other hand, was an elderly person, who couldn't really relate to the media. So, there was a strong temptation to glibly portray him as a buffoon out to sabotage the environmental dream.

There can be no denying that Routray does not share Gandhi's commitment to the cause or know as much about the environment as Maneka obviously does. But the sad fact is that the problems that arose between the minister and his deputy had little to do with policy, and everything to do with personalities. Despite Maneka's attempts to claim otherwise.

Documents made available to SUNDAY reveal that friction existed not just between the Cabinet minister and his minister of state, but also between Maneka Gandhi and the bureaucracy—chiefly environment secretary Mahesh Prasad.

There was a time when Maneka swore by Prasad, who was said to be her greatest supporter within the ministry. But something went very wrong somewhere along the line, and in recent weeks the two appear to have fallen out fairly seriously. Predictably, Gandhi's friends in the media have taken to portraying Prasad as the tool of vested interests.

On 2 June, 1990, Prasad was annoyed enough at such press reports to write to Routray about it. Enclosing a news item about a rift between Maneka and Routray being fuelled by some key bureaucrats, Prasad wrote: "If MOS/MEF have any knowledge about the role being played by any official they may kindly let me know so that such officials may be suitably dealt with." Routray, who knew only too well where such stories were coming from, replied: "In these matters we should blame ourselves, not the bureaucrats."

The stories, however, continued. And the environment ministry continues to maintain an extraordinarily high media profile.

Problems between Nilamani Routray and Maneka Gandhi began over the distribution of responsibilities in the ministry. In the beginning all went well. In May, when Routray joined the ministry as Cabinet minister, he instructed his officials that all files for him should be routed through Maneka, who he said was like a daughter.

The daughter obviously had other ideas. On 24 May she sent a note to Prasad,

Maneka Gandhi: angry young woman

JAGDISH YADAV



"She wanted to do everything"

Nilamani Routray on Maneka Gandhi

SUNDAY: In the last five or six months the environment ministry has become very important. We all know how Maneka Gandhi has taken the initiative...
Nilamani Routray: I feel that the publicity has far exceeded the actual work done.



Nilamani Routray NITIN RAI

Q: You have been brought to the environment ministry. Was it because Maneka was creating problems, and you were needed to reorganise matters?
A: That was the choice of the Prime Minister. Why he sent me to this department only he can explain. He was also very eager to bring some kind of discipline...you must have read the papers...

Q: But why did you have to give the office order re-allocating work for Maneka and taking the bulk of it yourself?
A: She insisted on that. After some time she said that all the files were going to her...

Q: You mean she felt overworked?
A: I don't know what she felt. That was what she said.

Q: So you say that Maneka herself wanted to be relieved?
A: Yes.

Q: Then why did she make the wry comment that she was happy to be left just with the zoo?
A: Well, I allocated about 40 per cent of the work to her.

Q: And she wasn't happy with that?
A: No. She wanted to do everything. She wanted to exercise power...or something like that.

Q: Do you think her attitude towards the Tehri dam, the Goa beach or Karnataka will help the environment department?
A: No. That was not a constructive attitude. You see, we want the environment to be preserved. But, at the same time, there should also be developmental work. There should be no conflict between environmental aspects and economic development. There should be harmony between the two.

Q: Do you personally approve of the Narmada Valley Project?
A: We are insisting on proper rehabilitation of the people who would be ousted, on proper afforestation, catchment area treatment and all that.

Q: You had said, when you joined the department, that you look upon Maneka as your daughter...
A: Well... But, look what kind of behaviour I got in return!

Interviewed by Shankarlal Bhattacharya/New Delhi

the environment secretary, saying that she had discussed the division of work with Routray and that it would now be divided as follows:

- Routray would have responsibility for the imposition of penalties, review of officers and answering questions in Parliament.
- Maneka would decide on policy matters, legislative proposals, promotions and then pass on the files to Routray.
- She would also be in charge of the administration of all the environment Acts, all international projects and the postings of forest service officers.

In effect, there was very little that Routray could do.

When Prasad got Maneka's note, he (not wishing to get involved in ministerial squabbles) forwarded it to Routray, who was obviously shocked.

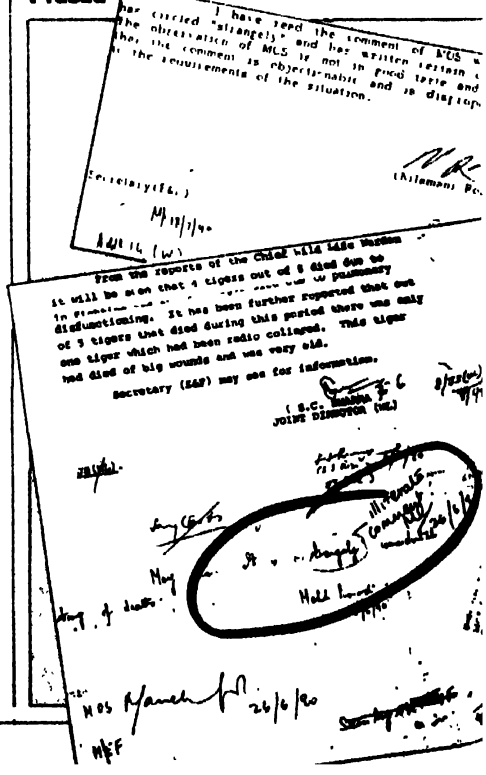
On 28 May, Routray wrote on the file: "I am sorry. This was never discussed with me." The Cabinet minister was accusing Maneka of lying. Two days later, Routray did his own division of work. This time, *he* kept most of the major responsibilities and gave Gandhi the minor departments. An outraged Maneka then told journalists that she'd been turned into a minister for Delhi zoo and provoked a media storm.

In the process, the work of the ministry suffered: for reasons that had nothing to do with the environment and everything to do with ego.

Since then relations between Cabinet minister and minister of state have plummeted and serious differences have developed between Maneka and secretary Prasad. Gandhi has now taken to insulting Prasad on the files whenever possible.

In June, the ministry considered reports that tigers were dying in a Bangalore sanctuary because of a "radio-collar" project. In fact, the deaths may have been unrelated to any environmental project. But Prasad thought it was worth checking on. "It is a strangely coincidental string of deaths," he noted on the file on 8 June.

Photocopy of notes exchanged between the two ministers and environment secretary Mahesh Prasad



This was enough to set Maneka off. When the file reached her, she circled Prasad's observation and wrote: "Illiterate comment".

An outraged secretary sent the file to Routray, noting in classical bureaucratese: "MEF may kindly see and decide whether the severity of MOS's comments is not disproportionate to the requirements of the situation."

Predictably, Routray agreed with Prasad.

By now New Delhi was agog with stories of Maneka's unusual notations on government files. Last week, Eduardo Faliero laid a letter from a Maharashtra advocate to Diana Rutnagar, president of Beauty Without Cruelty. The letter dealt with conditions in a Goa sanctuary and had apparently been forwarded to Maneka by Rutnagar.

Gandhi was angered enough to scrawl on it: "Secretary. Please write to chief secretary as the CM is mad."

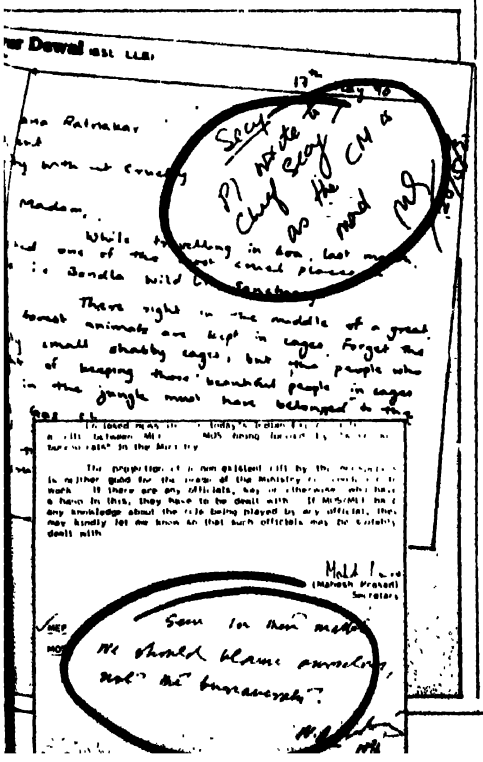
The issue, acording to the bureaucracy, is not one of an anti-environment lobby gaining the upper hand. The problem, say civil servants, relates to an immature minister giving vent to abuse on official documents and then portraying the insulted parties as enemies of the environment.

It isn't just the environment minsitry that is appalled by Maneka's manners. On 12 July, Muchkund Dubey, foreign secretary, wrote an official letter of protest to Mahesh Prasad about Maneka's behaviour.

Apparently, on 28 May, Gandhi's office phoned the foreign ministry to say that she would be going to Dudhwa National Park on 1 June. And that the minister would like to land the environment ministry's craft at Dhangadhi in Nepal, four kms from the park.

This was extraordinarily short notice. Moreover, the Nepalese never allow special flights to land anywhere other than Kathmandu.

Nevertheless, they were persuaded to grant necessary permission and even agreed to send several officials to the airport to receive her. They also sent a police escort for the minister. In fact, noted Dubey in his letter: "The



"When there are two people..."

Maneka Gandhi on the environment ministry

SUNDAY: How important is the environment ministry?
Maneka Gandhi: It isn't Maneka who is important. What is important is the growth of the environment movement in India. It is not just journalists or writers or people who have access to media who are concerned—it is thousands of people who have written letters, it is signature campaigns carried out by 15-year-old girls in Panchshil Park. Environment is the twentieth century obsession.

Q: People say that because of your rude behaviour, you are often at loggerheads with people...
A: That's really a popular misconception. I am not at loggerheads with anybody. For the first time this ministry is not a weak-kneed mini-ministry.

Q: Well, it didn't exist earlier.
A: No, it did. But it was used as a *chhappa* ministry. A businessman goes to the ministry, gets his *chhappa*, comes out, gets another *chhappa* and that's it. It's job was just to give a rubber stamp. It had nothing to do. And now I'm saying that it's not a rubber stamp ministry. Not just for clearances. What we will do is formulate policy for every other ministry.

Q: But there are some who feel you are going too fast.
A: That's because in India we are used to things happening very slowly. But we don't have the time! My son is ten years old. In ten years from now, he'll be 20. I don't have the time before he's grown up!

Q: You said in one of the interviews that a good minister is one who deputes his or her work to the people...
A: That was said in the context of the environment courts, where I said that a good minister is one who gives power to the people. That's what environment courts will be about, when the proposal comes through.

Q: People also say that you go against systems. But you have to accept certain systems and then work within it...
A: We do. But then, how do you work within a system that doesn't work?

Q: Are you optimistic from what you find here?
A: I'm very, very optimistic about India.

Q: Are there people in your ministry who understand your schemes?
A: Yes, there are people. The whole ministry was working beautifully. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to achieve anything. But then, when you have two people saying different things...

Q: What have you achieved in the past five months?
A: Well, first, the new systems. Second, the depollution of 1,000-odd factories. Then, the re-look into Tehri Dam—this was reopened by me. And environmental safeguards. If the solar energy project comes through, it will take India out of the grid system and decentralise power. So, we won't have the problem of dams and hydel projects. That in itself is a new idea. Then, a statutory impact assessment is on the anvil—everything will come here before, not after. Then the one I failed in recently—the hotel thing—which I wept over...every beach in India is finished...

Interviewed by Shankartal Bhattacharya/ New Delhi

minister did not make this trip at all. No one from the ministry informed us that she would not be going. As a result, the full contingent of Dhangadhi officials led by the CDO (collector), waited for her from 9.30 am to 3 pm."

The Nepalese were livid, and so, in turn, was the foreign ministry. Noted Dubey sternly: "This kind of behaviour by us is attributed by our smaller neighbours to our big-country arrogance and does no good to our image."

The secretary forwarded the letter to Routray who wrote to the Prime Minister, attacking Maneka for her "utter carelessness in dealing with a neighbouring country which has led to a diplomatic incident and offended the sensibilities of our small neighbour".

Once again Maneka Gandhi found herself at the centre of a storm that had nothing to do with the environment.

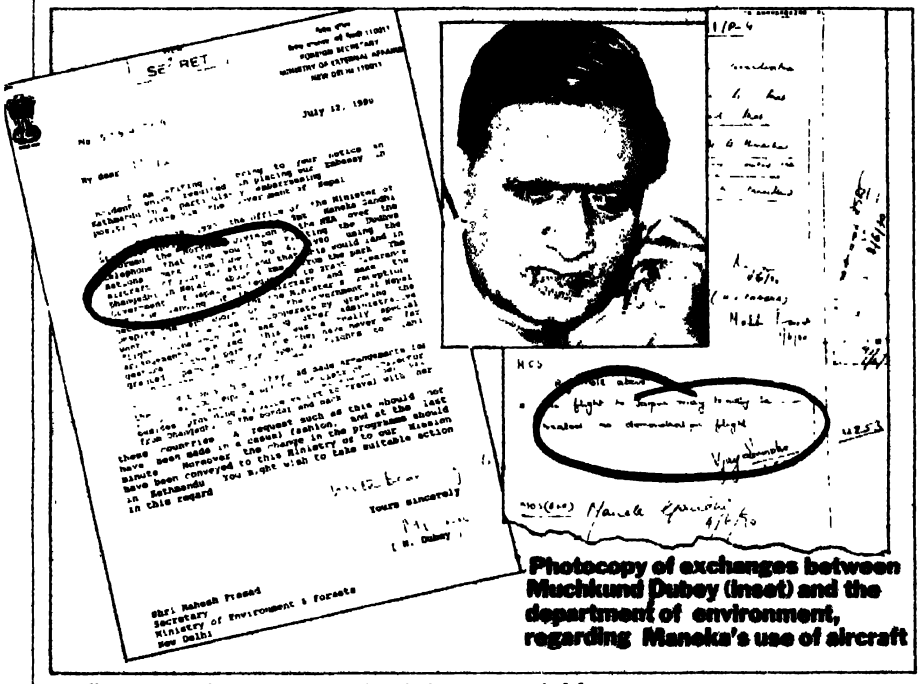
By the time the Nepalese incident took place, Maneka was already rowing with Routray over the use of the ministry's plane (see Delhi Diary).

In May, Routray asked if he could take the ministry's Cessna to Simla. He was told he couldn't because the plane had been funded by a UN (United Nations) body and was meant exclusively for forest-fire control.

On 31 May, Maneka's additional private secretary wrote to Prasad saying that she wanted to use the plane to go to Jaipur on 5 June. The joint-secretary (forests) dealing with the project wrote back to say that while Maneka had been allowed to use the craft to go to Bareli, that was only because the town fell within the UN's project area. Jaipur, however, was not in that area. Further, Routray had been refused the plane to go to Himachal Pradesh on the same grounds.

Gandhi's office was unfazed. The additional private secretary wrote back: "The flight to Jaipur may kindly be treated as a demonstration flight."

Maneka agreed and signed the file on 4 May.



Photocopy of exchanges between Muchkund Dubey (inset) and the department of environment, regarding Maneka's use of aircraft

In June, the ministry decided it did not need the craft, after all. It cost over Rs 15 lakhs to maintain the planes and less than 10 per cent of their flying time was for fire-fighting purposes. An outraged Maneka wrote to the finance minister, Madhu Dandavate, complaining that a very worthwhile fire-fighting project had been needlessly scrapped. Dandavate replied that the project could be extended for six months.

Now it was Routray's turn to fly into a rage. On 13 July, he wrote to Prime Minister V.P. Singh, explaining why the project should have been cancelled. And complained: "However Smt. Maneka Gandhi directly intervened with the finance minister over my head to ask for the retention of these flying machines. I feel embarrassed to write to you that the aircraft has been extensively used by her in the past to make trips to Bareily an airport nearest to her constituency which is contrary to the conditions used by UNDP uder which the aircraft could not be used for non-project work.

The continued retention of these flying machines in our ministry and the concomitant expenditure is contrary to your austerity drive and economy instructions. I thought I should bring this to your notice relating to the surrender of these flying machines as this has been made an issue by Smt. Maneka Gandhi in her public tirade against me through the media."

Maneka was upset by Routray's behaviour and the rift deepened. Once again the reasons were unrelated to environmental concerns.

The dispute between Maneka Gandhi her minister and her officials continues. There are many other areas of conflict. Among them are the allegations that till a month ago Maneka had a record number of 31 persons on her personal staff and an unseemly row over the composition of the National Wastelands Development Board.

So far few of these disputes have reached the media, who have been content to buy Maneka's line that the problem must be seen in an environment versus vested interests context. But now her enemies in the ministry are beginning to go public with their versions. Documents are floating around Parliament's Central Hall. Routray is talking to the press. And questions are being asked about Maneka's apparent arrogance and carelessness.

Clearly much of the opposition to her comes from people who would happily sacrifice environmental concerns for the pursuit of the big buck. For, in Maneka India has its first genuinely green politician, who understands and cares about the fate of our biosphere.

It is sad, therefore that instead of pushing for environmental betterment, she has lost herself in squabbles about private planes, 'mad chief ministers', and 'illiterate secretaries'. As her opponents intensify their counter-attack, her image is certain to lose some of its lustre. And with it will go some of the new-found credibility that environmental concerns had finally gained.

In the final analysis, it would be a pity if the cause of the environment suffered because a minister was too busy being abusive. ●

K. Srinivasan/New Delhi



R.K. Lakshman

HOTELS

Exit Lakshman

The ITDC chief resigns after a memorable tenure

Is the V.P. Singh government becoming a stickler for rules? Going by R.K. Lakshman's experience, yes. On 10 August, the debonair chairman and managing director of the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) resigned after receiving what is being termed a "measly" six-month extension when he turned 58. That wasn't unusual. After all, 58 is the official retirement age.

But, when Lakshman accepted the plum job of chairman and managing director of ITDC, a little over two years ago, he was apparently given a "strong verbal assurance that on retirement, a minimum extension of two years would be given.

So, the short, six-month extension came as a surprise to him. "Maybe, there is a change in policy or a change of heart," says Lakshman. "But, as I see it, I will not be able to achieve anything substantial in six months and decided to resign." He was hesitant to talk about the job offers he had at hand, only admitting that he would "remain in the country and would continue to offer his services to the tourism industry."

Since, there was no official response from the government regarding Lakshman's resignation till the last week of August, speculation was rife as to whether it would be accepted or not. The question doing the rounds was: would Lakshman stay back if he was given a longer extension? The ITDC chief executive was giving no answers at this stage. He was only willing to talk about the achievements of the corporation during his tenure. The public sector company made a 50.2 per cent record profit after tax in the year ending March 1990. Moreover, the group's sales turnover increased by 12 per cent. Two new hotels in Hyderabad and Bhopal have been commissioned and, for the first time, foreign exchange earnings of the corporation have crossed the Rs 50 crore figure.

So, it's not surprising that senior ITDC officials feel that if Lakshman leaves, a couple of on-going projects would receive setbacks. For instance:

- The expansion of ITDC's operations in the Janpath, Ranjit and Lodi Hotels in Delhi.
- Extending ITDC's activities to foreign countries. The company is already running restaurants in collaboration with private firms in Hungary and the USSR.
- Getting the real spin-offs from the Radisson tie-up which the ITDC announced in July 1990. Lakshman was the prime mover behind the collaboration with Radisson and it was ITDC's answer to the private hotel chains which pose stiff competition. Among the spin-offs are the opening of Indian restaurants in hotels and motels run by Radisson worldwide.
- Completing the massive three-year programme of modernising ITDC's existing facilities. The project was conceived by Lakshman a year ago with a total outlay of Rs 30 crores.

So, Lakshman leaves behind a formidable legacy. And now the question is who succeeds him? SUNDAY spoke to Kachru, a senior-vice president of ITDC, who felt that the tenure of Lakshman was a period of "consolidation". The real problems faced by the ITDC, he feels, stem from complex segmentation and the diverse nature of its activities. "The ITDC has to take on the image of a two-tier chain (and yet) offer both five-star and low budget facilities. That will be the ITDC's major challenge for the Nineties," he says.

And as for Lakshman's successor, Kachru says: "If the government decides to bring someone from outside to head ITDC, he should be better than the talent available within the country." The government, has a tough task ahead. Even though, it is aware of the merits of employing professionals and has been talking about introducing a new work culture in ITDC, things may not be that easy. Because as in the case of Lakshman, by the time a competent professional has settled down, the government brings in rules and regulations and thinks it's time for him to move on. ●

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

"If the government decides to bring someone from outside to head ITDC, he should be better than the talent available within the country," says Kachru



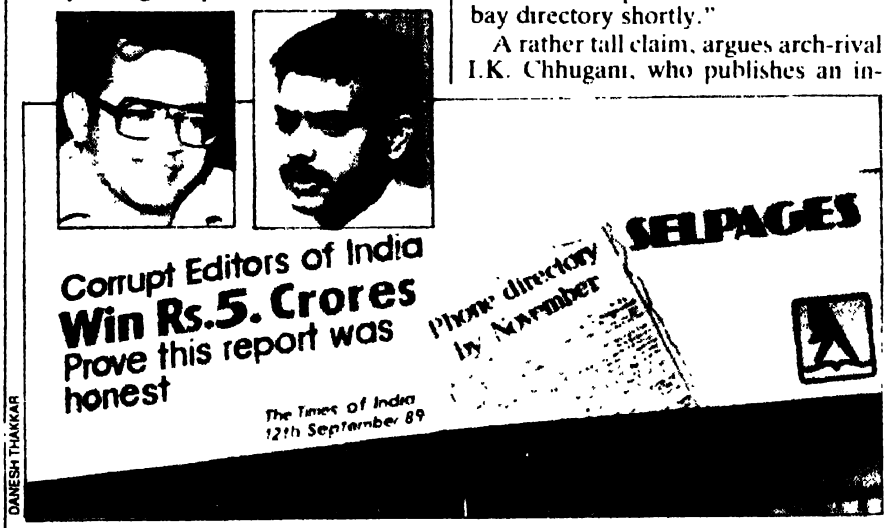
K.B. Kachru, ITDC senior vice-president

TELEPHONES

Cross connection

Bombay is still without an updated telephone directory

It is India's financial and industrial capital—the nerve-centre of the country's business activities. And a city which clearly sets the trend for the rest of the country. So, it's rather ironical that Bombay is still going without a proper and updated telephone directory since December 1988. Even more surprising since publishing and printing telephone directories for the city is big business with the print order usually running into nine lakh copies. The financial aspect is indeed impressive: it costs the present publishers, United Database India Pvt. Ltd (UDI), Rs 115 per set of three directories (3000 pages). But what is more important is that advertising revenue alone accounts for crores of rupees.



DANESH THAKKAR

A hoarding put up by Selpages chief I.K. Chhugani against newspapers which wrote that the UDI was bringing the Bombay telephone directory out in October 1989; (inset) UDI's Clayton Dias (right) and I.K. Chhuggani: arch-rivals

UDI bagged the lucrative contract for printing yellow pages for Bombay in 1987. Moreover, it also has to print the complete directory (the classified information has been provided by the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL)). But with 60,000 new lines and 80,000 telephone numbers being changed and re-changed, UDI obviously does not seem to be able to handle the task of printing a complete directory for Bombay. But the company denies it has any problems. Says Clayton Dias, sales manager Bombay: "We have brought out yellow pages for different cities. In the last seven months, we printed and published six yellow pages and distributed them in Hyderabad, Orissa Circle, Vizag, Madurai, Salem and Trichi. Earlier, we did the directories for Calcutta and Delhi. We hope to release the Bombay directory shortly."

A rather tall claim, argues arch-rival I.K. Chhugani, who publishes an industrial directory called Selpages, earlier with information up to October 1989, but they gave us just 8,000 copies which is not enough when the print order is nine lakhs."

Shoddy work and always behind schedule. UDI's performance so far has been bad. Little wonder then that its claims that the 1990 directory will be ready for distribution in September is dismissed by Kumar.

These problems apart, UDI has also to contend with a court case. The Bank of India has instituted a case in Delhi against UDI for the recovery of Rs 5.6 crores advanced to the company over a period of time. The bank has also threatened to initiate criminal breach of trust proceedings against Aruna Asaf Ali chairman of United Indian Periodicals (UIP), for having sold 48 per cent of UDI's shareholding to Ashok Advani of Business India Group.

And speaking of war, UDI's pugnacious competitor Chhugani has not given up yet. He has put up hoardings, informing the public of the court proceedings against UDI by the Bank of India. UDI promptly went to court and got a stay order against Chhugani resorting to such acts of adverse publicity. Not to be easily put down, Chhugani put up fresh hoardings in the first week of August displaying a news report which appeared in *The Times of India* on 12 September saying that the UDI phone directory would be out by November 1989. Chhugani's hoardings read "Corrupt editors of India, win Rs 5 crores. Prove this report was honest."

The Selpages chief blames the press for the Rs 10 lakhs of business he has lost. "Corrupt journalists believed whatever was told to them. The story that appeared in the report was false... Advertisers naturally believed what was in the newspapers. So, they took ads in UDI's yellow pages rather than in Selpages. Till today, there is no directory..."

One hopes for the sake of the Bombayite, Chhugani's words are proved wrong. And come September, they have their telephone directory. Because going by Dias's claim: "The directory will change the shape of communications as far as information is concerned and information marketing is an industry of the future."

If all goes well, Bombay could still be setting the trend for the rest of the country. •

Olga Tellis / Bombay

A city stalled

The Congress(I)-sponsored Calcutta bandh *is total even as the party's leaders are attacked by CPI(M) cadres*



WEST BENGAL

Except for their strident slogans, the Congressmen marching down a silent south Calcutta street on 16 August, were orderly, even decorous, but unaware that danger awaited them. Close by crouched over a hundred of the three lakh CPI(M) cadres, unleashed by the ruling Left Front, ostensibly to maintain law and order. As the procession approached, came the first war-cries. And then the cadres, led by Lallu Alam (brother of CPI-M leader Badshah Alam), armed with brickbats and wooden staves, pounced on the processionists. As the Congressmen ran for their lives, the cadres, some in helmets (their motorbikes were parked nearby), surrounded former MP Mamata Banerjee,repeatedly clubbing her. No one, not even newspaper photographers were spared that morning, as the CPI(M) storm-troopers beat up their unresisting rivals.



CPI(M) workers about to strike Mamata Banerjee (surrounded by her supporters): attempt to murder?

Only after the cadres departed were Mamata, her sari stained with blood, and other workers, taken to hospital.

Mamata, always an outspoken critic of the Marxists, was perhaps the primary target on the day of the *bandh* or general strike called by the Congress(I). Yet, on the injured list at the end of the day were INTUC leader Subrata Mukherjee, who narrowly escaped serious stab wounds, Pankaj Banerjee and Gobindo Naskar.

Never has a *bandh* called by the Congress(I) been so successful. "Chief minister Jyoti Basu should resign," said state Congress(I) president A B A. Ghani Khan Choudhury, claiming that the 12 hour *bandh* called in protest against the rise in bus and tram fares, the power shortages in the state, the widespread rigging in the 17 June Calcutta Corpration polls and the rise in prices of essential commodities had been a total success.

The city streets, normally a maelstorm of traffic, were nearly empty apart from the stray police jeep or the intrepid cyclist, the offices were deserted, and despite threats by toughs, shops in most areas, closed. Even the crematorium gates were closed, as a vibrant city of 10 million people remained in a coma for the day.

Even in the districts, escpecially Howrah, North and South 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Malda, Murshidabad, and Nadia, the story of Calcutta was repeated. The district Congress(I) leaders, taking their cue from Calcutta's frontline chiefs, successfully disrupted train services by sitting on railway tracks. For the exultant Congressmen, it was a moral victory. "We did not coerce anyone, we did not force shopkeepers to put down their shutters, we did not put up road blocks. The people voluntarily chose to stay at home, said former Union minister Pranab Mukherjee. "No amount of repression can silence the people. Police and party hacks can help to run buses. But you cannot force people to get on the buses," sneered Khan Choudhury.

As the Congress(I) leaders rejoiced after the Marxists grudgingly admitted defeat, "Normal life in the city disrupted", screamed *Ganashakti*, the CPI(M) newspaper, admitting that the three lakh party cadres had failed to maintain law and order. Less credi-

ble was chief minister Jyoti Basu's claim that the strike was a complete failure. It was only the Congress(I)'s terrorist campaign which kept the people indoors, claimed the red-faced Basu.

The transport minister's assertion that the people would accept the fare hike was negatived by the strike

But Basu was forced to admit that "anti-*bandh* supporters" (read CPI-M workers) had beaten up Mamata. Intransigent as ever, the 76-year-old chief minister refused to admit that the fare hike was a mistake. "The demand to review the increase in fares is illogical and irrational," he said while insisting that the demands by the undivided Communist Party to reduce bus fares when they were increased by one paisa in 1953 were legitimate and logical.

But it was Shyamal Chakraborty, the state transport minister, who was forced to eat humble pie. His assertion that the people would accept the fare hike was largely negatived by the strike. And even policemen claim that the cadres (it was Chakraborty's idea to employ the Marxist faithfuls to keep peace) only added to their problems.

Little support came from the CPI(M)'s Left Front allies. "The *bandh* was spontaneous," acknowledged state cooperative minister Bhakti Bhushan Mandal of the Forward Bloc—his statements, a quiet counterpoint to Basu's bluster. Skyrocketing prices and the persistent power cuts, which have made West Bengal an area of darkness, have infuriated the people, he believed. Nandagopal Bhattacharya of the CPI also admitted that the *bandh* was fairly successful, but blamed the Centre's economic policies for the discontentment.

All through the Eighties, during the state government-sponsored *bandhs* in protest against the slights (real or imagined) by the Centre, the Congress(I) was dubbed the enemy of the people. Today, as Mamata Banerjee lies in her hospital bed with severe head injuries, such perceptions are beginning to change. •

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta

Out in the open

The CPI(ML)'s Liberation Group decides to join the mainstream

COMMUNISM

Two decades and three years after the Naxalbari peasant uprising—a spark that lit a prairie fire in April 1967—another Naxalite group has decided to change tack and join mainstream politics. The Liberation Group of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML) led by Vinode Mishra, held a three-day conference in Delhi from 24 July, and announced that it would come "overground". The meeting was attended by 69 delegates from 12 states where the party enjoys varying degrees of support.

The turnaround is significant. For, the Liberation Group (named after its central organ, the *Liberation*) had for years doggedly adhered to Maoist fundamentals and tried to implant the Chinese model of revolutionary practice in India. But with the Liberation Group (LG) abandoning its secretive ways and shifting stress from armed actions to mass movements to the extent of participating in the parliamentary process, leftwing extremism is sure to undergo vital changes.

The LG was showing scepticism about the Maoist aphorism "power flows from the barrel of a gun" for some time past and finally dumped the old line at its Delhi conference. According to Shankar Mitra, spokesman of the LG's central committee, the changes were prompted by "both the absolute importance of launching an ideological counter-offensive against the growing anti-communist propaganda...and the urgent need for the politicisation of the widening mass influence of the party".

The special conference was followed by a special committee meeting in which the LG decided to usher in a few radical changes: among them the disbanding of the party's armed units and the winding up of its underground set-up. The LG has armed squads in every police station area in several districts of Bihar, where the party happens to have a strong base. The units comprise five to 10 people. Now, these bands are to be dissolved to form resistance groups involving the villagers to fight off attacks by landlords and the police. The usefulness of such vigilant forces was proved during the Assembly elections in February, when they successfully prevented the landlords from capturing polling booths and ensured that Harijans cast their votes.

The LG's theoretical organs—the *Liberation* in English and the *Lokyudh* in Hindi—will no longer be clandestinely published. This is in keeping with the party's strategy of emerging from the shadows. In its Fourth Congress held in January 1988, the LG had decided to open up gradually while the members of its



central committee remained underground. But this time, even that guard has been dropped and the whole party is to surface lock, stock and barrel.

Soon after the Naxalite movement suffered a debacle in 1970 and its main ideologue Charu Mazumdar died in police custody, the CPI(ML) split into multiple factions, of which the LG was one. Through the Seventies it concentrated its activities in Bihar and managed to carve out its areas of influence in the plains of Bhojpur, Jehanabad, Aurangabad, East Champaran, Gaya, Nalanda, Samastipur, Bhagalpur and Muzaffarpur. During this period the party remained strictly underground.

Its experiment with legal forms of

movement began in 1982 when it launched its mass platform—the Indian People's Front (IPF)—to garner more support. The very next year, the LG, in collaboration with the IPF, launched a massive demonstration against the Bihar Press Bill, introduced by the former chief minister Jagannath Mishra, to gag the press. The movement's success set Vinode Mishra and others in the central committee thinking about steering the organisation to more open pastures. And that search for new avenues finally led to the sea-change at the latest conference.

Why did it take the party so long to chart its new course? According to Kalyan Goswami, a party leader, the LG had been debating its strategy for about a decade. "Any restructuring or bringing about radical changes take time. We wanted to ensure that the entire rank and file remained with us," he says.



IPF leaders at a rally in Patna: emphasising mass movements

Naxalites feel that the new openness will help the CPI(ML) increase its mass contacts and formulate popular programmes

Party insiders expect the LG's activities to gain momentum because of its new orientation. Though it has strong bases in central Bihar, it failed to break through in tribals-dominated south Bihar or neighbouring West Bengal and Orissa, where situations are vastly different. The new openness, they feel, will help the party increase its mass contacts and formulate relevant action programmes.

The LG is one of the few communist organisations in India that has welcomed the changes in the Soviet Union and East Europe. It appears that *glasnost* and *perestroika* unleashed by Mikhail Gorbachev in the USSR to usher in a more humane form of socialism coincided with this Naxalite group's intense soul-searching. The party, which wanted to break out of its cocoon in Bihar and shed the claddings of outmoded theories, found that *glasnost* provided a justification for trying out new ideas.

One of the immediate fallout of the LG's new policy is that it has begun advocating united action with other left forces. The two communist giants—the CPI and CPI(M)—have at best been "guarded" in their responses so far. While the CPI is considering joint movements with the IPF in certain spheres, the CPI(M) is yet to commit itself.

But the CPI(M) leadership has not remained entirely impervious to the changes sweeping this major Naxalite group. The CPI(M) and the CPI(ML) which had fought each other violently in the past over ideological differences are now trying to build bridges. Lately, CPI(M) central committee members Prakash Karant and Sitaram Yachuri exchanged views with the IPF, of which the CPI(ML)'s Liberation Group is a guiding constituent. The CPI(M) general secretary, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, was also present at the meeting, for a brief while though. And, interestingly, the CPI(M) has agreed to exchange party documents with the LG via the IPF. It will now receive a regular supply of the *Liberation*, organ of the LG's central committee, which the Marxist big brother had always shunned. •

Pranay Sharma/Calcutta

Who cares?

A strike by Class III and Class IV employees paralyses the AIIMS



DELHI

The wards are empty. The corridors are strewn with filthy bandages. In every cabin, the air is dank with soiled linen. The taps are dry. And putrid sewage is spreading in parts of the complex. Unbelievable though it may seem, that's how the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), one of India's premier medical centres, looked as a workers' strike entered its tenth day.

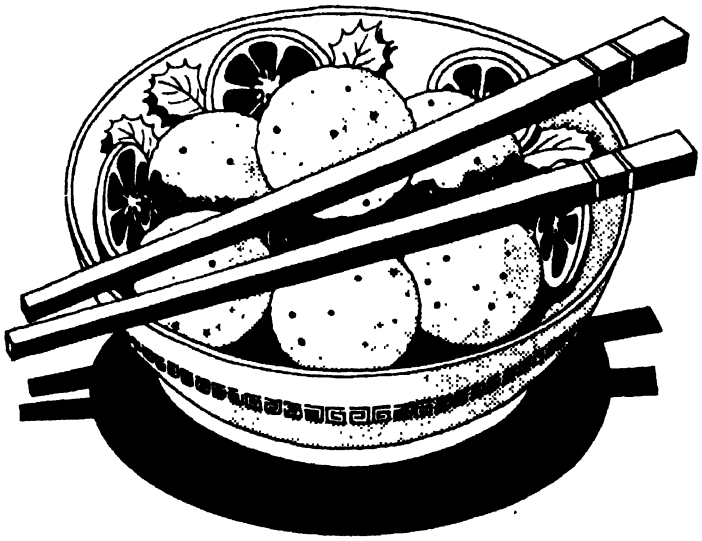
About 5,000 Class III and Class IV employees of the institute went on an indefinite strike on 8 August to press their long-standing demands. At first, the health ministry put up a brave face by declaring that the hospital would function as usual. But it hardly took the workers three days to call the ministry's bluff. As the facilities collapsed, the hospital was closed down to stave off a possible epidemic.

The obvious sufferers were the thousands of patients who seek medical care at the AIIMS everyday. All the in-house patients in the 1300-bed hospital were discharged, including the critical ones, as it became clear that the strike was not going to end in a hurry. As a doctor in the hospital put it, "Referring them (the patients) to other hospitals in the city will not work in every case. Some of the critically ill patients are definitely going to take a turn for the worse. Not only because the other hospitals do not offer the same facilities, but also because it is very unsettling for the patient."

Besides the in-house patients, severely inconvenienced were also thousands of people who flock to the AIIMS from all over the country. Many from the rural areas, who do not read newspapers or stay too far away from Delhi to have heard about the strike, continue to show up for treatment. A good number of them are forced to camp in the open, as they are too poor to go back and return again.

Take Sunder Lal, for instance. A

If you think you're having Dim Sum at Holiday Inn, Beijing, you're thinking half a world too far.



Holiday Inn, Bombay, offers you the same international facilities as any Holiday Inn worldwide.

The food at Holiday Inn, Bombay, takes you on a gourmet voyage of the finest Holiday Inns the world over.

We offer fine dining, superior accommodation, conference facilities, inimitable service, and of course, the value for money you've come to expect from any Holiday Inn worldwide...

All the more reasons to choose Holiday Inn first.

Holiday Inn
Bombay
The World's First Choice

ARTIG-469-90

For information and reservation, please contact: BOMBAY: Holiday Inn, Balraj Sahani Marg, Juhu Beach, Bombay 400 049. Tel: 6204444/6202398. Tlx: 011-78411 HOLI IN/ 011-78404 HINN IN. Fax: (0091-22) 6204452 • NEW DELHI: Holiday Inn, Connaught Plaza. Tel: 3320101. Tlx: 031-61186 HIND IN. Tel: 3010211. Tlx: 031-65526 CLAR IN • BANGALORE: Tel: 77676/77931. Tlx: 845-8668/2354 MACH IN • CALCUTTA: Tel: 412009. Tlx: 021-5421 • AHMEDABAD: Tel: 448602 • PUNE: Tel: 661752.

clerk in a post office in Purulia, West Bengal, he brought his wife, a cancer patient. "I saved for months to get her here for treatment. The doctors in West Bengal have said that she has a few months to live," says a distraught Lal. And a few feet away was Shanti, her plastered leg soaked in rain, waiting for her next appointment with the doctor.

Defying the AIIMS director's order to report for work by 2.00 pm on 16 August or face termination of service , the belligerent strikers instead burnt copies of the notice and declared that there would be no negotiations until a "no victimisation clause" was incorporated. Besides, the strikers added two more demands to their original list: withdrawal of all cases against the workers and 10 per cent extra pay as is being given to the AIIMS faculty.

Significantly, the original demands of the employees had been accepted by the ministry as well as the hospital authorities long back. But, as it usually happens with every section in this sector (junior doctors, nurses and the service doctors), the agreements have not been implemented. The workers are essentially demanding better promotional avenues, granted to them by a cadre review and career development committee in 1988.

Explaining the employees' stand, union spokesperson V.P Arya said that the committee had guaranteed every worker a promotion after eight years of service. The authorities accepted the recommendations in part, depriving 1,400 workers of the benefits. This was followed by endless rounds of minor agitations and talks with the ministry. Six years later, in April this year, the authorities suggested a package, offering the workers a promotion with retrospective effect (1.4.86), but commensurate salaries only from 1.1.90. The workers agreed, but by then a new minister, Rasheed Masood, had taken over and discussions began anew.

The career development committee, on the other hand, had been set up by the AIIMS director. It suggested the first promotion after five years of service and three promotions during one's service tenure. The proposal was accepted by the institute's governing body headed by the health minister. But the health ministry has now sent the files to the finance ministry for approval, much to the chagrin of the workers. •

Minu Jain/New Delhi

Moon Moon Sen seems to have shifted, more or less permanently to Bombay. Like Rupa Ganguly, the Bengali sex-bomb has made the scene.

And like Rupa, she has few films on hand.

Spare a thought for Anil Kapoor!

Only six months ago, the hairy marvel was on top of the world expecting that his position as number one would go unchallenged for years to come.

Now, he's suddenly feeling very insecure.

The reasons are easy enough to see. Sunny (after *Ghayal*) and Aamir (after *Dil*) are now regarded as real contenders for the number one slot. And the fantastic initial response to *Aaj Ka Arjun*—perhaps the worst film Amitabh Bachchan has made in his life—suggests that the old boy's charisma is intact.

On the other hand, what has Anil got?

Neither *Amba* nor *Jeevan Ek Sangharsh* has ended up being the kind of hit that Anil's producers had expected.

If he doesn't come up with a bona fide hit soon then his number one slot will be in real danger.



Anil Kapoor: in real danger?

GAUTAM PATOLE

OK, folks, the crisis is over. Yes, Rekha and Mukesh Aggarwal have made up. There will be no divorce. She is not pregnant. And you can all stop worrying.

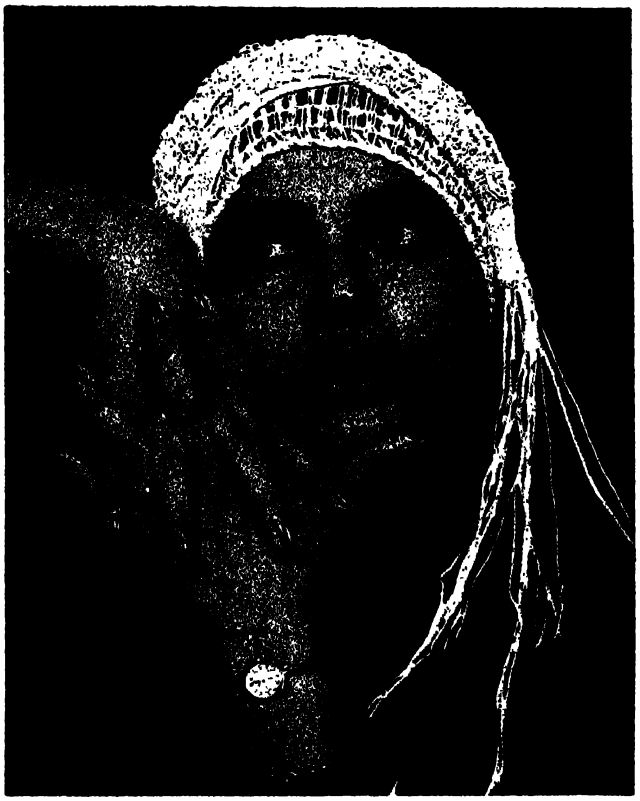
So was there ever a crisis?

Yes there was.

Apparently Rekha did not know Mukesh very well before they got married but was in love with the fact that he was so in love with her.



Chunky Pandey: protests too much?



Rekha: the crisis is over

Then, after she decided to spend time with him, she hoped that he would turn out to be sexy and exciting. Unfortunately, this was *after* they got married.

When she found out that he was boring, she thought seriously about calling the whole thing off.

Saner counsels prevailed however and it was explained to her that grown-ups do not terminate marriages for this reason.

So, she's laid down a few conditions. He spends most of his time in Delhi and she lives in Bombay. They meet a couple of times a month but not for long enough for her to get bored.

And all is well with the marriage.

And you thought this whole thing was just a stunt to get lots of free publicity for Bina Ramani!

Isn't it delightful how Chunky Pandey keeps telling everybody that he hates homosexuals, has never had a gay experience, and is totally, utterly and completely hetero.

We are sure he's telling the truth.

But why bother to keep repeating it?

The one Bombay star who counts for a lot in Delhi is Shatru. Not only is he a friend of Devi Lal's but he also retains the respect of V.P. Singh. After all, it was Shatru who first asked the government not to be vindictive before Arun Nehru, Jyoti Basu etc. all picked up the chorus.



GAUTAM PATOLE

Shatrughan Sinha: hot favourite in Delhi

But as a consequence of this stand, Shatru is a great favourite of the Congress-wallahs as well. He gets a huge suite and VIP treatment at Lalit Suri's Holiday Inn, was wined and dined by the Hindujas in London and can get any Congress leader he likes on the phone. ●

Follow the leader

Celebrities queue up for advertising campaigns

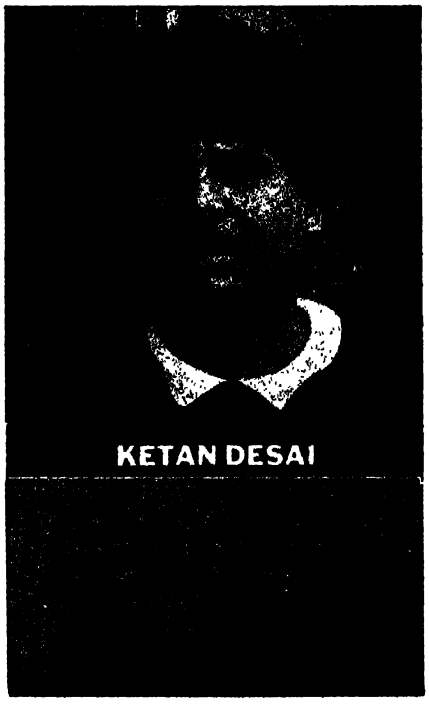
Celebrity advertising is the "in" thing these days. Our filmstars are endorsing a range of products, so are our cricketers and musicians, hawking wares on the print and television media with a sincerity that would convince an Eskimo to buy a double-door refrigerator. From Bollywood there is a veritable queue: Sridevi, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Dimple Kapadia, Zeenat Aman, Vinod Khanna, Jeetendra, Mithun Chakraborty, Jackie Shroff and lesser—but no less in demand—stars such as Shekhar Kapur, Sangeeta Bijlani and Saeed Jaffrey.

Ex-aces, the Nawab of Pataudi and Sunil Gavaskar, lead the cricketing crew of Kapil Dev and Krishnamachari Srikkanth. And from two ends of a spectrum: sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan, tabla magician Zakir Hussain and Bombay pop star Remo Fernandes. There is a big draw for appearing in print ads, but by far the most popular medium with the star-folk is TV.

"Television as you know is a very powerful medium," says Shekhar Kapur actor, film director, ad-filmmaker and a rage as a Digjam suitings model, talking about his assignment by way of illustration. "Now they want a celebrity to do it, because then there is instant identification supported by the fact that people tend to look up to the celebrity concerned." People, continues Shekhar, aspire to be like the star, and "in their subconscious, that dream never dies. Everyone has this aspiration to stand on a pedestal...in a tightly competitive market, a celebrity does provide that extra cutting edge. By remembering the star people tend to remember the product."

For some celebrities, a little rattled on the publicity front as far as their professions are concerned, it presents an opportunity to look at their modelling assignments as a gateway in the battle to remain in the public consciousness. And often, being accepted as a model is an indication that there is still scope to carry on. Says Sangeeta Bijlani, once a full-time model and currently a fairly big name on the silver screen: "I think film stars appearing in ads is a very good sign. Ad agencies will not want to sign on a faded star."

And, as they have what the public—specifically, the consumers—may want, it is easy enough to cash in on fame. "I have often been asked why busy stars take time off and do a ten second commercial (for TV)," says Frank Simoes, who runs Bombay-based ad agency Frank Simoes Advertising and is one of the most respected names in the business. "Well, in the first place it is very good money and very little work. Secondly, the power of television keeps them in the public eye." Adds a top Bombay model coordinator, who declines to be identified: "What's wrong with a little extra pocket money anyway? And what is wrong with some nice exposure? Most stars are egomaniacs who live for publicity, so why shouldn't they grab a chance like this. And it's a profitable way of spending their free time."





It certainly is. Celebrities are reluctant to talk about their modelling earnings, but is easy enough to get estimates from industry sources. Vinod Khanna reportedly picked up over Rs 10 lakhs for his stint as the Cinthol Lime soap man, riding horseback along the beach. Shekhar got Rs 10 lakhs for each Digjam campaign. Dimple would easily pull off Rs 4 to 5 lakhs for the Crowning Glory soap shampoo ads. Even Shroff, a top draw name who does not quite draw a top film industry pay packet, received anything up to Rs 3 lakhs for a Red & White cigarette commercial. (Vivian Richards, who came to play in the 1987 Reliance World Cup cricket, ended up endorsing the company's Vimal fabrics and took home over Rs 8 lakhs for the effort.) "The money is good," says Bijlani, "very good."

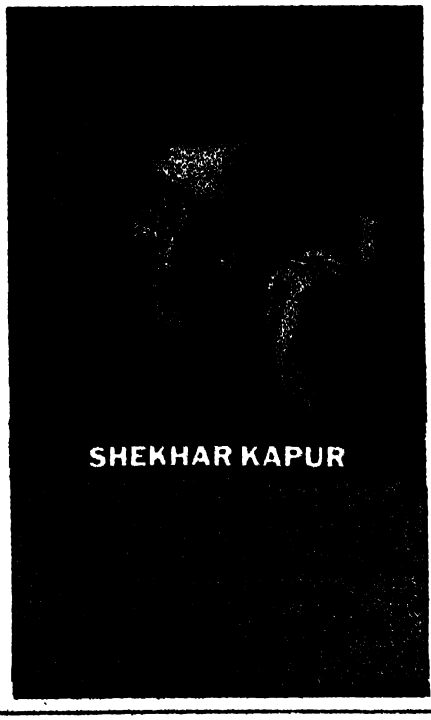
Remo is supposed to have received Rs 1 lakh for a stint as the Raymonds man, and a similar amount for co-starring with Juhi Chawla in a Pepsi



cola commercial. Industry insiders say that most celebrities today, all millionaires, demand half the payment in "white" and the rest in "black". Often, consumer items such as foreign refrigerators, video cassette recorders, and even real estate—Indian, till now. "If Amitabh Bachchan decided to enter the market," says Kapur, "the price that he would command would be enormous. I am sure, absolutely sure that Bachchan would get a minimum of Rs 30 to 40 lakhs for one campaign." And no one, he says, would even blink an eyelid to pay out.

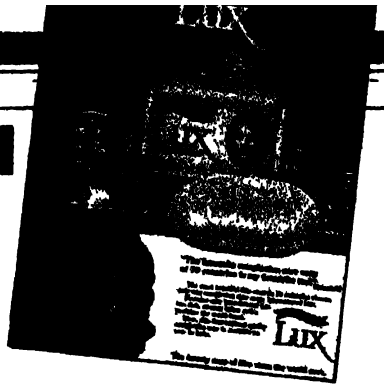
"As an ad-filmmaker I would definitely use stars although they demand a huge amount of money," continues Shekhar, who runs Quasar, an ad-film company. "But let us look at it this way. A star who commands and gets Rs 12 lakhs is worth it." He adds: "Take advertising budgets, some of them run into crores (of rupees). Now what is 12 lakhs on a budget like that? Peanuts." K. Ravi, general manager of Mudra Communications—the agency which roped in Richards, Shastri, and the recently beknighted Richard Hadlee for a Vimal campaign—agrees. "The money that you pay celebrities is worth it," he says. "In the first place, identification is instant where a really big name is concerned. And that is very good for the product."

No question there. Cinthol sales are up. As with Gwalior suitings—called 'Pataudi suitings' in many parts of India—and Gold Cafe, the two brands that Pataudi endorses with class and elan; that is why he was chosen in the first place. Cema light bulbs, Sridevi's baby, is so popular in the south that consumers go to the market and ask for Sridevi bulbs. Red & White has kept up its loyal line of smokers, first through a Raj Babbar catch the robber act, and now, with Shroff rescuing a waiter from a disastrous fairground fire. Another indication about celebrity being in great demand is the fact that big film making names have got involved. At the top of the heap is Ketan Desai, film director Manmohan's son. Ketan, who was a major Bombay producer-director till recently, is devoting all his time to making ad-films, with the elder Desai's blessings. For him it is not too difficult, the Desais know the big Bollywood names anyway. "I first did L&T Vision, an ad-film for Larsen & Toubro (before the company's Rs 820 crore debenture issue last year)," says Ketan. "I know Anil Ambani so I bagged the contract. Later, the Modis and Everest (Advertising) in New Delhi approached me to do the Red & White campaign...they wanted a celebrity. I jumped at the offer." Shroff would be the best bet.



Nothing could be better

Being the Lux dreamgirl is still a top draw



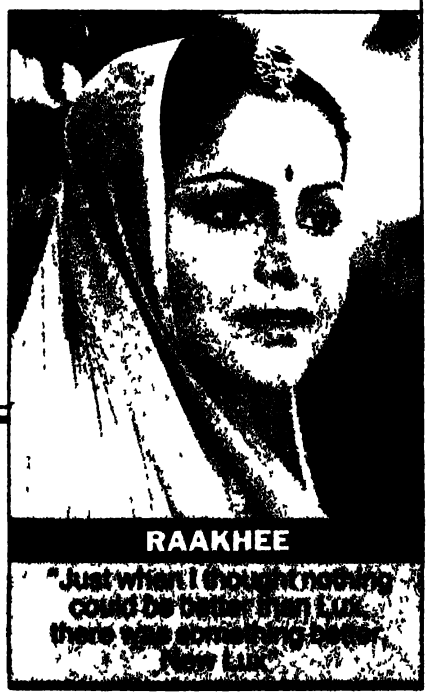
"Just when I thought nothing could be better than Lux, there was something better, New Lux," said film star Raakhee and millions believed her. As they did other stars who endorsed the soap, making it the only brand—worldwide—which has used celebrities, for every major launch event, from the film world, ever since it was launched in 1929.

According to Utpal Sengupta, general manager, Popular Detergents, the brand's New York advertising agency was asked in 1929 to prepare a campaign for Lux. A copy writer in Los Angeles, the film Mecca, had an idea: she suggested something on the lines of a girl who uses Lux becomes so beautiful that she is mistaken for a filmstar. The agency's bosses in New York took it a little further—they decided to use a real filmstar to endorse the product. Ever since, Lux has been advertised by stars in 76 countries.

Leela Chitnis was the first Indian filmstar to endorse Lux, in its 'pure white' incarnation. Later, stars such as Kamini Kaushal, Nargis and Meena Kumari became Lux stars.

In the 1960s, when Lux decided to go colour—in blue, green, yellow and pink—the top stars of the decade helped launch the soaps. Mala Sinha, Asha Parekh, Sadhana and Waheeda Rehman. Lux's 1969 relaunch was advertised by the next lot of film sirens, including Simi Garewal.

"In the 1960s," says Roger C.B. Pereira, who runs Bombay-based Roger Pereira Communications Pvt Ltd, "I had done a mini thesis on Lux. I met celebrities in India." Pereira says he discovered one thing: stars would "die to get into the Lux campaign. If a star was featured in a Lux campaign it meant: she had made it. The campaign was that big for them. A lot of Indian filmstars fought to get to Lux." However, he adds, once they made it big in the film world, they hardly touched the product. That may have been true of the 1960s. But today, the Lux allure still holds good for India's top female stars. And you can bet Simi Garewal would not mind being the Lux girl one more time.



"As an ex-model," says Shroff, who realises the power of advertising, "I must admit that television is not bad." However, he adds: "In future, I don't plan to do many ads, but if there is an interesting one, whose storyboard (script) is great, why not?"

Indeed. But as much as stars may be in demand, and, of course, however much money they may demand, just having a big name is not enough. Suitability for an ad is what matters even more than the star. Very simply: casting, in much the same way film stars are used to, and what lesser luminaries such as sportsmen and musicians have to cope with if they want to be hired as models. "Celebrity advertising must have a connection," says Simoes, the ad-man. "Suppose Satyajit Ray, the international master said in an ad 'From now on my films will only be shot with a Nikon 801 (camera).' That would be *the* celebrity ad for Nikon all over the world." Of course, he says, Ray will never do it, but this was just to illustrate the point that there is a direct connection between the product and the celebrity endorsing it.

"Or take Mithun and the National' (video recorder) ads," continues Simoes. "They have him in the right context, at the right place and at the right time. Mithun has the power, the charisma, he is a man of this world." In the same way, he says, Pataudi and his wife Sharmila Tagore are "perfect" for Gwalior suitings ads.

This is a crucial factor, how a star personality fits into an advertising role. Pataudi, for instance, comes across as classy in Gwalior suitings and Gold Cafe ads, but he would be a disaster in a tooth powder ad, say industry executives. A Deol or a Dara Singh might fit the bill better. "Now if you take me in a monkey brand matchbox advertisement," says Shekhar, for example, "it will not work. The mix of product and celebrity do not jell. There will be absolutely no believability."

However, sometimes when there *is* a sense of believability, as Shekhar calls it, it can actually affect a celebrity's real profession. And Shekhar is a good example. "Look what happened to me in Digjam. The exposure was so much that I as an actor began suffering. Even in a role in a film, people used to say 'Look, the Digjam man'. For an actor that is death."

Shekhar's colleague in the film industry, and even in the modelling trade, Sangeeta Bijlani, disagrees. Bijlani says she cannot figure out how an ad could damage a star and his or her film prospects. In fact, it can help fill the gap when film offers are few, or between movie releases. "There is nothing wrong with that," she says. Besides, she adds, refuting the claim of a celebrity overshadowing a product, the ad strategy is worked out to the minutest detail, keeping in mind the product, the positioning and the target audience. "An ad is presented for the product and not the star," says Bijlani. That certainly is the ultimate aim of all marketing men, but having a celebrity or two around to spread the message certainly helps. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

DINESH MOHAN

Merchants of life

The finest hospitals in India send you home a pauper and the worst don't send you home at all

A few days ago a cousin of mine passed away — a road accident victim. He was in his prime but the injuries he sustained got the better of him. After many days in coma in the intensive care unit of a private hospital, he died leaving behind sadder (and much poorer) near and dear ones.

Mulling over the events following the accident I realised how negligent the medical profession has been in evolving a trauma-care system which suits the economy and culture of our country. The 'finest' hospitals in India send you home a pauper and the worst don't send you home at all.

This is not surprising. Data from the United States of America indicates that a typical trauma-patient bill amounts to about $13,000 (Rs 2 lakhs). Treatment of serious cases end up costing many times that amount. This is mainly due to the very high cost of medical technology. Therefore, even if we use low-cost doctors in India, the trauma-care costs will be unaffordably high for a vast majority of Indians. Most health insurance schemes do not cover costs more than Rs 75,000.

It is obvious that we will not be able to afford a replica of the American emergency room in every Indian hospital. Yet almost all our medical practitioners keep lamenting the fact that we don't have the latest gadgetry in our hospitals. None of them has been able to explain to me the mechanisms of fund raising which will enable every hospital in the country to install and maintain multi-crore complexes.

But this is less cause for concern than the lack of innovative thinking among medical practitioners. They just want to import the "best". There is little attention being given to studies indicating the very low cost-effectiveness of much of the latest equipment being used in hospitals abroad.

It is high time that trauma management is given a little more importance in India. A court ruling has established that treatment of accident victims is mandatory for all hospitals. If this is so, then we have to establish procedures and guidelines for equipping, manning and running emergency rooms in hospitals of different sizes.

Firstly, the medical community has to decide whether it wants to train super specialists in trauma management or whether it would be more effective to train existing specialists in diagnosis and treatment of external and internal injuries. In either case we have to develop training systems suitable for our environment.



Inside a plush hospital: expensive

Secondly, we have to design a workable system to transport the patient to the nearest hospital. In the absence of an adequate network of ambulances we'll have to depend on voluntary systems. We could make it compulsory for all professional drivers to undergo a one-day emergency-care course. Hospitals could also set up funds (with the help of donations, etc.) which could be used for reimbursing taxi drivers bringing victims to the hospital. They could even be paid twice the regular fare.

Thirdly, some guidelines have to be established for the standard equipment that must be available in all hospitals, irrespective of their sizes and expertise level. These guidelines should also prevent hospitals from purchasing expensive equipment whose usefulness is under question. We could even think of evolving a new paradigm for low-cost but effective trauma-care.

There are a few other matters deserving attention. For example, hospitals are often short of blood. This is because there are many prejudices prevalent in our society against blood donation. We must launch a long and sustained educational effort to destroy these myths.

The health insurance system must also be made more accessible. Every single individual not covered by his employers should be able to gain access to good medical treatment at reasonable rates.

Unless medical care is more easily available a greater proportion of our budget is spent on health care, and we establish more realistic and humane norms for running our emergency rooms, many more young men and women are going to die when they don't need to. But the pity is they won't even be given a fighting chance to survive like my cousin was.●

The author is a member of the Centre for Biomedical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi

V. GANGADHAR

Serious reservations

The press unanimously condemns the Mandal Commission report

Mandal, the miracle worker! He has achieved the impossible. His recommendations on the reservation issue have managed to unite the media as never before.

'Ruinous; Disaster; Riding a tiger; Back to the past'are some of the editorial epithets hurled at the recommendations. The strongest comments are found in an editorial in *The Sunday Observer* headlined.'Butchers of India'.

Here it goes: "For India, the age of enlightenment, the age of the Mahatma and Jawaharlal, is over. The dark ages have dawned. The clock of history has been put back by a few centuries... And where will all this stop? Already caste-oriented political formations are taking shape. The 'Mandalisation' of society can only accelerate that process. No voices of sanity are left. There is no Mahatma who once undertook a fast to persuade Dr Ambedkar to abandon separate electorates for Scheduled Castes. There are no sage leaders like Ambedkar either. Instead we have political butchers who are only interested in having their pound of flesh. In this crass pursuit they have stabbed India and left it to bleed to death."

Even the establishment's own paper, *Indian Express* is not at all happy at the 'Mandalisation'. Calling acceptance of the recommendations of the Commission, 'crassly opportunistic', the paper even calls for a nationwide struggle against the recommendations. Of course, it has to be peaceful, but are agitations, under the present circumstances ever peaceful?

Politicians are always happy to ride the caste tiger. They do not seem to have learnt anything from the experience of the late Karpoori Thakur, who was ultimately swallowed up by the casteist populism which he himself had evoked.

Predictable reaction

Media reactions to the two major international events, the ouster of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, and the 'merger' of Kuwait with Iraq with the subsequent ominous developments in the Gulf region, are more or less predictable.

Quite justifiably Saddam Hussein, has been branded from a blackguard to a zombie, and some of our commentators are more militant than even the Western correspondents. Under the circumstances;G.H. Jansen's despatches from nearer the scene in Nicosia which appeared in *The Times of India* are illuminating. According to Jansen, Mr Bush, so long taunted as the 'Wimp' (I.K. Gujral, please note), is determined to get rid of Saddam Hussein because he is an uppity, insubordinate Arab and an inveterate enemy of Israel. The US scenario, argues Jansen, is to rush Saudi Arabia into becoming a participant in the American crusade by provoking or staging a supposedly hostile Iraqi attack against Saudi Arabia. Hence the cooked-up crisis being built on the fact that the Iraqi troops are now on the Kuwait-Saudi border.

What our political pundits seem to have forgotten is the fact that the massing of Western (particularly American) forces in the Gulf region has opened up an immense fissure within the Arab world. Jansen points out that the majority of the Arabs are extremely anti-American for its unswerving support to Israel, their bitter and historical enemy.

Everyone is talking about sanctions against Iraq for its illegal annexure of Kuwait. Going by the same standards, sanctions should also be applied against Israel for defying UN resolutions for refusing withdrawals from the West Bank, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights as well as from Southern Lebanon. And what about Turkey's flouting resolution 353 calling for the withdrawal of its 35,000 troops from Northern Cyprus. As G.H. Jan-



The Sunday Observer **editorialised, "For India, the age of enlightenment, the age of the Mahatma and Jawaharlal is over....Already caste-oriented political formations are taking shape. The 'Mandalisation' of society can only accelerate that process "**

sen puts it succinctly,"It all depends on who the invader is."

Benazir baiting

Somehow, I had expected the Indian media to be a lot more sympathetic to Benazir Bhutto on being removed from power. But most of our commentators seem to be a bit smug and gleeful at the ouster, looking at it as a kind of comeuppance for alleged corruption and misrule. The epithet 'Mr Ten Per Cent' about her husband has provoked our scribes even more and the general mood seems to be one of she-got-what-she-deserved. Not much seems to have been written about the constraints under which Ms Bhutto had to operate, the sinister role of the military intelligence and the link-up of the events in Pakistan with what is happening in the Gulf.

Surprisingly enough, some of the best coverage on the Pakistan crisis was in the Sunday edition of the Bombay tabloid, *The Daily*. While columnist Tavleen Singh shed no tears for Ms Bhutto, Inder Malhotra concluded that corruption led to her downfall (again a more sophisticated manner of looking at political happenings). But the most readable and objective piece was an interview with former foreign secretary, S.K. Singh who had functioned as our high commissioner in Pakistan.

Singh, who was made to resign from his post refers to the constraints under which Ms Bhutto had to operate. These compromises weakened her authority as the Prime Minister besides lowering her standing with her political adversaries. Singh made a telling comment on the future relationship between India and Pakistan, "Who are we to decide what the people of Pakistan should want? As long as they are able to produce a governmental system under which the people of Pakistan can be our friends, it should be all right with us."

Now, a word or two more about *The Daily*. Started by R K. Karanjia, the tabloid, despite a promising beginning, had been stumbling along. But the new management and the Rajat Sharma-Fatma Zakaria editorial team has jazzed up the paper quite a bit. *The Sunday Daily*, in particular, offers a wide variety of articles. *The Daily* would do even better if it regards itself as a Bombay newspaper with less emphasis on national politics.

The average reader of *The Daily* is certain to skip all that stuff on what is happening to whom in the Delhi bureaucracy and the relative positions of Deshmukh, Seshan, Mahesh Prasad or Shiromani Sharma in the power struggle. But they would definitely lap up stories like the success of the son of a port worker residing at a Sewri fish market *chawl* who is all set for higher studies at Dallas University in the US. The father, Mohammad Ali, had saved and sacrificed, working overtime whenever possible, investing everything he had to give his children a decent education.





Inder Malhotra concluded that corruption led to Benazir's downfall—a more sophisticated manner of looking at political happenings

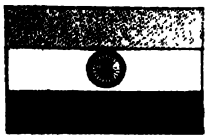
Pande-monium

On the subject of civil servants, the Vinod Pande interview to Kumkum Chadha has predictably raised a storm. Rajiv Gandhi (in SUNDAY), is not amused. "I think it is incredible that a cadre civil servant like the Cabinet secretary is writing off this government and giving it a deadline of 13 months! I've never heard anything like this before.

Pande's favourite journalist, Pritish Nandy, rushed to the defence of his hero in a front-page, by-lined article in *The Independent*. But the more interesting comments on the Pande interview came from Tavleen Singh in the *Indian Express* column. "Along with his bizarre political predictions, Mr Vinod Pande, also talked of love and women, and the level of his confessions, would be disturbing enough in an adolescent, leave alone in a man who should be thinking of more serious things than why he is cynical about women." Ms Singh suggests that Pande, for his next interview, chose either *Savvy* or *Society* and tell the readers whether he finds (like the BJP MP, Uma Bharati) Madhavrao Scindia attractive or not.

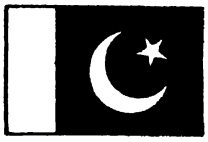
New columnist

I have to congratulate *'Dev Features'*. In their latest recruit for syndication, P.C. Alexander, (former principal secretary to Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi) they have found someone who writes knowledgeably and with an easy, flowing style on his life and career. "Both *Week* magazine and Calcutta's *The Telegraph* are carrying detailed account of the present ('Lessons from Haryana') as well as the past ('How I was hounded by Morarji Desai'). •



WAR

An imaginative account of what might happen in the event of an India-Pakistan conflict



Over a year ago the Indian Defence Review (IDR) research team had predicted that Kashmir would go up in flames. At that time, the team's findings had largely been ignored. The IDR team had also suggested that the uprising in Kashmir had been meticulously planned by the Pakistani Military, and had sketched out a fictitious scenario called 'Operation Topac', which later generated a lot of controversy. Many defence analysts believed that Op Topac had been unearthed by RAW agents. The IDR team, however, insists that Op Topac was a fictitious scenario built up through analysis.

Now, the IDR team has come up with a second instalment of the Op Topac scenario. Their conclusion is that Pakistan and India are headed for war over Kashmir. But war is not going to solve any problem:

ISLAMABAD MARCH 1990

By the year 1990 the situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) had been aggravated to a high pitch. The efforts of Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN had not succeeded. The Islamic countries with the sole exception of Iran had NOT quite responded to the *umma* in danger angle. On the other hand, certain strong measures taken by India created problems for the militants and the third phase of insurgency as visualised in *Op Topac*. Ms Benazir Bhutto made some provocative statements and continued to assert her country's moral right to support the people of J&K, but did not seem quite sure how far Pakistan could covertly assist the secessionists. It appeared, rhetoric notwithstanding

(From left) Pakistani armymen exercising in the Siachen area; Indian tanks





that she was keen that the situation should not escalate into a military conflict with India. There were other pressures however!

In early March 1990, when Ms Benazir Bhutto was received at the General Headquarters (GHQ) by General Aslam Beg, the morning was still misty and a chill wind was blowing from the mountains of Kashmir in the North-East. The briefing session which followed in the sanctum santorum of the dimly lit war room was attended by a small but select gathering.

No one, even in Pakistan, outside the Ops Room was quite sure what actually transpired that day. During a tea-break, someone mentioned the *Strategy of Artichoke* (an expression frequently used by Abraham Guillen whose notions are reflected in several terrorist operations. For reference: his book *Urban Guerrilla Strategy* in a lighter vein, meaning 'to eat bit by bit till you can swallow the whole'.

It is believed that the briefing although varied in nature covered the following:

- The current situation in Afghanistan.
- Internal situation in Pakistan with particular reference to Sindh and Baluchistan.
- The situation in J&K: this took the maximum time and seemed a cause of general satisfaction all round. Everyone agreed with the point of view that the Kashmiri Muslims have been completely alienated and have become markedly 'anti-Indian'. It was, however, expected that the struggle would be long and bitter.

Much else that transpired is not known. It is believed that Ms Benazir Bhutto was frank, forthcoming and exuded a lot of confidence. It is understood that her line of thinking was:

- She was not in favour of a war with India, as according to her, this would not solve any problem. If, however, a war is forced on Pakistan, she would not be found wanting in the state of readiness required.
- The problems in Sindh must be resolved with speed. If Muslims continue to kill each other in Pakistan, they can hardly expect the Arab world to condemn the oppression of the Muslim *umma* in Kashmir.
- The problems created by the continued and prolonged stay of Afghan refugees must be contained and curtailed as no speedy resolution of the Afghan problem was in sight.





ZARB-E-KAMIL AND OP MUSHTARY

In informal discussions during the Pakistan Ambassadors Conference held in the last week of March 1990, it was frequently asserted that unless the Indian Army was tackled, the struggle in Kashmir had no future. Many people felt that, in any case, the current situation would ultimately lead to a military conflict or showdown between India and Pakistan. The Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahebzada Yakub Khan, however, made a formal statement during the *Iftar* party hosted by Mr Meraj Khalid, the National Assembly Speaker, to the effect that, 'Pakistan will not be provoked into a war with India [as] it won't solve any problem. India also did not want a war'.

In another *Iftar* party held in a more informal atmosphere at the residence of a senior retired military officer, the trend of thinking, conversation and opinion was:

- *Zarb-e-Kamil* should go ahead full steam (*Zarb-e-Kamil* roughly translated means the final or the comprehensive stroke or blow).
- *Op Mushtary* should commence at the right stage, soon thereafter. 'A faint heart never won a fair lady', someone very important remarked.

A certain group of well informed persons in positions of authority were of the view that *Op Mushtary*, if not *Zarb-e-Kamil*, would lead to an all out war. Capture of lateral valleys to help Kashmiri insurgents or attacks on Soltoro Range under the present circumstances would not be tolerated by India. An all out war will be extremely risky for Pakistan—if Pakistan suffers major setbacks the 'movement' in Kashmir will also fizzle out—then 'would the game be worth the candle?' someone asked.

CURRENT INDICATORS

It was obvious from various trends, belligerent statements from Ms Benazir Bhutto and other military indicators, that Pakistan was likely to step up support to insurgency in Kashmir and terrorism in Punjab in the

Now it was only a matter of time before open hostilities would break out. Pakistan continued abetting insurgency in Kashmir and stepped up terrorist activities in Punjab. The situation therefore, deteriorated speedily

Delegations of non-political Kashmiri notables met the Governor and made it plain that this 'repressive' regime would invite full non-cooperation and worse, total cooperation with the militant groups

coming years. At this rate, a point of no return in her relations with India would be reached very soon.

Zarb-e-Kamil—seems to pertain to the stepped up insurgency combined with civil disobedience and non-cooperation. The aims during this phase could be:

- To paralyse the civil administration completely.
- Establishment of a parallel administration in selected areas and collection of taxes.
- Use of land mines operated by remote control to make highways and movement of security forces unsafe.
- Establishment of guerrilla strongholds daring security forces to attack them.

Op Mushtary (Jupiter) will commence at a certain stage of *Zarb-e-Kamil* and is likely to take the following form:

- Extensive and continued firing, including artillery and mortar fire, all along the LC.
- Attacks on isolated posts on the LC particularly in remote and difficult areas.
- Capture of important but less defensible tactical features on the Shamsabari Range, Kargil, Shyok valley– Soltoro Range and in the Punch—Rajouri sectors.
- Concentration of forces opposite Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Jammu and Akhnur and tactical regrouping of forces in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).
- Increased Air and LC violations and visible movement of reserves opposite selected sectors.
- Increase in 'terrorism' in Jammu and Punjab, lines of communication and railways to be the main targets.
- Appearance of well organised guerrilla forces capable of pitched battles. These will be armed with sophisticated weapons which would include missiles, heavy mortars and *Stinger* missiles.



Pak jawans manning a base camp in the Siachen area

India's Reactions

Our reaction to *Zarb-e-Kamil* and *Op Mushtary* will be graduated but purposeful. Strong statements by the Prime Minister (PM) apart, India would mean business and aim at long term gains. This and the 'inflamed public opinion' in India, would ring alarm bells in Pakistan.

There are dangers lurking behind the current situation which could be disastrous for Pakistan, unless she relents and stops fuelling insurgency and terrorism in Kashmir and Punjab, and armed conflict may become inevitable.

Considering the current circumstances, likely developments could be.

- Concentration of forces and preliminary operations.
- Graduated escalation of hostilities in J&K leading to a military conflict which could remain confined to J&K *for a while*.
- Widening of the conflict into a fourth Indo-Pak war, with possible use of the nuclear blackmail card.

DRIFT TOWARDS BELLIGERENCE AND CONFLICT

By April– May 1990 strongly worded statements were being issued by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan. Some reports suggested that Pakistan's armed forces had begun tactical manoeuvres and hectic military activity in POK, indicating certain regrouping and an operational alert. Civil defence organizations were activated and even camouflaging of some installations was reported. Plans to evacuate civilian population from vulnerable areas were recently updated. Various statements were being made in Pakistan to prepare people *for any eventuality*.

The Prime Minister of India, Mr VP Singh, while intervening in the debate on the demands of the Defence Ministry for grants, asked the people 'to prepare themselves psychologically for a war which may be forced on the country by Pakistan'. He also made it clear, 'If a war is forced on us, we are not going to stop it till we gain our objectives'.

The Cabinet Defence Committee of Pakistan presided over by the Prime Minister met again, in the first half of April 1990, to review the recent events in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The four hour long meeting was attended by senior officials including the three Service Chiefs and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. A joint strategy to handle the situation in Kashmir and Afghanistan was discussed. This meeting was a part of a series of such meetings held from March 1990 onwards.

With *Zarb-e-Kamil* and the advent of *Op Mushtary*, a war like situation developed in J&K. After repeated warnings, which went unheeded, India attacked certain insurgent

bases in POK, across the LC. Hot pursuit of insurgents escaping to POK lead to some major clashes between Pakistani and Indian troops, both in the mountain and plains sectors of J&K.

After some more belligerent statements by various leaders of India and Pakistan, large scale movements and heavy concentration of troops was reported on both sides. Air violations increased steadily.

Now it was only a matter of time before open hostilities would break out. Veiled warnings and threats and a lack of support from either superpower held back the belligerents to an extent. Pakistan did not, however, cease her open abetment of insurgency in Kashmir and rather than decreasing, stepped up terrorist activities in Punjab. The situation therefore, deteriorated speedily.

In spite of severe economic constraints and against better counsel, India and Pakistan were drifting towards a war (fourth round) once again, in the nineties.

Activation of LC/Attacks on Lines of Communications

- Selected bridges or culverts on both National Highway IA and Srinagar—Leh road started getting destroyed.
- Significant infiltration commenced on Srinagar—Zojila—Dras—Kargil sectors leading to temporary halting of convoys. Zojila was given special attention by a complete infiltration group (code name—Zulfikar).

Firings and Patrol clashes increased dramatically all along the LC especially in Mendhar and Punch. All 'Azad Kashmir' battalions commenced using every type of battalion support weapons freely, culminating in heavy shelling of Punch and selected picquets all along the Jammu portion of the LC.

Very heavy troop concentration began to be seen opposite Uri and Tithwal subsectors. It became impossible to differentiate between 'Azad Kashmir volunteers', Afghan Mujahideen, Light Mujahid battalions of the Pak regular army, and Kashmir 'volunteers' who had crossed over and had been given training in POK and Pakistan.

Government officials and VIP's were selectively targetted including the Governor's House.

Siachen and North-East Ladakh

The daily artillery duelling ongoing for five years in Siachen increased dramatically. Searching fire came down on Siachen base for the first time during this period.

'Low Level' reconnaissance flights by PAF aircraft became commonplace in North East Ladakh. (Shallow but selective photo reconnaissance missions increased between Pathankot and Akhnur also. It encompassed all roads leading North.)

Non-Cooperation. At this stage, the few porters and graziers still cooperating with the Indian Army ceased to do so as some of their families were systematically butchered in reprisal. All porters ceased work.

Indian Reaction to Zarb-e-Kamil

India was forced into a steady reinforcement state by Pakistan's actions. It assumed massive proportions as preliminary actions of *Zarb-e-Kamil* forced such a move (Pakistan had already beefed up POK with a 'Mountain Division' and had brought in an ad-hoc Corps Headquarters controlling it's Force Command Northern Area (FCNA) and 12 Infantry Division to full establishment). The reinforcement of J&K consisted of tested counterinsurgency formations from the North-East. Reserve paramilitary forces in large numbers were lifted from the rest of the country leaving a 'police vacuum' in other sensitive flashpoints

Within the Valley and in selected towns and areas elsewhere, increasing cordon and search activities now found massive resistance from the locals. Delegations of non-political Kashmiri notables met the Governor and made it plain that this 'repressive' regime would invite full non-cooperation and worse, total cooperation with the militant groups. On being asked why the militants were being screened off and sheltered, these delegations gave a stock answer—"We have no choice in the matter, we are caught between the crossfire of the militants and the Security Forces". And either way, the Delhi regime had failed to protect what it called it's own citizens. The checks provided by private or public interest civil liberty groups were no longer effective in curbing government excesses. These groups, always quasi-political in nature, further marginalized known political personalities.



Indian armymen preparing for combat

The Security Forces continued to succeed in breaking up militant cells, but found that their organization was such that one cell had no knowledge of others. Major successes in neut-

International opinion disfavoured war as an option to be exercised by either India or Pakistan

ralising top militant leaders found a second tier taking over without a break. There was no resistance to interrogation of captured militants. But weapons of Pakistani and Chinese origin continued to be captured and caches discovered (in fact many were pointed out by captured militants who mostly said, "we were forceably recruited").

The problem for the Army now became acute as local police information dried up. No matter what the quality of a police force administration is, they are the best informed agency, leaving intelligence services far behind. Security Forces within the Valley had by then developed their own scratch networks. A first order intelligence vacuum was slowly developing within the Valley.

OPERATION WARCLOUD

The Politico-strategic Dilemma

International opinion, especially those of the permanent members of the UN Security Council disfavoured general war as an option to be exercised by either Pakistan or India.

This had been made clear in unambiguous terms by both superpowers time and again. It was also made clear that the aggressor would invite sanctions other than stoppage of military—economic aid.

General war had other problems attending it also. These were:

(a) Clearly defined strategic aims and objectives were not forthcoming for India, whereas Pakistan's were clear—their objective was Kashmir, and complementary to it the declaration of 'Khalistan' in contiguous areas of the Punjab abetting Jammu province. Both these objectives as India saw them, were in fact one strategic objective for Pakistan.

(b) What was the strategic/operational limit beyond which the war itself would prove counter productive? In this, cases had to be built in with regard to demonstrative use of nuclear or chemical weapons by the adversary.

(c) Clearly a strategy of pre-emption favoured Pakistan, provided it restricted itself to the Jammu border all the way to Siachen. They could justify ingress into Northern Punjab only as a military necessity unless appeals went out from those areas asking for liberation, by say, a Khalistan government in exile. They could justify this in their minds at least as a reverse 1971 situation. The 'Beg Doctrine' posited absorption in one area, while counter vailing assets were grabbed in a far more politically sensitive area. This was the essence of the so called new doctrine (which was not new in the military sense at all). Pakistan's justification came from losses in sensitive Northern territories in *Op Mushtary*. Here the 60 year lease of this area to Britain was twisted and presented.

(d) Afghanistan had shown little interest during the *Zarb-e-Kamil* phase in activating Pakistan's Western borders. Later matters changed for the better for India.

(e) *The 'Domino Syndrome*. Indian planners had to contend with a possible break up in Pakistan's polity having a corresponding effect in North West and North East India.



Prayertime for a Pakistani jawan

CONCLUSION

The PAF did not have sufficient means to deploy assets simultaneously for all tasks demanded of it. It had to rapidly switch priorities depending on the ground and sea situation. However, it did manage to support fully, the main politico-strategic thrust of Pakistan's war plans. Their aims and objectives were clearer.

The Indian effort, large as it was, did not pay the dividends expected of a modern air fleet. The cause lay not in the equipment but in joint operations. It failed again, throughout the spectrum of the air battle. Procedures and methods were so wrapped in red tape, that the outstanding principles like concentration, flexibility, and economy of effort went abegging.

Many people felt that the current situation would lead to a military showdown between India and Pakistan. The Pakistani foreign minister, Sahebzada Yakub Khan, said that 'Pakistan will not be provoked into a war with India as it won't solve any problem'



Navy

This time round, the PN was not bottled up in the harbour. Its task forces, a complementary mix of small missile armed craft operating with larger surface combatants, and supported by a reasonably good Maritime Reconnaissance effort remained near their continental shelf with enough sea room Southwards to await the IN's initiative. Their submarine arm ranged out into the South Arabian sea and tied up assets (It was meant for that) of the Indian Eastern Fleet in the Bay of Bengal.

The IN efforts at bringing the Pakistani Navy elements to battle proved difficult as the PN would not accept these engagements. The country was to learn not to be plunged into gloom every time a ship was lost. Maritime air effort proved inadequate in numbers. The IN did try to draw away the PN at least upto the limits of maritime strike aircraft range but the latter would not budge. This certainly helped in both blockade and contraband control when and where applied. For the first time, a comprehensive warning was sent out to international shipping of all registry not to approach within 150 to 200 nm of the 700 km Pakistani coast. At one stage, four Western Navies had deployed elements on the outer arc stretching as it did from the Iranian coast to Kutch.

Karachi's port facilities were heavily damaged again by air and long range missile action and this had an enormous *political* impact in Sindh province where a feeling arose that because of 'what the west Punjabi's had started—we are getting the big stick'. A seaborne raid in strength, West of Karachi got entangled with American assets leading to a major diplomatic furore. The amphibious raid would have been more successful if extrication had been planned properly.

A geographically compact country, underdeveloped economically, militarily aided far beyond its intrinsic ability to sustain, has both enormous advantages as well as disadvantages especially in a long drawn out conflict of attrition. Pakistan, one such country, was able to derive *psychological* advantage out of pin pricks applied far away, whereas India had to show concrete and solid results with assets bought the hard way.

EPILOGUE

Military

Compared to the losses in material and manpower casualities, the stalemated *Op Warcloud* managed to produce virtually no results worth the effort. It is emphasised again, that a compact, relatively smaller nation is not necessarily a *weaker* nation. This is specially true for limited duration or limited war. Total war has not been in vogue, at least after the Second World War. Depending on the reader's viewpoint, total war has not visited any political entity since Carthage.

The main aspects of *Ops 'Mushtary'* and *'Warcloud'* are:

Territory

Pakistan. On the day an interim ceasefire came into force, both India and Pakistan were holding precariously on to areas South West of the Soltoro Ridge. Who had captured what and held it in sufficient strength became debatable. Pakistan still held Khapalu, and while Indian forces were sitting on their Line of Communication, near Jaurian, Akhnur, Jammu and Samba, she still held very small lodgments.

In the Gurdaspur sector, between Dera Baba Nakak (Jassar) and Pathankot she had fallen back on the River Ravi holding her own enclaves across the river. The destruction in this district especially of irrigation assets was enormous. For instance, whole lengths of flood control embankments had been bulldozed away, and canal linings ripped out. In the armoured—artillery battles whole villages had been razed to the ground. In Sind, she did lose territory in the deep South. She gained

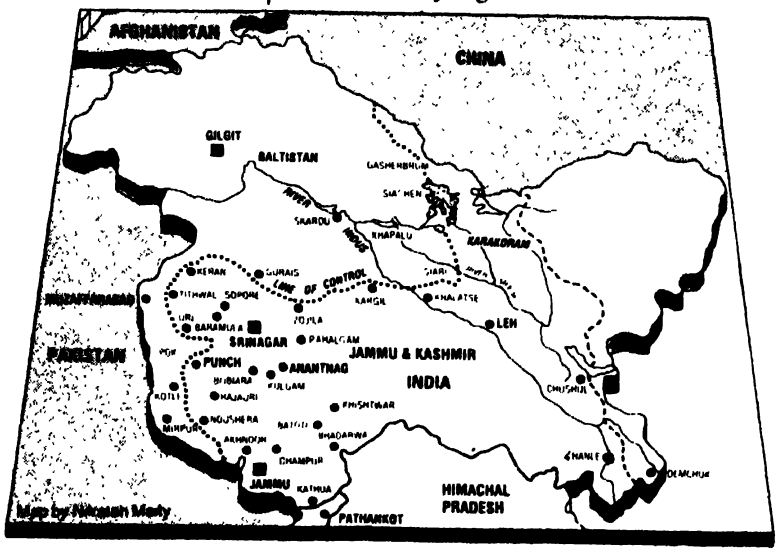
Benazir was not in favour of a war with India, as according to her, this would not solve any problem. If, however, a war is forced on Pakistan, she would not be found wanting in the state of readiness required

Shahgarh bulge and a small piece on the Gujarat—Rajasthan state boundary.

India. Her main gains on the Saddique line of canals now became a contentious issue. Pakistan's holding corps penetrated in a narrow front had not disintegrated on the flanks. Both the strike corps mechanised forces were mixed up in great details over a 600 sq km area. Who held what, became the question since no specific 'Line' had been reached and consolidated. Pakistan had to admit the loss of approximately 300 sq. km where an expanded bridgehead and corridor remained firmly in Indian hands. India thereafter gained a small bit North West of the Tanot bulge, and much wasteland in Southern Sind reaching out to Umarkot.

Material

Pakistan. Very high material losses were imposed on her, depleting her mechanised forces and their war reserves. Her Airforce *losses* was heavy mainly because of overuse. She was down to two depleted sqadrons from an original three. In Kashmir and the Sind, mechanised battle casualty rates were very high. Material losses were heavy enough for Pakistan regrouping armour, armoured infantry and air defence assets immediately awaiting further accretion from abroad. At the end of the hostilities (officially speaking) she was in the position of reconstituting her strike reserves as one full and other 'Light' capable of limited offensives only.



Map showing the strategic points in the J&K areas

In the final analysis, the main political and strategic objectives remained unattainable at the end of the war. Pakistan could make no headway in India. India too failed to defeat Pakistan

India. Tank and aircraft losses were heavy in absolute terms. The more you use, the less you lose is a correct idiom if concentration is achieved. This was not the case, even though belated efforts were made to reorganise armour into independent bridges before the commencement of *Op Warcloud.*

Reserves. Wastage rates were higher than twice the figures catered for.

Cost. When a war is to be fought, either do not count the money involved or fight it on the diplomatic front. There is no other way. The armed forces are *not* a commodity taking up warehouse space. Yes, modern war *does* cost money. Its returns are seen politically in our context, since reparations or capture of territory in lieu, does not form part of the strategic calculus.

Political Effect

In the final analysis, the main political and strategic objectives remained unattainable at the end of the war. Pakistan could not make any headway in Kashmir or elsewhere. India too was unable to defeat Pakistan conclusively. "However, the setback to their respective economies made them more dependent and vulnerable to outside influences.

The balance sheet at the end of *Op Warcloud* showed that this war too was a costly waste of effort, resulting only in human suffering and colossal material damage without solving any of the basic problems between the two countries. All this has several lessons and points to certain alternatives.

Pointers for Pakistan

- Kashmir *cannot be annexed through a war,* be it low intensity or conventional. So why not seek realistic alternatives through negotiations.
- The bogey of *ummain danger hurts Kashmiris and the majority of the ummain India, which resides outside the Kashmir Valley.*
- Discussions and negotiations within a South Asian economic federation like the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and a genuine no war agreement, within the subcontinent, would be more likely to open up Kashmir for Pakistan rather than any conflict.

Pointers for India

- Advocate peace through a South Asian economic forum or some such arrangement, in which Pakistan has a prominent position and a major role.
- Discourage, talk of war and advocates of arms race, particularly those who seek the so-called nuclear deterrence. Instead, bring Pakistan to the negotiating table for a Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and troops reduction talks.
- An autonomous Kashmir region including POK within the Indian Union with soft borders with Pakistan may provide a solution.

Conclusion

Op Zarb-e-Kamil, Op Mushtary and *Op Warcloud* are fictitious scenarios but have been based on existing probabilities and realities on the ground. The acutal 'thrust lines' may differ in reality but the net result will be strikingly similar, to the one depicted here, if anything resembling these scenarios are enacted in the 1990s. ●

Excerpts from the *Indian Defence Review*, July 1990

MUKUL KESAVAN

The direct look

Indian politicians don't realise its importance on TV



There were two notable television commercials in mid-August: the Pepsi launch and the Red Fort speech. There were some important differences: one was longer and the other was better produced, the Prime Minister was peddling the common touch while Remo and Juhi were selling the exclusive cachet of stardom, but both sales pitches told us a great deal about their intended audiences.

The Pepsi commercial was aimed at the new middle class, that wonderful mongrel jointly sired by Jackson and Jalota. It was all very nicely Calcutta—a Goan rocker and a *filmi* heroine, Indian dance steps to Western rhythms, a multinational brand name gone breezily native (Lehar Pepsi).

Juhi Chawla and Remo Fernandes made a direct pitch to camera: they gave it all they had—eyes, teeth, smiles, *joie de vivre*, everything. V.P. Singh never so much as looked at Doordarshan's lenses. He knew that he had a nationwide audience on network television—his speech mapped the Indian electorate segment by segment. But in the manner of his address, he made believe that he was talking to the invited audience at the Lal Quila.

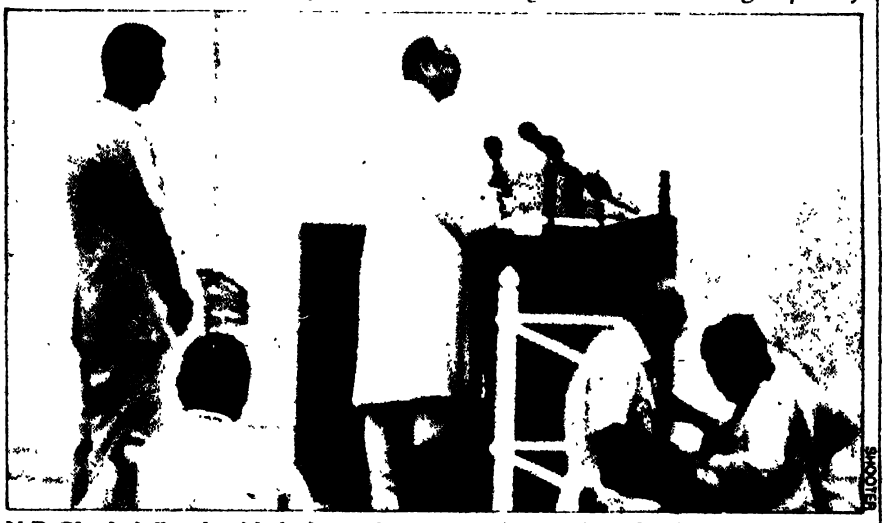
This could only happen in India. I once sat for a whole afternoon in the visitors' gallery of the American Senate. It was a slow summer afternoon—there were barely a dozen Senators present. But the senior Senator from Maine, undeterred by the meagreness of the physically present, spoke with a rhetorical passion worthy of the Ram Lila Maidan or the Boat Club. Throughout his speech, he never once looked at his colleagues in the House : his gaze, his eloquence, his entire being was focused on the little glass lens beyond which sat the nation, mute before its telly screens.

In India, television audiences don't like being addressed directly. We assume that television is a window on the real world, the world out there. We see ourselves as curious pedestrians or casual passers-by, watching accidents happen and traffic flow past. So, the idea of being directly addressed, of being the primary audience for a speech, is as unsettling as the possibility of a road accident being staged for the benefit of the man on the pavement. Which is why, even in the darkest days of the Emergency, Mrs Gandhi was always shown haranguing someone else. More recently, with the grotesque K.K. Tewary at the helm, Doordarshan had Rajiv on our screens continuously, but he spoke to us indirectly via rallies and conferences. For the same reason, when he spoke on 15 August, V.P. Singh pretended the cameras weren't there.

But it's only a matter of time. I remember how disconcerting it was when Doordarshan's newsreaders began using the autocue. I didn't mind them looking up occasionally from their scripts, but looking directly into my eyes for minutes on end seemed presumptuously intimate. Besides, it didn't seem authentically the news without the authoritative presence of the script. It felt as though they were making it up.

But I and everyone else got used to it in time. Now I feel impatient when Ms Albequerque's eyes lose the autocue and dart downwards. It seems very like incompetence, where once it had been the most normal thing in the world. I've grown to value the slick illusion of directness.

It is partly because commercials, as they get better and better, are remaking our attitudes. We aren't spectators any more—we're customers. We've grown used to being explicitly courted and wooed. We mightn't succumb, but we expect performers on the box to try to seduce us. Remo and Juhi do their best.



V.P. Singh delivering his Independence day address: ignoring the camera

So give it a few years and the Prasar Bharati Bill and perhaps it won't seem bizarre that at election time, American politicians buy television time for campaign commercials. Or that the electorate takes such advertisements seriously. After all, British MPs took lessons in deportment when cameras were let into Parliament. Perhaps five years from now, on Independence Day, V.P. Singh will speak his whole speech into the television camera with a picturesque detail of the Red Fort in backdrop for tradition's sake. He'll look into our eyes and we will look into his and India shall be one for those minutes—a nation in electronic communion. Franchised by our screens, we shall be sovereign. We, the people....●

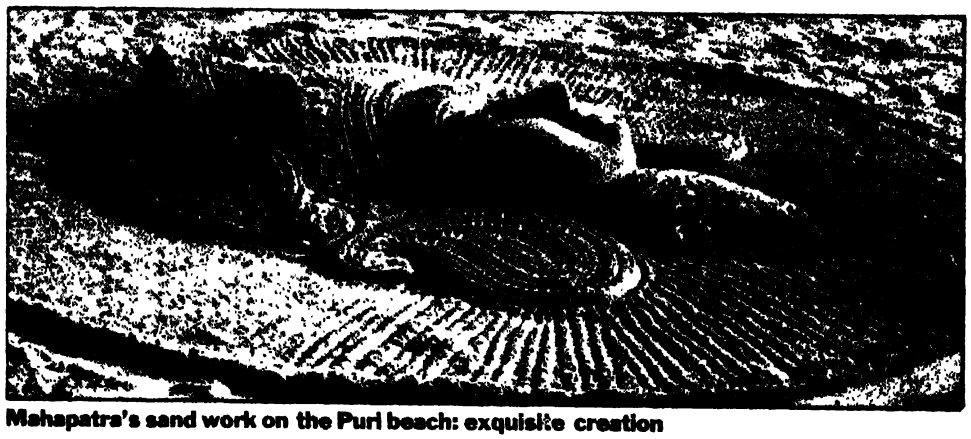
ODDS AND TRENDS

What's the tab?

■ It's being billed as India's first English tabloid on films. *Lehren Cine Tab*, priced at Rs 3, hit the stands last week and joined the mob of film mags and rags on display. Edited by Bharathi S. Pradhan, the tabloid was launched at a star-studded function. Multichannel, the group that pioneered video advertising in India, is behind the tabloid. The inaugural issue has an interview with Meenakshi Seshadri and exposes the secret love of Aamir Khan, besides the usual starry stories peppered with gossip.

There's more to sand

■ Manmohan Mahapatra is a sculptor with a difference. His exquisite figures are not made of metal or clay, but sand. And his workshop is the beach at Puri. For 13 years he has experimented with sand art to gain near perfection—the beautiful figures testify to his creativity. In 1977, Mahapatra got the idea of making sand models while watching children build sand castles on the beach. After ten years of hard work, he established the Academy of Sand Art Culture on 25 December 1987. By then Mahapatra and his art had caught the local imagination and there was no dearth of students. But Mahapatra, not content with just local recognition, wishes to popularise this new art form on the national level and, if possible, spread it beyond India as well.



Mahapatra's sand work on the Puri beach: exquisite creation

Born in a family that boasts of an artistic tradition, Mahapatra says he has never had any formal training. It's his inherent skill, interest in his "hobby" and his family background that have helped him perfect his art. And he is determined not to let all this hard work go to waste. Plans are afoot to open a branch of the Academy of Sand Art Culture in Calcutta (if funds permit that is, says Mahapatra) and maybe elsewhere too.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Nazia Hassan



Maneka Gandhi

MILESTONES

Died: Krishnan Nair, noted Kathakali exponent and Padmashri winner, after a prolonged illness in Thiruvananthapuram on 15 August.

Scored: Sachin Tendulkar his first test century at Old Trafford in England on 14 August saving the match for his team in the second test match between India and England.

Appointed: Ratan Tata as a director of Haldia Petrochemicals Limited with effect from 1 August.

Dismissed: Four Haryana Cabinet ministers, **Hira Nand Arya, O.P. Bhardwaj, Maha Singh** and **Balbir Singh Saini** on 10 August for rebelling against the chief minister, Hukum Singh.

Adjourned: The hearing of the US $470 million **Bhopal gas disaster settlement case** on 10 August till 28 August by the Supreme Court.

Resigned: R.K. Lakshman, chairman and managing director of the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) on 8 August, five months before the end of his extension period.

Died: Dr Gopal Singh, former Governor of Goa and Nagaland in New Delhi on 8 August, due to heart failure.

Sworn-in: Dr Sanjay Singh, as a member of the Rajya Sabha on 7 August.

Dismissed: Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on 6 August, who accused the PPP government of nepotism, corruption and inability to control deteriorating law and order situation.

Invaded: Kuwait, by neighbouring country Iraq on 2 August.

BEGINNING 26 AUGUST 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



This is a week of changes. Your drive and ambition are going to help you to implement your plans. But your professional success could cause jealousy among your relatives. Secret associations will be helpful.

Good dates: 26, 28 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



The domestic front will remain peaceful and be a source of joy for you. This is an excellent week for romance, courtship and marriage. Professionals are likely to receive transfer orders

Good dates: 28, 30 and 31
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: South

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



The stars will favour you this week. But do not be over-confident. Romance is in the offing. For others, this is going to be a hectic week. Your social engagements will keep you busy. Friends will call upon you.

Good dates: 27, 29 and 30
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: East

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



This is a very good week for you. Difficulties may arise on the professional front but they will be sorted out. The period is favourable for romance, courtship and marriage Consult your elders before taking a decision.

Good dates: 26, 27 and 29
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

LEO (21 July—20 August)



Keep an eye on your health this week Businessmen should sort out their differences with their partners. A fairly good week for romance. The domestic front will be peaceful.

Good dates: 30, 31 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 9
Favourable direction: North

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



Professionals will be very busy this week. A promotion is in the offing. This is an excellent week for romance; you will be successful in finding a partner for your life. Pay attention to your family this week.

Good dates: 28, 29 and 31
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: West

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



There might be a few problems for you. You are advised to pay attention to the minutest details of your work. Property matters may cause concern to you. Keep an eye on your health. The time is not ripe for romance.

Good dates: 27, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 6, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



Your intuition will help you to tide over your problems Your efforts may not bear fruit. Do not be disheartened and avoid taking hasty decisions Keep your cool. Avoid taking unnecessary risks.

Good dates: 26, 29 and 31
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is not a favourable week for you. Be cautious on the domestic front. However, keep up the good work you have been doing. Be careful with your finances. Contractors will be successful.

Good dates: 28, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: South-east

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



You will make remarkable progress this week Those in service will be praised by their seniors. Financially, this is going to be a lucky week for a windfall is in the offing. But check extravagance.

Good dates: 29, 31 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: West

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



A moderately favourable week for you. But you are likely to have some financial problems. Do not be disappointed. Patients in hospitals will show remarkable progress. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 26, 28 and 30
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: North

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



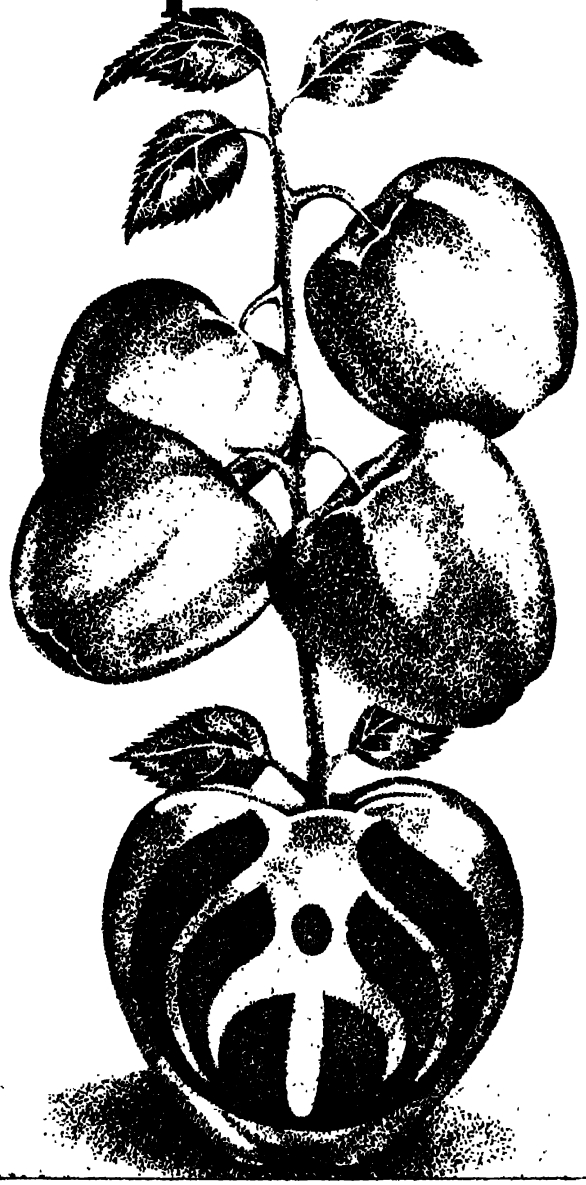
Businessmen will be successful. Avoid unnecessary risks. This is a good week for romance but it is not the right time for marriage. The domestic front is likely to pose a few problems.

Good dates: 27, 29 and 1
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: East

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—CAPRICORN

The Scorpio woman's need for peace and security draws her to the Capricorn man who believes her to be a strong, uncomplicated woman. He might, however, be proved wrong and should respect the intensity of his partner's emotions. ●

IDBI Capital Bonds
An attractive instrument for exemption from Capital Gains Tax.



- Available at par throughout the year.
- Exemption from Capital Gains tax under Section 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Exemption from Wealth tax under Section 5(1) (xvie) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957
- Income tax benefit under Section 80L.
- Interest at 9% p.a. payable half yearly.
- At the investor's option, interest for the full period of 3 years can be paid in advance on discounted basis.
- No deduction of tax at source.
- Outstation cheques accepted and cost of collection will be borne by IDBI.

For further details contact the nearest IDBI office or write to Manager

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA

IDBI TOWER, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay 400 005.

Sohagya-B/IDBI/89

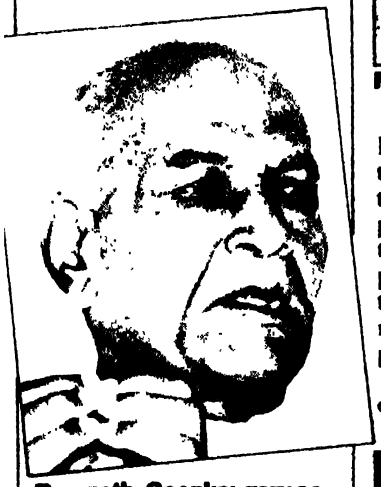
Off with the Dal, on with the BJP

Is the *Indian Express* planning to change its editorial position? The pro-BJP/RSS, anti-Congress position, that is.

In the last few months the BJP has been left at home while the *Express* leader-writers flirted with the V.P. Singh faction of the Janata Dal.

But it now looks as if the *Express* has rediscovered the virtues of fidelity. In a recent interview to a New-York based newspaper, Ramnath Goenka proclaimed support for the BJP-RSS line, reasserting his pride in Hinduism.

At the same time, the *Express* has launched unprecedented attacks on the new caste coalition that the Raja is hastily cobbling together *(see Coverstory)* to win the election.



Ramnath Goenka: *garv se kaho, hum* Hindu *hain*

This suggests that the *Express* will not be able to support the Janata Dal. And the BJP may be the net gainer.

Fly by evening operator

The government's behaviour, apropos the Syed Modi case, gets curiouser and curiouser.

On the one hand, the Raja assures Parliament that justice will be done in the case and reinstates the private counsels. But on the other, Sanjay Singh the prime accused is nominated to the Rajya Sabha, and remains the PM's favourite person.

The Uttar Pradesh government also seems to be following the Raja's lead in this regard. So, regardless of the fact that the state is fighting the case against the princeling of Amethi, Mulayam Singh Yadav sent the government plane over to Delhi to fetch Sanjay Singh's lawyer, Ram Jethmalani to Lucknow.

The craft arrived at 11 in the morning, but Ram Jethmalani was busy in Parliament all day. So, the plane stayed in waiting until late in the evening, awaiting the intrepid lawyer's pleasure.

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL

Devi Lal is one of the great minds of the 16th century.

A DISGRUNTLED JANATA DAL MP



Ram Jethmalani: hang on, I'm coming

THERMOMETER

BJP decision-makers—the second rung

- **S.S. Bhandari:** Most policy decisions are taken after consulting him. He would like Advani to continue as party president and is therefore opposing the candidature of M.M. Joshi.
- **Ashwini Kumar:** Fund collector of the BJP, he is on M.M. Joshi's side. But his advice is being taken only in Bihar and UP.
- **Gobind Acharya:** Pretends to be a second-rung leader. But his influence is stronger than his profile suggests. He is Nagpur's man in the BJP.
- **J.K. Jain/Sardar Angre:** Have risen on the Scindia network. But now both have emerged as powers in their own right. Jain is extraordinarily connected and Angre runs Madhya Pradesh.

Khullar Liberation Front

The last time the country went to the polls, journalist-turned-politico Inderjit convinced Subash Ghisingh to field him in Gorkha territory. And thanks to the Gorkha National Liberation Front network, the mediaman managed to win the election.

This time, however—assuming that a mid-term election iscalled—Ghisingh is unlikely to be quite so cooperative. So, Inderjit has turned his eye to more promising pastures.



Inderjit: BSP *zindebad!*

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), in other words. He has taken on the role of adviser to Mayavati, a senior BSP leader. And spends all his time in Parliament, briefing her on various issues and preparing copious notes for her.

The *modus operandi* is simple. If the Lok Sabha is dissolved, as may well happen, Inderjit will not go to the hustings. Instead, he will prevail upon the BSP to get him a Rajya Sabha nomination.

And going by his success with Mayavatiji, this plan may well work. ●

Super Steno strikes

Has anybody noticed the transformation of Dhawan from Super Steno to Parliamentary Figure? Last week, the safari-suited factotum rose to his feet and demanded to know from V.P. Singh, why a man who is facing criminal charges had been appointed to a high office in government.

The Raja retorted that he would be better placed to answer this question if the raven-haired MP could tell him who the man in question was.

"Why should I tell you? You find out," said Dhawan triumphantly.



R.K. Dhawan: playing riddler

But when he's not playing the riddler, RKD is busy encouraging his protégés S.S. Ahluwalia and Ratnakar Pandey to leap up and down and wave their arms in the air, while screaming "V.P. Singh, resign. Resign."

The Congress' official parliamentary leadership is appalled by this demonstration of loutish (even by Congress standards) behaviour but is powerless to stop RKD's cronies from making Colo because of the Super Steno's proximity to the Congress president.

HEARD AT CENTRAL HALL.

Rajivji hasn't come to Parliament because he has a bad throat.

A CONGRESS(I) MP

Why? Has he put his foot in his mouth again?

A JANATA DAL MP

Nilamani Routray (left): clipping Maneka Gandhi's wings





Choppy waters

The on-going battle in the environment ministry between Nilamani Routray and Maneka Gandhi gets more and more farcical with every passing day.

The latest row centres on the helicopters owned by the ministry. The minister is hell-bent on surrendering them, on the grounds that his department has no use for them. But his minister of state thinks differently.

According to Maneka, the task of safeguarding our fragile biosphere will be severely curtailed if the choppers are given up.

BAROMETER

The coterie at 5 Race Course Road

Sanjay Singh: A member of the family, is at the Prime Minister's residence every evening whenever he is in Delhi. The Raja's wife and children are frequent visitors to the house.

Som Pal: The middleman between VP and Devi Lal. Flew to Bangalore to negotiate that disastrous deal with the Chautharys. Now Chautala's gone, the Tau's gone, Ranjit is in limbo and Sanjay Singh bears the brunt of a new attack. But Som Pal, he thinks getting stronger...

Santosh Bharatiya: Nobody can quite work out why the bearded MP cum journalist is no longer a frequent visitor. Outwardly appears to retain the Raja's trust but the socialising has been curtailed.

Raj Bahadur: His political career seems to be going the way of the film career. Useful sycophant who's (when he chooses) a witty conversationalist. Sanjay Singh has been showing signs of getting tired of him.

What the other MPs of Tau's tie-mates is that she won't be able to pay flying visits to her constituency either.

Put him through, at once!

After his interview to SUNDAY *(see issue dated 27 May—2 June '90)* in which Shatrughan Sinha told Amitabh Bachchan that he disapproved of the government carrying on vendettas against its foes, the Bihari babu found himself in disgrace. The Raja refused to see him, while Janata Dal workers acted



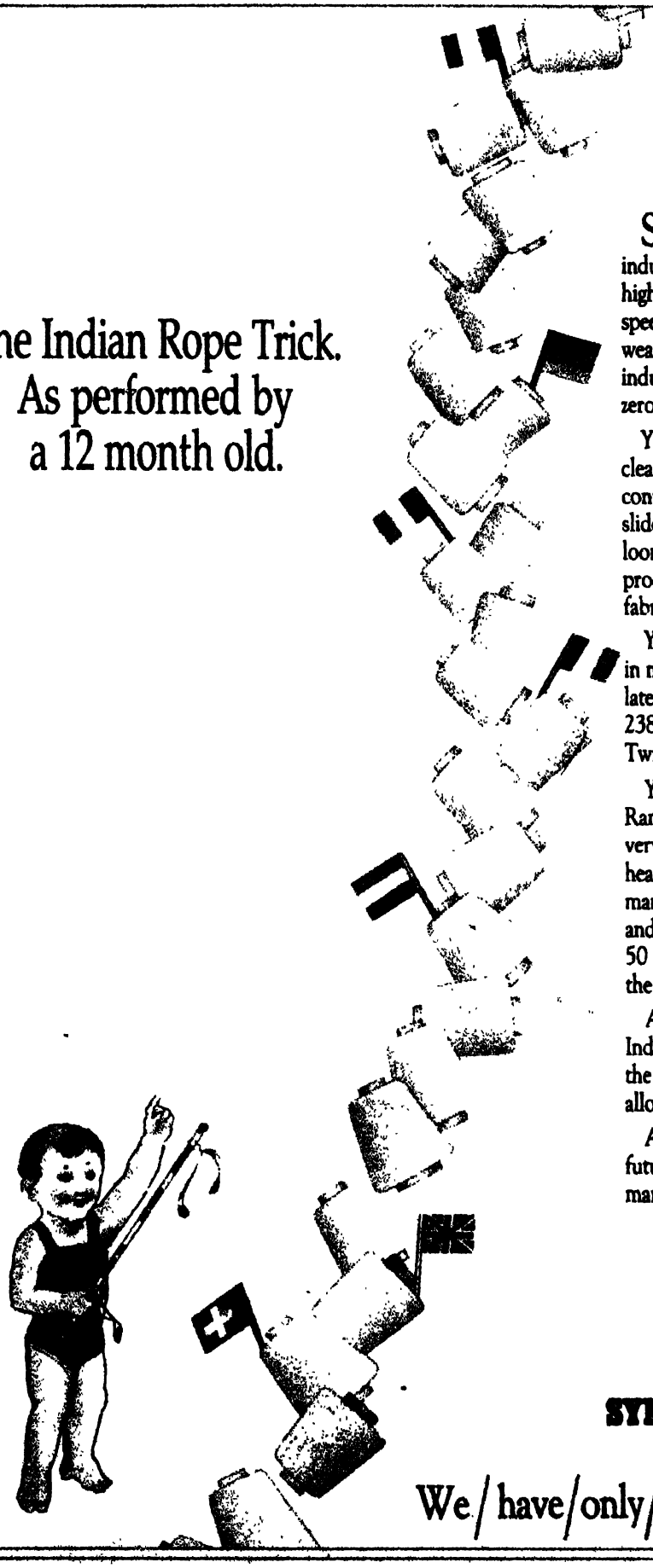
Shatrughan Sinha: back in favour with the Raja

as if he had a communicable disease.

Things seem to be changing for the better now. Not only did the Prime Minister grant an appointment to Sinha, he also spent close to an hour with him, with only minister for state for home affairs Subodh Kant Sahay in attendance.

The Raja has also issued instructions to the A.K. that Shatrughan is to be put through at all times, unless [illegible]

The Indian Rope Trick. As performed by a 12 month old.



Some years ago, the textile industry in India brought in highly sophisticated, high-speed airjet and projectile weaving looms. This meant the industry needed top quality, zero-defect yarn.

Yarn that's electronically cleared, spliced, knot-less and contamination-free. Yarn that slides through the shuttleless looms, enhancing both productivity and quality of fabric.

Yarn spun on the very finest in machinery including the latest generation Autoconers 238 and Two-for-One Twisters.

Yarn manufactured by Indo Rama. A company that, in its very first year, has won the hearts of all leading fabric manufacturers in the country, and has exported over 50 percent of its production to the fashion capitals of Europe.

And as the top weavers in India and Europe wonder at the Indian Rope Trick, we allow ourselves a small smile.

After all, we have the entire future to look forward to. And many more yarns to spin !

INDO RAMA SYNTHETICS (I) LTD.

We/have/only/scratched/the/surface

B.V. SWAMY/IRS/5858 R



The Silk People. He loves designer drapes. She loves daydreaming. Their walls love Luxol Silk.

Silk sheen ... silken feel



Drape your walls with Luxol Silk — the richest emulsion in the world.

BERGER Luxol Silk

BERGER PAINTS

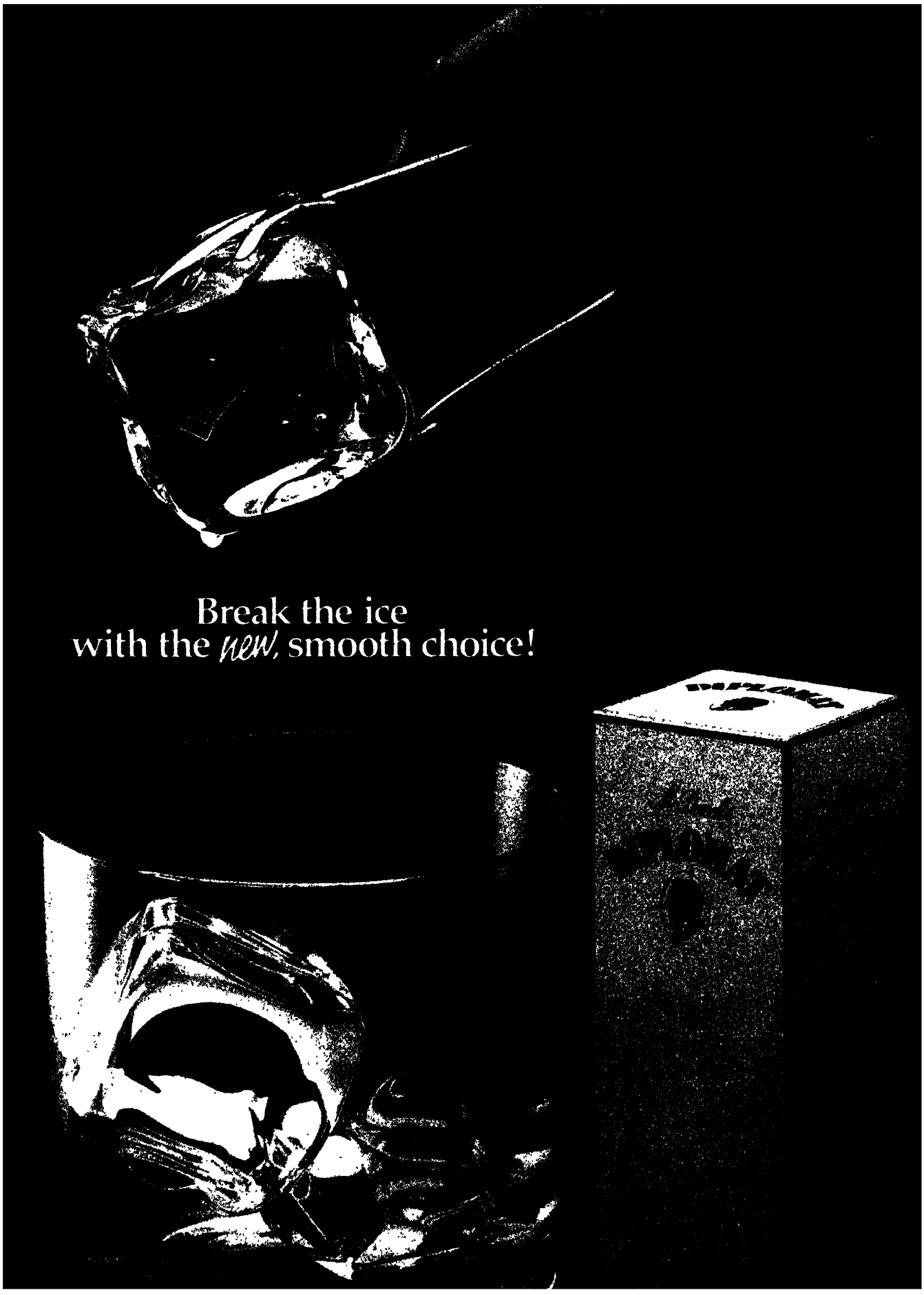
LINTAS (CAL)/BP/LS/P2/2619

ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION ☐ RS 7.00

V.P. SINGH: VANISHING OPTIONS

SUNDAY




Break the ice
with the *new*, smooth choice!

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 35 □ RS 7 00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
2—8 SEPTEMBER 1990



35
COVER STORY

End of the Gulf dream

Thousands return in poverty from the Middle East. And the oil crunch will definitely jack up prices in India. A report on the fallout of the Gulf war.

10
TELEVISION

Doordarshan Pvt. Ltd?

Allowing private enterprise into television may be the only way out.

14
SPECIAL REPORT

Cadre raj

Jyoti Basu's Red Brigade rules West Bengal.



22
NEWSWATCH

Pulling a fast one

Jayalalitha turns the tables on her party rebels and the DMK government.



27
POLITICS

Chameleon

V.P. Singh recasts his image and dumps the middle class supporters.



62
DE JURE

Leaks, plants and lies

Mahesh Jethmalani defends the Bofors investigators in a hard-hitting essay.

67
TRENDS

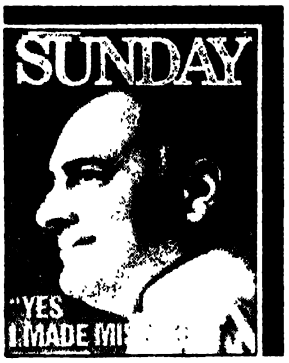
Country pleasures

Rural retreats are the latest craze in Bangalore.

LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 13
BODYLINE 18
CAPITAL MATTERS 43
SPOTLIGHT 44
PROFILE 48
Joan of Arc
BUSINESS/FEATURE 50
MANI-TALK 56
FOCUS 70
Right on target
KHAAS BAAT 72
NEWS 74
CONTROVERSY 80
Culture vultures
MEDIA MUSINGS 82
SPORTS 84
ASTRONOMY 86
Jesus Christ, B.C.?
THIS INDIA 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency:
Gautam Patole

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise; North-eastern states: 30 paise



A late realisation

The interview with Rajiv Gandhi (*Time to be frank*, 12—18 August) was excellent. It seemed as if the former Prime Minister is no longer complacent and is ready to accept that both the Congress party and his own image need to be refurbished, if he wants to make a comeback.

Most Congressmen have realised that whatever be his shortcomings and drawbacks, Rajiv Gandhi still remains their greatest asset. Given Rajiv's fame, his background and his own image—there is no one in the party who can pose any serious challenge to his leadership. Though he is in an unenviable position, he cannot afford to take things for granted. So what is required is a definite programme and direction in order to win over the masses.

Manoj Kumar Jain, Serampore (West Bengal)

■ The first formal interview of the former Prime Minister showed Rajiv Gandhi in a new light—relaxed, unassuming and happy to be away from the glare of publicity. The conversation was really free and frank, as a result of which a lot of confusion has been cleared.

Rajiv was really candid enough to admit the organisational failures of his party in the last parliamentary elections, which was responsible for his downfall. Therefore, it is high time that Rajiv started setting his house in order.

Pranab Hazra, Bankura (West Bengal)

■ Rajiv Gandhi was very frank and forthright in his interview. He has acknowledged his mistakes as the Prime Minister and as the Congress party president. So if he makes a comeback, he is bound to be much better than what he was. Therefore, given the chance, Rajiv might prove that he can really rise to the occasion. But first, he should weed out all the undesirable elements from the party and revamp the organisation and its image.

K.V. Rajagopalan, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

■ The cover story on Rajiv Gandhi shows that he has woken up a bit too late. His mistakes have caused the nation great hardships. He left Punjab in a mess and since then the situation has turned from bad to worse.

In Kashmir, Rajiv made a grave mistake by supporting the then chief minister Farooq Abdullah, whose credibility was nil. The common man felt alienated with Abdullah's style of functioning while the terrorists took over the administration in the Valley.

Rajiv was also not firm enough to tackle the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue. He needlessly exploited it for political gains and blew it out of proportions. Now it threatens to tear apart the social fabric of the entire nation. The Rajiv era should be forgotten as a bad dream and we should look forward to a better future under the National Front government.

Rohit Das, Bangalore (Karnataka)



Rajiv Gandhi: admitting his mistakes

Om shanti! Om

The article (*But Angre is cuter*, 5—11 August) was absolutely shocking. I deny that I have ever used the kind of words you have mentioned as uttered by me about Madhavrao Scindia.

I am not used to this kind of language as I come from a very religious background. I am always for the downtrodden people, and whatever little I can do I do for them. I am really hurt by the write-up.

Uma Bharti, Member of Parliament, New Delhi

Gearing up for the polls

The cover story (*Biding his time*, 5—11 August) was interesting and comprehensive. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is in an enviable position at the national level.

It is a very organised party, has disciplined cadres and its leaders are relatively honest. But it is hard to imagine that the BJP will be in a position to rule the country. Their weakest point is perhaps their current strength in Parliament. By playing the Hindu card, it has managed to increase its tally in the Lok Sabha from two to 84 seats. But the party's theory of a Hindu nation—whether we like it or not—cannot succeed in India. The Congress has ruled the country for more than 40 years on the plank of secularism. And a serious deviation from this is bound to hurt the national pride.



L.K. Advani: going it alone

If the BJP is supporting the National Front government, it is only to forge a marriage of convenience. What is holding them together is the prospect of keeping Rajiv away from capturing power.

Krishan Kalra, New Delhi

■ The BJP seems to be right in its assessment of the present situation in the country. L.K. Advani's disillusionment with the Janata Dal and V.P. Singh is complete. So he feels it is wiser to distance itself from the National Front. L.K. Advani feels that he can go it alone if a mid-term poll is held. His view that he can form a government at the Centre with the help of regional parties sounds incredible. But this should not be scoffed at, for he is a matured politician with vast experience.

Amitava Ghosh, New Delhi

Good riddance

The dismissal of Devi Lal (*How now, Tau?*, 12—18 August) from the Cabinet has shocked many people and aroused sympathy among his supporters, especially in Haryana. But what perplexed everyone was the way he championed the cause of his eldest son Om Prakash Chautala. Ultimately the charges he levelled at some of his Cabinet colleagues



Devi Lal: cornered, at last

boomeranged on him.

The Prime Minister should be congratulated for taking the bold step of sacking his deputy. By doing this, he has not only saved the National Front from grave crisis, but has also managed to boost the image of his government in the eyes of the people.

S. Bachan Jeet Singh, Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

■ The article on the dismissal of the Tau, was timely and impressive. V.P. Singh was correct in his decision to get rid of Devi Lal, who was causing immense problems for the National Front government. Lal was arrogant, selfish and power-hungry. His only aim was to promote his eldest son Chautala and his cause. Therefore, his ouster was justified and good both for the government and the people.

Bhupen Bose, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Temple politics

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has taken a rigid stand to start the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple (*The gathering storm*, 12—18 August) at Ayodhya on 30 October, ignoring any judicial dispensation.

Whether the Muslims will accept the VHP's decision is extremely doubtful. The National Front government has been absolutely non-committal. And a satisfactory court verdict seems to be an illusion.

In the meantime, political forces are being polarised over the temple issue with the BJP expressing its support for the cause and the leftists declaring their opposition to the construction plan. The conflicting stands of the erstwhile allies of the National Front have put the latter in the horns of dilemma.

Manoj Kumar Jain, Serampore (West Bengal)

■ The VHP's activities regarding the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple at Ayodhya have placed the National Front government in a piquant situation. The BJP which is supporting the VHP's cause, should realise that it must work to preserve national unity and integrity, as it is a partner of the National Front government at the Centre.

Samir Marx Mahajan, New Delhi

Masjid, not mandir

The report (*Temple or mosque?*, 5—11 August) is full of inaccuracies, presumptions and contradictions.

The reporter says that recorded history offers very few dues as to what it (the structure) really says: mosque or temple. On the other hand, the historical facts are well established on the basis of contemporary inscriptions, describing the structure as a mosque and naming Mir Baqui, an officer of Babar, as the builder. And, this was vouchsafed for by none other than the government of UP in its official affidavit of 1950, which is part of the official records. The correspondent himself cites the VHP claim that Babar tore down Vikramaditya's temple and built a mosque, which was named after him. Now, how can they turn around and in the same breath say that there is nothing to suggest it was a mosque save a mildewed dome. If indeed the disputed monument is a temple, why this hue and cry over pulling it down to renovate it? So much for the Hindu version. The reporter's own account is full of unchecked myths.

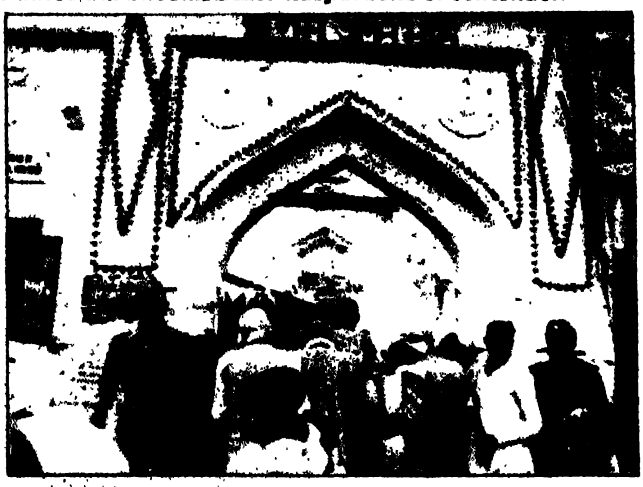
First, the conflict of 1855 was not on the question of the possession of Babri Masjid but of a masjid adjacent to Hanumangarhi, about a kilometre away. The Muslim title remained unchallenged upto 22 December, 1949. Moreover, Amir Ali was not the Sultan of Amethi but a man of piety.

There is no historic record of the supposed agreement between the Sultan and the Raja to pray in different parts of the building or the Hindus to "take over the shrine when the Muslims were given an alternative plot of land to build the mosque". Will the correspondent quote a contemporary record?

No ban was imposed on the Muslims by the British in 1930. In fact, the British administration had the mosque repaired after it was damaged in the riots, and the Muslims continued to offer regular prayers right up to 22 December, 1949 and the mosque was under the management of the UP Sunni Wakf Board. The Imam who led the prayer is still alive and lives in Ayodhya.

Syed Shahabuddin, former member of Parliament, New Delhi

Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid: bone of contention



Sunny stroke

The write-up (*Thanks! But no thanks!*, 12—18 August) was a nice piece. Sunil Gavaskar has done the right thing by refusing the MCC membership. Henceforth, the MCC will be more careful in their behaviour with cricketers. India's former opening batsman has executed a masterly stroke in teaching them a good lesson, which they will not easily forget in the distant future.

V. Deolkar, New Delhi

Fact and fiction



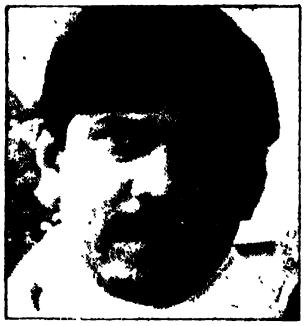
Jaswant Singh



Kidar Nath Sahni



Jagmohan



Saifuddin Chowdhury



M. Farooqui

For keeping the record straight, I must once again deny what Shri Rajiv Gandhi has attributed to me in his interview *(Time to be frank,* 12—18 August).

As already reported in the press, leaders of other political parties present at the Srinagar meeting on 8 March have vehemently denied Shri Rajiv Gandhi's version. And I quote from their statements as published in the *Indian Express* of 24 July, 1990:

Mr M. Farooqui, senior CPI leader, said; "There is no love lost between us and Mr Jagmohan. But, in my opinion, Mr Gandhi has misquoted Mr Jagmohan. So far as I remember, what Mr Jagmohan had said at that time was that the state administration had been taken over by the terrorists and, therefore, paralysed. He had also said that his first task was to rebuild the state administration. What he said about the National Conference and the Congress(I) was that they had become irrelevant and a new political force would have to be rebuilt. Mr Jagmohan did say that you had to make a distinction between the Jamat-e-Islami and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The Jamat is for integration with Pakistan and the JKLF is for the liberation of the state."

Mr Saifuddin Chowdhury of the CPI(M) said: "I cannot remember the exact words used by the Governor. But the impression that the Governor gave was that the Congress(I) and the National Conference had become irrelevant and a new force had to be developed."

Mr Jaswant Singh (BJP): "It is perverse misquotation...a figment of Mr Gandhi's over-active imagination."

Mr Kidar Nath Sahni (BJP): "It is a m[illegible] statement, distortion [illegible] facts...playing the same game which Mr Gandhi tried to play in Srinagar on the day of the meeting."

Even Shri Rajiv Gandhi, who was otherwise critical of me in his talk with the press after the meeting on 8 March, did not make any such accusation. Presumably, Shri Mani Shankar's records had not been manufactured by that time. There should be some limit to disinformation. At first they tried to portray me as anti-Muslim; now they say that I was pro-JKLF. Are these two faces of disinformation reconcilable? Mani Shankar, perhaps, does not know that JKLF, Hissab-ul-Mujahideen and such other subversive organisations were banned by me. Nor does he know that Shibir Shah is not even a member of JKLF.

The fact is that in the Srinagar meeting, I had analysed the nature and potency of the political, social, economic and religious forces operating in the Valley. This I had done at the suggestion of the members and on the assurance that the meeting was for evolving national consensus on Kashmir and nothing that was said during the course of the discussions would go out of the room. I had also indicated that my foremost task was to dismantle the network of terrorism, rebuild the administration and assert the authority of the state which was non-existent at that time. I also stressed the need for setting up of a just and fair system of administration and pattern of development which were people-oriented and not elite-oriented.

Regarding the conditions prevailing before imposition of Governor's Rule, I would just let a contemporaneous document, a representation of Kashmir Sabha, given to my predecessor, General (retd) Krishna Rao on 16 January, 1990, speak: "It is the militants who are the *de facto* rulers in the Valley today. The murders of Mahant Keshav Nath, Tikka Lal Taploo, N.K. Ganjoo, Prem Nath Bhat, Ajay Kapoor and others, were to create scare and awe among the minority community to force them to leave the Valley. The pace of exodus has further accelerated now...It is a sad commentary on the present administration that not even a single assailant of the minority leaders and others has either been identified or apprehended by the police till now...Fully Pakistan-trained underground elements who are armed with modern weapons openly engage in battles with the security forces."

I have no doubt that oral disinformation cannot stand the heat of truth; it would soon melt into nothingness. Hard facts and documents would show that Kashmir was snatched back from the clutches of pro-Pakistan and anti-national forces after 20 January, 1990.

Jagmohan, Rajya Sabha member and former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ I am not taking any message, I'm not a messenger. I am going to Iraq if I do at all—only because our people are held up there.

I.K. GUJRAL, *external affairs minister*

■ If Iran and Iraq who fought a better war for over eighty years could bury the hatchet, why can't India and Pakistan do so?

C.P. Singh, Prime

■ He is the Prime Minister of the country, but he is not my Prime Minister.

R.K. DHAWAN, *Congress(I) MP, on V.P. Singh*

■ Because of it this government will be remembered whether it lasts or not, or whether V.P. Singh or Ram Vilas Paswan remain or not.

RAM VILAS PASWAN, *labour and welfare minister, on the Mandal Commission Report*

■ Did he? Well, it is his prerogative. But let us have it clear, I am not interested in that post at all.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *senior Janata Dal leader, on being informed that V.P. Singh had justified in an interview the need of a deputy prime minister in his Cabinet*

■ They should not criticise the government they are part of. Let them resign, become politicians and then point fingers at the government.

G.C. SAXENA, *Jammu and Kashmir Governor, on some dissatisfied officials of the J & K cadre who have sent a memorandum to the UN protesting against army excesses*

■ The guns could not silence the people of the state. What was needed was good-will, love and affection.

DR FAROOQ ABDULLAH, *former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister*

■ In economics we call it diversification. In this case, it would be diversification of alcohol from drinking to technology.

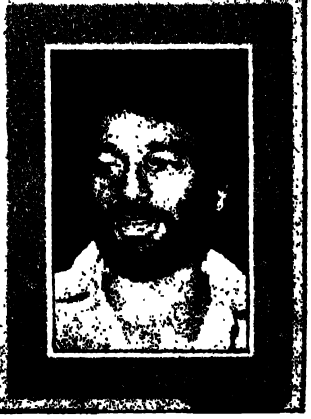
PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE, *finance minister, on a suggestion that more research should be conducted into conversion of alcohol into fuel in the face of the oil crisis*

■ Where did they find stones in that area? Perhaps they bought them from home in their bags.

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister, condemning the Congress(I) agitation*

■ Success is so anti-creative. I wanted to do something creative.

SHEKHAR KAPOOR, *film director*



VINOD MEHTA

Manch ado about nothing

Blame the moderators of Khula Manch, *not the organisers*



On 22 August, if the Press Trust of India is to be believed, two Congress members of Parliament, Dinesh Singh and M.J. Akbar, sought to move a privilege motion against the information and broadcasting minister. The charge? Doordarshan, according to them, has been turned into a "propaganda unit" of the National Front government. Very interesting. Since wire agencies studiously avoid colour reporting, we were not told whether Messrs Dinesh and Akbar kept a straight face while pointing the accusing finger.

Politicians, of course, are completely humourless. Their trade also demands partial amnesia while irony is definitely taboo. Otherwise, how could those close to the previous regime hope to make such a preposterous charge stick? After all, they were part of the machinery that attempted blatant, crude and round-the-clock news management between 1985 and 1989. If Doordarshan is a "propaganda unit" now, the English language is inadequate to describe what it was 12 months ago.

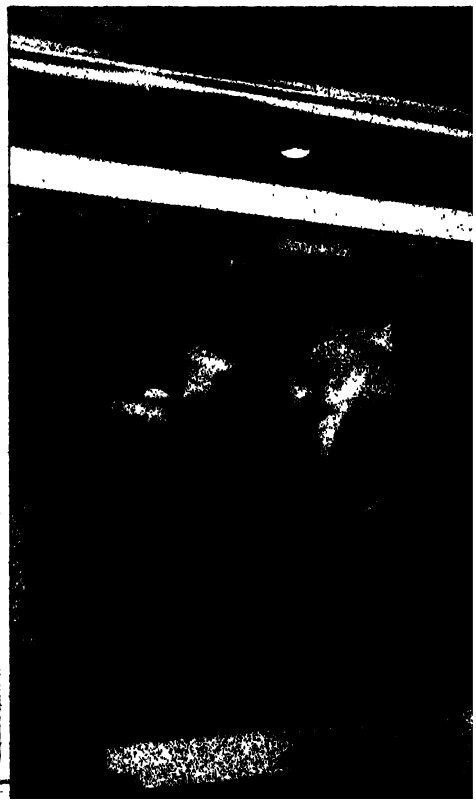
Controversy is the lifeblood of public affairs, but has there been anything more bogus and self-serving than the hue and cry over *Khula Manch*? I missed the first episode, graced by Madhu Dandavate, that hit the headlines not because the finance minister dropped a brick, but due to Mandi House's inability to produce a full-time farmer (surely Mr Devi Lal would have helped if approached). One would have thought that this was the stuff that diary items in the press are made of, but the republic's loyal and diligent Opposition was on its feet insisting on the resignation of P. Upendra for perpetuating a "fraud" on the people of India. Again, there is no information whether those demanding the minister's head were rolling in the aisles while raising the serious point of order.

I did catch George Fernandes on *Khula Manch* having earlier been alerted by the *Indian Express* that sparks had flown during the programme. No sparks flew during transmission time, instead one was pleasantly surprised to see how mellow and statesman-like our George has become. The burdens of office,. no doubt. Alas, despite its noble intentions the programme itself was rather weak: poorly constructed, badly conceived, erratically compered. (Mr Karan Thapar, a pleasant new face on our screen, has a synthetic combativeness coupled with a tendency towards populism—seeking a vote on the Mandal Commission; asking for an apology from the guest; gimmicks snatched no doubt from David Frost—that must be curbed if the programme is to make any headway.)

Moreover, the pursuit of free and frank dialogue between audience and guest was inhibited by the presence of print journalists, whose attendance gave *Khulq Manch* the routine question and answer context. The programme, I thought, was devised along the lines of its distinguished predecessor, *Janvani*. Ministers would be quizzed by the ordinary public while the moderator's role would be clearly restricted to maintaining a modicum of discipline in the studio and ensuring that ministers were pinned down to specifics. Unfortunately, *Khula Manch* to date has achieved few of its ambitions. It has, of course, received lots of undeserved publicity in the press, much to the delight of the producers who must now feel that they have a winner on their hands. Mr Thapar's numerous interventions amplifying and explaining the censorship charge can only add fuel to the controversy. Meanwhile, the producers will be lulled into the belief that their programme needs no refining. My advice to everyone connected with *Khula Manch* is to stop giving interviews to the press and to concentrate on tightening the format of what is, by and large, a promising effort—promising by the standards of what we currently see on our screens.

The charge of censorship, nevertheless, is too grave to ignore, especially since Mr George Fernandes has now joined the chorus declaring that "the editing of the programme was not necessary". Thus, an examination of the 18 minutes that were allegedly scissored becomes imperative. Mr Fernandes states that the edited film had his views on Kashmir, Pepsi Cola, the Mandal Commission and the new industrial policy. Mr Thapar sheds more light. He told an evening paper in Bombay that the chopped-off portions "contained some of the most electrifying scenes ever seen on Indian TV. There was so much aggression, quarrels, interruption, heat, excitement... Absolutely riveting".

Well, I am not sure if heat, interruption, quarrels, aggression are essential ingredients for a meaningful encounter during which an invited audience gets cogent replies to pressing daily problems. Mr Thapar must learn to distinguish between knock-about television, which is a variant of the soap



opera, and serious television which is usually long on content and short on heat.

I can understand George Fernandes's ire. He is a naturally garrulous man with a wide range of interests and prejudices. Indeed, reserved compartments, platform tickets and rolling stock are probably at the bottom of his intellectual priorities. But that is the job he has been assigned, and by all accounts has thus far acquitted himself with distinction. On *Khula Manch*, it must be stressed, he was appearing as the minister for railways and he should have restricted himself to that portfolio. Mr Fernandes was not giving a press conference, neither was he participating in a debate on the state of the nation. He had been invited, as had the audience, to answer queries and complaints on the work of his ministry. Any views he may have on the soft drink industry in India or five-star hotels or terrorism in Kashmir were outside the mandate of the programme.

Actually, the responsibility for the digression lies only partially with George. The major share of the blame rests with the producers and presenters of the programme. They should have ensured that all the questions were screened, and those not germane to the Indian Railways barred. I suspect that the producers encouraged the provocative digressions in their eagerness to make sparks fly. If *Khula Manch* hopes to fulfil any useful social purpose beyond *mare-mari*, some ground rules will have to be quickly formulated and strictly implemented. After the George Fernandes fiasco, I was glad to see an announcement requesting the public to send in only those questions that fall within the official domain of the person sitting in the hot seat.



P. Upendra may not have been an unqualified success as a minister, but his mischief in Mandi House has been greatly exaggerated

The National Front government has had a terrible beginning. However, its handling of media has been exemplary. The Congress has been circulating all kinds of stories suggesting continuous interference in Doordarshan by P. Upendra. From quietly slipping in NTR films to arbitrarily transferring producers, he is supposed to be the main culprit. The Telugu Desam MP may not have been an unqualified success as minister, but his mischief in Mandi House has been greatly exaggerated. From what one sees on the screen, Doordarshan remains its shoddy self—unprofessional, dull, inept, unimaginative and monumentally boring. However, the kind of distortion, suppression, embellishment and daily PM-*darshan*, conspicuous during Rajiv Gandhi's reign, is missing.

If anything, the government can be faulted for being too open. Ministers, including the Prime Minister, err on the side of excess when affording access to journalists. I remember the song and dance that was made before an interview with the PM was granted when Sharda Prasad, G. Parthasarthy and Mani Shankar Aiyar used to call the shots. Questions were submitted in advance, meetings were arranged aboard airplanes, cuttings were required to establish credentials, promises of good subsequent behaviour were extracted.

The government is bleeding all over and it gifts new vulnerabilities to the Opposition almost on a weekly basis. With such an embarrassment of riches on hand, it is baffling why Rajiv Gandhi's MPs waste their fire power on non-issues. No Indian voter within reach of a television set is going to believe that P. Upendra and his henchmen are discreetly, but devotedly, turning Doordarshan into a house magazine. As the Devi Lal saga demonstrated, they are letting it all hang out on the screen. You cannot, if you have any sense, accuse the National Front, in the Lok Sabha, of perverting the electronic media when in that very session of Parliament the same government is piloting a bill to free Doordarshan and Akashvani from official control. •

On *Khula Manch*, **George Fernandes** was appearing as the minister for railways and he should have restricted himself to that portfolio. But, the responsibility for the digression lies only partially with George. The major share of the blame rests with the producers and the presenters



Doordarshan Pvt.Ltd?

Allowing private enterprise into television may be the only way out

"What you need here is to open up TV broadcasting to private Indian channels...In fact, I have forced an amendment in the Prasar Bharati Bill to bring this about."
Rajiv Gandhi is an interview to SUNDAY.

It was as though Che Guevara had started selling T-shirts in Connaught Place. After years of singing the praises of the public sector and reasserting an obstinate determination to retain governmental control on television, Rajiv Gandhi suddenly did an about turn last month.

In his now-celebrated SUNDAY interview, the former Prime Minister not only declared that he would free Doordarshan from governmental control but also made the extraordinary assertion that he would open the air waves to private enterprise if he had his own way.

Proof that Gandhi was serious came when P. Chidambaram introduced an amendment to the Prasar Bharati Bill, that aimed to translate his leader's rhetoric into reality. Because the Congress(I) does not have a majority in the Lok Sabha, few people expected the amendment to go through.

But Gandhi's resolve was more important as a statement of intent. The Congress(I) is now committed to privatising television if it returns to power—a prospect that nobody can rule out.

It was the introduction of Direct Broadcast TV which prompted Rajiv's announcement. With a direct broadcast satellite scheduled to be stationed overhead in the next year (some satellites are already operational) or so—on which Pakistani interests have bought time—the danger from motivated telecasting is very real. All viewers need in order to watch these programmes is a dish antenna which now costs an exorbitant Rs 1 lakh (approximately) but may soon be available for as low a price as Rs 500.

Doordarshan, according to Gandhi, lacked the credibility to counter the propaganda which would be beamed into Indian homes country-wide. It thus became imperative to open up television to private industry, which would be far more effective in projecting an alternative view.

The reaction to the Congress(I) proposal was muted. Doordarshan producer Vinod Dua, who now works for an Ambani-owned television company, was sceptical about the possibil-

By George!



The censoring of the Khula Manch *episode featuring Fernandes draws flak*

The idea was to telecast a current affairs programme on the eve of the Prasar Bharati Bill that would beat both *Janvani* and *Newsline*. But *Khula Manch*—the fortnightly interface between a minister and the public, touted out to be the ultimate proof of the Dal government's commitment to television autonomy—turned out to be a complete farce.

Controversies began from the first episode itself featuring finance minister Madhu Dandavate. It was alleged that one of the participants was an actor masquerading as a farmer. Dandavate, however, said that he was satisfied with the way the programme had worked out.

But with the second episode, featuring railways minister George Fernandes, things got worse. Exercising his writ as information and broadcasting minister, P.Upendra gave instructions to hack the programme from the proposed 45 minutes to 30 minutes, giving the go by to Doordarshan's tight scheduling. That the kendra itself was taken by surprise was obvious from the fact that programme listings had been sent out with *Khula Manch* scheduled for telecast at 10.00 pm and the next programme (the *National Programme for Music and Dance*) at 10.45 pm.

What made matters particularly suspect was that the crucial 18 minutes edited out contained all the potentially embarrassing questions—on the Pepsi deal, the Mandal Commission and the Kashmir issue—that the outspoken Cabinet minister had chosen to answer. With only 48 minutes shot, leaving three minutes for editing, the viewers were thus left with 30 minutes of questions on the railway ministry alone. In fact, P.Upendra exercised his powers as 'editor' and even hacked questions on the railways, including one asking Fernandes whether he would allow Pepsi to be sold on railway platforms.

Co-presenter of the programme and executive producer of Hindustan Times Television (HTTV), Karan Thapar, said that the minister got in touch with them only on



Rajiv Gandhi: advocating revolutionary changes

Saturday night, one day before the programme was due for telecast. He cited three reasons for 'editing' the programme: that these shows were designed to be restricted to a ministry; that other ministers might take offence at somebody else commenting on their area of responsibility; and that if every minister was to answer questions on general importance, the programme might as well finish with the first minister. Hence, when Upendra saw the programme one day after it was shot, he, reportedly, brought it up at a Cabinet meeting.

Ironically, even though the minister was "very agitated" that questions other than those pertaining to railways had been asked, all his queries were discussed before hand at a pre-recording meeting arranged by Doordarshan officials. Yet, Doordarshan's Sarla Thapar and Mrinal Pande, and two other journalists. In fact, veteran journalist Kewal Varma, who was one of the participants in the show, had clarified to Doordarshan that he would be interested only if questions not strictly related to railways were asked. In a letter to Upendra after the telecast, Verma wrote, "I was assured that it was precisely because of that they were inviting me." Despite such assurances, all of Verma's questions were edited out and in a gesture of protest, he returned his cheque of Rs 750 (for appearing on the show) to Doordarshan.

Anchorperson Thapar, while emphatically stating that HTV had nothing to do with *Khula Manch* beyond presenting the show and advising Doordarshan on the format, said that the participants were justified in "making the boat"



Vinod Dua (right) was sceptical about the possibility of private channels being sanctioned in the near future. Producer **Ashok Raina** also had his reservations

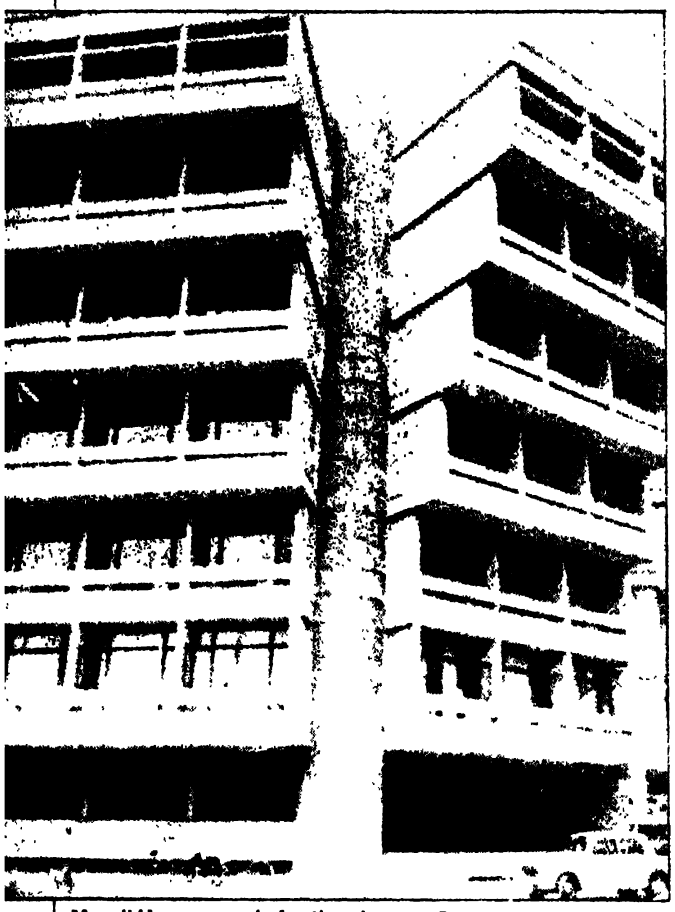
ity of private channels being sanctioned in the near future. Producer Ashok Raina also had his reservations. "It is uncertain whether the Congress(I) will regard private producers as production houses or transmission houses. It is a change of laws for transmission of programmes which is urgently required," he said.

But nobody really disputes that the danger from Direct Broadcast TV is very real. The Asia Satellite I, owned by a Hong Kong company, has already

Says Thapar: "For instance, I think that it is perfectly legitimate to ask George Fernandes a question on Kashmir even if he relinquished charge two months ago."

Others obviously feel the same way. In the face of Upendra declaring that he had only edited the programme, not censored it, his Cabinet colleague, George Fernandes went on record to ask that the "whole programme be shown for what it is worth". He added that he had repeatedly told Upendra that the programme should be telecast in its original form. L.K. Advani, BJP supremo, was more emphatic and declared that the entire episode was "absolutely indefensible".

Even while the controversy raged, however, everyone agreed that the programme had enormous potential. "That such a programme has taken place at all is welcome. Even if they have botched up a splendid opportunity," said presenter for countless current affairs programmes on TV, Vinod Dua.



Mandi House: ready for the changes?



Cautioned former I&B minister **V.N. Gadgil** : "While demanding private channels we have to be alive to its implications. In the West, independent broadcasting has affected the reading habit..."

been commissioned (in April 1990) and covers India, China, Thailand, Pakistan, Korea and Hong Kong. It has as many as 24 responders. There is also the Soviet satellite named GORIZONT, with Asia as its target, which is transmitting CNN (Cable News Network) programmes. Yet another satellite, ARABSAT, is soon to be commissioned.

Indian enthusiasts have already begun beaming in foreign programmes by investing around Rs 1.6 lakhs in a dish antenna. The Hindustan Times Group, the Taj Mahal Hotel and Maurya Sheraton Hotel in Delhi are among those who use this facility. Even in faraway Sikkim, the ruling party uses the antenna to watch foreign shows.

Says Vinod Dua: "There could be developments similar to what happened to radio broadcasting. The introduction of audio cassettes ruined the future of the Vividh Bharati channel within a year. Similarly, Doordarshan will soon face a serious danger from Direct Broadcasting."

Adds Ashok Raina: "The difference is that in the case of radio the signals can be blocked. However, TV signals cannot be jammed and there is no way of stopping foreign programmes. But during the Janata Dal period there is little hope of private channels coming in, if the rigid control over programmes like *Khula Manch* is any indication."

What contributed to the widespread scepticism was the disappointing nature of the Prasar Bharati Bill. According to the long-awaited autonomy Bill the broadcasting corporation would be totally funded by the government; the existing staff of Doordarshan would continue its employment; and most important, the transmission rights would remain with the government. A far cry from the sky-high expectations that the Dal's post-elections media hype had raised.

But while most private companies are—understandably—enthusiastic about the privatisation proposal, others are more wary. S.S. Gill, former secretary of information and broadcasting, for instance. "Political parties make such promises only when they are out of power," he says. "But it should never be done in India. It will devalue the whole system and will inevitably lead to a commercial mess."

According to Gill, the threat from satellite broadcasting is real, but the exorbitant cost of the antenna will ensure that it never really assumes gargantuan dimensions. "At best, after a few years the cost of the dish would come down to $500. Not any less," he says. "And not too many Indians could afford that price."

Some Congressmen, too, were less than enthused by the way their leader had jumped the gun yet again. Cautioned former information and broadcasting minister, V.N. Gadgil: "While demanding private channels we have to be alive to its implications. Television is a double-edged sword. Even in the West, independent broadcasting has affected the reading habit and the art of conversation and drastically changed social intercourse and the art of political campaigning."

But such fears are not immediate, for the pace at which the Janata Dal government is moving on the matter of television autonomy is sluggish at best. Besides, any privatisation move would involve the amendment of the Indian Telegraph Act, according to which the right of transmission is restricted to the government. According to legal experts, the monopoly the government enjoys over the electronic media would not stand the scrutiny of a court of law. But a major change as this will require time.

Also, the private channel producers would face a tremendous paucity of software and hardware. It has been calculated that if the government conceded to the demand of opening second channels all over the country, the project would consume the entire budget of the information and broadcasting ministry for the next five years. So, the expense incurred in setting up private channels would be prohibitive and it is far more clear whether the private sector would be willing to put in the required resources. Going by the rigid control the Dal government exerts on such current affairs programmes as *Khula Manch (see box)* it is unlikely that it will be willing to subsidise private enterprise.

So, the Congress(I) remains the best bet for private industry. For, if Rajiv Gandhi does return to power in the mid-term poll everyone is speculating about, he promises to usher in open television. As distinct from the Raja's open government. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Afro-Asian saga



In the spring of 1970, I spent a fortnight in Uganda and Kenya at the invitation of a Sikh organisation based in Jinja. Milton Obote was in power. He was said to be a friend of the Asian community but had made it clear to it that they must accept Ugandan nationality or quit. They could not make up their minds. It was a difficult decision to make. Some families had been there for four generations. Almost all the business was in the hands of Asians. Many like the Madhvanis and the Mehtas had become multi-millionaires owning sugar and textile mills, real estate including hundreds of square miles of forest and agricultural land. My host Channan Singh had risen from a carpenter to owning his own spacious bungalow, three cars and a few servants. His friend, Sardar Inder Singh Gill, the richest Sikh in the country, had a mansion overlooking the source of the Nile. He flew me in his own aircraft to see Murchison Falls. They had their own schools, colleges and hospitals. The Aga Khan's followers had their own townships, the neatest in the East African states. The majority of Indians were Gujaratis; the next were Punjabis. There were Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of different sects: Ismailies, Bohras, Manon, Ithnashas, Shamsis. Though on reasonably friendly terms with each other, there was little real mixing between them. On Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations at Jinja, the procession was led by the Ismaili girls schoolband. The Partition of India had divided the Indian community: Hindus and Sikhs regarded themselves as Indians; Muslims, though the vast majority came from Kutch, felt more sympathetic towards Pakistan. At one point they were of the same opinion: they would not side with the blacks and integrate themselves in African society. I met a couple of young men, born of Indian fathers through black maid servants; they were treated as pariahs. An educated Sikh woman who had taken on an African lover was ostracised by the entire Asian community. The younger lot had started leaving for England, Canada, United States, Australia or New Zealand. Their elders were taking whatever they could out of the country. Many shops in Jinja and Kampala had notices of closing sales; there were few takers for houses and properties owned by Indians—Africans knew they would soon be theirs without having to pay for them. And so it came to be. While Obote was away in Singapore, Idi Amin grabbed power. The first thing he did was to order the Asians out of Uganda. They were lucky to get away with their lives before the blood-thirsty tyrant launched the mass killings of rival tribes and cannibalism. Today, little or nothing remains of the Asian presence in Uganda. The sorry tale is being slowly repeated in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and and Mozambique. The Asians of East Africa are now to be met in different parts of the world once again rebuilding their fortunes.

The story of the settlement and diaspora of Asian immigrants had to be told. It has been in an unusually moving saga by one M.G.Vassanji in his first novel, *The Gunny Sack*. Forty-year-old Vassanji was educated at the Aga Khan Schools in Dar-es-Salam and Tanzania before joining the MIT and later the University of Pennsylvania. He now lives in Toronto. teaching and writing.



When Idi Amin grabbed power, the first thing he did was to order the Asians out of Uganda. They were lucky to get away with their lives from this blood-thirsty tyrant

Vassanji is a Shamsi, a small Muslim sect from Kutch still heavily influenced by Hinduism,as names in his family tree and other kinsmen show: Dhanji Govindji, Mitha Kanji, A.A. Raghavji, Ji Bai and others. He starts with his ancestor, Dhanji Govindji who arrives in East Africa before World War I when Germans, Portuguese, Belgians are busy carrying up the African continent between them. Dhanji has a wife away in another town but in order to keep himself warm on winter nights takes an Africal slave girl, Bibi Tarahbu to bed. The author is the great grandson of this Afro-Asian liaison-progeny. The scene moves through different African cities, Mumbasa, Zanzibar, Dar-es-Salam, Nairobi and smaller towns. The Shamsis multiply, make money in their small *dukans*, which are periodically looted by Africans. And start all over again. The last part tells of the author's attempt to integrate. He joins a volunteer corps. Falls in love with a black girl Amina, a communist who ditches him for a yank. On the rebound, he marries a girl of his own community Zuleikha. They have a child he names Amina after his African sweetheart. Then ditches his wife and child to migrate to the United States, where the African Amina has a jon with the United Nations.

This is an unfairly short summary of a truly great novel written by a gifted writer who combines lyrical descriptions of the countryside with a cartoonist's skill in portraying characters, humour with pathos and tragedy. I haven't read anything so moving in the last many years.

Haryana versus Bengal

Devi Lal's son-rise
Nearly caused V.P.'s fall;
But Jyoti Basu's son-rise
Makes no difference to West Bengal.

(Contributed by Reeten Ganguly, Tezpur) ●

A DANGEROUS PLACE

The CPI(M) brings violence to the streets of Calcutta

So, even Jyoti Basu, West Bengal's *bhadralok* chief minister, lied for the sake of his party and government. On the evening of 16 August, Basu told stunned newsmen that the 12-hour bandh called by the Congress(I) that day to protest against a sharp hike in transport fares, power cuts and rise in the prices of essential commodities had failed. And, even without batting an eyelid, he went on to congratulate the people of the state for defeating the Congress move.

The perplexed reporters rushed back to their desks and when the dailies front-paged Basu's ridiculous observations, people at first did not know what to make of it. Even the die-hard supporter of the Marxist regime knew that the bandh had been total—that office-goers had not ventured out that day, shops and business establishments remained closed, that empty state transport buses guzzling precious fuel raced along the main thoroughfares while the deserted sidestreets were taken over by children.

Not that Jyoti Basu was unaware that the state was paralysed for 12 hours on 16 August. But he said what he did because he had few other options. The Calcutta bandh, total by any standards, was a blow to his personal prestige. Moreover, it was the first real rebuff the party had received from Calcuttans during its 13 years of uninterrupted rule in the state.

While the success of the bandh jolted the ruling Left Front as a whole, it was a moral defeat for the CPI(M) in particular. The party thought that it would coerce the people into submission by unleashing 3 lakh cadres in the city and its suburbs to keep things moving. But by 9 in the morning of 16 August it became clear that only the CPI(M)'s workers were at large, while the people responded to the Congress(I)'s bandh call and remained indoors.

It is this Red Brigade—like Chautala's Green Brigade—that is proving to be the CPI(M)'s undoing. When it dawned on the comrades that the bandh was going to be a success and that the Congress(I), unlike on previous occasions, had decided to maintain peace, the CPI(M) workers became desperate. They attacked peaceful Congress processions and beat up several Congress(I) leaders. Of them, the assault on Mamata Banerjee, a former MP, was brutal and murderous. The vociferous former MP repeatedly clubbed on the head by baton-wielding CPI(M) activists till she collapsed with blood gushing from her split scalp.



VIVEK DAS

Jyoti Basu: presiding over violence and lawlessness



Not far away, in another south Calcutta area, INTUC chief Subrata Mukerjee was chased by CPI(M) workers with lethal weapons. His bodyguard, a plain-clothes policeman, told newsmen later that the attackers would have killed Mukherjee had he not brandished his service revolver. In fact, the policeman regretted that no cops in uniform came to his help.

And the ritualistic beating up of photographers continued. Four lensmen who tried to click Mamata Banerjee being assaulted were thrashed up. Of them, Tarapada Banerjee of *Anandabazar Patrika* had to be hospitalised with multiple fractures.





ASHOKE MAJUMDAR



ASHOKE MAJUMDAR

'adre raj: Mamata Banerjee being assaulted by Laloo Alam and his men; (top right) CPI(M) cadres and policemen n the streets of Howrah on the bandh day; (below) armed Marxist cadres intimidating voters during the municipal polls

The only saving grace was that Jyoti Basu was honest enough to admit hat CPI(M) workers were behind the iolence. But not all his party colleagues were as candid. Minister for nformation and cultural affairs, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, for instance, vas conspicuous by his absence at the ress conference Basu held at the end f the day. The minister, who many eel is being groomed as Basu's successor, is usually by the chief minister's ide whenever Basu meets the press, nd rumours doing the rounds is that Bhattacharya was against owning responsibility for the violence. He vanted the attacks on the Congressnen, particularly that on Mamata Banerjee, to be portrayed as inter-arty clashes so as to shift a part of the lame on the Congress(I)'s shoulders.

Basu expressed righteous indignaion over the acts of violence. "The olice should have arrested the culrits at once," he said, even while knowing full well why they didn't. The chief minister, who holds the home portfolio as well, is aware that the police force in the state has been thoroughly politicised with the seniors taking instructions from Alimuddin Street, the CPI(M) party headquarters in Calcutta. In such a state of affairs, it would be ridiculous to assume that the cops would lay their hands on ruling party activists.

What is striking is that days before the attack, Mamata Banerjee had told people that a conspiracy was being hatched to kill her. She had incurred the CPI(M)'s wrath by organising agitations, which often took a violent turn, against the rise in bus and tram fares in the state. She said she had even been cautioned by a police officer to be on her guard.

Soon after the bandh, Calcutta Police sources said that there was indeed a method in the madness and that the attacks were all pre-planned. The simultaneous assaults on different Congress(I) processions in various parts of Calcutta and the calculated way in which the leaders were isolated from their supporters and made the targets, could in no way be coincidental.

Given the CPI(M)'s remarkable ability to brush things under the carpet, the culprits this time too may have gone undetected and the police would have made things appear to be in order by making a couple of routine arrests. But such possibilities were frustrated by lensman Parthasarathi Sengupta. Almost all leading dailies of the city published his photographs the following day, clearly identifying the attackers.

And one of those who brutally assaulted Mamata Banerjee was the CPI(M)'s dreaded muscle-man, Laloo Alam. He is the brother of the party's Calcutta district committee member Badshah Alam, a protege of

information minister Bhattacharya.

This time there was no way the CPI(M) bigwigs could call the photographs "doctored" or "rigged" as they had done after newspapers published pictures of toughs romping about with daggers and revolvers during the Calcutta Municipal Corporation elections in June. Non-partisan observers felt that the election was largely rigged, but the CPI(M) daily, *Ganashakti*, created a gaffe by identifying the men in the photographs as Congress(I) workers, and even printed their names and addresses. Ultimately the move backfired.

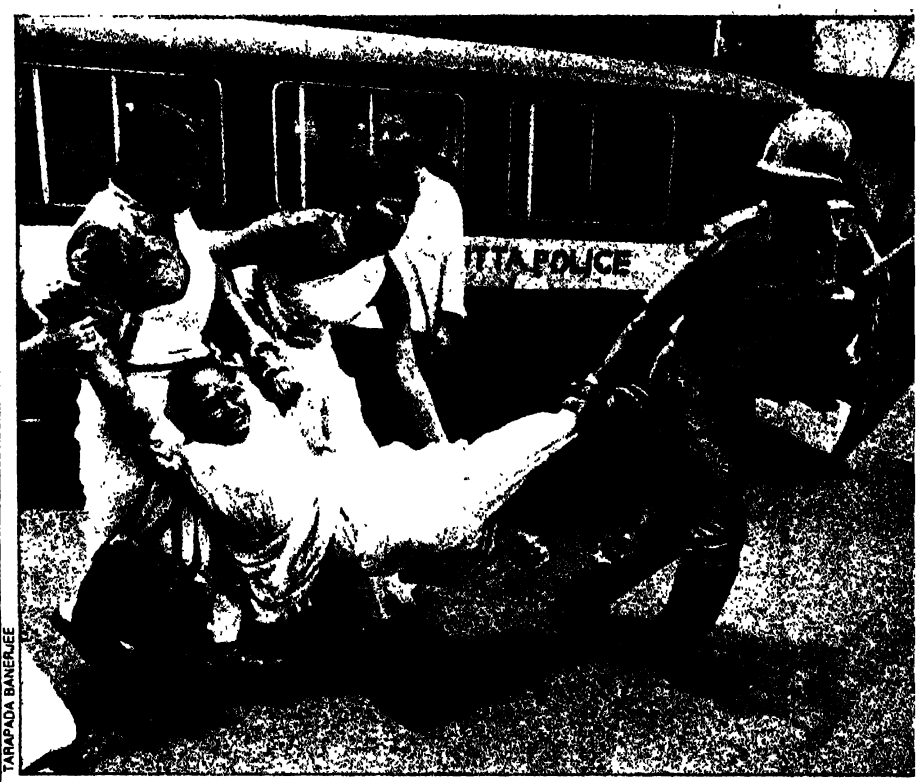
There was no way out for Laloo Alam, a man who epitomises the present-day CPI(M) cadre. On 17 August, he was arrested on charges of attempted murder and held in police custody. Laloo Alam, alias Mehabublal, is well-connected. By virtue of being the brother of Badshah Alam, who happens to be the son-in-law of the veteran CPI(M) leader Sadhan Gupta, Laloo claims personal links with the party's top brass. He shot into prominence during the parliamentary elections last November. On the day of polling, Laloo was out on the streets, preventing voters from approaching a polling booth in a south Calcutta constituency.

The voters appealed to the police for help, but the cops looked the other way. Naresh Chaturvedy, the then special secretary, department of home, was witness to the goings-on. He lodged a strong complaint and an indignant Basu ordered Alam's arrest. But he successfully eluded the police. Later, a CPI(M) leader admitted: "When we came to know that Jyoti Basu was making enquiries about Laloo, we helped him to go underground."

Ironically enough, Laloo started his career in politics with the Congress. In the infamous 1972 Assembly elections in which the Congress, under Siddhartha Shankar Ray's leadership, staged one of the biggest electoral farces in independent India, Laloo was a seasoned Congress campaigner.

In 1987, he decided to don new colours. The Congressman became a comrade, realising that the CPI(M)-led Left Front wouldn't be easily dislodged. Since then, Laloo Alam gradually emerged as the CPI(M)'s most dependable stormtrooper in south and central Calcutta, where his name became synonymous with terror.

No one would say what Laloo's fate within the party would now be. Even Young Turk Biman Bose, the party's conscience keeper, would not commit himself on the possibilities of Laloo's expulsion. But Badshah Alam was livid with rage when he heard that his brother was arrested. On 18 August, Badshah went to Bhawanipore police station and threatened the officer in charge with dire consequences.



TARAPADA BANERJEE

Popular stir: cops drag away a Congress activist in Calcutta: (right) violence during the Calcutta civic polls



RASHBEHARI DAS

Buddhadev Bhattacharya: differences with the chief minister

The police could have arrested Badshah Alam under Section 506 of the Indian Penal Code for threatening a government servant. But they wouldn't dare to do such a thing. As a district committee member of the CPI(M), Badshah was too powerful and therefore perhaps above the law. Calcutta's police commissioner, B.K. Saha, who has perfected the art of seeing nothing and hearing nothing, said that he had no knowledge of Badshah's malevolence. But the home secretary, Manish Gupta, sought an explanation from the police, wanting to know why Badshah wasn't arrested. Political observers believe that Gupta's action followed the chief minister's directions, because the home secretary would not have dared to suggest police action against information minister Bhattacharya's blue-eyed boy.

But perhaps it is beyond Basu's power to stem the rot any more. The party, it seems, has drifted far too much from its ethical and ideological moorings to care for political civilities. At the grassroots level, it is the likes of Laloo Alam who are in command. It is they who are responsible for preserving and expanding the party's vote bank, and ensuring victory in electoral



battles. In return, they are given a free hand to 'tax' the people in the best manner possible.

The truth is that the power centre is shifting from Writers' Buldings—the seat of the government in West Bengal—to the party offices and it is the local toughs who are increasingly moulding the party. There was a time when ministers dispensed favours; now a cadre does the same thing, thanks to the CPI(M)'s way of decentralising power.

Today, a party activist can achieve the impossible and it is him one must approach to get things done. He can make files move in government offices, arrange for beds in overcrowded hospitals, secure bank loans, procure permits, shield rapists, murderers, hoarders, blackmarketeers and can even help you to jump the queue at the crematorium. But he charges a price for everything he does and makes sure that he gets what he wants in cash or kind. But cadres—as Biman Bose reminded the city people—are "disciplined party workers". And just as well. He doesn't work entirely to line his own pocket, but shares the spoils with the party, which has become conspicuously rich over the years it has been in power.

Initially, Jyoti Basu himself was averse to unleashing cadres to counter the Congress(I)'s bandh call. When transport minister Shyamal Chakravarty mooted the idea, Basu dismissed it, arguing that the challenge would be tackled administratively. But pressure from his partymen made him go along with the majority decision.

The Left Front's other partners—the RSP, CPI and the Forward Bloc—had also opposed the idea at a meeting of the Front. They feared that the move would be construed as an administrative failure and spark off widespread violence. But having committed himself to his party, the chief minister refused to change his mind. And, when his allies persisted, Basu, in a fit of anger, declared: "As long as I am here the cadres will be used."

The unseemly incidents on the bandh day indicated that the CPI(M)'s tactics were flawed. On 18 August, Basu held a meeting with the party's district committee secretaries of Howrah, Hooghly, North 24-Paraganas and Nadia where he admitted that people's discontent was increasing and suggested that the party must do some soul-searching to understand the causes of the popular disaffection. While Biman Bose and the CPI(M) state secretary Sailen Dasgupta openly condemned the attack on the Congress(I) leaders by their own boys, Jyoti Basu warned that it would be difficult for the Left Front to return to power in future if the CPI(M) failed to heed the warnings.

With the events on the bandh day proving them right, CPI and RSP leaders renewed their criticism of the CPI(M)'s policies. In an unprecedented move, the CPI called for a bilateral dialogue with the CPI(M) to air its views on the state's problems, for it felt that the Front's meetings had been reduced to a "farce". On 22 August, the party's state unit virtually assumed the role of an Opposition party by submitting a memorandum to chief minister Basu, detailing the causes behind the people's growing disenchantment with the Left Front.

Perhaps it is beyond Jyoti Basu's power to stem the rot any more. The CPI(M) has drifted far too much from its ethical and ideological moorings to care for political civilities

With the CPI daring to speak up, the RSP followed suit. Debabrata Bandyopadhyay, the RSP minister in the state Cabinet, met Basu on 23 August to say that there were gross anomalies in the fare structure of buses in the districts and that the people had genuine reasons to feel sore.

While the Left Front's misadventure with cadres has virtually put the Marxists on the defensive, the Congress(I) has bounced back into reckoning. The party had been slowly emerging from the cold since the district civic body elections in May, in which it bagged far more seats than was expected. Then came the Calcutta Municipal Corporation polls in which the party acquired a martyred image following allegations that the elections were heavily rigged by the Marxists. But what really breathed life into an organisation that till recently looked moribund was the hike in the transport charges. While agitations launched by the Congress(I) and some left forces outside the government such as the SUCI, the IPF and several Naxalite groups had failed to cut much ice in the past, this time around they appear to have touched the right chord.

An emboldened Congress(I) has, therefore, planned a major show of strength in early September. Around the second week of this month, the party plans to carry out what it calls the "siege of Writers' Buildings" by bringing in about ten lakh supporters from the districts. Throwing a challenge to Jyoti Basu, state Congress(I) president A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury said: "An awakening of the people has begun in the state. If Jyoti Basu has the courage let him seek a fresh mandate on issues like the fare hike, rising prices, atrocities on women and the growing clout of anti-social elements. If the elections are free and fair, we'll know what the people want."

So, come September and Calcutta might be rocked by another bout of violence. But, hopefully, the next time the CPI(M) will have the gumption to rely on the administration and will not let lose the Red Brigade on its political adversaries.●

Anish Gupta/Calcutta

RAVI SHANKAR





"Sometimes the best kind of party is when the guest list totals two."




DIGJAM
Suitings for the Connoisseur

Pulling a fast one

Jayalalitha turns the tables on her party rebels and the DMK government

Jayalalitha Jayaram has the uncanny knack of bouncing back just when her critics tend to write her off. Ever since the death of her mentor, M.G. Ramachandran, the AIADMK has undergone numerous splits, Jayalalitha has threatened to quit politics at least twice and the Assembly elections last year all but sealed the fate of a party that was once considered invincible. But just when the AIADMK had been relegated to the footnotes of history, Jayalalitha struck back in style. Of course, the ruling DMK government has to a large extent contributed in keeping the Jayalalitha factor alive in Tamil Nadu politics.

Only recently, the lady was in the dumps. Party rebels led by the fiery Thirunavukarasu had come out strongly against her leadership. The group even managed to wean away three MLAs from the Jayalalitha camp, stripping the AIADMK of the status of the main Opposition party in the state Assembly. Emboldened by their success, the rebels tried to attempt something adventurous, which ultimately proved disastrous.

Claiming that they now represented the "actual" AIADMK, Thirunavukarasu and company tried to storm the party headquarters in Madras on 12 August. The operation was reminiscent of the one attempted by Jayalalitha in January 1988, when the lady along with her followers tried to wrest control of the building from the Janaki Ramachandran faction of the AIADMK. Incidentally, Thirunavukarasu was in Jayalalitha's camp at that time.

The operation was meticulously planned this time. But as luck would have it, Jayalalitha's supporters got wind of Thirunavukarasu's plans and jammed the party building from the morning of 12 August. A large posse of policemen were also present. The rebels came in a group and were startled to find Jayalalitha's men blocking the entrance. A free-for-all followed. At the end of it all, over a dozen members from both the sides were injured and around 50 supporters from either side were detained by the cops. Later, Jayalalitha alleged that Thirunavukarasu was helped by the police all along, who had orders from chief minister Karunanidhi to side with the rebel AIADMK group.

Such an allegation wouldn't have gone down with the people had the DMK kept out of what was surely an internal matter of the AIADMK. But the ruling party seniors were bent on teaching Jayalalitha a lesson. Soon after the scuffle, the police sealed the AIADMK party headquarters and handed over the keys to an executive magistrate, who was asked by the government to examine the claims of the rival groups.

From then on, it was Jayalalitha's show all the way. Immediately after hearing that her party members had been arrested by the police, she drove to the police station and demanded that they be released. "I will not move from this place until you release my men," she told the officer on duty. Realising the gravity of the situation, the police officer got in touch with the city police commissioner, Rajasekhar-



MUTHU KUMARAN

Crowds outside Jayalalitha's Poes Garden house: back in the limelight



MUTHU KUMARAN

an Nair. "I will have to consult my superior. I will get back to you in ten minutes," Nair told the AIADMK supremo over the telephone. An outraged Jayalalitha shot back: "Yes, I can see that your inspector wants to consult you and now you want to consult someone else. I know who that someone is. He is the chief minister. You can do as you like but till then I am not moving from here."

By then, hundreds of Jayalalitha supporters had gathered outside the police station. The crowd even stoned several state transport buses and many shops in Madras promptly downed their shutters. Nair soon contacted Jayalalitha and informed her that the police were releasing her supporters on bail. Jayalalitha returned home—triumphant and satisfied.

The matter did not end there as Jayalalitha would not let the opportunity go by to launch a comeback. On the evening of 12 August, she announced her decision to go on a fast-to-death till the keys of the party office were returned to her. "There is a Supreme Court interim order which gave me possession of the building. By attempting to break into the office, Thirunavukarasu and his men have committed contempt of court," Jayalalitha thundered, adding, "The DMK government should also be punished because their police helped the rebel group to break into the building and for arresting my supporters."

Interestingly enough, the government as well as the AIADMK rebels seemed ignorant of the Supreme Court interim order. On learning of it, the police commissioner issued a statement saying that it was not the cops, but someone else who had actually locked the AIADMK party office. Since in the confusion it was not possible to find out who had actually done it, the keys of the building were handed over to a magistrate. Thirunavukarasu, too, promptly changed his stance. On 12 August, he had alleged that he and his men were beaten up by Jayalalitha's supporters while attempting to enter the party headquarters. Now, he said that the scuffle actually took place outside the office premises. Countered a Jayalalitha faction leader, "Everyone present there at that time saw what happened. The rebel group did storm into the building and clash with us." Whatever be the truth, the fact remains that Jayalalitha did manage to exploit the controversy to her advantage. And by the time she called off the hunger strike precisely 36 hours after she started it, Jayalalitha had managed to discredit both the DMK and her party rebels.

But the Thirunavukarasu group did make a last ditch attempt to save the day. During all this drama in Madras, S. Madhavan, a Rajya Sabha member and a prominent leader of the Jayalalitha faction, was significantly absent from the scene of action. The rebel group quickly made an issue out of this. Its leaders organised press conferences where they asked: "Why was Madhavan absent? Has he run away with the money paid by Karunanidhi?"

The rebels followed this up with another round of fasting, ostensibly to focus public attention on the party office dispute. The crowds that watched Thirunavukarasu lying on a bed was nowhere near what Jayalalitha managed to attract.

As for chief minister Karunanidhi, he must be cursing himself for getting involved in the AIADMK party affairs. Sources close to veteran DMK leaders said that many partymen had advised Karunanidhi not to get into a confrontation with Jayalalitha unnecessarily and had even told him to buy peace with the AIADMK chief. Their argument was that Jayalalitha was a spent force and would fade away soon. But the chief minister obviously wanted to demonstrate his might—and in the process revived Jayalalitha's sagging political fortunes.

On earlier occasions too, it was the DMK which helped Jayalalitha to remain on the centrestage of the state's politics. In 1989, at a time when the lady was sulking, DMK members assaulted her inside the Assembly—something which brought a divided AIADMK solidly behind Jayalalitha. The Congress, too, sided with the AIADMK on the issue, greatly embarrassing the DMK.

The mood at Jayalalitha's Poes Garden residence is upbeat. And the lady is smiling these days. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

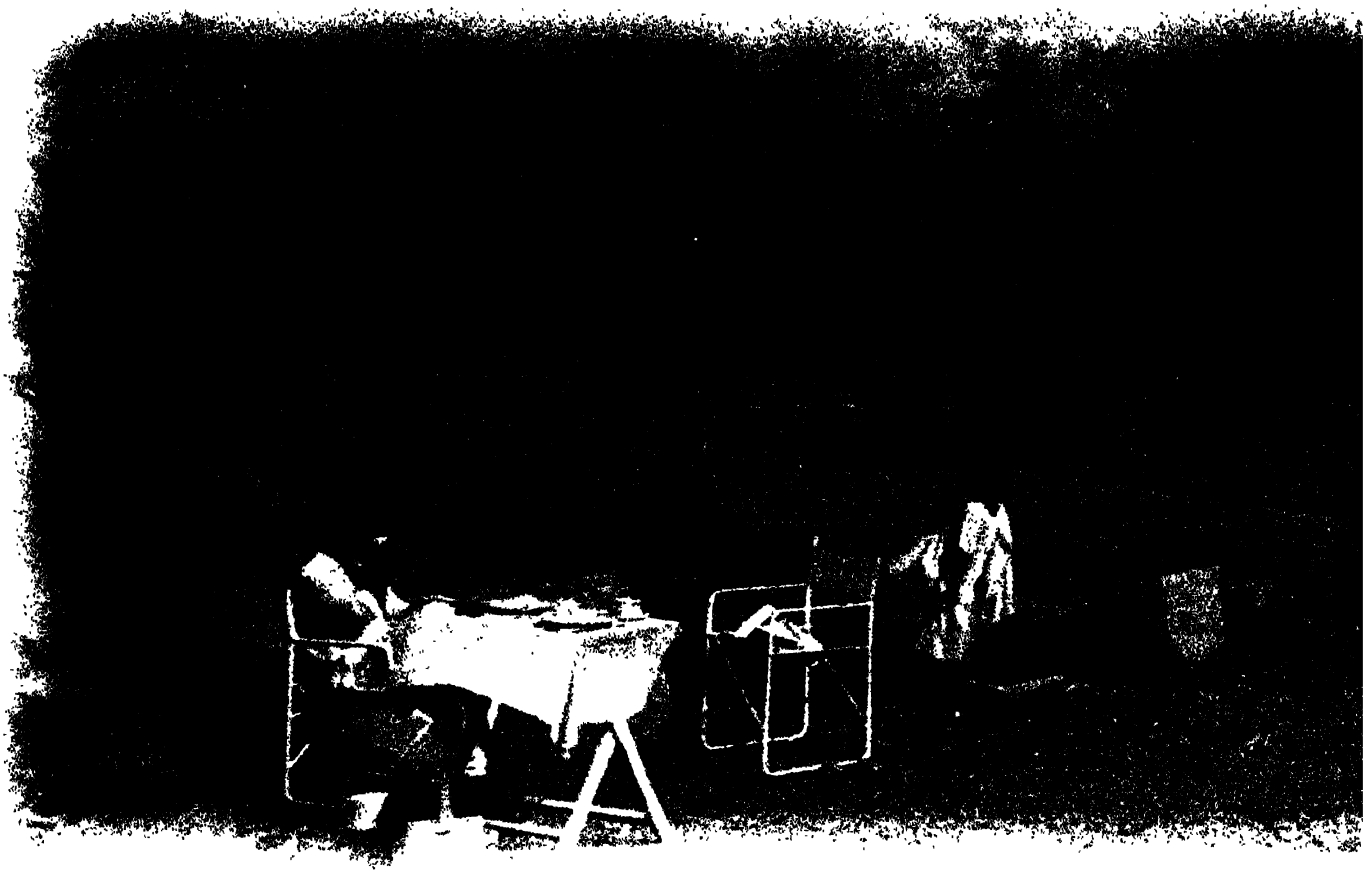
Jayalalitha fasting to protest against the DMK helping her party rebels: a huge success

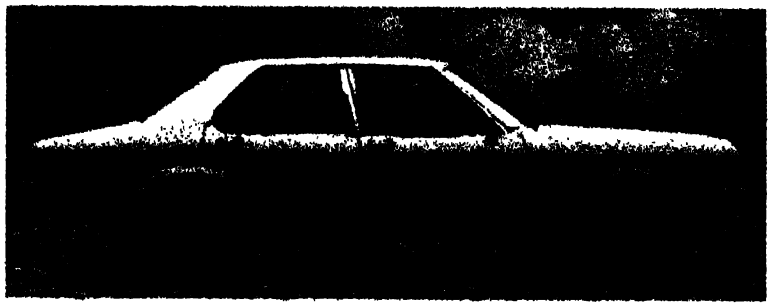




Chief minister and DMK supremo Karunanidhi wanted to demonstrate his might but ended up reviving the sagging political fortunes of the AIADMK chief, Jayalalitha

A car for those who have outgrown the



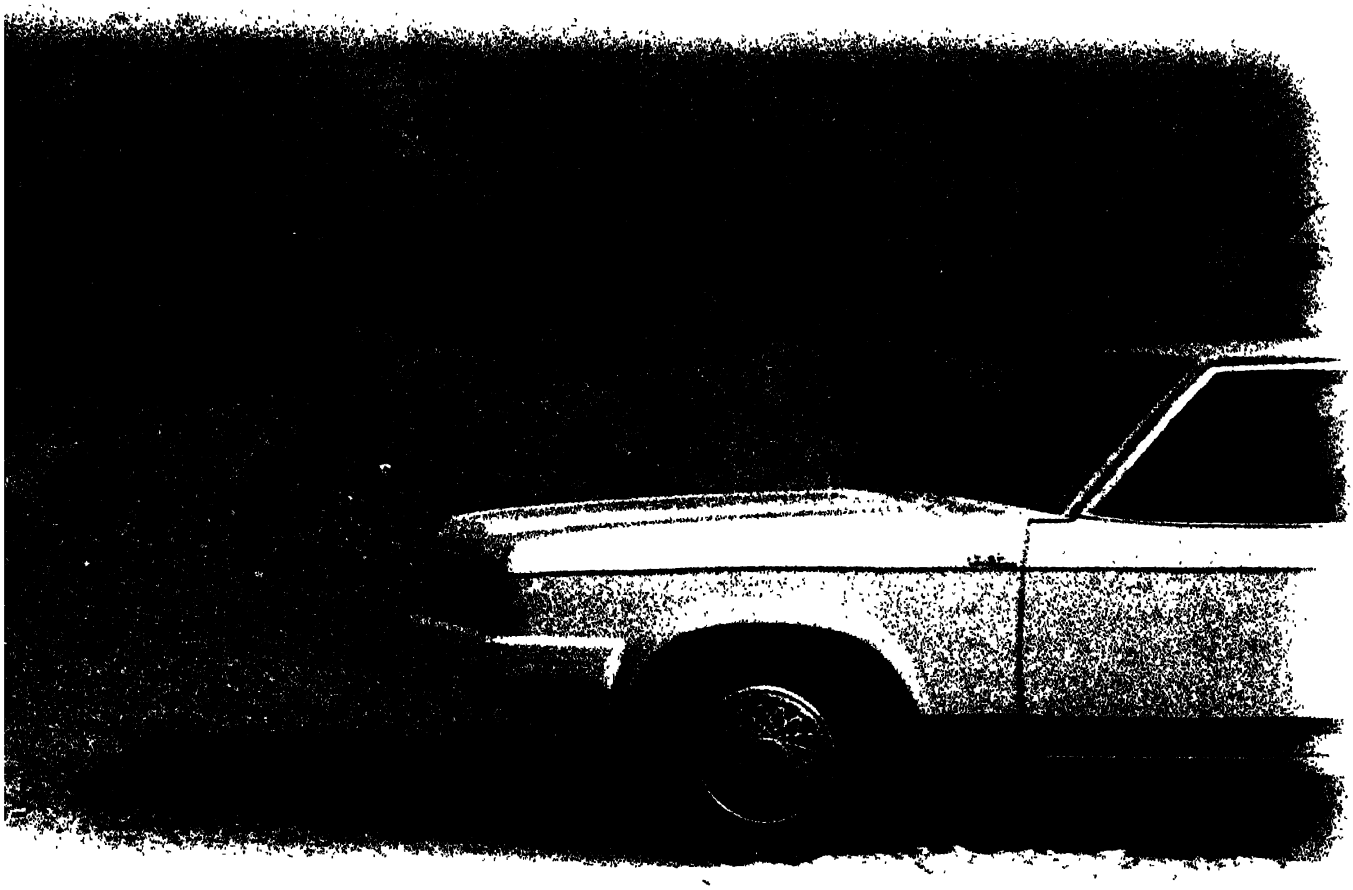


Contract HM 22160A

Accessories shown in the picture
are not part of standard equipment.

A Limousine to every other car

excitement of touring the cocktail circuit.



To people who are a trifle bored of clinking glasses, and making polite conversation, the Contessa Classic offers an intoxicating escape route.

A fuel efficient 1.8 litre Isuzu engine helps place vast distances between them and the maddening crowd.

Five forward gears, including an overdrive, smoothly raise the speedometer to 120 km per hour.

An impressively responsive steering places them in complete control of any situation.

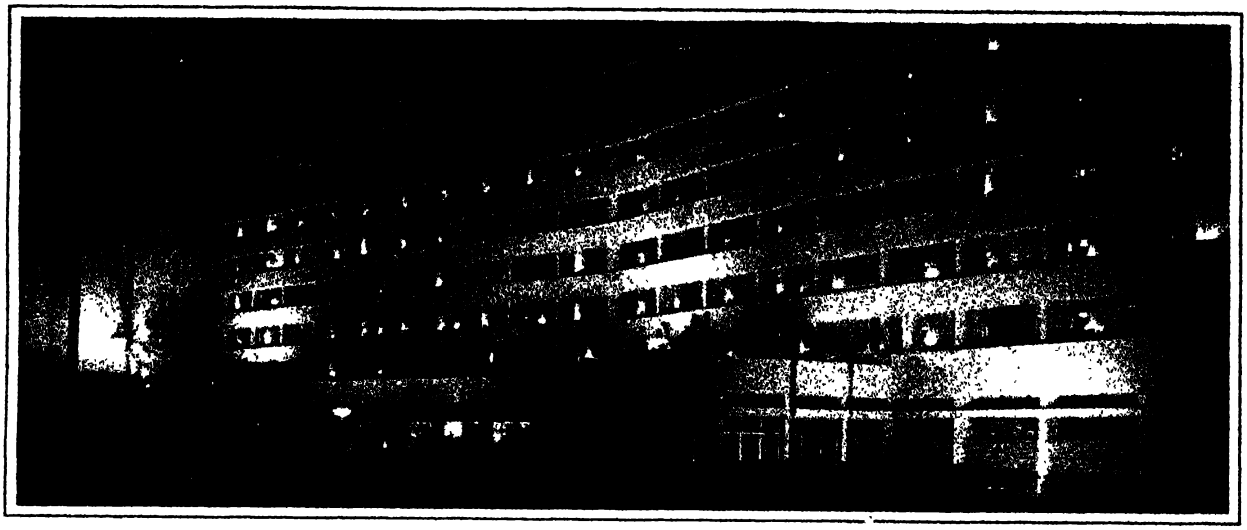
Power disc brakes help stop them in their tracks — safely and smoothly.

And, of course, a plush interior, an independent suspension and air conditioning are enough to give you a high of a totally different kind.

But there's really much more to the Contessa. So why not get in touch with us.

And taste a heady mix of refined luxury and raw power —poured into a car.

Contessa
Classic 1·8 GL



Ashok and Radisson offer you new standards of world class hospitality at Bangalore

Radisson Hotels Corporation with its dynamism, its philosophy 'Yes I can' is the fastest growing hospitality group in the world, with hotels at 240 locations.

Ashok now joins hands with Radisson to bring you the finest international hospitality at Bangalore and three other places in the country. With a new work culture, a new ethos to ensure even greater consumer satisfaction.

Other Ashok Radisson Hotels: Ashok Hotel, New Delhi, an affiliate of Radisson Hotels Corporation; Ashok Radisson Lalitha Palace Hotel, Mysore; Ashok Radisson Beach Resort, Kovalam.



Ashok Radisson Hotel, Bangalore

Kumara Krupa High Grounds,
Bangalore 560001 Tel: 269462, 269482
Cables: ASHOKOTEL Telex: 0845-2433 ASOK IN
Fax: 260033

VISIT INDIA
YEAR

AKSHARA/ITDC 210

INDIA'S HOST TO THE WORLD

CHAMELEON

From Mr Clean to Mr Caste in four easy weeks

It was Winston Churchill who when asked about the shifts in his political career blustered: "Consistency is the virtue of donkeys." But the slogan could fit Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's style just as well.

Eight months into his term, the Raja has revealed himself to be a radically different person from the man who went before the country last autumn and asked for a mandate against the corruption of the Rajiv Gandhi regime.

The V.P. Singh of 1989 was the Great Conciliator, a leader who was determined to knit every opposing faction into a patchwork coalition that would provide the country with a unique brand of consensus politics.

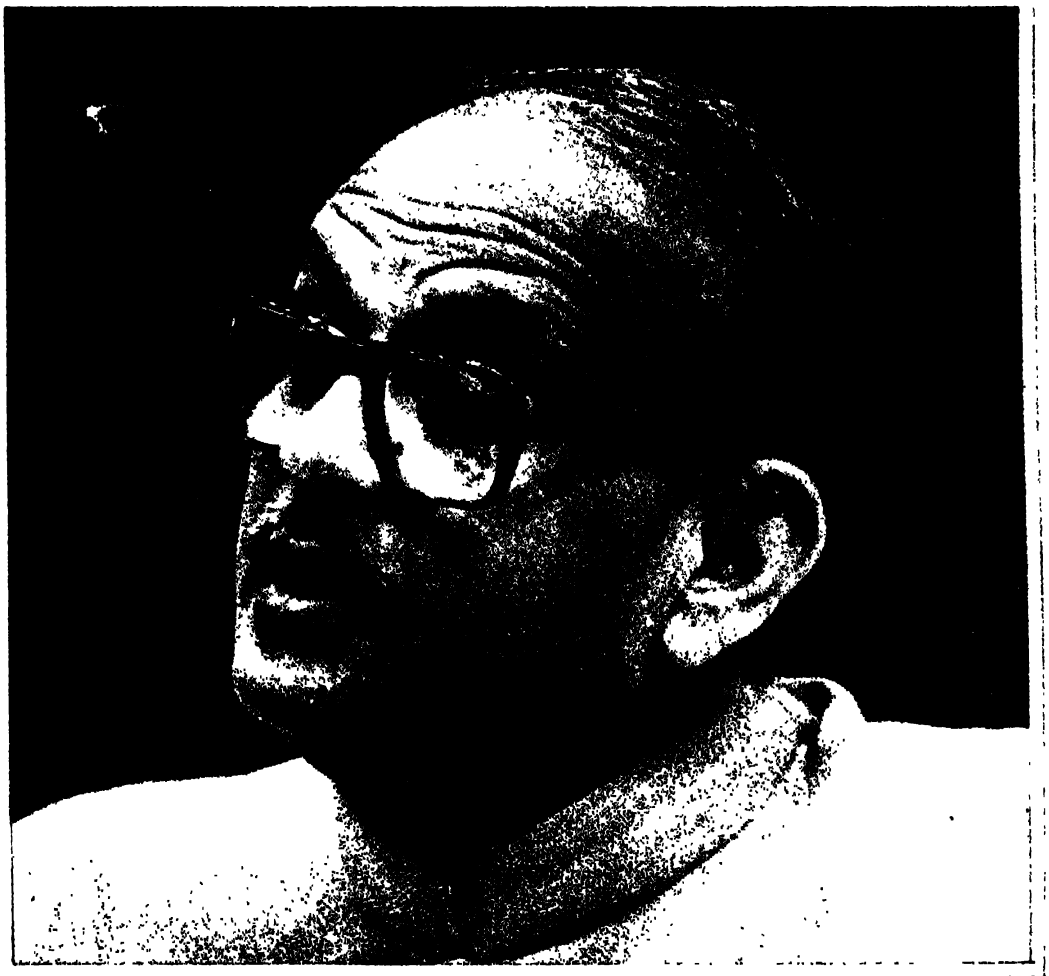
When he was insulted—as he frequently was, by the likes of Chandra Shekhar—he would turn the other cheek. When his critics alleged that he had no clear-cut policies, he would say that contradictions had to be managed and that complex problems required complex responses. If he was asked to take a decision he would ask for time to consult his colleagues.

For the first few months of his reign, Vishwanath Pratap Singh the Prime Minister was not very different from V.P. Singh the Opposition leader. He still talked in terms of consensus argued that the solution to such problems as Punjab was a dose of love and affection, and hammered away at the corruption issue on which he had made his national reputation.

But then, around four weeks ago, he suddenly had a change of heart. Gone was the dithering, spotlessly clean consensus manager of old. In his place stood the classic cow-belt demagogue.

It is fashionable now to claim that V.P. Singh shed his skin on nationwide television during his Independence Day address at the Red Fort. But the change had begun even earlier.

Ever since Devi Lal resigned over Meham I, the Raja's cheer-leaders in



Even if the Raja thinks better of going to the country, there is no way his government can survive beyond 1991. And by the end of that year, his reputation is certain to be in tatters

MID-COURSE CORRECTION



THE OLD V.P. SINGH



THE NEW V.P. SINGH

Idol of the middle classes.	1	Supports reservation, an idea hated by the middle classes.
National leader.	2	Concerns limited to the Hindi belt.
Ambivalent on Ram Janmabhoomi.	3	Backs Mulayam Singh's anti-VHP position.
Obsessed with corruption enquiries.	4	Does not mention them now.
Fought for liberal industrial policy.	5	Now backs a regressive caste-based reservation scheme.
Seen as weak and indecisive.	6	Acted firmly in dismissing Devi Lal.

the media had urged him to fire his deputy prime minister. Such a move, they argued, would demonstrate that he had the strength to face down an obstreperous colleague and therefore, win him the renewed admiration of the nation.

V.P. Singh refused to take their advice, believing that to do so would be to divide the party. So, a compromise was engineered and Devi Lal withdrew his resignation. Then, far from facing him down, V.P. Singh actually negotiated a deal with the Chaudhary that guaranteed both men a quiet life and gave Om Prakash Chautala a second shot at the chief ministership of Haryana.

When the deal came unstuck (largely because of Arun Nehru), V.P. Singh once again refused to take on Devi Lal and instead of asking for his deputy's resignation, volunteered his own. The National Front presidium was convened again, like some jet-set village *panchayat*, and the Prime Minister and his deputy reconciled with the commerce minister.

So when Arun Nehru forced a new confrontation over Devi Lal, the betting was that V.P. Singh would manipulate his way towards a compromise. The Raja did everything to encourage that view. He told the Janata Dal's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) that no "precipitate action" should be taken and urged restraint.

Five hours after that PAC meeting ended, he dismissed Devi Lal. The President was informed that the Prime Minister did not want the Tau in his Cabinet and the Chaudhary was not even allowed the honourable option of resigning, he was sacked.

That—and not the Independence Day speech—was the first sign that V.P. Singh had changed his style.

Why did V.P. Singh do it? Surely, he must have known that no government could hope to last for five years with such powerful enemies as a bitter Chandra Shekhar and a wounded Tau?

The only answer that makes any sense is this: he knew that he only had a few months to go before he called an election. While it is folly for a Prime Minister who hopes to last the full stretch to antagonise Devi Lal, it makes perfect sense for a political leader who wishes to go to the polls to indulge in a crowd-pleasing display of political muscle. Compromise is the way to survive in the long run; confrontation is a means of seeming decisive in the short term.

Everything V.P. Singh has done since then has tended to confirm this impression. The decision to implement the Mandal Commission report came as a total surprise, there had been no mention of it in the Dal's manifesto. The Raja must have known that it would lead to blood in the streets and to social war. He is bright enough to also recognise that the way ahead for India in today's fast moving world does not lie in playing caste politics in the cow belt or in reserving

If V.P. Singh doesn't call an election now, Rajiv Gandhi will find the time he needs to get his comeback organised. With the Raja abandoning corruption as an issue, Rajiv's position is bound to get stronger

more jobs for backward communities.

Once again, there can be only one reason for going ahead anyway: as an election stunt. In January 1991, nobody will have had to face the disastrous economic consequences of the Mandal recommendations and in the short term, V.P. Singh will -if his reasoning holds- have emerged as the champion of the backward classes.

So, by the time the Prime Minister arrived at the Red Fort for his Independence Day speech, he had already transformed himself. He had abandoned the moral high ground he had occupied during the 1989 election and had bolted towards the ballot box

Why has V.P. Singh dumped his old middle class constituency and recast himself? Nobody really understands the labyrinthine workings of the Raja's mind, but the following reasons must have had something to do with it.

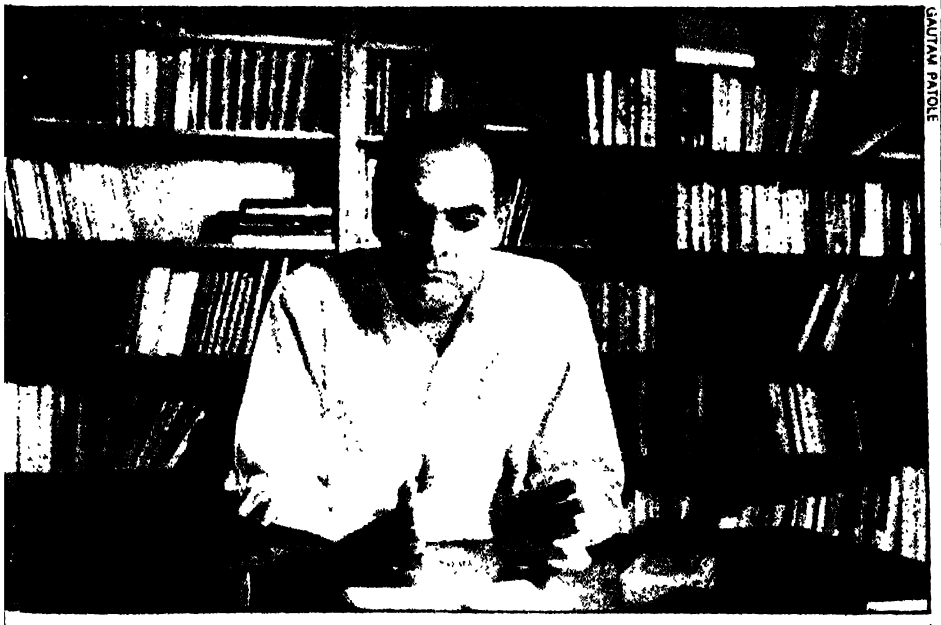
- Inflation still rages unchecked. With the oil crunch, it will get worse. Rising prices tend to anger middle class voters, so V.P Singh would probably have lost a large chunk of this segment anyway.
- Corruption is a vote-winning issue only when you are in the Opposition. The Raja had counted on dramatic revelations that would destroy Rajiv Gandhi's political career. These have not been forthcoming. So, V.P. Singh would have had to find a new issue to court the middle class with. And there aren't too many of those around.
- Central to his appeal to the middle class was his image as a saintly, other-worldly figure. Over the last few months, he has faced an unpleasant trade-off. To keep the Janata Dal intact, he needs to manipulate. But to retain middle class support, he must pretend to be uninterested in power.

It is, therefore, much simpler for him to dispense with middle class support entirely and to revert to the image he had before 1985: as an ambitious, Hindi-belt politician.

- There is no way the Dal government can last its full term. The allies will not let it survive that long and its internal tensions will pull it apart anyway. So, it is much better to go for a poll before one is forced on the regime. And as the old slogans about corruption won't work this time, he needs a Unique Selling Proposition.

V.P. Singh's supporters feel that he now has Bihar and UP wrapped up. They think that the National Front will probably gain an overall majority on its own.

In fact, this is less than certain. The key assumption is that the backwards in those two crucial Hindi-belt states (Bihar and UP) will vote solely on the basis of the Mandal Commission proposals. But in the run-up to the election, much else could happen. If the law and order situation continues to slide out of control because of Mandal-related violence and if Mulayam Singh Yadav's anti-Vishwa Hindu Parishad stand leads to riots over Ram Janmabhoomi, then the Congress might well make stability its election plank. With Punjab and Kashmir in flames, a retread of the 1984 election



GAUTAM PATOLE

V.P. SINGH IN THE EIGHTIES

More avatars than caps



1980-81

Sanjay-man: Candidate of the Thakur lobby as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

1981-84

Indira loyalist: UP CM/commerce minister/UPCC chief. Played the party man.

1985-87

Mr Clean: Rajiv Gandhi's right-wing, super honest finance minister.

1987-89

Leftist crusader: In Opposition, he called the left his natural allies and campaigned against corruption.

Dec. 1989-July 1990

National leader: For eight months, played the great reconciliator and managed the Janata Dal's contradictions.

Aug. 1990—

Cow-belt demagogue: Pins his hopes on a caste-coalition in the Hindi belt.



Over the next two months, Devi Lal intends to tour the country to whip up Jat/*kisan* support and remind his supporters that their loyalty is to him personally and not to the party he is a member of at present

campaign might well lead to a significant increase in the Congress vote.

Moreover, there is still the Chandra Shekhar factor to contend with. As our interview with him *(see box)* indicates, he is unwilling to rule out a deal with the Congress. Even if a breakaway Dal faction does not form the next government and Parliament is dissolved, Shekhar and the Tau might decide to fight the election on their own. That would almost certainly split the Dal vote in UP and Bihar and might give the Congress the edge, particularly if there are no seat adjustments with the BJP.

As is obvious from the interview, Shekhar hates V.P. Singh. He will do anything to stop him.

Even, let Rajiv Gandhi in.

Three months ago, SUNDAY called V.P. Singh the Indian political phenomenon of his generation. We listed his many successive avatars and commented on his ability to spring surprises. He was, we suggested, the X factor in Indian politics. A man whose actions were so unpredictable that all rational expectations were undermined by his manoeuvrings.

The decision to recast himself as the champion of the backwards tends to prove the point. At a stage when the old avatar seemed to be running out of time, V.P. Singh has suddenly changed the rules of the game.

But will the gamble work? There is

"V.P. Singh is either a hypocrite or a dunce"

Chandra Shekhar on the prospects of a split in the Janata Dal

SUNDAY: Let me tell you about a scenario that is being talked about in Delhi. V.P. Singh announces election; then, 70-80 MPs say they don't want an early election and approach you to become Prime Minister...

Chandra Shekhar: In that case, there can't be any election

Exactly. But because the PM has already resigned in anticipation of an election, the President calls the leader of the Opposition to see if he can form a government. Rajiv Gandhi says no, but agrees to support a ministry headed by Chandra Shekhar.

Let such a situation arise, then I will answer that question. If the leader of the Opposition makes such a suggestion, then I will give my reaction to that.

This is all speculation.

So you are not ruling out that scenario?

But there is no compulsion on me. I see no reason why I should answer this question.

I can't answer questions where the moves of a hundred other people are involved.

I'll rephrase the question. Would you agree to become Prime Minister



if you were elected leader of a faction of the Janata Dal and were then supported from outside by the Congress?

But I haven't been elected leader of such a party. So how can I presume?

So you are going to avoid ruling out this scenario?

The leader of the party is not elected by surmises.

Suppose you became the leader of your party and had to face elections. Would you raise the money that was required from industrialists?

No, that's not necessary. I would just turn to the middle class. There are thousands of people in this country who would give donations



RAJESH KUMAR

of a few hundreds

But is it possible in today's political system for a politician to survive without taking money?

That is true. I said that in 1977-78.

Nobody can give more than Rs 100 unless he has black money. But who can contest an election with Rs 20,000 or Rs 30,000?

Even today, however, the minimum election cost is in Ballia (Chandra Shekhar's constituency). The people there don't know how to use money *(laughs)*.

Doesn't this constant raising of money make it difficult for a politician to remain entirely clean?

If you take small amounts, then it is all right. It is taking large amounts that is bad.

Like if you take Rs 20,000, 50,000 or even a lakh, the man will not expect that he can dictate to you. But if you take Rs 50 lakhs or a crore, then you are in trouble.

But the Janata Dal does raise money. Take the expenditure on the Allahabad byelection, for instance.

I don't want to comment on that.

Why not? Everybody agrees that a lot of money was spent.

But he (V.P. Singh) insists that he does not know how much money was spent *(laughs)*.

All I can say is that he is either a hypocrite or a dunce!

not only no unanimity over the accuracy of his caste calculations, but there is also some doubt as to whether he will call an election after all.

Over the next two months, Devi Lal intends to tour the country whipping up Jat/*kisan* support for his cause. The Tau wishes to remind his supporters that their loyalty is to him personally and not to the party he is a member of at present. It is easy to see what he plans to do. In the event of a split, he wants his own organisation in place.

With Devi Lal and Shekhar ready to split the party, can the Raja afford to call elections? He could take the line that Shekhar and the Tau are yesterday's men and will not attract any votes (this view is the prevalent one in the V.P. Singh camp) and risk a split. But it is still a gamble. In the end, his Janata Dal could end up losing more seats than it can gain through his caste calculations.

But V.P. Singh's problem is that having made the transformation from Mr Clean to Mr Caste, his options are severely limited. If he doesn't call an election, then he faces a year of chaos and anger.

- There is no solution in sight to Punjab or Kashmir.
- Inflation could reach 1973-74 levels.
- Devi Lal will make the normal functioning of the party impossible.
- The social war that is the inevitable result of the Mandal Commission recommendations will rock the Hindi belt.
- Rajiv Gandhi will find the time he needs to get his comeback organised. With the Raja himself abandoning corruption as an issue, Rajiv's position is certain to get stronger.
- The allies will make their disillusionment with the government public and may even withdraw support.
- Through all this chaos, V.P. Singh will find that he has alienated the middle class and antagonised the press.

So, even if he thinks better of going to the country, there is no way his government can survive beyond 1991. And by the end of that year, his reputation is certain to be in tatters.

The Raja is, therefore, in a situation in which he may have to take a risk: his options are limited. He might lose an early election but equally, his caste formula might just tilt the balance.

It is still not clear what he will do, but his record suggests that he has always gambled. He resigned as UP chief minister against Mrs Gandhi's wishes at a time when to do so meant instant excommunication. The gamble paid off and he returned in a blaze of glory to the central government. In 1987, he took another risk, walking out of the Congress (by asking to be expelled), despite warnings that all those who leave the Congress either fade away or return with their tails between their legs.

That gamble also paid off.

But now Vishwanath Pratap Singh may have to plan his grandest gamble. It is not just his own career that depends on it. Because, if he does win an early election, then the India he will be obliged to create will be a very different place, full of Kurmi-appeasement, Yadav-quota and cow-belt casteism.

It is a gamble that will shape our future. And the future of our children.

Vir Sanghvi

Look back in anger

The anti-reservation stir sweeps the country



V.P. Singh: under attack

The protests and demonstrations were spontaneous. And they spread like wildfire throughout the country, plunging state after state in turmoil. Soon after the National Front government announced its decision to implement the contentious Mandal Commission report, students took to the streets, blocking traffic, stoning vehicles, burning railway property and even gheraoing ministers and senior government officials. Never before had the students got together to launch such a determined agitation. And never before had the government appeared so helpless in the face of a popular stir.

Understandably, the protests in Bihar were the most violent and widespread. A state where caste factors play such an important role, it was but expected that the Mandal Commission's report would evoke such strong reactions. As soon as the Hindi TV bulletin on 7 August declared that the Centre would implement the Mandal Commission recommendations extending 27 per cent reservations to a number of backward castes, Patna erupted in flames. Youths took over the streets in a spontaneous gesture of protest and brought life to a standstill. The following day, students of the Patna University, the hotbed of students' activities, went on the rampage. They ransacked the office of the vice-chancellor and set fire to a number of buildings. Trouble soon spread to other educational institutions as well. A panicky Patna administration ordered all the schools and colleges of the capital city closed and ordered the police to vacate the hostels.

The high-handed attitude of the state government only incensed the anti-reservationists further. Their numbers swelled and the targets of attack were government offices and railway property. Groups of lathi-wielding students even attacked ministers and senior officials. For over a week, trains approaching Patna station were stoned and several bogies set on fire. In some parts, the agitationists blew up railway tracks, throwing the state's transport system completely out of gear. And on 13 August, the police fired on a group of students in Madhubani, killing one of them. Despite the elaborate security arrangements—the paramilitary forces were also called in to assist local administrations—the agitation continued unabated, with violence gripping more and more areas of the state every day.

Chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav promptly blamed the Congress for instigating the students. But the truth was that though most of the political parties, including the communists, solidly backed the movement, none of them helped the students in any way: for a change, this was one uprising that was spontaneous and enjoyed the support of all concerned.

In the past too, Bihar has seen violent protests over the question of reservations. Once, Karpoori Thakur, the firebrand Opposition leader, even forced all legislators to resign from the Assembly in protest against the Centre's decision to reserve a percentage of government jobs for backward classes.

But Uttar Pradesh was surely a let down. For, nine months ago, when the V.P. Singh regime had announced, soon after assuming office, that the existing policy on reservations would continue, UP was the first state to react to the Prime Minister's statement with anger. Naturally, this time too the state was



UNI

expected to lead the anti-reservation stir in north India. Moreover, this time round, a rejuvenated Congress party, a number of upper caste leaders within the state Janata Dal and, most important, kisan leader Mahendra Singh Tikait -he is upset with the UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav -were all expected to stand by the agitators.

But the stir proved to be a non-starter. First, Tikait told the students that he had nothing to do with the agitation. Moreover, the UP government had announced recently that it would recruit around 20,000 personnel and naturally the students were too busy preparing for the examinations.

But that did not deter anti-reservationists to voice their protest against the Mandal Commission report. And expectedly, the banner of revolt was first raised in Kanpur, the centre of student politics in the state. On 19 August, a powerful bomb exploded at the Chumganj police station, injuring five people. The other target of the agitators was the Kidwainagar branch of the Punjab National Bank.

Like Kanpur, Allahabad too is a nerve-centre of students' movements. But this time, the police reportedly came down with a heavy hand to deal with the agitation. On Independence Day, students of the Allahabad University hoisted a black flag. Later, when they brought out a procession, the police allegedly beat them up with lathis, forcing the protesters to retreat to their hostels. Surprisingly, Lucknow University, which remained unaffected by the anti-reservation movement last time, experienced more than its share of campus violence this time. The fillip was said to have been provided by the visit of Sanjeev Shankhdhar, a member of the national coordination committee of the Anti-Mandal Commission Forum, to the university. He camped at the university for four days and in one of the public meetings that he addressed, Shankhdhar termed Mulayam Singh Yadav as "anti-students". He also appealed to the students to resort to peaceful means of demonstration. But soon after his departure, a bomb exploded inside the office of the deputy registrar (examinations). The students also set ablaze furniture belonging to the Hindi department. But once the police moved in, the stir subsided.



VIJENDRA TYAGI

Delhi University students form a chain around Parliament: an angry lot

Students of the capital have in the past remained more or less unaffected by movements sweeping other parts of the country. But this time it was different. And, 24 August was a day of spectacular protests all over Delhi. Most of the 10,000-odd students who had assembled on the lawns of the Boat Club on the morning of that day had nothing to



K M KISHAN



(From far left) Students demonstrating against reservations in Delhi; protesters on the streets of Patna; (above) B.P. Mandal: a popular movement



SECRET EYE

Police burst tear gas shells to disperse agitators in Delhi: strong-arm tactics

do with politics and had perhaps never participated in demonstrations before. But the jeans-clad youths were determined to form a "human chain" around Parliament as a mark of protest against the government's decision to accept the Mandal Commission report. For, once implemented, the report would negate the whole purpose of education and would disqualify most of them from entering government services.

The administration was also prepared in full force to tackle the situation. The Parliament was cordoned off, and when the students attempted to march towards the Lok Sabha, the police, armed with canes, shields and tear gas, chased them away. There was total confusion everywhere and the cops had to burst as many as 50 tear gas shells on Parliament Street to disperse the crowds. In another incident, hundreds of students of Deshbandhu College in south Delhi fought a pitched battle with the police for over an hour. The cops stormed the college and beat up the agitators, injuring even the principal, Balbir Singh.

Another target of the students was the new Congress(I) headquarters, Jawahar Bhavan on Raisina Road. The Doordarshan centre was also stoned. Traffic on all the four bridges across the Yamuna came to a standstill, resulting in chaos on the roads linking east and central Delhi. Students deflated Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus tyres and shattered their window panes. The youths grew so militant that when a senior police official suggested that a student delegation meet the Prime Minister, they shouted back: "The Prime Minister will have to come out and meet us." What emboldened the students was the public sympathy the agitation generated. On Parliament Street, for instance, employees of the Reserve Bank and Bank of India came out in support of the demonstrators.

The protests in Delhi were impressive by any standards, particularly because the students had staged the demonstration without the help of their unions and were virtually leaderless. They had been let down pretty badly by the powerful Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) in particular, which, because of its links with the ruling regime, had refused to launch a movement against the Mandal Commission report.

But that didn't prevent the students from taking to the streets on 24 August. Preparations for the massive demonstration had begun weeks in advance with students taking out processions within the campus of Delhi University, the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Jamia Millia Islamia University. The youths had hoped that these would force the government to reconsider its policy on reservations, but when nothing of that sort happened, they went ahead with the 24 August programme.

Students throughout the country resented being labelled "anti-reservationists". In all public meetings they said that they were fully in support of reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, members of whom were participating in the present movement, the students claimed. But they all were opposed to extending reservations for backward castes, who didn't deserve the crutch of "social justice" that SC/STs did. By extending reservations to backward castes, the students argued, the quota of reserved jobs would be as high as 49.5 per cent. But what is really disturbing is that the country would be divided along caste lines. VP could reap political advantage from this, but what about the future of the nation? •

Nirmal Mitra/Delhi, Subodh Mishra/Patna and Radhika Rameseshan/Lucknow

Violence in Patna: the anti-reservationists had their way



K.M. KISHAN

The oil crunch

The problem is not supplies, but the price

Most Indians have never heard of Saddam Hussein. But what the Iraqi leader does over the next few weeks is going to determine the way of life of millions of Indians over the next few months. For, Saddam Hussein has everything to do with oil—and oil is literally what keeps the Indian economy going.

Ever since Iraqi tanks rolled across the desert into Kuwait, international oil prices have gone through the ceiling, precipitating yet another crisis for Indian economic policy-makers. India just does not have enough foreign exchange to pay the higher oil prices. Moreover, the central government is all but broke and has been slashing spending across the board. If oil prices stay high, the government will have to make drastic moves, such as cutting back on public sector investment, imposing import curbs and going to international bankers with hat in hand. And that can mean only one thing: general economic downslide.



Saddam Hussein: his imperiousness could prove costly for India

Faced with this disquieting scenario and extremely limited means to deal with it, Prime Minister V.P. Singh's economic managers do not seem to know quite what to do. So far, they have reacted in a most predictable manner and are clinging to the hope that the Gulf crisis will end soon. As a first step, officials have been despatched to every corner of the globe in search of assured oil supplies; excise duty on cars has been hiked by ten per cent in the somewhat absurd hope that people will buy fewer cars and thereby consume less petrol; government cars have been ordered not to ply on Sundays, and Union ministers have been told to cut their consumption of petrol by 20 per cent. The idea, according to Union finance minister Madhu Dandavate, "is to reduce the consumption of petrol immediately". Speaking in the Lok Sabha, he urged: "I would like the general public, business, industrial and other establishments to voluntarily give up the use of their cars for one day of the week."

If the finance minister seriously believed that these measures would help reduce India's oil import bill by any significant amount, he was barking up the wrong tree. For, petrol is the least of the problems. The major consumers of oil products are not car owners, but the railway's diesel engines that pull goods trains, the country's truck operators who haul millions of tonnes of goods across the highways and the urban poor who depend on kerosene to cook their meals and light their homes. There is no way the consumption of petroleum products by these sectors can be significantly reduced in the short term. The finance minister's moves, consequently, can hardly be construed as a serious fuel conservation drive. In fact, Union petroleum minister M.S. Gurupadaswamy admitted that the petrol rationing drive since June this year had managed to cut consumption by a paltry one per cent. The country was continuing to guzzle more fuel than it could produce.

The government's political opponents, of course, feel that the latest oil crisis demonstrates just how incompetent V.P. Singh's ministry is. Former Union petroleum minister Brahm Dutt declares: "In my opinion, the petroleum sector has been completely neglected by the National Front regime." The government, he argues, should have anticipated that trouble was going to break out between Iraq and Kuwait, both of whom supply crude oil to India. "Had the government purchased large stocks of crude when the price was U.S $11 to $12 a barrel, this crisis might have been averted."

But that is being a little unfair. Not even the most clairvoyant of governments could have anticipated that Saddam Hussein would send his army into Kuwait and precipitate a global oil crisis in the process. If anything, the present government should be commended for taking early action to keep down oil imports. Initially, it had been estimated that the country would require over 60 million tonnes of crude oil and petroleum products during the current (1990-91) financial year. But given the extreme shortage of foreign

exchange, with which petroleum has to be bought, the government decided to clamp down on consumption and hiked the prices of pe 'eum products by 15 per cent in this year's budget

"The process of correction, which we initiated and for which we took a lot of flak, began with the budget presented in March this year," points out finance secretary Dr Bimal Jalan "We created an awareness of the problem and had we not taken those steps, today we would have been compelled to adopt crisis measures " In June this year, the petroleum ministry also announced a package of measures designed to curtail petroleum consumption. Moreover, the country' foreign exchange reserves have actually recorded a marginal increase since 1 January this year due to a number of government decisions. Because of all this, the country can absorb a certain degree of shock on the oil import front. But if the situation in the Gulf continues to be as bad as it is and, most important if the blockade of Iraq continues and the price of a barrel of oil touches the doomsday level of US $40 a barrel, there will be nothing which even the most astute of economic managers can do.

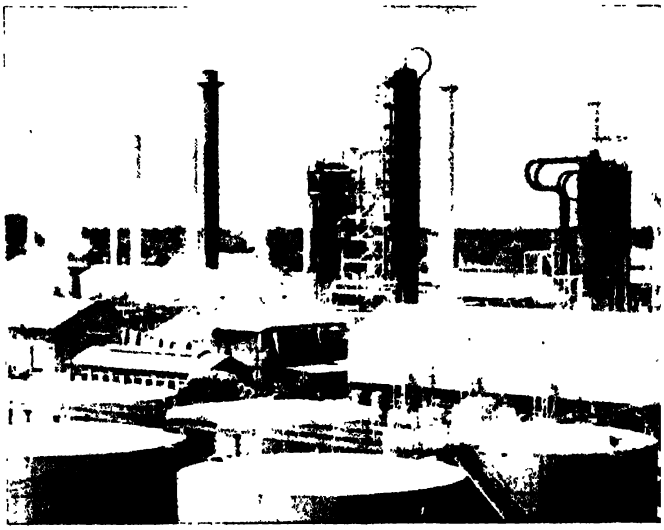


The government has estimated that even after the consumption curbs, the country will require a total of 58.9 million tonnes of finished petroleum products during 1990-91 This amount of end products (which includes naptha, gas, diesel, petrol,etc.) is procured through a variety of means: direct imports and by refining crude oil acquired both from domestic sources and through imports Matters are further complicated because India cannot refine all of the crude it produces and has to export it. This year, total domestic production of crude will touch 35 9 million tonnes and we will need to import about 18.5 million tonnes of crude. Apart from crude oil, India needs to import an additional 12 million tonnes of finished petroleum products.

Traditionally, India secures about 80 per cent of its crude oil supplies under contractual terms from selected countries. The remaining amount is purchased from the spot market where ruling prices have generally been below OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) levels. This year, India had planned to import 14.25 million tonnes of crude from seven countries. Soviet Union 4.5 mt, Saudi Arabia 3 mt, Iraq 2.25 mt,



INVASION: Ever since Iraqi soldiers occupied Kuwait, international oil prices have gone through the ceiling, precipitating yet another crisis for Indian economic policy-makers



INFLATION: Inadequate domestic production necessitates imports. To meet demands, India would have to pay an additional Rs 4,400 crores at today's prices—an impossible burden





V.P. Singh's economic managers do not seem to know quite what to do. So far, they are clinging to the hope that the Gulf crisis will end soon

Kuwait 1.5 mt, Iran 1.5 mt, UAE 1 mt and Malaysia 0.5 mt. The per barrel cost of imported crude till the Iraq crisis was about US $14. However, the government's economic analysts had predicted a hardening in world oil prices and had suggested that the finance ministry be prepared to buy crude at an average of US $18 during 1990-91. This suggestion had been accepted and a total outlay of Rs 6,440 crores in foreign exchange been earmarked for oil imports.

For the first four months of the current financial year, matters were proceeding as planned. In fact, the petroleum ministry even saved about Rs 300 crores because of oil prices prevailing at levels below the expected one. Moreover, the petroleum minister M.S. Gurupadaswamy told the Rajya Sabha that the country would be able to save another Rs 910 crores due to the curbs on petroleum consumption introduced by the government. But, with oil prices climbing to US $29 per barrel in the international markets, the government's plans have been completely wrecked.

The assured supplies from Iraq and Kuwait have completely dried up, at least for the moment. Of the 14.25 mt of crude contracted for, more than 8 mt (including the supplies from the Soviet Union) was to have come through Iraq and Kuwait. By the end of July, about 3.5 mt of this oil was fortunately lifted, but what is going to happen to the remaining amount is not known. Indian officials have approached virtually every major oil producer and most of them have promised to help. The problem so far, however, is not the supplies but the price. For every US dollar increase in the per barrel price of crude, the finance ministry estimates that the country will have to fork out an additional Rs 400 crores in foreign exchange.

At today's prices, which are about 11 dollars more than the anticipated price of US $18 for every barrel, the country will have to pay a total of Rs 4,400 crores extra. This clearly would be an impossible burden given that the government had earmarked a total of only Rs 6,440 crores for total petroleum imports. As it is, the country continues to be in the grip of a chronic balance of payments problem with imports far exceeding exports. Currently, the country's foreign exchange pool is enough only to finance about 42 days of imports. Should the crisis in the Gulf continue, India will be forced to spend more and more on oil imports. This would either mean drastically cutting down on imports in the short run or taking a foreign loan.

Neither of these alternatives is attractive. For, lower imports would affect investment and thus the growth rate. On the other hand, any increase in foreign debt would increase the debt servicing burden and, in the medium term, leave less money for capital goods imports. The government's economic managers are, however, hoping that oil prices will stabilise at around US $25 a barrel, which, together with the consumption curbs announced, will keep the additional foreign exchange requirement to a still tolerable level of Rs 2,000 crores or less. But that depends entirely on what the Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein decides to do.

The tragic part is that the domestic crude production situation only further exacerbates the present crisis.



CRISIS MANAGEMENT: Excise duty on cars has been hiked by ten per cent in the somewhat absurd hope that people will buy fewer cars and thereby consume less petrol



AASU AGITATION: The students have been picketing oil refineries and other installations in Assam, blocking oil flow out of the state and exacerbating the present oil crisis

The biggest problem back home is the continued interruption of oil supplies from Assam. All Assam Students' Union (AASU) activists have been picketing oil refineries and other installations in Assam and have successfully blocked oil flow out of their state. Crude oil production in this state accounts for as much as ten per cent of the country's annual requirements. Brahm Dutt feels that a political solution to the Assam students' agitation has to be worked out on an urgent basis. For, picketing oil refineries in Assam has become something of a legitimate method of protest since the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) leaders had themselves used this technique during their agitation in the early Eighties.

Bijoy Chakravarty, an AGP MP, laments: "This is a legacy of the Assam movement. It is a dangerous trend and a lot of damage has already been done. The young men involved in the movement should be taken into confidence and told to stop contributing to the fissiparous tendencies in the north-east." The AASU, the students' wing of the AGP, is, however, not terribly concerned about what happens to the national economy. It is demanding that the government implement the Assam Accord and stop constructing the 'loopline', which is being built to allow the Assam pipeline to operate more efficiently. The students, despite assurances and explanations, have chosen to continue their oil blockade, forcing two of the state's four refineries to shut down and inflicting a loss of 49,000 tonnes of crude worth Rs 16 crores. By the end of August, a total of 1,07,000 tonnes of crude would be lost to the nation if the agitation is not called off.



Should the crisis in the Gulf continue, India would either have to drastically cut down on imports in the short run or take a foreign loan. Neither alternative is attractive



MADHU DANDAVATE
(Finance minister)

"I would like the general public, business, industrial establishments to voluntarily give up the use of their cars for one day of the week"



BRAHM DUTT
(Former petroleum minister)

"Had the government purchased large stocks of crude when the price was US $11 to $12 a barrel, this crisis might have been averted"



BIMAL JALAN
(Finance secretary)

"Had we not taken those steps (in this year's budget), today we would have been compelled to adopt crisis measures"

What the government really needs to do is not throttle the demand for petroleum products, but initiate measures that will make the economy less dependent on petroleum in the medium and long terms. The government's present efforts to cope with the oil shortage, experts believe, will not suffice. What is needed, they feel, is a thorough review of both the energy scene and the automobile policy. Several agencies have carried out studies to show how the government would have to tailor its policies to encourage coal-based energy, thermal power and even nuclear power in order to make the country less vulnerable to unpredictable developments in the Gulf. The casualness with which OPEC was recently able to raise crude prices is a grim pointer to the times ahead.

Said Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) spokesman, Dr Reena Ramachandran: "Energy has be given the same status as environment." Just as environment, energy too must be conserved and its wastage would ultimately have to be made punishable. For this, it is necessary to frame an Energy Conservation Act, set up energy conservation boards as watchdogs for the implementation of the Act and also form an energy advisory council headed by the Prime Minister to take charge of all policy matters. It is pointless depending on abstractions like 'public awareness' to curb petrol consumption. The country will have to operate more fuel-efficiently in every sphere.

In the area of oil production, former minister Brahm Dutt feels that production from new oilfields like the Krishna Basin must be encouraged. But officials say the government should also give a better deal to public sector organisations like the ONGC, which have been producing crude at prices fixed in July 1981, when oil was $13 a barrel. The government will have to understand that if oil has to be found and drilled, it can only be done for a price. For there is no greater peril for a country on the path of rapid development than being hobbled by the lack of energy sources. If the government can put together a comprehensive long-term package for developing indigenous energy sources, then Saddam Hussein would actually have done India a favour. •

Nirmal Mitra and Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi

GAUTAM PATOLE



The scene at Bombay Airport: returning to chaos

End of the Gulf dream

Thousands return in poverty from the Middle East

They had gone searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But all they got was gunfire, Iraqi tanks and the end of a dream. And the Indian expatriates returned home from the Gulf with little more than the clothes on their backs. Their savings left behind in Kuwaiti banks, with little hope that they would ever see their hard-earned dinars again, the evacuees were left with what they had started out: nothing. And—to make matters worse—had to put up with an absolute lack of sympathy from the authorities.

The fate of the 377 passengers of the Air India Boeing 747, which landed in Bombay on 19 August, was a case in point. They arrived, confident that the government would take care of them. Only to find that no arrangements had been made for them by the authorities. Instead, a private organisation, the Shri Nagardas Dharsi Bhutta Charities had set up a transit camp for their benefit at the Bhutta High School in Andheri. Ramniklal Bhutta and Chimanbhai Seth of the charity took the evacuees to Andheri, where they were housed and fed free of cost. The government showed little interest, other than offering them rail tickets back to their homes.

The new arrivals—refugees in their own country—sat around in stupefied silence. And spoke only to relate their experiences during the Iraqi invasion and their fears about the future.

While Doordarshan had been trumpeting the 'fact' that all Indians were safe in their homes in Kuwait, the truth was that many of them were languishing in a prisoner of war camp in Baghdad, for 18 days. Workers of the Kuwait Gulf Links Transport Company, the Kuwait Drilling Company and the Kuwait Building Company were among those placed under arrest. Says Ismail Jamail, one of those imprisoned: "The Indian embassy did not even know where we were so how could it help us? Even when we landed in Bombay nobody cared. I don't know what they've been saying on television but we had a terrible time."

The workers were herded out on the morning of the invasion and asked to get into military trucks, leaving all their belongings behind. Francis Souza remembers that horrible ride: "There were about a hundred of us in that truck. It was as dark as hell and I was sure that we were going to be shot." After a never-ending ride, the workers arrived in Baghdad.

Here they were taken to a military camp, along with prisoners from such countries as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria and China. Recounts Mohammad Mohiri: "The situation was desperate. There were 400-500 people in the camp, all of whom were nervous, so trouble was bound to erupt. Moreover there was an acute shortage of water and food. Nobody could have a bath and the smell of human bodies

The politics of evacuation

The heat is turned on the Kerala and Union governments

When the Gulf crisis erupted, everybody who had friends and relatives in Kuwait was reasonably confident that no harm would come to them. Doordarshan contributed to this feeling by reiterating that Indians in the oil-rich kingdom were safe and that efforts were on to evacuate them.

But when these assurances failed to materialise, worry and anxiety turned to anger; directed at the central and Kerala governments. An association of the relatives of those trapped in Kuwait staged a *dharna* outside the Raj Bhavan in Trivandrum while in the central Travancore area the agitated people squatted on the railway tracks, to protest against the authorities' inaction.

Resentment against V.P. Singh and E.K. Nayanar's state government increased when restrictions were imposed on the exchange of Gulf currencies. Says Thampi Malaikkal, a spokesman of the Indo-Gulf Welfare Council, Thiruvalla, "The Gulf NRIs brought in crores as foreign exchange. Yet the government clamped down on the



Nayanar: trying to cope

currency the moment the heat was on. If the north Indian politicians can spend crores on Kashmir and Punjab, why can't they pay us at the old rates?"

When news of the acute water and food shortages in Kuwait came, the pressure on the government increased. The Nayanar regime responded by setting up three special cells at Cochin, Trivandrum and Calicut, in collaboration with the Union government, to provide information on those who had been stranded in Kuwait. Nearly 20,000 queries were received at these centres, and says Kumardas, regional passport officer at Cochin, "The information given by relatives on printed forms was passed on to the special cell for Kuwait at the external affairs ministry in Delhi."

But these special cells weren't much help, either. No information was received from Delhi in response to any of the requests sent from Kerala. Maintains Thampi Malaikkal: "The Kuwait cell is an open fraud by the government. I had gone to the Cochin and Trivandrum cells seeking information about my family but I got the stock reply: every Malayali in Kuwait is safe."

And K.P. Unnikrishnan, in what was projected as a "confidence-building talk" over Trivandrum Doordarshan, claimed that he could not get big enough passenger ships to evacuate all the Malayalis



GAUTAM PATOLE

The evacuees: an uncertain future

in the camp was terrible. There were bitter fights for water, in the course of which one Indian worker cracked his skull."

Others were luckier. K. Kakkar, for instance, who was divested of his Rolex watch by one of the guards. Egged on by his fellow-prisoners, he complained to the sergeant. It worked. He got his watch back. And he never saw that soldier again.

For breakfast, the prisoners were given a slice of bread and a plate of *dal*. Lunch comprised some rice and *dal*, with ten people eating from one plate. At night, the inmates of the camp got a slice of bread and some mutton. Everyone went hungry, but kept quiet for fear of being killed.

But there was only so much they could take. And when things became unbearable, the Indians decided to go on hunger strike. Fortunately for them, the Iraqis turned sympathetic, and they managed to forward a letter to the Indian embassy. The embassy intervened and on the 18th day, the Indians were told that they could leave. They were put on a flight to Amman, from where they flew to Bombay, still wearing the clothes they were arrested in.

Despite the fact that they had sweated blood for at least a couple of years in Kuwait, most of the workers were destitutes when they landed in India. Explains G.S. Ghai, an in-flight supervisor, "Everyone in Kuwait avails of the ATM (automatic teller machine) system in banks, and they withdraw about 40 to 50 dinars every week to take care of their living expenses. Now, with the attack, all the dinars they had earned over the years have simply vanished. Presently, there is no food shortage among the Indians, but as time passes, and with all their money locked up in the banks,

in Kuwait!

The Congress(I), aware that it was on to a good thing, began a series of protests, including a mass fast outside the regional passport office in Cochin, which has a Kuwait cell. Later MPs from Kerala observed a day-long fast at the main gate of Parliament House in Delhi, with K.V. Thomas, MP, declaring: "The Centre has failed along with the state government to take firm action. As leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, India should have taken a firm stand."

Nayanar, at least, got his act going, sending his PWD (Public Works Department) minister T.K. Hamsa to the Gulf, to expedite the evacuation of the Keralites. The chief ministeralso suggested that a fund be set up to reimburse those returning from the Gulf to the tune of 15 per cent of their deposits in the Middle East. Nayanar also took up the cudgels on behalf of the evacuees with the Prime Minister. He wrote to the Raja: "The refusal of the nationalised banks to exchange the Gulf currencies is extremely cruel. An enquiry should be ordered into this and remedial steps taken immediately."

But by then, the credibility of his government had already been damaged.

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

GAUTAM PATOLE



Back from Kuwait: encountering apathetic officials

things are bound to get difficult."

Even those who have managed to get out in time are pretty badly off. Subramaniam Surendran, a worker at the Mina Abdula refinery, had to leave sophisticated hi-fi equipment and all his savings behind and estimates the loss at Rs 5 lakhs. Others like Deepak Mehta and Jude de Souza had paid fantastic sums to agents to get jobs in the Gulf. Mehta has yet to repay the loan he took to make the payment, while de Souza, who sold his wife's jewels, now has no way of recompensing her.

Nobody has much confidence in the government's ability or inclination to rehabilitate them. Says N. Radhakrishnan: "In the end we will have to fend for ourselves. The government should remember that we have helped India all these years by sending foreign exchange. But I am sure that nothing will be done for us, like nothing was done at the airport when we landed here." Or at the Victoria Terminus station, from where the workers were to take the Dadar Madras Express back home. All 55 of them were handed Rs 25 each for the return journey. An old man of 50, who'd worked as a mason in Kuwait, broke down completely. "What state have we been reduced to?" he cried. "Everyone is making a big noise about the Air India crew coming back, but what about us? Are we not Indians? While the Air India crew was staying in a five-star hotel, we were in jail in Baghdad."

Most of the workers were forced to go around with folded hands and tears in their eyes, begging passers-by for some money so that they could go back home.

As usual, the officials were difficult to locate. In the end, help came from three members of the Young Women's Christian Organisation, who collected some money and gave each of the passengers the Rs 10-15 they needed. Complained I. Hussain: "The attitude here seems to be, 'Get the hell out of here and do not come back. You people went to the Gulf to make money and now that it hasn't worked out, it is your problem.' We are fools to even expect help."

Even the Indians in Kuwait seem to have realised that self-help is the best way out. Writes Agnes Fernandes from Kuwait: "Every day at lunch or dinner time around eight to ten families meet, each bringing a little something. In this way we manage to save food. I have heard that the banks may open soon. But many of us plan to stay here until things get really bad. I hope it never does."

Things have begun to get out of control in Kerala, whose economy depended on the Gulf remittances. Also, an exodus from the Gulf will increase the number of unemployed in the state

But things have already begun to get out of control in Kerala, whose economy depended on the Gulf remittances. With banks refusing to deal in Gulf currencies, the Malayalis returning home found that their savings were not worth the paper they were printed on. Later, under press-

The invasion

A first-hand account

Commander Prakash Pant of Air India was in Kuwait when the Iraqis took over the country. He remained in Kuwait along with his 14-member crew for three weeks until they were finally evacuated. This is his story.

I woke up around 5.30 in the morning at the Sheraton Hotel to the sound of machine-gun fire. Going to the balcony I got the shock of my life. There were tanks rolling on the streets and men in army uniforms running wild. Something was, obviously, terribly wrong.

Soldiers stopped all the cars and made their occupants lie flat on the road, while the poorer people were held captive on the pavements. The cars, including such expensive makes as Mercedes Benzes, Rolls Royces, Toyotas and BMWs, were left lying on the road until the tanks ploughed right through them, with the hapless owners looking on.



Prakash Pant: a harrowing experience

The army moved on towards the palace, and appeared to be in a hurry. But we still didn't know which army it was.

Around seven am, the hotel manager knocked on the door to inform me that Iraq had invaded Kuwait. We should all, he said, go down to the basement. By this time the rest of the crew were up and around ten, we went down into the lobby.

Only to get the shock of our lives The army had taken over the place which now looked like a military camp. The glass doors lay smashed; the soldiers had literally bulldozed their way in.

Meanwhile, the sound of gunfire continued. I think the soldiers were just firing in the air. But it was a good psychological weapon, for the Kuwaiti soldiers simply disappeared. The only public building they damaged apart from the palace was the television station. Otherwise they simply walked through, almost as if they were on an exercise. By the afternoon all communication with the outside world was cut off.

One Indian national was shot during the first couple of days, but we were told that it was a case of mistaken identity. But tension ran high as we did not know what would become of us. The thought that the Third World War would break out and we would be caught in the middle of it was our greatest fear. We were aware of the massive arms build-up through the American news network, and we had heard Saddam Hussein's speeches.

During my stay I never noticed any Kuwaiti nationals on the street.

Finally the external affairs ministry ordered our evacuation via Baghdad. At Baghdad we met Mr I.K. Gujral, who wanted feedback on the situation in Kuwait as he was scheduled to meet Saddam Hussein the next day.

From Baghdad, Air India put us on a flight to Amman and from there we flew back to India.

As related to Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

ure from the E.K. Nayanar government, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) instructed the State Bank of India to allow conversion of Gulf currencies to the maximum limit of Rs 5,000 per person.

But what will become of the families dependent on regular NRI remittances? According to estimates, as much as Rs 4,000-5,000 crores used to come in from the Gulf every year, mainly through *havala* payments. With that income gone, the state, with no agriculture or heavy industry to speak of, is bound to be plunged into a serious economic crisis. Also, an exodus from the Gulf will increase the number of unemployed, which already stands at 32 lakhs.

A pall of gloom has already decended over Thiruvalla, 135 km from Trivandrum, where most of the rich Syrian Christians and Nairs have relatives in the Gulf. Says C.T. Titus, whose brother-in-law M. Matthews has worked in Kuwait for 32 years: "His gratuity alone would have been more than Rs 1 crore, which he now stands to lose." In Thiruvalla, hundreds of NRIs had invested in Kuwaiti dinars as it was one of the strongest currencies in the world and banks there gave better interest rates. Now they stand to lose all that money.

Chavakkad boasts of all the lower level workers who went to the Gulf. But even here there never used to be a dearth of money. All that has changed now Says a doctor, who had a flourishing practice: "I used to make Rs 30,000 a month before. But now that the Gulf crisis has erupted all these people have started going to government hospitals."

At the Chavakkad fish market, wholesale dealer Abubacker says: "The price of marine delicacies like pomfret and sear fish has crashed. Now people only want common fish like salmon." T. Thomas, who owns a department store in Thiruvalla, says: "The day after the Iraqi invasion my sales came down." Kochuman, who used to drive a tourist taxi, rues the fact that everyone has switched to autorickshaws. "If by the end of the month the situation becomes worse, I will also sell my taxi and go in for an auto," he says.

In Cochin, there is an acute shortage of gold; the entire gold market in Kerala depends on smuggled Gulf gold. Now prices of gold have gone up in the Gulf as well and so the supply has dried up. According to Babu Alappat of Fashion Jewellers, Cochin: "By the end of the month, the price may touch Rs 3,000 from Rs 2,480 a sovereign."

Most people, however, are convinced that the present crisis will pass and it will soon be business as usual. The version that the Gulf dream is over, bar the mourning, has few takers. ●

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay, Sreedhar Pillay/Cochin, Chavakkad and Thiruvalla with reports from Chhaya Balachandran

ANURAG MATHUR

The foreign hand

It is much sought after for it offers a lot

Delhi is host to a large number of foreigners and they affect the city in various ways. Everybody who comes in contact with them reacts in different ways, but no one is untouched.

First are the diplomats. Delhiwallas look on them as providing access to a host of duty-free goods besides foreign liquor. They are therefore highly popular and much sought after. Unfortunately, the diplomats are quite aware of the reason for their popularity and are consequently extremely wary of being milked.

Next are the staffers of various UN bodies, who are slightly below in terms of desirability, but they too have access to foreign goods. Third are the executives of different multinational companies' who are not very high on anybody's list since they lack the diplomatic stamp and the same degree of access to foreign brand names.

The extremely desperate Delhiwalla is not even averse to latching on to the odd tourist. However, he has to be a visibly affluent tourist and not one of the sort who sits in Connaught Place with a can in front and a sign that says, "Passport and money stolen. Please help."

The point is that foreigners in general are sought after, at least by a section of the city. But the game has become more complex than in the past when you merely looked for a white skin and were assured of having your prayers for genuine Wrigley's chewing gum answered. The Nigerian embassy used to be fairly high on the popularity list, particularly among businessmen, because it provided opportunities for doing substantial business with Nigeria. Later, of course, it lost out because of Nigeria's financial problems but no doubt it will recover. Other African embassies are also high on the popularity chart because their countries need to import a wide range of goods and India is in a position to supply them.

The Arabs occupy a peculiar position in that they are so much like us that a certain amount of familiarity breeding contempt has become inevitable. Their embassies are often crowded, odorous, and staffed by rude and indifferent personnel. But they are forgiven everything because their countries are still a virtual El Dorado for an ambitious businessman or even a professional aspiring to emigrate. In that sense, the motivation for cultivating diplomats has changed from merely seeking consumer goods to seeking large business opportunities.

However, the people who have surged ahead in popularity in the recent past in a steady way are from the countries in the Far East, especially Japan and South Korea, though others like Singapore and Thailand also do surprisingly well for themselves. From a time when they were barely visible they have progressed steadily until they are very much in the forefront of not only diplomatic groupies but the government itself.



The extremely desperate Delhiwalla is not even averse to latching on to the odd tourist. However, he has to be visibly affluent and not one who sits in Connaught Place with a sign that says, "Passport and money stolen. Please help"

But despite this, the colour complex remains. It still remains easier for a West European country to attract groupies than it is for others, except of course the North Americans. Interestingly enough, the East Europeans, despite being white, never attained the same degree of popularity. Perhaps their preferred form of government coloured them all in red. Now, however, the situation is likely to change.

So that is how the position stands today. There are a plethora of foreign hands, most proffered in friendship rather than balled in a fist, which was the original meaning of the phrase. The situation is infinitely more complex today than what it was in the simplistic days when the foreign hand was seen behind every problem. Overall it has been a change that is much more to India's advantage than it was in the recent past.●



Vijayalakshmi Pandit: a personal milestone

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

It was, perhaps, the most exclusive 90th birthday party ever held, with entrance restricted to members of the Nehru-Gandhi family. And they turned out in full strength to greet their oldest living relative, Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit at her Chakrata Road bungalow in Dehradun.

In all, there were 32 Nehru-Gandhis in attendance, among them Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi with daughter Priyanka, Arun and Subhadra Nehru with daughter Avantika, and minister of state for environment Maneka Gandhi. But according to Mrs Pandit's daughter Nayantara Sehgal, "Nobody talked politics, it wasn't the occasion."

Apparently all the invitees—including Rajiv, his portly cousin Arun and estranged sister-in-law Maneka—met Mrs Pandit individually to extend their greetings. Said Sehgal: "My mother was more interested in how the kids of the family were coming up and what they are doing."

But then Vijayalakshmi Pandit has always had a special pride in family. A pride shared by her cousin B.K. Nehru, former J&K Governor, with whom she spent most time with on her birthday. They discussed their Anand Bhavan days over lunch, comprising *rumali rotis*, *methi rotis*, *bhuna* chicken, mutton curry, *dum aloo*, mushroom with peas and *pulao*.

All in all, a successful birthday bash, which left Mrs Pandit far too exhausted to meet the press the day after.

Among the invitees: (from left) Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi, Arun Nehru and Maneka Gandhi



RAKESH SAHAI



RAJESH KUMAR



BLOW YOUR MIND

She is top of the pops as far as the Indian government is concerned. First, Sharon Prabhakar was chosen over the likes of Alisha Chinai and Parvati Khan to perform as the country's official crooner, belting out *Tracks of friendship* at the Asian Track and Field Meet in New Delhi.



T.N.N. PRASAD

Sharon Prabhakar: wowing the Japanese

And now Prabhakar has been selected to represent India at the Asian Music Festival in Tokyo.

Sharon is all set to wow the Far East, with her distinctive brand of Hindi pop and a splendidly-choreographed show, complete with high-tech equipment (laser beams and the like). Her repertoire will include at least two numbers from her forthcoming release *Blow Your Mind*.

And if she manages to blow the minds of the Japs, international stardom may be only a couple of albums away.



A scene from the *Mahabharat*; (inset) B.R. Chopra: the saga continues

MAHABHARAT, THE PLAY

Grant this to B.R. Chopra: he knows a good thing when he sees one.

What's more, once he realises he's on to a good thing, he refuses to let go.

The *Mahabharat*, for instance. Not content with the long and popular run his serial enjoyed on television, Chopra first commissioned a documentary on the making of the magnum opus. And now, the filmmaker has abridged the 93-hour serial into a three and a half hour stage-cum-video show, the world premiere of which was held on 26 August at the Birla Matushri Sabhagar, Bombay.

After that the show will go on the road, with performances scheduled in New Jersey and Chicago (USA). On completion of the American tour, Chopra will come back to Bombay to make a film on the *Mahabharat*, and—if things work out fine—an English version of the serial for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

So, you haven't heard the last of the *Mahabharat* as yet Not by a long shot.

INDIAN STOOGE? WHO, ME?

So, all her strident anti-India rhetoric didn't work. Not only was Benazir Bhutto fired from her job as Prime Minister but Pakistan Television (PTV) Corporation accused the Mohtarma of staying on in office with the help of the Indian government.

Quoting a Bombay-based magazine, the news bulletin reported that Bhutto had asked for assistance from across the border when the going seemed to be getting tough.

Benazir was livid. And served a legal notice on PTV through her counsel Aitzaz Ahsan, demanding an unconditional and unqualified apology and a retraction within two days. If PTV failed to comply with this demand, Bhutto threatened to sue the network to the tune of Rs 10 million, on the ground that the news report had been intended to lower her dignity and was "false, scandalous and highly defamatory".

Much like the reports about her husband's corruption, in fact.

Benazir Bhutto: apologise or else...

SHIRAZ SIDHVA



TRASH DOESN'T WORRY HIM

The ban imposed on the Pakistani bad taste film on Salman Rushdie, *International Guerillas*, had become a *cause célèbre* with the Muslim community in Britain. If Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* hadn't been banned, they argued, the British censors had no business keeping *International Guerillas* out of the theatres.

Predictably, the ban on the film was lifted. But not because of the pressure exerted by the *mullahs* at Bradford. It was Rushdie



Salman Rushdie

who managed to make the censors see reason.

Condemning the ban on principle, Rushdie announced that he didn't want the "dubious protection of censorship". The ban should be lifted for the audiences to recognise "this film for the distorted, incompetent piece of trash it is".

Brave words, which threw those clamouring for his head completely. Though they did recover soon enough to call his stand "courageous".

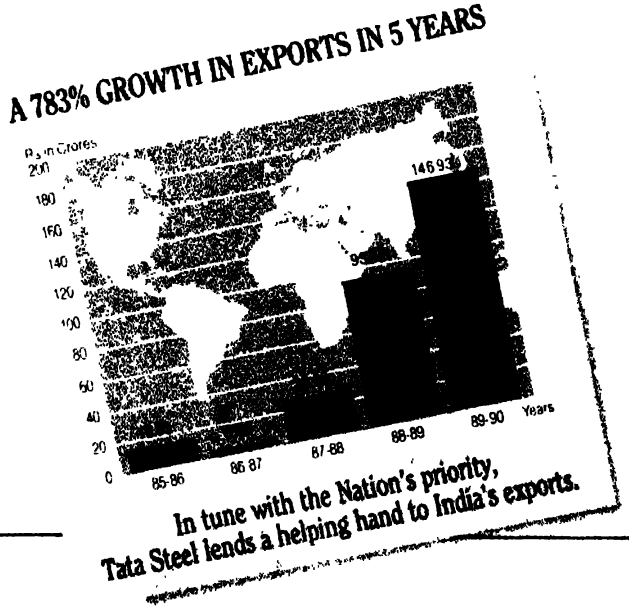
It is, of course, another matter that they attended an anti-*Verses* rally the very next day. ●

In the Gulf, we've to take a little pepper while having a lot of wire rods

Not only in the Gulf, in the USA and in Australia, in Japan and in New Zealand, in Bangladesh, in China and West Germany and in many other countries, Tata Steel, today, is exporting a wide range of products.

The objectives are evidently clear. To ensure foreign exchange earnings, which are a national priority, and to establish a long-term quality leadership for the Company and the country in the global market.

In just six years, Tata Steel (with a turnover of Rs 146 crore) has become one



persuaded people

of the country's largest exporters. Its range not only covers engineering goods and raw materials but also commodities such as black pepper, coffee and black tiger shrimps. In spite of its large imports of equipment and raw materials for the on-going modernisation drive, Tata Steel, today, is a nett exporter. For 1985-86, the Company won the prestigious National Award for Exports.

Today, Tata Steel is spreading all its pioneering expertise and experience across the seas to build a long term base for India—all over the world.

Tata Steel Exports:

Steel and Steel-based engineering products	- Wire rods, re-inforcing bars, structurals, tubes, wires, bars, cranes, rolls, bearings, etc.
Raw Materials	- Chrome ore & concentrates, manganese ore, ferro-manganese, ferro-chrome, charge chrome, refractories, etc.
Commodities	- Black pepper, coffee, black tiger shrimps.



Discussions that are opening up new markets in the Gulf

TATA STEEL

DECADE OF EXPORTS

1990 2000

TATA STEEL

The first and still the foremost

Joan of Arc

Why the CPI(M) assaulted Mamata Banerjee

When Marxist hoodlums brutally attacked former Congress(I) MP Mamata Banerjee at a Calcutta street crossing in broad daylight on 16 August, they knew what they were doing. For, Mamata currently is easily the most active Congress(I) leader in the state. At a time when her party colleagues are busy squabbling amongst themselves, she alone has kept up the fight against West Bengal's ruling leftists. Her battle instincts, grit and singular resolve have been winning her more and more admirers. Calcutta's Marxists know that if any Congressperson is fast emerging as a grass roots leader in the state, it is Mamata Banerjee.

This 34-year-old, street-fighting politician is threatening to bring down the Marxist citadel in Calcutta. She is directly challenging the communists' claim to be the defender of the common man and questioning their right to continue dominating the city. The Marxists have been holding on to Calcutta through political machination and muscle power. The city is a prestigious prize which the state's rulers just cannot afford to lose. So, when the Congress(I) called a *bandh* on 16 August and Mamata came out on the streets to rally Congress(I) sympathisers, a bunch of killers owing allegiance to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), decided it was a bit too much.

The procession led by Mamata Banerjee was stopped at a street crossing and the ex-MP attacked by a group of CPI(M) supporters led by Lallu Alam, the brother of the CPI(M) leader Badshah Alam, who had unsuccessfully contested the Chowringhee seat in the last Assembly elections in 1987. The assailants, wearing police helmets, first struck her repeatedly with *lathis* and then went in for the kill with a knife. The policemen present on the spot intervened only when it was evident that Mamata was being murdered. She was admitted to a hospital where she was treated for multiple fractures and a severe head injury. In fact, the scalp had virtually been split open. Press photographers who had tried to photograph the attack were themselves beaten up—one of them, Ananda Bazar Patrika's Tarapada Banerjee had his arm broken.

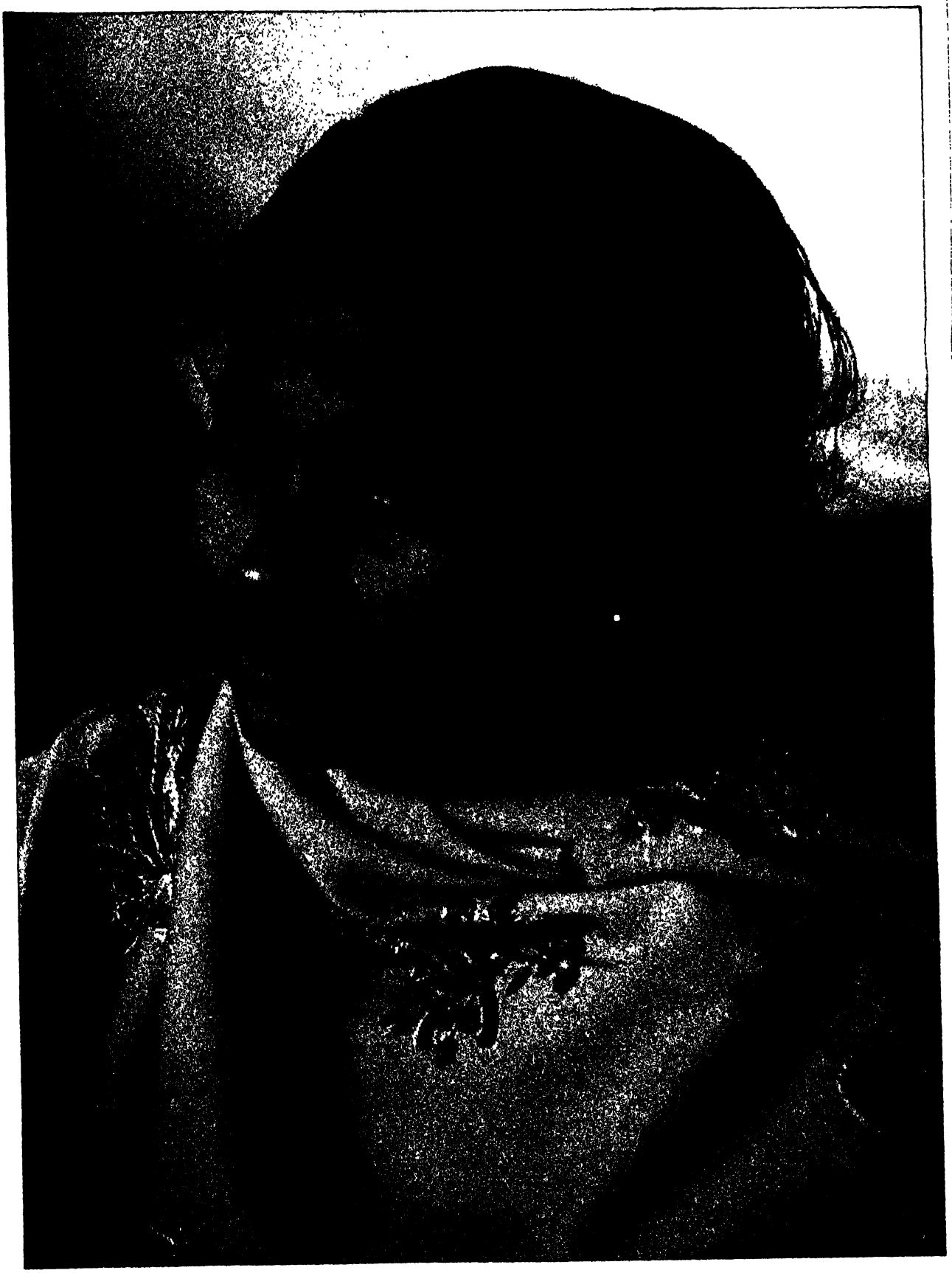
It was a shameful episode. And the public outrage against the ruling Left Front was loud and predictable. For, in Calcutta women have always been treated with great deference. The Marxists had sinned by attacking a defenceless woman just because she happened to be a political rival. Mamata might have been ignominiously struck down on a Calcutta street but the ultimate victory might well be her's. For, if there is any Congress leader in West Bengal who just cannot be cowed down, it is Mamata.

POLITICS HAS been one long battle for Mamata. She started off as a small time student leader in south Calcutta's Jadavpur University. Those were the wild days. She is reported to have been a spirited girl, ever ready to snipe at her leftist rivals. She remained on the fringes of state Congress(I) politics till Subrata Mukherjee, a party MLA and trade unionist, took her under his wings and began promoting her as a youth leader. She got her biggest break when her party leadership chose her to contest the 1984 Lok Sabha elections against the veteran CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee in the red stronghold of Jadavpur. At that time, virtually no one expected the young Mamata to put up a genuine fight against Somnath Chatterjee. Her unexpected victory, with a whopping margin of about 48,000 votes, made her an overnight celebrity in Bengal.

Most of the Congress(I) candidates who had been elected to Parliament in December 1984, thanks to the so-called "Indira wave", did little to promote their constituents' cause. But not Mamata. She emerged as the most vocal MP in the Lok Sabha, constantly raising even the insignificant of her constituency's problems. She incessantly petitioned ministers in New Delhi and followed up hundreds of requests from her supporters. On one occasion, she even spoke against the Congress(I) government at the Centre for not helping industries in West Bengal. This attitude won her supporters cutting across wide political barriers. The people of the Jadavpur Lok Sabha constituency began to grudgingly admit that this lady meant business and whatever else she was, first and foremost she was their true representative.

THE REPORTS of Mamata's burgeoning popularity worried the Marxists no end. They knew that if Mamata was allowed to continue, she would destroy their base in Jadavpur, which has traditionally been the fortress of the leftists in Bengal. During the 1989 general elections, the Marxists instead of fielding Somnath Chatterjee, put up a lady professor Malini Bhattacharjee against her. The political battle, however, took an entirely different turn. The Congress (I)'s national level politicians blundered by allowing the *shilanyas* ceremony near the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and succeeded in completely alienating the Muslim voters. A large chunk of Mamata's supporters were Muslims and by the end of November 1989 the overwhelming majority of them had decided to vote for anyone but the Congress(I). And, Mamata lost.

She was down but not out. Unlike other defeated poll contestants, she refused to give up her constituency. From time to time, she organised rallies and street-corner meetings in the Jadavpur and Behala areas. She continued to offer her services to the people. At a time, when a debilitated state Congress seemed to have sunk into manic depression, she alone kept on protesting against the injustices committed by the Marxist government. In the end, she could not but be admired. If she went down under the blows of her leftist assailants, it was because she stood up to fight in the first place. A hospital ward is a lonely place but Mamata Banerjee fortunately will not be there for long. She is destined for a place amongst the multitudes.●



TAPAN DAS

MARKETING

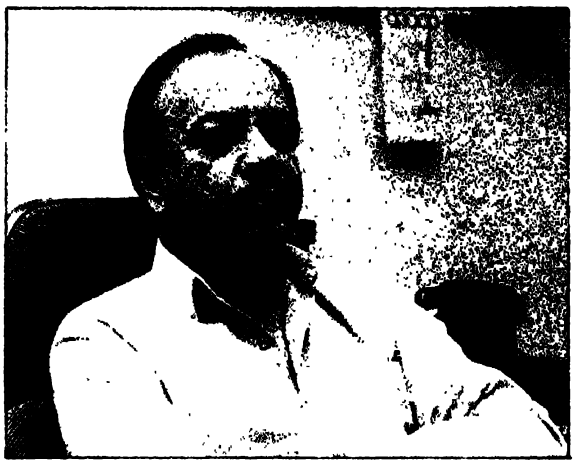
Head for success

Godrej Soaps begins to market the controversial Anoop hair oil

A bald fact. Soon, the streets of Bombay will display ads which read: "Godrej brings you Anoop the much-acclaimed hair oil from Kerala."

The giant family-owned business house, Godrej Soaps has tied-up with Kerala's Gopalakrishnan Nair, the maker of the controversial Anoop hair oil. Apparently, Godrej Soaps beat a number of multinationals which vied to market this product. Says the company's spokesman, Pratap Roy: "It was a simple exercise and all over in a month. Nair is not one for intricate legal details and agreed to market his home-grown product through Godrej."

Last year, after Anoop hit the headlines in Kerala's number one daily, *Malayalam Manorama*, it became a rage. The oil sold at Rs 75 per bottle; in the black market as much as Rs 300. Reports had it that the oil was a surefire cure for baldness and Nair was acclaimed a 'miracle' man. But soon overnight success attracted controversies and detractors. Complaints began coming in that the hair oil was nothing but a hoax and Nair a fraud. And in August last year, a writ petition seeking a stay on the sale of Anoop was admitted by a Kerala High Court. The petition followed investigations made by a consumer's group. The state health ministry also instructed a director at the Central Council for Research on Ayurveda and Siddha (CCRAS) to submit a report on Anoop's hair-raising facilities.



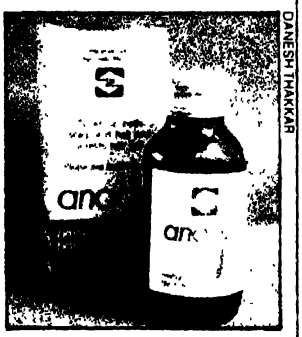
DANESH THAKKAR

Godrej spokesman Pratap Roy: "Marketing Anoop will synergise with our personal care products"

But, obviously, all this has not put off Godrej. Says Roy, "There was no untoward finality in people's accusations. We made enquiries and got a good feedback about the credentials of Nair's oil and so started talking to him." He adds: "Through our normal marketing intelligence, we found that marketing this oil would synergise with our personal care products."

Suitability aside, Godrej will have to cope with a different kind of problem. Nair alone knows the hair-raising formula, which he says contains—apart from coconut oil, goat's milk etc.—over 50 herbs. As some of those herbs are seasonal, production is severely curtailed. At best, he can manufacture 25,000 to 30,000 bottles a month. Moreover, Godrej also has to risk depending on just one man for the produce.

But, Godrej seems more than willing to take the chance. Says Roy: "We are not making any tall claims. We are selling it as an ayurvedic hair oil and not a miracle." In fact, Godrej is not even altering the original packaging. Perhaps, it will be glossed up a bit, say company insiders, but, it will be as simple as an ayurvedic product should be. And that's the way Nair wants it.



DANESH THAKKAR





RAJAN

(Left) Gopalakrishnan Nair with his wonder oil; Anoop marketed by Godrej: simple packaging

With the tie-up, Anoop is being sold at Rs 100 per 50 ml bottle all over the country. Nair's agreement with Godrej is for five years, but it allows him to sell bottles to his own customers.

If Nair can increase production (he has already bought land to grow more herbs) and Godrej's marketing strategies are successful, both will have it made. In fact, Godrej began marketing Anoop on 5 August and already demand far outstrips supply. Letters have been pouring in from jubilant consumers. Nair has even been receiving orders by post. The hair oil has even attracted the interest of people in the US and Switzerland.

So far, it seems to be a winning combination. Whether it raises hair or not, it is certain to raise money. ●

Olga Tellis/Bombay

COMPANIES

A panicky peace?

Perhaps, as Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi may have bitten off more than he can chew with Standard Motors

On the face of it, it appeared that the Tamil Nadu government had decided to buy peace. On 22 August, Standard Motors Products of India (SMPL) chairman A.C. Muthiah was summoned by state chief secretary M.M. Rajendran. Good news, thought Muthiah, this is the end of his pariah status, the end of the year-long persecution by the state government—courtesy chief minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi's long-standing ire against everything the Madras-based industrialist and his family had a hand in. Of immediate concern, however, was the possibility that the government had something in mind to resolve the crisis at SMPL, its factory locked out since February 1989, and the company declared sick.

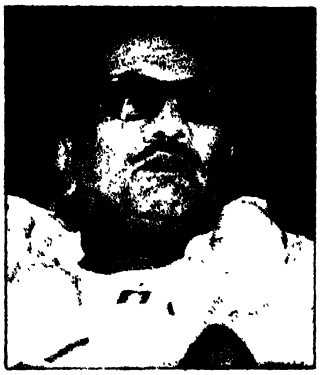
However, when Muthiah presented himself in Rajendran's office, it did not take him long to realise the meeting was a mere formality, and that the government had no concrete proposal to reopen Standard Motors, one-time maker of the ill-fated Standard 2000 luxury car. Why, then, was Rajendran so keen to meet Muthiah, a man the state government has systematically hunted down? Especially when Muthiah has said often enough that he has washed his hands of SMPL—a company he picked up as a bargain two years ago but discovered soon enough that it was a dud—and how relieved he would be if he was able to offload his 20 per cent SMPL equity on to any buyer?

Corporate observers have it that for a change, the Tamil Nadu government is in for some flak. Karunanidhi had announced in the Assembly that he would make sure the SMPL facility reopened by June. Nothing happened. The Communist Party of India (CPI), which controls the SMPL labour union—and is politically allied with Karunanidhi's Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam—is tired of the CM's assurances, say political observers, and is getting restive. For a good reason: the company's 3,000 workers are without a job and the leftists have already lost a lot of credibility, walking a tightrope between an ally's promises and constituents' aspirations. A number of CPI legislators have even served notices for an adjournment motion in the Assembly on the SMPL issue. Faced with a tricky political situation, say observers, Karunanidhi had to act—and fast.

Hence the government's sham meeting with Muthiah. But it was enough for Karunanidhi to claim in the legislature that "even today, the chief secretary is holding discussions with Muthiah".



THE STANDARD 2000



M. KARUNANIDHI



A.C. MUTHIAH

The Tamil Nadu chief minister may have realised that without Muthiah's help, it may be impossible to get SMPL going

Corporate observers have it that for a change, the Tamil Nadu government is in for some flak

The CPI is not the CM's only worry, or the only cause to keep alive the pretence that he is really interested in SMPL's—and by default, Muthiah's—welfare. The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) has scheduled a hearing for the sick company's affairs on 12 September. R. Ganapati, the board's chairman, is exasperated enough with the Tamil Nadu government's vacillation on SMPL, and has even issued a show cause notice asking why the company, burdened with a staggering Rs 20 crore loss, should not be wound up. The government panicked and asked for a grace period, promising that it would name Muthiah's successor—as chairman and co-promoter—by 12 September.

With the publicised meeting, Karunanidhi can at least tell the BIFR that he is doing his best to figure something out—holding out the same sop he has to his communist allies—to solve the SMPL mess. Not exactly buying peace with Muthiah, but buying time to save face.

The DMK don, however, may find it difficult to find a way out: he has already tried roping in buyers for Muthiah's stake, but all moves till date have fallen through.

The Tamil Nadu government—after Muthiah cried off—approached four industrialists to find out if they would be interested in rehabilitating SMPL. They were non-resident Indian Vijay Mallya of the United Breweries Group, R.J. Shahaney, Ashok Leyland's chairman, M. Puroshothaman, a small-time businessman and owner of Empee distillery in Tamil Nadu, Palani G. Periaswamy, NRI businessman and a friend of Tamil Nadu's former CM M.G. Ramachandran.

Among them, say government insiders, only Mallya seemed really keen. Shahaney even claimed that he "would not touch SMPL with a bargepole". But, unfortunately, Mallya's applications to the Union industry ministry for certain concessions in duties on the sale of the car and for importing parts for the manufacture of the luxury vehicle were rejected. Moreover, all his appeals to the state government asking it to try and influence Delhi in his favour came to nothing. "We could not help him in that," confesses a state government official. So, Mallya held discussions with experts and decided to keep off SMPL.

This is where a crucial realisation on the state government's part comes in, say observers, an acknowledgement of the fact that without Muthiah's help, it may be virtually impossible to ever get SMPL going again. After all, a prospective co-promoter would have to bring in Rs 8.40 crores as bail out money, inclusive of Muthiah's 20 per cent holding. Karunanidhi had managed to stall criticism somewhat, by pledging Rs 3 crores from state funds for SMPL's well-being, and getting the Indian Overseas Bank, through a special Reserve Bank of India directive, to pump in a crore more. He also announced an ad hoc grant of Rs 250 to each SMPL employee—"the third time such help has been provided to them by the government," declared the CM at the Assembly recently—adding up to Rs 7.5 lakhs, but such palliatives only have a short-term effect.

Seen in this light, the 22 August meeting between Muthiah and secretary Rajendran does not seem like a sham, but the first move towards reconciliation—both political and corporate—by a hard-pressed government.

But it remains to be seen whether Muthiah will respond to the Karunanidhi government's gesture—if indeed it is a gesture. After all, in end-July, the government filed criminal charges against him and other executives of Southern Agrifurane—the government removed Muthiah from the vice-chairmanship of the joint sector company last year. In April, the government sacked Muthiah's father, M.A. Chidambaram, from his post as chairman of the family's flagship joint sector company, Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corp. (SPIC). It must also hurt that state chief secretary Rajendran, the government's let's-have-a-chat-man, is now SPIC chairman.

In this set-up, it seems very unlikely that Muthiah will be enamoured of a government that has not even bothered to hide its animosity towards him. Unless, of course, he can extract a bit of revenge. Okay, he might say, drop the criminal charges and maybe I will help you out with SMPL. Try returning the management of some companies you took away, and I will help some more. And about SPIC, dear chief secretary...

The progression can go on, in a battle which started with Karunanidhi's advent at the state's helm and the SMPL muddle, peaked with the SPIC ouster and the cases, and has come a full circle—assuming Karunanidhi is ready with the peace pipe. Whatever the case, Muthiah can rest easy about one thing. He does not have much more to lose. Anything positive that happens now is a step up from rock bottom. For Karunanidhi, on the other hand, it is just the opposite. ●

R. Bhagwan Singh/ Madras

PROSPECTIVE BUYERS



VIJAY MALLYA



R.J. SHAHANEY

The government asked both to pick up the Standard Motors stake, but only Mallya seemed really keen

PLANTATIONS

Tea? No, thanks

Locals and environmentalists slam a proposed tea garden in Karnataka's coffee-growing Coorg region

Anyone for tea? Well, certainly not the Coorgs of Karnataka. Or environmentalists, for that matter. Together, the unlikely team is trying its level best to stall a project which envisions Asia's largest tea estate, spread over 2,096 hectares of the state's coffee producing Coorg district.

The project, called Kantea, was proposed by the Karnataka Forest Development Corp. (KFDC) in 1984, when Ramakrishna Hegde was chief minister. The Tea Board had backed it to the hilt, and the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development was enthused enough to extend a loan. But nobody planned for any opposition, which is surfacing only now. Perhaps because the state government, mindful of the present slump in the coffee industry worldwide, is pushing the project—tea is still in demand and fetches extremely good prices—to hedge against a shaky future.

As far as the Coorgs are concerned, the problem is fairly straightforward. They mostly depend on the district's numerous coffee plantations for their livelihood. They are already resentful of Malayalees from neighbouring Kerala who have established a stranglehold on the coffee trade, once a Coorg preserve. Besides, large numbers of migrant labour from neighbouring states work in Coorg plantations, and locals fear that the grandiose tea project would only bring in more labour, totally swamping the Coorgs. As it is, claim the Coorgs, competing for jobs with outsiders is tough enough.

Says Sarojini Muthanna, a local and all-India secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party's Mahila Morcha wing: "Trade is already in total control of the Malayalee, and the labour force largely comprises Tamilians...the Coorg population in the area of the tea project is around 24,700. The project will bring in about 5,000 labourers and their dependents. With the existing outsider population, the local people will be left with no hope."

Muthanna's fears reflect an age-old wariness born partly out of xenophobia, and mostly, out of a realisation that employment opportunities—increasingly—ignore regional and ethnic boundaries. But environmentalists, on the other hand, predict an ecological doomsday in the region if the project ever assumes its full form. Sunderlal Bahuguna, leader of the Chipko movement and one of India's most respected environmentalists, even visited the proposed site and gave a number of reasons as to why the project should never take off. For example, the use of fertilisers and pesticides could pollute the hilly area's streams and the Kootepal river, which supplies drinking water to Mercara town, the district headquarters. Also, as the project will attract labourers in large numbers, and as there are no facilities to meet the fuel and fodder needs of the migrants, they would have no choice but to fell trees in the area. The nearby *shola* forests, cautioned Bahuguna, could be destroyed. The results: massive erosion, a surefire way to ecological hell.

Battered by increasing criticism, the state government thought it wise to set up a working committee to go into the "environmental and socio-economic aspects" of the project. For starters, the committee suggested that some measures be taken before the Kantea project kicks off. Mulching for instance, spreading a mixture of straw and dung on the ground which helps to protect a plant's roots, hold it firm and ultimately, helps prevent erosion. The committee also suggested that the government should plan to control run-off water from the project area, and be very careful about how it used fertilisers and pesticides to prevent polluting streams.

THE CRITICS



SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA



SAROJINI MUTHANNA

The politician (above) and the environmentalist are trying to stall the project.

The report also notes that the project may start a chain reaction, drawn by the Kantea effort, others may also decide to set up tea plantations nearby once the project is in full swing. Actually, this future has already been pre-empted. "In the neighbouring areas of the project," says Muthanna, "there has been a heavy rush to buy land to grow tea. In fact, recently one person from Tamil Nadu bought 200 acres for this purpose." With the blessings of the Tea Board, she adds. Some locals, belying Muthanna's pro-Coorg, anti-tea stand, are also said to be waiting for the project's fruitition—which mean tea curing factories and other trade paraphernalia nearby—so that they can start growing tea on their sizeable hillside plots.

Battered by criticism, the state government set up a working committee to go into the "environmental and socio-economic aspects" of the project

its brainchild prosper, has already cultivated tea plants over 34.5 hectares of land as an experimental project—without the state government's approval, and, say insiders, ignoring the working committee's suggestions. No mulching has been done in the area, for example. The KFDC has also sunk Rs 1.2 crores in its experiment, and the danger could be that the organisation can say it has to go ahead with Kantea, now that so much has been spent already. The corporation's eagerness—and alleged malpractices with money, to boot—has led B. Basavalingappa, Karnataka's minister for forests, to say that he will start an official enquiry into KFDC functioning.

This is no guarantee that the government will actually do something about the Kantea controversy. But the way things are going, the minister must surely be hoping that coffee prices, for a change, go up. It would save him a headache, the Coorgs their identity and livelihood, and the region its ecology. •

Gayatri Laxman/Bangalore

CURRENCY

Dinar spill

The Kuwait scare knocks Bombay's black money exchange

Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's conquering mood has shaken up more than just India's expatriate workers in Kuwait and the Persian Gulf region. It has knocked the bottom out of Bombay's flourishing black market trade in Kuwaiti dinars.

Before Hussein's ill-advised invasion of the oil-rich and cash-flush country, one Kuwaiti dinar fetched Rs 70 in Bombay. Officially, it was almost Rs 60 to a dinar—it still is. But the black market rates have plummeted to Rs 4 for a dinar. And sometimes, even this rock-bottom dinar is going abegging. "I have stopped accepting the Kuwaiti dinar," says the owner of a hotel in Bombay's southern Colaba Causeway area, "because at this stage one does not know what will happen. I know that there are many people who are buying dinars left, right and centre, but they are taking a big risk." All hoping, he says, for a time when things return to normal, and they can make a killing in the black market, a gain potentially worth more than 17 times the investment.

Before Hussein's invasion of the country, one Kuwaiti dinar fetched Rs 70 in Bombay. Now black market rates have plummeted to Rs 4

The hotelier-cum-black marketeer cautions against such profligacy. "Supposing," he continues, "the currency changes (if Iraq decrees that only Iraqi dinars are legal tender in Kuwait, and to hell with the pampered Kuwaiti variety), what are they going to do with all that paper? It will be useless." He adds: "I have been approached by hundreds of people who want to unload their dinars and buy (US) dollars, but right now I am not touching them (Kuwaiti dinars)." There is reason enough for his apprehension. Iraq has already declared parity between its dinar and Kuwait's and scrapping the Kuwaiti dinar could be the next illogical step.

Perhaps, the worst affected by Hussein's goose-stepping are *havala* operators—who effect currency smuggling scams by supplying hard currency at a location abroad for the payment in rupees, at a premium rate, of the equivalent black market exchange at home—who managed the Kuwait run.

"This Saddam Hussein has shattered much more than the peace of people all over the world," says an anguished M. Shah (who declines to give his full name for obvious reasons), a *havala* operator who lives in Pali Hill, a top-end north Bombay locality. Even in Dubai, says Shah, which is still a duty-free and money-switching haven, "people want to get out the money they have banked there". He continues: "But most of the operators that I know are very wary. What if there is a war (encompassing the Middle East)? Then the



SADDAM HUSSEIN

entire Gulf will be affected and it will be years before it comes back to normal. Let's face it. Right now, the situation is too risky."

There may be a way out. Dump the dinar and go for the dong. With US and Japanese aid making their way to Vietnam, the struggling nation's economy may be looking up, in turn strengthening its currency. In the long run, a Ho Chih Minh may be better than a Hussein. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

Plastic ways

Many economic analysts thought it wouldn't work out. India is simply too primitive to live by the credit card, they said—yes, even urban India. But that hasn't stopped organisations from entering the fray. The latest in a line of Indian companies is the Taj Group of Hotels, which offers its 15,000 private card holders—who are entitled to concessions at Taj hotels, among other things, in much the same



Ajit Kerkar: plastic convert

way the Oberoi chain operates one—the facility to draw credit. The Taj has tied up with Bank of India for the Mastercard facility. This is a departure from the norm, at least in India, where banks and finance companies have held sway in the credit card business. The only exception was Diners Club India, the pioneer, but after its takeover by Citibank early this year, the Diners credit cards went the bank way. Even public sector banks have been bitten by the bug. Central Bank of India followed in Diners' footsteps in 1981, Andhra Bank and Bank of Baroda three years later, ending with Canara Bank, Vijaya Bank and the Bank of India in the latter part of the decade. While India is light years away from the credit card culture in, say, the US, and cash is always more welcome, trends show an increasing growth of a plastic society.

Buy-now-pay-later is what conquered the West. To many in India, it seems as attractive.

Slipping on oil

Prophets of doom have already begun talking of the oil crisis that is bound to follow if the Gulf situation does not improve. And the bright sparks at the finance ministry have begun developing ways and means to stop the excessive consumption—and wastage—of petrol.

The only way to do it, they decided, was to curtail the use of private cars. But there was one hitch to that. For, private vehicles account for only six per cent of total petrol consumption. And even if they were kept off the roads totally—not the most practicable of moves—the petrol saved would be negligable.

So, now the great geniuses are back at the drawing board trying to think up new schemes.

Au revoir?

Sacre bleu! And if the turn of telecom events in New Delhi is anything to go by, the French could be emoting in a stronger vein pretty soon.

Rumours have it that the government has junked plans for the ESS-II (Electronic Switching System) factory in Bangalore, a plum US $500 million-plus contract French telecom giant Alcatel was hoping to get. Instead, goes the grapevine news, the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT), Alcatel's bugbear for the last five years, should pass on its technology to the state-run Bharat Electronics Ltd to manufacture small rural



Sam Pitroda: back to the future?

automatic exchanges. If this is true, the possibilities are endless, and none of them favourable for Alcatel or any other multinational hopefuls. For starters, it means that till India tides over a foreign exchange crunch, technology stays home-grown. That's a multi-billion dollar proposal down the drain for foreign companies. It could also mean that Sam Pitroda, C-DoT's eccentric, but undeniably bright creator, is on his way to becoming officially rehabilitated, and would continue in his efforts to keep telecom imports at bay. It also means Telecom War II. K.P. Unnikrishnan—a pro-imports man—is no more the communications minister. It should be interesting to see who takes Pitroda on for this round. *En garde*!

STOCK QUOTE

"The way things are going, I might as well go in for an air-conditioned bullock cart."

A Bombay businessman, commenting on the economy, the looming oil crunch and the government's decision to hike the tax on cars

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

Madhu Dandavate

Finance minister



• The professor is in for a bad patch. His money-juggling effort should take a beating with increasing oil import bills, and the estimated Rs 3,000 crores extra it is supposed to cost the exchequer is a pressure that India can certainly do without—things are bad enough as it is. Left with very little, Dandavate tried a new tack. He put on a truly remarkable performance in Assam last week, exhorting students to lift the state's oil blockade, and even went as far as to say that he would give his life to stick to his beliefs. That should fetch the minister some sympathy when he gets up to defend the economy's dismal performance in Parliament. But that will only last a while—till people go back to realising that profligate state expenditure is the main reason behind India's plight, and a bunch of militant students have very little to do with it.

DILIP THAKORE

Dear Prime Minister

The Mandal Commission report is shocking

Dear V.P. Singh,

I am writing this letter to you to register my protest against the opportunistic and reckless manner in which you have espoused the pernicious Mandal Commission's report and have revived casteism into a national issue.

Less than a year ago, like millions of other citizens, I responded to your proclaimed crusade against corruption in high places and your call for value-based politics. Within an amazingly short span of time—confirming the cynics of that time—you have let your supporters down. For what is it but corruption that to win the imminent mid-term general election you have opened the Pandora's box of casteism and caste conflict? Surely to have done so is the antithesis of value-based politics.

If your government introduces legislation to enforce the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, 49.5 per cent of all jobs in government and public sector enterprises will be reserved for citizens belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes and other socially and economically backward castes. Surely, you are aware that given the nation's huge pool of unemployed, estimated at 40 million, there will be a mad rush for caste certificates? And surely you have taken into consideration that all kinds of rackets—issuance of false certificates and the like—will flourish.

Besides, from reserving jobs in government and public sector enterprises to reservations in schools and colleges (given that the Indian people seem doomed to suffer welfare sector shortages) is but a short and logical step. Or else how will people of the backward castes be able to impart even a modicum of efficiency to the jobs reserved for them?

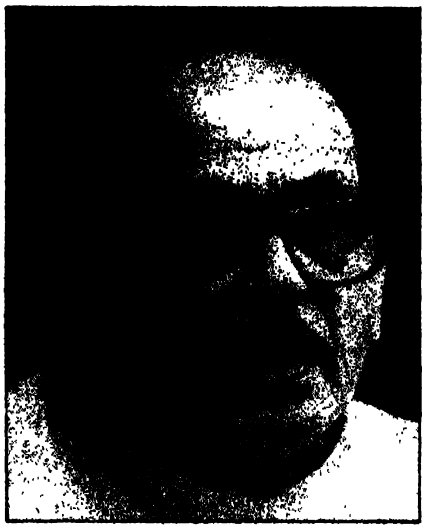
The vital requirement of a modern state or political entity is unity if not homogeneity. Surely, it is not lost on you that almost every developed nation as also the newly prosperous nations of South-East Asia are united by homogeneity? If not, they are unabashed meritocracies such as the USA.

The moral of the history of development, my dear sir, is that nations must be united if they are to prosper. That their common cultural and spiritual heritage must be emphasised by their leaders to mould them into a disciplined citizenry working unitedly to attain common objectives. A nation characterised by caste or class conflict—particularly to the extent that one of two employees in government and public sector enterprises is selected on the basis of caste by birth rather than merit—cannot prosper. Such institutionalisation of caste added to the numerous ethnic, religious, lingual and occupational cleavages that Indian society is heir to, will make the task of economic and social development even more difficult. One does not need a doctorate in logic to deduce this, does one?

Shockingly, the Mandal Commission not only recommends the reservations of jobs in government on retrogressive caste considerations, it also says that jobs should be reserved on the same principle in public sector enterprises. In retrospect, it is now crystal clear that the public sector (which includes the central and state governments' commercial enterprises and departmental undertakings) in which the nation's savings have been forcibly canalised during the past decades, is the primary cause of India's abysmal economic growth record. A massive investment estimated at Rs. 300,000 crores has produced an average net return of less than 1 per cent during the two decades past. Little wonder that "resource constraints" is the perennial national lament. And now, instead of gearing up the public sector by attracting the most able and competent managers, caste quotas are being created within it. What a travesty of planned development! What's the utility value of the new industrial, agriculture and foreign investment policies if the performance of the vital public sector infrastructure industry is budgeted to go from bad to worse?

V.P. SINGH

The antithesis of value-based politics



No, Prime Minister, your avowed determination to give what you consider a fair deal to the backward castes is motivated less by concern for their well-being than electoral calculations. You (erroneously) believe that short-sighted populist measures such as caste-based reservations will win you the mid-term general election which you are all set to proclaim. Well, this shows that you have a poor grasp of history. For your information and education, there's never been a single general election in which the people have voted differently from the educated middle class. And by resurrecting the spectre of caste, you have alienated the educated middle class which propelled you to power. In short, you are about to fade into the footnotes of history.

Someone very prescient once highlighted the difference between a politician and a statesman. A politician is a person who thinks about the next election; a statesman thinks of the next generation. Unfortunately, Mr Singh, you have shown yourself to be a mere politician. Like Mr Mandal whose foolish recommendations you value so highly.

Dilip Thakore is the former editor of Business India, Business World and Debonair

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Pussyfooting in Punjab

The NF government has done precious little in the most troubled state of India



Now, what on earth do you think persuaded the Prime Minister to announce to the pressganged inhabitants of the border village of Lopoke (hereafter renamed "Low Poke") that he would be undertaking a *padayatra* in Punjab? Doesn't he like open jeeps any more? Or has he discovered that Punjab is rather longer—and rather more serious—than 200 yards from Jallianwala Bagh to the Clocktower Gate of the Golden Temple (surrounded, moreover, by Sikh plains-clothesmen disguised as plain Sikhs)? Or is it that, with the Tau humbled, V.P. Singh now thinks he can flatter Chandra Shekhar out of the way by recalling through imitation the last person to undertake a pointless trek from Nowhere to Nowhere—the Ageing Turk himself?

No, none of these explanations fits. For, quite simply, V.P. Singh has concluded that the time has come for yet another futile gesture. All that stuff about "*dil ki tijori*" (the treasury of my heart) which he flung around at the January rally in Ludhiana has gone with the wind. Gogia Pasha is left with no alternative but to rummage once again in his populist bag of tricks. So, where another Prime Minister was so naive as to actually believe that what Punjab needed was a policy, this one is persuaded that what Punjab needs is a *padayatra*. The futile gesture has the merit, moreover, of being a useful substitute for the tiresome business of working out a solution. Never one to walk out on a problem, our VP is determined to walk into it. As the old saw goes: "tum-te-tum-te-tum/Where angels fear to tread"!

The low farce began last October when the National Front decided to spell its views in its election manifesto on the country's most intractable problem. Two ingredients were considered essential: one, total distancing from anything Rajiv Gandhi might have said on the subject, however sensible; and, two, blood-curdling metaphors cast in the mould of our contemporary Rabindranath Tagore, the Raja of Manda no less. Accordingly, since the Congress had considered the key problem of Punjab to be terrorism, out went the word 'terrorism' and, ergo, any suggestion as to how terrorism was to be tackled. And, calling up the Muse, the National Front delivered themselves, in the introductory section of the manifesto, of that remarkably original observation: "Punjab is now a boiling cauldron" (which is why, perhaps, the minute V.P. Singh put his hand into it, he was scalded!). Having thus construed Punjab as a culinary (rather than a political) question, the manifesto then went on to say nothing further in the matter till, several pages later, in the section entitled "Punjab", the National Front spells out what has hitherto been its only policy statement on the issue: in a total of *seven* crisp sentences.

Nirmal Mukarji: *He persuaded himself that all he had to do was rein in "police excesses" and the poor misguided youth of Punjab would come trooping in to the negotiating table, like adolescents cajoled to the family dining table by a doting father*



Sentence One: "The National Front government will immediately take steps to resolve the Punjab tangle." Immediately? Nine months on, can one ask—what steps? True they've held an "all-party" meeting (one: that's it!). And true they've held an "all-party" rally (one: that's it!). And true too they've recalled from Punjab their own chosen Governor in what (but for Jagmohan) would have been the shortest governorship in living memory. And, yes, true also that in the Bad Old Days before VP discovered that his initials stood for vertebrae-in-place, they'd picked, as the avuncular Nirmal Mukarji's replacement, a Devi Lal *chamcha* called Virendra Verma (who had never run even a *gram panchayat* before, let alone the most troubled state of the Indian union!).

But, apart from such trivial gimmicks—ranging from the futile to the foolish—what other "steps" have they taken? And, at that, "immediately"? To "resolve", moreover, what their manifesto called the "tangle"? The fact is that, close on 12 months since the NF government assumed office, swearing to "immediately take steps to resolve the Punjab tangle", the only real steps they can claim to have taken will be the steps the Prime Minister will be taking as he steps out on his *padayatra*—delicately picking his way through the Punjab tangle!

Sentence Two: "Laws that violate civil liberties will be reviewed." When they got down to it they discovered that the only law that could be said to "violate civil liberties" was the 59th Amendment to the Constitution. Or, rather, one clause of that Amendment. Which, incidentally—and significantly—had never been invoked. And which could not have been in-

voked without Parliament's prior consent. And which was in any case due to expire on 31 March 1990. They even forgot *that*—so it was left to Rajiv Gandhi to remind them; and then offer the full strength of the largest single party in the Lok Sabha to get the Amendment annulled—before it died of its own accord!

Sentence Three: "All those persons against whom there are no specific charges will be released." What the manifesto conveniently failed to mention was that almost all such persons—the victims of the Operation Bluestar/Woodrose round-up—had already been released. The NF let off the handful that remained. But it made no material difference to the political situation in Punjab for, although the NF had been beguiled by the Punjab Group's hue and cry on the subject, the fact is that the detention of innocents was always a human rights issue and never a particularly germane political issue. Neither was their detention the cause of the problem. Nor was their release a solution. Or—as we can now testify nine months and a thousand-terrorist-inflicted deaths later—even a contribution to a solution of the problem. The release was right. Making it the central question in Punjab was merely gimmicky populism.

Sentence Four: "Wide-ranging discussions will be held, *without preconditions*, with leaders of various sections of the people for a political solution to the Punjab problem." And therein lay the crucial difference between the NF approach and the predecessor government's policy. The NF refused to recognise the reality of terrorism. Not even the word "terrorism" was allowed to figure in their manifesto. Nor was it allowed to figure in the national Front's election speeches. Indeed, JD candidates had no compunctions about cozying up to anyone ready to train their guns on the Congress—metaphorically or even literally. "Terrorism" was banished even from the President's address to Parliament. The overwhelming fact of terrorism in Punjab was simply wished away (as Hegde is doubtless whispering into his telephone: "If wishes were horses, buggers would ride"!).

It was the mindless stupidity of not reckoning with terrorism that caused the NF to proclaim that they would hold discussions even with secessionists, terrorists and their criminal cohorts "without preconditions". Their newly-appointed Governor, Nirmal Mukarji, persuaded himself—doubtless as a result of inadequately digested lunches with his Punjab Group cronies at the India International Centre—that all he had to do was to rein in "police excesses" and the poor misguided youth of Punjab ("Tut, tut, never call them terrorists—militants, if you will, but never, never terrorists") would come trooping in to the negotiating table like adolescents cajoled to the family dining table by a doting father!

Not even the assassination of Govind Ram, the dreaded former senior superintendent of police of Gurdaspur, the worst-affected district of Punjab—who was always portrayed as the very symbol of "police excesses" and from whose funeral Governor Mukarji, therefore, ostentatiously stayed away—nor the mounting murder of other police officials (which took a larger toll in Mukarji's first four months than in all of Arjun Singh's and Siddharth Shankar Ray's four years)—could persuade Uncle Mukarji into understanding that terrorists are not wayward kiddies ("Say good morning nicely to Aunty, dear"), but psychotic assassins and cold-blooded criminals. His appeasement of terrorism led to the average daily rate of the killing of innocents mounting from around ten per day, when he took over, to over 30 per day by the time he was through. He had failed to heed the sage advice tendered him by the Chandigarh *Tribune* (26/12/89): "It is not enough that policemen do not commit excesses. Respect for human rights must be accompanied by concern for innocent human lives."

So, Mukarji had to go—and with him quietly went the National Front's commitment to talks "without preconditions". For, the same week that saw Mukarji's unlamented exit from Chandigarh also saw V.P Singh announce that talks would now be held *only* with those who (a) eschewed violence, (b)



SUBHAJIT PAL



Trouble in Punjab and V.P. Singh: *12 months since the NF government assumed office swearing to "immediately take steps to resolve the Punjab tangle", the only steps they can claim to have taken will be the steps the Prime Minister will be taking on his* padayatra

swore fealty to the Constitution and, (c) respected the democratic way of life. And where had we heard that before? In the Congress manifesto, of course: "A political solution will be found with the participation and cooperation of all people and all political parties of Punjab who eschew violence, affirm their loyalty to the Constitution and accept the democratic way of life"! The only policy on Punjab that the Prime Minister had ever enunciated is the Congress policy. Would it not be more logical to leave it to a Congress administration to run a Congress policy?

In contrast to the turnabout on Sentence Four, Sentence Five of the NF's manifesto promises on Punjab *has* been fulfilled: "A round table conference will be convened for this purpose." Well, a conference *was* called. It achieved precisely nothing. Another conference is still to be called. Nothing much wrong with not having called a second conference—for, after all, the NF had promised only "a" round table conference, not two!

On then to Sentence Six: "Elections to the Punjab Assembly will be held expeditiously." Not even Vishwanath Pratap Singh's poetry—nor even Vinod Pande's astrology—can help our Prime Minister duck out of that one. Within nine months of winning the Eighth Lok Sabha elections, Rajiv Gandhi held Assembly elections in Punjab. Within nine months of winning the Ninth Lok Sabha elections, V.P. Singh has nothing to show the Punjab electorate but yet another broken promise. The reason? Let me leave it to Chandan Mitra to spell it out (*Times of India*, 14 January 1990):

> "At present, V.P. Singh probably regards Simranjit Singh Mann as his Sant Longowal. But the Sant was a mature politician with decades of experience in the field. Mann is a different kettle of fish."

How prescient! But then Chandan Mitra is neither a Janata Dal propagandist—nor, indeed, like the National Front's favourite editor, a merchant of mendacity!

Sentence Seven—and that's it: "Discussions between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan for settlement of disputes will be organised." Not even one discussion has been held. As for Punjab, the Punjab Group/V.P. Singh line always was that the Tau's *langotiya*, Parkash Singh Badal, was the key that would open the magic door to peace in Punjab. Badal collected all of five per cent of the votes cast in the Punjab elections. In any case, with the Tau put to grass, Badal too has gone to pasture—as the Tau's goatherd.

So, Punjab cannot be brought into the promised trilateral inter-state discussions for the "settlement of disputes". As for Haryana, V.P. Singh is *persona non grata* in the *hukumat* of the Tau's protegé, chief minister (and chief floor-swiper) Hukum Singh. And, in Rajasthan, there rules the BJP's formidable Bhairon Singh Shekhawat who won't discuss anything with anyone other than the duly annointed *pratinidhi* of the Hindu Rashtra! And, thus, not only has not even one of the "discussions" promised in the NF's manifesto been held, none, in the nature of things, can ever be held—at any rate, not so long as V.P. Singh bubbles on the surface of what the NF manifesto has so disarmingly called the "boiling cauldron" of Punjab.

And that, I am afraid, is it. Never since the manifesto has the National Front or its Prime Minister (never mind about the home minister, who isn't even allowed into Punjab as his deputy, Subodh Kant Sahay, does a Chidambaram on VP's Buta Singh!) articulated a policy on Punjab. As for the manifesto policy, that now stands revealed as a heap of broken promises. Without a policy and without a programme, all that V.P. Singh has left for Punjab is a *Padyatra*.

When we were schoolboys, we used to assiduously store up what were called PJs (i.e. "Poor Jokes"; otherwise somewhat cruelly called "Punjabi Jokes").As our Prime Minister sets out on his wanderings across Punjab, a PJ of childhood memory comes to mind: "*Arre yaar*, why don't you take a long walk off a short pier?!" *Au revoir*, VPji—or, better still: Thank you—and goodbye! ●



SONDEEP SHANKAR

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position



Who wouldn't want to earn upto 10.94%* interest on his monthly savings instead of the usual 5%?

The ANZ Grindlays Hi-Performance Savings Account offers upto 10.94%*. Not just 5% that an ordinary Savings Account offers. Plus the freedom to withdraw upto 75% against your accumulated monthly savings. Anytime. By cheque.

You pay 2% interest (above base rate earned) on withdrawals.

To open an account, your average monthly savings should be Rs.1,000/- or more. Call or visit us today. Or mail the coupon now.

HI-PERFORMANCE SAVINGS ACCOUNT. THE ONLY ACCOUNT OF ITS KIND IN YOUR CITY.

EARN UPTO 10.94%*

GRINDLAYS HI-PERFORMANCE SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Grindlays Hi-Performance Savings Account is a brand name of ANZ Grindlays Bank plc and includes a package of services

*10.94% is the compounded interest rate on a 3 year Recurring Deposit on a base rate of 10%.

SDY

Marketing Manager – India, ANZ Grindlays Bank, 132 Mint Road, Bombay 400 001

Yes, I want to earn more on my savings through your Hi-Performance Savings Account.

Please send me more information/an Account Opening Form

Name. _____

Address. _____

_____

Phone: _____

ANZ Grindlays Bank

ANZ GRINDLAYS MAIN BRANCHES: BOMBAY – 90 M.G. ROAD, PH: 270165. CALCUTTA – 19 N.S. ROAD, PH. 208346. NEW DELHI – 10 SANSAD MARG, PH. 312004 MADRAS – 19 RAJAJI SALAI, PH: 589131 AMRITSAR – GANDHI BAZAR, PH: 43217. BANGALORE – MISSION ROAD PH: 220300 COCHIN – BRISTOW ROAD, PH. 69582 DARJEELING – 49 LADEN LA ROAD, PH: 2777. GUWAHATI – FANCY BAZAR, PH. 27018 HYDERABAD – 5-9-234 ABIDS, PH. 237506 KANPUR – 16 M.G. ROAD, PH. 211462 SHIMLA – THE MALL, PH: 3025. SRINAGAR – SHERWANI ROAD, PH: 76935 TUTICORIN – 44 BEACH ROAD, PH. 20817

SPEER 28 192 90

Taking a walk

Will V.P. Singh's padayatra *in Punjab disarm the terrorists?*

Prime Minister V.P. Singh had made stirring speeches promising to heal the wounds of Punjab. They were fine words as long as the euphoria over unseating the Congress(I) lasted. But hardly anything has changed in Punjab since V.P. Singh replaced Rajiv Gandhi. If anything, terrorist killings have taken a turn for the worse.

The Prime Minister plans to walk through the terrorist-infested rural areas early this month. He is convinced that the gesture will win more hearts than similar *padayatras* undertaken in the past by Baba Amte, Sunil Dutt and Acharya Sushil Muni. "This time I will not return from Punjab until I have won your hearts," V.P. Singh told a gathering at the border village of Lopoke. "In fact, I would prefer dying in Punjab for this is a land of martyrs," he added.

But can a *padayatra* alone help,if he cannot follow it up with a determined effort to fulfil popular demands and isolate the terrorists? After all, his earlier visit to the Golden Temple in an open jeep eight months ago had also generated enormous goodwill. But he made no attempt to capitalise on it.

Punjab is a challenge the Prime Minister has refused to face squarely. The National Front government's policy on Punjab—if there is one—hasn't gone beyond rhetoric and emotional outpouring. The government has failed to check the entry of Pakistan-trained terrorists and restore the political process as it had promised.

The PM's idea of walking through the Punjab villages, however, is being praised as a courageous gesture. Many see it as a sign that elections will be held to the state Assembly in the near future. The *padayatra* is aimed at ending the alienation of the masses. The home ministry officials see in it an immense scope of "grassroots interaction" for the PM.

V.P. Singh's proposed initiative has been timed to coincide with the confusion in the ranks of the Akalis. Both Simranjeet Singh Mann and Prakash Singh Badal—whom the government had thought of installing as the CM at different times—have made themselves irrelevant to the state's politics. Mann has developed a reputation for antics each time somebody else steals the limelight. Even Atinder Pal Singh, MP,had complained against Mann to the underground Panthic Committee after his release from Tihar Jail.

The chairman of the committee, Dr Sohan Singh, subsequently, questioned Mann's background and integrity. Mann immediately resigned from the presidentship of the Akali Dal (Mann) and from the Lok Sabha. Atinder Pal believed that Mann had persuaded the V.P. Singh government to delay his release from jail. According to Atinder Pal, Mann feared that he would emerge as his political competitor. And the Panthic Committee was inclined to believe Atinder Pal.

Mann's resignation (which he withdrew following pressure from party colleagues) proved that Akali politics today is run according to the whims of the militants. The Panthic Committee's criticism stemmed from its disapproval of the Akali Dal (Mann)'s constitutional ways of struggle, even though its goal was the right to self-determination. The committee's assertion that it would recognise only the struggle waged for the freedom of the Khalsa Panth stemmed from its suspicion that the Akali Dal (Mann) would contest the Assembly elections and join the political mainstream. Again, it was in order to comply with the militants' opposition to constitutional politics that Mann quit his seat in the Lok Sabha.

The militants are also furious at the move to revive the Punjab Assembly through a writ petition in the Punjab and Haryana High Court in Chandigarh. Ironically, the very politicians who had expressed relief at the dismissal of the Assembly in 1987 are now trying to revive it. The leaders of Akali Dal (Badal) are now engaged in discussions with the Akali Dal (Longowal) about a possible move to revive the Assembly.



V.P. Singh talking to Punjab villagers: preparing the ground for his new venture

While the drift in Punjab continues, the terrorists are becoming increasingly dangerous. They have now started attacking army units patrolling the border areas, where they have their hideouts. Recently, they fired on jawans of the Bihar regiment. Already, the army in Punjab has been placed on full alert. And a number of anti-insurgency units, which took part in the IPKF operation in Sri Lanka, have been sent to Punjab. But whether they will succeed in containing the terrorists remains a debatable matter. ●

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

MAHESH JETHMALANI

Leaks, plants and lies

In defence of the much-maligned Bofors investigation





The manner in which recent events concerned with the Bofors investigation have been portrayed by a section of the press cannot but serve to leave an innocent, though interested, reader with the rather unfortunate impression that far from exposing corruption in the highest echelons of the previous regime, the entire issue may well be a disappointing damp squib. Worse is the suggestion, by this very section of the press, that Bofors was a mere tool, and Rajiv Gandhi and the Bachchan brothers convenient scapegoats used by Mr V.P. Singh to elevate himself to the post of Prime Minister. The National Front investigation into the matter is depicted as no more than political vendetta, which received its deserved come-uppance in two court decisions—the rejecton by the Cantonal Court of Geneve of the Letter Rogatory filed by the CBI in respect of six entities holding accounts in Switzerland, and Ajitabh Bachchan's much celebrated victory over the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in the London courts.

On the Swiss ruling, criticism has essentially been of two varieties. The harshest protagonists of the first kind are none other than Vir Sanghvi, the editor of SUNDAY, and of all persons, Chitra Subramaniam who has sedulously assisted the Bofors team in its investigation in Switzerland. The burden of their theme has been that the Letter Rogatory submitted by the CBI was naive and clumsy in the extreme. This criticism is, in fact, directed against members of the Bofors team itself and focuses particularly on the

THE CRITICS



For someone so closely associated with the Bofors team, the public rebuke administered to her colleagues is the unkindest cut



His theory that the investigators have reached a dead-end is misconceived, erroneous and devoid of logic



This magazine has done a marvellous demolition job on the Bofors team executed with professional ruthlessness and efficiency



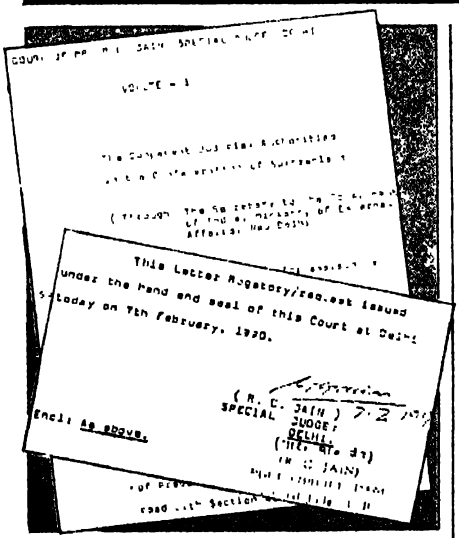
manner in which the Letter Rogatory, the First Information Report (FIR) and the accompanying documents were drafted and submitted. Significantly, neither of these criticisms questions the motives behind the entire investigation. This, however, is their only saving grace, for otherwise, they are unwarranted, if not downright unfair. The most unfortunate part is that because of their *ad hominium* thrust, the claim that the criticisms stem from genuine concern about the fate of the investigation and no more, does sound a little suspect. Mr Sanghvi's compunctions are hard to understand. Having pursued the Bofors investigations for three years, he has suddenly changed his tune. The rejection by the Geneve Cantonal Court of the CBI's Letter Rogatory furnished Mr Sanghvi a splendid opportunity to discredit the Bofors team, which he could hardly be expected to spurn. Both before and after the order of the Geneve court, he has spared no effort to tell us what he thinks about the competence of the team. In issue after issue of this magazine, the investigators have been portrayed as a bunch of bungling detectives whose efficiency is so pathetic as to almost lead to the impression that they are acting at the behest of the real beneficiaries of the Bofors commissions. Mr Sanghvi has done a marvellous demolition job on the Bofors team, executed with professional ruthlessness and efficiency.

Ms Subramaniam's motivations are considerably more difficult to decipher. Her indictment of the Bofors team in her article of 7 July, carried on the front page of the *Indian Express*, was savage in the extreme. For someone so closely associated with the Bofors team during the course of its investigation, the public rebuke administered to her colleagues must appear to the latter to be the unkindest cut of the *Et-tu-Brute* variety. Significantly, she chose to attack her colleagues after the Geneve Cantonal Court had delivered its judgment. Was her ex-post-facto wisdom about her co-investigators' lack of competence in dealing with such delicate matters as letter rogatories, no more than an attempt to distance herself from the setback in the investigation, which the Geneve Cantonal Court order was bound to be perceived as?

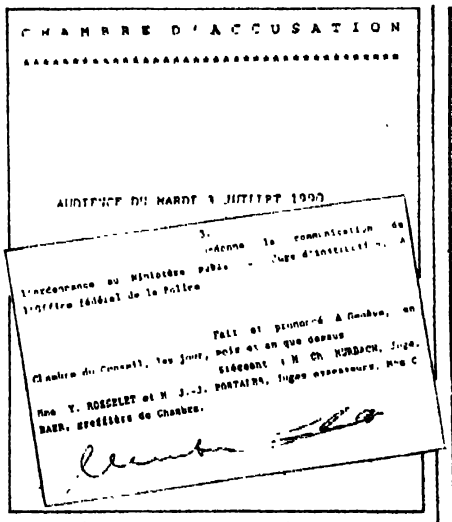
But how substantial are the criticisms levelled by Mr Sanghvi and Ms Subramaniam? Is the Bofors investigating team really as blame-worthy for the rejection of the Letter Rogatory submitted to the Geneve court as it is made out to be? Indeed, why was the Letter Rogatory defective, and can its rejection be attributed to the incompetence of or the lack of expertise on the part of the investigating team?

From what has appeared in the Indian press including Ms Subramaniam's own article of 7 July in the *Indian Express*, the objections of the Geneve court to the Letter Rogatory seem to be technical and trivial. An Indian

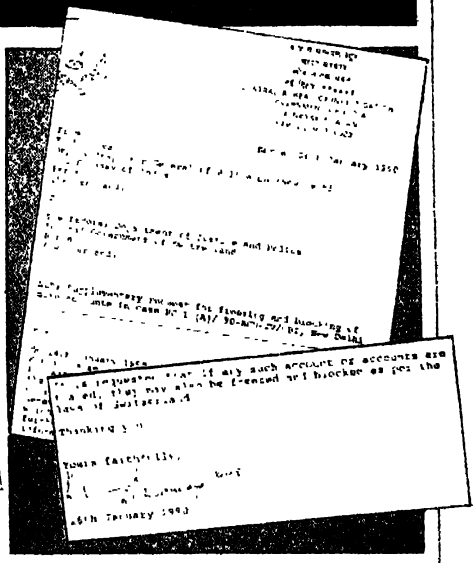
THE INVESTIGATORS



Ultimately, the responsibility for the Letter Rogatory lies with the learned special judge who gave it its final shape



The Geneve court's objections to the Letter Rogatory seem to be technical and trivial. An Indian judge would have overlooked them



An honest man should welcome an investigation. Just because somebody is listed as a suspect doesn't mean he's guilty



It is now clear that the Hindujas were involved in Bofors. They have been linked to the Pitco/Moresco payments codenamed Tulip

judge, more concerned with substantial justice, would perhaps have overlooked these. Several of the objections of the Geneve court pertain to defects of translation into German and French. Some objections pertain to mistakes in paging, and some to the existence of annotations in ball-pen.

Yet some others pertain to doubts and misconceptions which the Geneve court entertained on Indian law and procedure. Unfortunately, there was no representative of the investigating team who could clarify these across the Bar, since nobody was permitted to remain present. None of the objections are so grave as to cast doubts on the efficiency of the Bofors investigating team. The members of the team operating as they were in an unfamiliar jurisdiction could hardly have foreseen the ultra-technical requirements of that jurisdiction. In short, no blame can attach to them for not having attended a Swiss legal finishing school. The situation at the most calls for greater coordination with the CBI's retained lawyer in Switzerland, Marc Bonnant.

Further, it is important also to remember that the Letter Rogatory and accompanying documents were merely submitted by the CBI to the special judge in Delhi, Shri R.C. Jain. It was the special judge who moulded the Letter Rogatory, gave it final shape and signed it. Ultimately, the responsibility for the Letter Rogatory lies with the learned special judge, for, it was he who issued the same to the Swiss courts. Once the Letter Rogatory bore the imprimatur of the learned special judge, the CBI could hardly be expected to alter its form and tenor.

One criticism of Ms Subramaniam—though not of the Geneve court itself—centres round the First Information Report (FIR). According to Ms Subramaniam, the Swiss court considered the FIR to be tediously prolix. While this may or may not be true, it is unlikely that an Indian court would have joined issue on the FIR on this account. The FIR in the Bofors case is no more or less prolix than most of the FIRs prepared by investigating authorities and lodged in Indian courts.

In any event, it ought not to have been too difficult for the Geneve court judge to cull out the essential ingredients of the offence from the FIR. Once again, the investigating team can hardly be blamed for a foreign judge's inability to summarise the bare essentials of an offence from a lengthy Indian document. The FIR, a uniquely Indian document, was bound to be prepared in accordance with the prevailing conventions in this country.

A second variety of criticism regarding the Swiss court order is of the doomsday-prophet variety. This variety has its best exponent in Pritish Nandy. Mr Nandy's interpretation of the order is that the Swiss court has not merely sought further clarifications from the Indian government, but "has clearly and unequivocally turned down the request for judicial assistance sought by the Indian authorities..." According to Mr Nandy, the Swiss court in its order has insisted on evidence of actual corruption before they admit a request for judicial assistance, which, he says, "means that the Indian government has 60 days to prove that civil servants have been actually bribed by Bofors and initiate prosecution against them before the investigations can go further". It is Mr Nandy's considered opinion that the investigating agencies have reached a dead end on Bofors.

This extremist interpretation is—fortunately—misconceived and erroneous. His views are not shared either by the Swiss police assisting the Bofors investigating team, nor even by Mr Sanghvi or Ms Subramaniam. Further, a fresh Letter Rogatory, which is to be submitted to the Geneve court complying with the form required, is awaiting final touches in India. This Letter Rogatory has been prepared without the Indian government going through the exercise of proving that civil servants have been bribed and initiating prosecution against them in India, as Mr Nandy would have us believe were the Swiss court's directive.

Moreover, Mr Nandy's theory is devoid of logic. The entire procedure, commencing with the tendering of a Letter Rogatory to the Swiss authorities, is for the purpose of seeking judicial assistance in the matter of uncovering recipients of illegal commissions which have been stashed in Swiss banks. The assistance of the court is being sought to discover the recipients, so that they can be prosecuted in India. Mr Nandy has given us to understand that it is incumbent upon the Indian government to prosecute named recipients and then seek legal assistance from the Swiss courts. Indeed, if the Indian government were

possessed of proof regarding the identity of the recipients of kickbacks, there would hardly be any need to approach the Swiss courts for any assistance under the treaty. Mr Nandy's views do not make for good sense or good Treaty Law.

While the Geneve court decision, then, has been subjected to grossly distorted and unwarranted interpretation, the interpretation of the English court decision in Ajitabh Bachchan vs *Dagens Nyheter* must surely furnish an object lesson in disinformation and the art of securing maximum propaganda advantage from an innocuous event. The pro-Bachchan press would have us believe that capitulation by a Swedish newspaper in an English court on facts constituting the subject matter of an Indian investigation (and, therefore, within the special and exclusive knowledge of the Indian investigators) is tantamount to conclusively establishing the innocence of the Bachchan brothers in l'affaire Bofors apart from exposing a vindictive investigation. Such inferences may well be permissible in the heady celluloid world which Mr Amitabh Bachchan is so accustomed to. But, in the rather more disciplined realm of law and criminal justice, such conclusions are a *non sequitur*.

The interpretation of the Bachchan case must surely furnish an object lesson in disinformation and the act of securing maximum propaganda advantage



Let us first consider the facts with which the *Dagens Nyheter* decision was concerned. The Bofors investigating team visited Berne in Switzerland, in the last week of January this year. A short while thereafter—on 31 January—*Dagens Nyheter* carried an item in which they alleged that a sixth account had been discovered by the Bofors investigating team, into which some of the commissions paid by Bofors had been deposited. *Dagens Nyheter* categorically asserted that the holder of this account was Ajitabh Bachchan.

Of considerable significance is the fact that in the said article itself, the paper unambiguously stated that the information was provided by "sources with detailed access to the Indian bribery investigation". Of commensurate importance is the fact that the article also recorded that the CBI had not confirmed that Ajitabh did indeed hold the sixth account.

Ajitabh Bachchan initiated an action for libel against *Dagens Nyheter* in the High Court of London in respect of the article. On 19 July this year, a settlement was arrived at. *Dagens Nyheter* offered to pay an undisclosed sum to Ajitabh Bachchan who generously announced that he would donate it to charity. *Dagens Nyheter* stated that the information for the article was derived from "a source directly connected with the Indian investigation".

The latter statement by the paper has been seized upon by Amitabh's media supporters to suggest that the article in *Dagens Nyheter* was based on information furnished by a member of the Bofors investigating team, and probably, Mr Arun Jaitley, additional solicitor general.

The investigators, operating as they were in an unfamiliar environment, can hardly be blamed for not having attended a Swiss legal finishing school

This contention is not only tendentious but manifestly untenable. On *Dagens*' own admission, it is impossible that any member of the Bofors investigating team could have been the source of this article. In the article, the paper recorded that its information was derived from sources close to the investigating team and not the investigating team itself. Why then, did it eventually agree to alter this admission to one which could encompass in its sweep members of the Bofors investigating team?

The answer is not far to seek. There simply was not enough material in *Dagens Nyheter's* possession on the basis of which it could be said that the sixth account uncovered in Switzerland belonged to Ajitabh Bachchan. In the article, *Dagens* claimed that it was acting on information obtained from sources close to the Indian investigating team. The paper may have been misled by its source in either one of two ways: the source may have conveyed as fact to the newspaper what to the Bofors investigating team was only a legitimate line of investigation. Alternatively, if the Bofors investigating team was possessed of proof that the sixth account belonged to Ajitabh Bachchan, it was unlikely that it would share it with anybody outside the team, including *Dagens*' "source"

no matter how close that individual was to them.

Left, therefore, with no defence to the libel action, *Dagens* rephrased the description of the source of its article. Significantly, it refused to name Arun Jaitley as its source. In other words, it was willing to go to the trial if Ajitabh's counsel had insisted that Arun Jaitley be named as the source. Contrary to what Mr Bachchan has been insinuating in post-trial interviews, Mr Arun Jaitley cannot be the source of the *Dagens* article. There is only one person who fits into both the descriptions furnished by the newspaper regarding its source. For the time being, the identity need not be disclosed.

What did the compromise in Ajitabh vs *Dagens* really amount to? Flushed with his brother's victory, Amitabh claimed that "India has been shamed in a London court". Surely this is excessive licence even for a *filmi* script. There was no question of India having been shamed in an English court, for, neither the State nor the Government of India were represented in that court. Amitabh's is a prime example of a flag-waving man, waiving what the flag stands for. Not only, however, is Amitabh guilty of spreading disinformation and attempting to strike an amusingly patriotic note in aid of that disinformation, but his untenable interpretation of the London court judgement cannot but be viewed as an attempt to intimidate the investigating team. And consequently, an attempt to obstruct the course of justice.

In actual fact, Ajitabh's victory in the London court could well be a pyrrhic one. Ultimately, all that he received from *Dagens* was an undisclosed sum and an unnamed source. It is inconceivable that the undisclosed sum could, in fact, be no more than the lowest coin in the realm i.e. a farthing. In such an event, all that Ajitabh is left with is an unnamed source, and with little to donate to charity. But, even if the undisclosed sum is substantial, Ajitabh's charitable intentions must fail to impress, for, we all know what the favourite charities of the Bachchans are.

There can be no doubt that the Bachchan brothers must necessarily figure as suspects in any investigation into Bofors. The Hindujas have been linked to at least one of the streams of payment made to the Pitco/Moresco group, viz. Tulip. The Bachchans are known to be close to the Hindujas and have had financial dealings with them. Amitabh has made donations amounting to 1/3rd of his income in a year, to the Hinduja Foundation. The Hindujas, in turn, have financed several films starring Amitabh Bachchan.

In addition, the Bachchan brothers are extremely close friends of Rajiv Gandhi who finally concluded the Bofors deal. Ajitabh Bachchan was abroad shortly after and during the time some of the commissions were paid up by Bofors. He, admittedly, is the holder of an apartment in Switzerland, into the banks of which country the commissions were paid. In proceedings under the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA) concerning the acquisition of this apartment, Ajitabh has admitted that the flat stands in his name, but stated that the money was furnished by a foreign company and a foreign national.

The previous regime of Rajiv Gandhi accepted this contention and exonerated Ajitabh in a palpably absurd order. A review of that order has been sought by the present regime. In proceedings under FERA, Ajitabh has not disclosed the bank accounts from which those payments were made. If the payments can be traced to accounts which directly or indirectly received part of the Bofors commissions, then the case against Ajitabh would be transformed from one of reasonable suspicion to one of conclusive proof. The Bofors investigating team can legitimately pursue this line of investigation. To be a suspect is not to be a criminal. An innocent man would welcome such an investigation into his affairs, for, it would establish his innocence.



There's no doubt that Arun Jaitley did not leak the story about Ajitabh to *Dagens Nyheter*. Only one person could have done so—but more about that later

The Bachchans' conduct subsequent to the National Front assuming power has only served to enhance suspicions about their role in Bofors. The moment the Bofors team was constituted, Amitabh's hitherto infrequent interviews to the press became common-place and they all dealt with his innocence in the Bofors affair. His famous missives to the Prime Minister were addressed at about the time the Bofors team uncovered the sixth account in Switzerland. The Bachchans travelled to Switzerland to meet Chitra Subramaniam, during the course of which meeting, they undoubtedly attempted to elicit information regarding the sixth account, while simultaneously protesting their innocence and suggesting they were the victims of a frame-up.

They obviously expected the Bofors team to discover some documentary evidence, since Amitabh asked rhetorically in public as to what his fate would be if someone actually involved in Bofors attempted to forge documents to implicate him. If documents implicating the Bachchan brothers in the Bofors affair are, or come, in the possession of the Bofors team, we know what the Bachchan's defence is likely to be. In short, Amitabh's behaviour in public was scarcely that of an innocent man.

The good news then, for all those who are interested in the truth about Bofors emerging in the near future, is that notwithstanding the Geneve court order rejecting the Indian Letter Rogatory, the Bofors investigation is alive and kicking, the order itself merely amounting to a request for compliance with proper form. The bad news—for the Bachchan brothers—is that while they may continue in misconceived fashion to console themselves that the London court order constitutes a first-round victory for them, it remains to be seen whether they can last the distance. ●

Mahesh Jethmalani, the author of this essay is a Bombay-based barrister and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party. He is SUNDAY's newest columnist.

Country pleasures

Rural retreats are the latest craze in Bangalore

Delhi's elite has its country homes—so what if it is only a farmhouse in Mehrauli? And Bangalore, the garden city of the south, now has its country clubs. Set amidst sprawling acres of verdant green and boasting such facilities as swimming pools, swank restaurants, billiards rooms, meditation centres and—most important—exclusive membership, these rural retreats have become the place to be seen in. And predictably, everyone who is anyone is queueing up to join.

One of the more talked about places is Shankar Nag's Country Club which was inaugurated on 24 August. A highly successful actor in Kannada cinema Nag had been sitting on a 15-acre plot for years when a friend suggested that he put it to good use by opening a country club. With a bit of help from his friends and massive loans from outside Nag set about the task.

The actor feels that it is the lack of social activity in Bangalore that accounts for the concept taking off so well. "Besides films, what is there," he asks. This, added to the fact that there is no place near Bangalore which is ideal for a quick getaway makes Nag confident that his club will be a roaring success.

If the number of hopefuls queueing up for membership is any indication, Nag's confidence is sure to be vindicated several times over. Such is the clamour for entry into these clubs that when memberships went on offer, there was a tremendous rush, despite the fact that Nag had made it clear that no more than 200 would be taken in. Even though the admission fee was a steep Rs 15,000 Nag received no less than 3,000 applications.

The only hitch, as far as Nag was concerned, was the fantastic sums of money he had to put into the project. The initial outlay of Rs 1.5 crores was soon exhausted and the completion of the project meant added expenditure to the tune of Rs 1.5 crores. But raising the money is the least of Nag's worries: "We worked out the economics and saw that we needed at least 2,000 members to make it click." So, the actor has decided to lift the 200-member ceiling and will take in another 1,800, who will be charged a whopping Rs 25,000 for life membership. "Believe me, there are any number of takers," he discloses.

One look at the club, though, and the amount of money spent on it seems totally justified. Designed by architects from Pune the club buildings are attractively modern, yet blend into the scenic environment with ease. The white building with the wide arches and tiled roofs is an elegant departure from the Bania Byzantine school of architecture so popular today. The pool, for instance, looks straight out of a James Bond movie, with a bar situated bang in the middle. The coffee shop, too, is unusually designed, built on the lines of small hut-like shelters with an artificial lake in the centre.

In keeping with the current ethnic craze there is also a rustic corner. The food served here is derived from the typical recipes of Karnataka farmers: *Ragi Mudde* (millet balls) *Akki* (Rice) *rotis* and the like. The old wooden door, salvaged from the granary of a



MAHESH BHAT



Shankar Nag (inset) and his country clubs the ideal getaway

Kerala palace which was being demolished, helps create the right ambience.

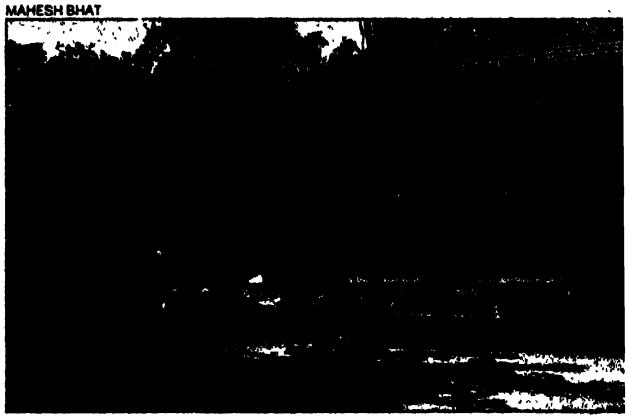
Entertainment will not be lacking at the club either. While there is a discotheque for the jivers there will also be local artistes coming over from the neighbouring villages to play their rustic tunes. But if a Bhimsen Joshi or a Bismillah Khan is scheduled to perform at the club there is a theatre for them as well. As with the rest of the structures this is not in the regular arch format with a stage at one end. Modelled on ancient Greek lines, the amphitheatre comprises a huge pit in the centre for the performers with stones jutting out at irregular levels making up the seating arrangement for the audience.

Nag is certain that his club will become the ideal spot not just for leisure activities but also serve as a weekend resort and conference centre. For which purposes Nag is also setting up another massive banquet hall.

That there's money in country clubs is beyond doubt. Or why would the liquor barons, Khodays, move in for a slice of the market? The Khoday's club will be built on a much larger scale, though. Sprawled over 100 acres on the outskirts of the city, the project is expected to cost over Rs 12 crores. And its sophisticated fixtures are sure to provide stiff competition to Shankar's more humble outfit. Called Country Club and Village Resort the Khoday's project is due to start operations in a year and a half's time. It will have an 18-hole golf course, a skating rink, an artificial lake equipped with a wave making machine, water cascades, musical fountains, rope chair cars and—believe it or not—a robot service.

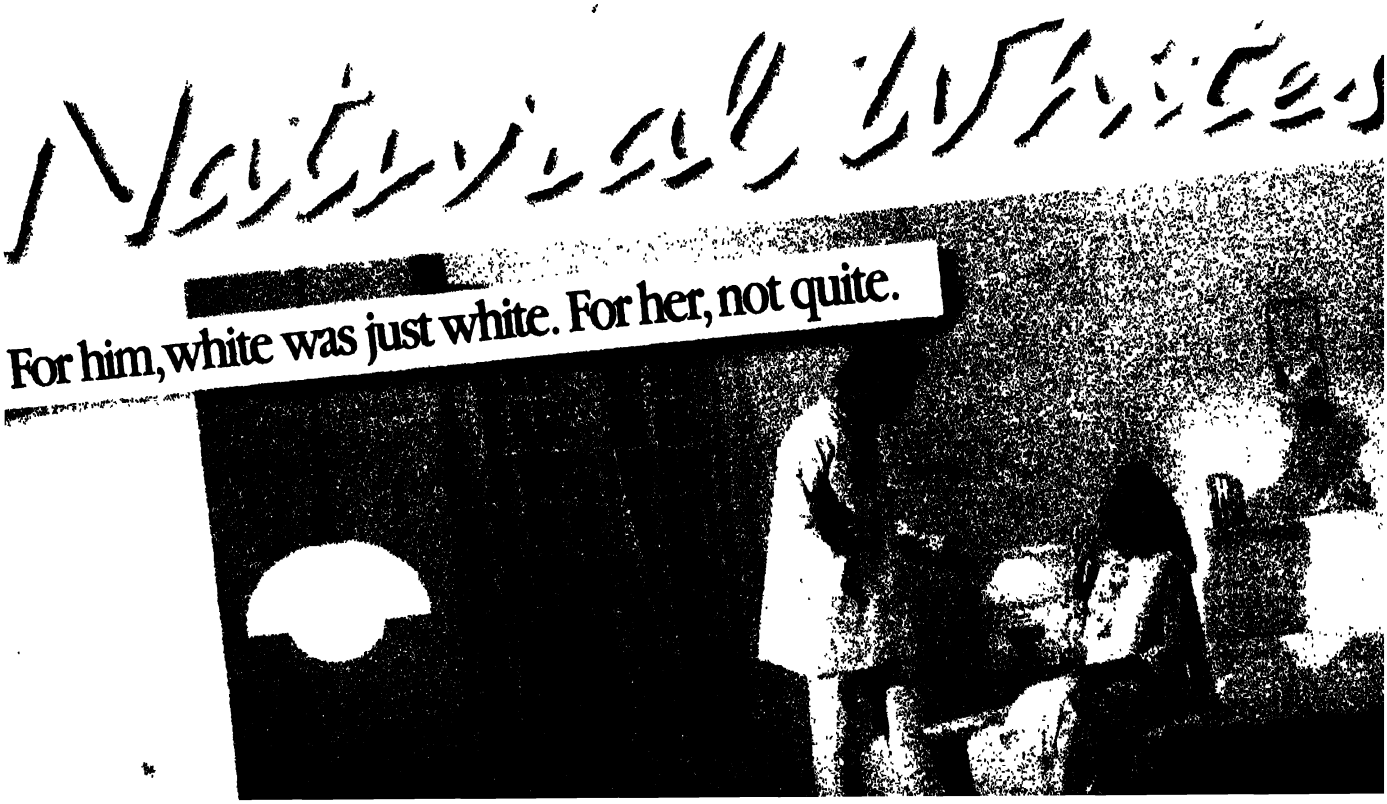
If the number of hopefuls queueing up for membership is anything to go by, country clubs are the latest status symbol

MAHESH BHAT



Designed by some Delhi architects, the club is set in the midst of two hillocks. The emphasis is on creating an illusion of sweeping space and panoramic views. Exquisitely set out Japanese gardens with the most extraordinary landscaping are just a few of the embellishments that the club boasts of. The Khodays too hope to recover their input in five years time by taking in about 5,000 members.

The manner in which Bangalore's elite is lining up for membership seems to suggest that there is a dearth





The exclusivity of such institutions as the Bangalore Club remains. But the new rural retreats have their own market

of clubs in the city. But, in fact, Bangalore has always had several clubs. Besides the old and exclusive Bangalore Club there is the Century Club. (When the Bangalore Club was considered the bastion of the British, the Indians got together and opened their own club—The Century Club.) The Bowring Institute is another club dating from the days of the Raj.

But since these have long frozen their memberships, or have a ceiling, those who wanted to break into the club circuit found they had nowhere to go. Added to this was the growth of Bangalore as south India's boom city. The burgeoning population, the escalation of commercial activity in the city all created a class of people who were very eager to achieve the kind of exclusivity that membership to a club invariably brings.

Country clubs were the logical answer to such a need. While the good clubs in the city offer all the traditional services associated with clubs like a bar, library, swimming pool, they often lack such extravagant features as the meditation centre at Shankar Nag's club. While a club in the city suffices for an evening out country clubs offer a complete break from routine.

And their restricted membership imparts an air of exclusivity to them. For scores of social climbers in the boom city this is the most irresistible part of the deal. Moreover, country clubs claim that they will not enrol anyone who is already a member of the city clubs. Though, one suspects, that if they are rich and influential enough they can get past such obstacles.

But there is no denying the country clubs are where the action is, these days. Apart from Shankar Nag's club and the Khoday's club, which is still under construction, there are many others in the conceptualisation stage. One hotelier, for instance, has bought land near the airport for setting up a country club. And if it does come up, there will be no dearth of takers. As a market survey undertaken by the Khodays before they launched on their country club project revealed, there is a tremendous market out there, just waiting to be tapped. •

Gayatri Laxman/Bangalore



Right on target

Archery is a form of gambling in Meghalaya

As the last rays of the sun cast a charming spell over the picturesque town of Shillong, Meghalaya's capital, crowds begin to pour into the Polo Grounds. Every evening, the lush green field overlooking the majestic Khasi Hills wears a festive look. Makeshift stalls, selling food and the precious archery tickets, are always jammed with men, women and children. And as the much-awaited archery competition gets underway, all eyes turn towards the archers and the target. The show lasts for barely 15 minutes, but the enthusiasm it generates throughout Meghalaya and other neighbouring states of the north-east surpasses that of any other popular sport.

There is a reason for the craze though. The archery game—known as Thoh Teem or just Tir in local parlance—is a form of gambling, legalised by the government of Meghalaya in 1982. The most attractive aspect of the game is that the rules are very simple and it is extremely easy to make quick money. For instance, in just over 15 minutes one could make as much as Rs 5,000 by investing a meagre Re one. What is more, since the entire operation is controlled and supervised by the government, there are no chances of foul play: the winner is paid his due on the spot with the minimum amount of fuss. No wonder, gambling has become part of the Khasis' social and cultural ethos. And its popularity keeps growing by the day.

Take a hint. Though the government has set up stalls throughout Shillong and in other towns of the state, there is a great rush since morning to acquire tickets from the numerous licensed bookies. The shooting time has also been adjusted to suit office-goers: between 4.30 pm and 5 pm. What is more, one could even bet from places as distant as Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh, Imphal in Manipur or Guwahati in Assam over the telephone. And, according to S. Pal, a bookie, "We receive hundreds of calls everyday from these places. Our phones just keep ringing all the time." And since the stakes are pretty high, there is no dearth of those willing to gamble.



Archery has always been traditional to Meghalaya. It is a form of tribal sport and the bow and arrow are symbols of Khasi culture. In the olden days too, the sport was used by many to gamble. In fact, one reason why the state government decided to get into the gambling business was because of the huge amount of money that was changing hands at the shooting sites. Today, the sales and excise department of the government virtually runs the show. However, the state authorities have restricted their involvement to just making the rules for the game, the printing and distribution of tickets and the appointment of bookies and organisers. The actual show is conducted by these licenced organisers.

The rules and regulations for the betting are all laid down in great detail in the book, *Taxation Laws in Assam and Meghalaya*. The government has chosen three shooting sites in the state: one each in Shillong, Jowai and Khanapara. But the one in Shillong is by far the most popular. Shooting takes place everyday except on Sundays and religious

An archer takes aim: tension all around

KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY





KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

(From left) People crowd around the archers; a ticket booth doing brisk business: a popular sport



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

The arrows being counted: nervous moment for the gamblers

holidays. The price of tickets ranges between 25 paise and Rs 20. And for every rupee invested, a winner gets Rs 80. The rates are even higher for a jackpot: Rs 4,444 for a rupee.

The rules are all too explicit regarding the conduct of the game. Between 30 and 50 archers appointed by the organisers—all archery clubs—can take part. Initially, appointment of archers was the sole prerogative of the associations. But, when charges of foul play were levelled against the clubs by the bookies' association, the government stepped in and allowed the latter to appoint 20 archers. Today, 50 archers take part in the shooting: 30 from the organisers and another 20 from the bookies' association.

The game is played over two rounds. Both the rounds are identical. The archers—all aged Khasi tribals—sit around a target, made of stuffed banana tree, and start shooting arrows at random. Round one ends when between 700 and 2,000 arrows have been shot. The organisers then count the arrows which have hit the target. The winning number is determined after the first digit of the number of arrows which have hit the spot is deleted. And if the number of successful hits exceed 1,000, the first two digits are deleted. (Example: if 622 arrows have hit the target, the winning number is 22). Round two is the same. This stage is, however, important because of the jackpot.

Government sources are extremely tight-lipped regarding the amount of money that changes hands at the shooting centres every day. All they are willing to reveal is that the government levies a 20 per cent amusement and betting tax on the stake money. The bookies, however, are not that secretive. Informed S. Pal, who has been in the business for the last 22 years: "Though it is difficult to ascertain how much money is spent every day as there is a lot of illegal betting as well, I can safely say that as much as Rs 4 to Rs 5 lakhs change hands every day in Shillong alone." Other bookies feel much the same.

There is no doubt that the government, too, must be netting in a tidy sum. But moralists have raised a hue and cry over the government virtually promoting a social evil. The authorities, however, counter such an argument. They maintain that if horse-racing is legitimate, why protest against archery? In any case, the people of Meghalaya have gambled at the shooting sites since the beginning of this century. The government stepped in only to ensure that the rules of the game were observed and the people got their due. "We used to get a lot of complaints from the masses. And since there was no way we could ban the gambling since it was in the tradition of the Khasis, we did the next best thing and ensured that the game was played fairly," said a state government spokesman.

And so the archery competitions continue. And people continue to try their luck in the hope of becoming rich overnight. •

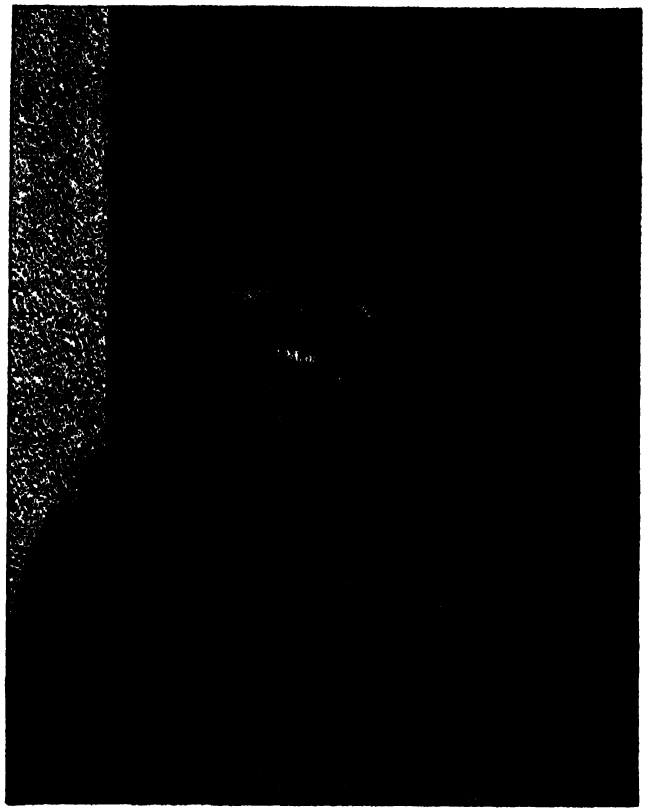
Rajiv Bagchi/Shillong

Sonu Walia and beefier-than-thou Vinod Khanna are coming together again. The last time they acted together was for *Mahadev*.

In those days, of course, the noted drunk was going around with Amrita Singh—she of the vaguely equestrian features. And on being confronted with talk of the special vibes that Sonu and Vinod were sharing, the formidable Ms Singh bristled, as only a furious *sardarni* can, and called Sonu a cheap floozie. Not long after this incident the Vinod Khanna-Amrita Singh combine broke up.

Now that there is talk of Vinod and Sonu starring in Hema Malini's home production, to be directed by Aruna Raje of *Rihaee* fame, Kavita Daftary-Khanna should gear herself for a tough battle ahead.

What makes the matter just a trifle more complicated this time is that director Aruna is not one who believes in playing coy games with the audiences. So, no shots of a flock of birds flying off towards the sky or fresh blooms appearing in the scene in place of the real stuff. She obviously believes in supplying the real totally unadulterated stuff in her impeccably adult manner.





Vinod Khanna (left) and Sonu Walia: that old magic...

Not that the audiences will be complaining, but the new Mrs Khanna is extremely worried.

Babita, the one Kapoor *bahu* who never took kindly to her forced retirement from films, is hell bent on making her daughter Karishma achieve the superstardom she missed.

So what's new? Just another sordid saga of an ambitious parent getting her kicks from her child.

But such is Babita's growing despair to launch Karishma that, recently, she pulled out her daughter from the film that she was supposed to star with Dharamendra's younger son Bobby, and went ahead and signed up Bhappi Sonie's *Nischay* opposite Salman Khan, the better box-office bet. This did not please Dharam too much.

It seems likely that Babita will end up in quite a mess in her hurry to prove her point. For going around troubling powerful benefactors like Dharamendra is not going to make her task any easier.

Ashwini Bhave: playing second fiddle to Zeba



Shakti Kapoor is on a different high these days. (As distinct from his alcoholic highs.) The actor is elated because of the encouraging response he has received from fans for his performance of a homosexual in *Veeru Dada*. He claims that he has received 300 international trunk calls and 250 telegrams from fans and admirers congratulating him on his performance.

Of course most of it is straight fan mail, you know, like the kind he used to get in the good old days when he played a tough cookie. But then that was before he took it upon himself to be Hindi cinema's pioneer gay! And no he can't deny that he has also received enthusiastic response from gay organisations abroad.

Enthusiastic responses or overtures?

The second female lead of *Henna* has at last been finalised. And that puts an end to the hopes a lot of starlets had pinned to the project. The lucky girl is Ashwini Bhave, a Marathi stage and film actress, who was also seen in a couple of TV serials like *Apne Paraye*, *Jantar Mantar*, and *Ek Kahani*. Earlier girls like Neelam and Juhi Chawla were being considered for the role, but neither of them were too keen to play second fiddle to Zeba. Ashwini suffers from no such starry hang-ups. She is too excited about her imminent trip to Switzerland for the shooting of the film, anyway. ●

Practice makes perfect

Ila Arun's Riyaz *goes down well with the audience*

A new, offbeat, relatively unknown theatre group is making a name for itself in a place not particularly famous for serious Hindi drama. The group: Surnai. The place: Bombay. And the critics: fulsome in their praise. Dolly Thakore wrote that their play "certainly makes one sit up in amazement", while Kavita Singh applauded Surnai's "move away from empty hilarity, usually referred to as entertainment" in Bombay.

Surnai, a small and close-knit troupe, has writer Ila Arun, director K.K. Raina and designer Vijay Kashyap as its core members. All three act, and their faces are all too familiar to television viewers. Ila Arun, who hails from Rajasthan, composes lyrics and music and sings; Raina is best known for his work in films with Benegal; and Kashyap often doubles as director in addition to conceiving of and executing sets and lights.

Their brief career spans five productions. They began with two successes based on Rajasthani folklore, *A Musical Sandstorm* and *Jethwa-Ujli*, followed by Ila Arun's original script *Riyaz*. Lately, they have adapted two rather obscure European plays—the existentialist Albert Camus' *The Just* (translated as *Jayaz-Najayaz)* and the Soviet writer Arbuzov's *Success Woman* (Hindi title, *Parten)*. But there's no doubting the troupe's sincerity. Surnai is so dedicated and meticulous that it reportedly spent eight months on *The Just* which is particularly relevant now because it deals with extremists deciding to do away with a government official.

But, Surnai's biggest success has been *Riyaz*, most of all because it heralds a new voice—Ila Arun—in Indian playwriting, which hasn't had too many talented young entrants of late. It has won over average Bombay spectators accustomed to watching and expecting *mirch-masala* melodrama and bedroom farces. Perhaps attracted to Prithvi Theatre by the ads claiming that the play can heal a breaking marriage, audiences have stayed on. *Bombay* magazine describes the viewer reaction thus: "Audiences who shell out their money only for comedies these days, sat gravely through most of *Riyaz*, laughed a couple of times out of turn, clucked at the wisdom of some dialogue and came out saying it was so close to their lives."

Indeed, the story is so close to the lives of so many contemporary couples that one wonders why somebody didn't think of it earlier. Dhani (Ila Arun) and Rishabh (K.K. Raina), a young couple who once had a torrid romance, find their not-too-old marriage souring as they drift apart. With the domestic responsibilities of a newborn baby and household chores to look after, Dhani must stay at home most of the time and forget about practising vocal music, which used to be her passion. With the financial responsibilities of running the family on his shoulders, Rishabh has to stay out longer and longer, trying to milk the maximum money out of his profession, which happens to be directing theatre.

Friction sets in. Dhani feels Rishabh is being selfish, enjoying himself at rehearsals and neglecting her at home. Rishabh thinks Dhani is being selfish, inconsiderately demanding attention and becoming irritable when he is slaving to earn their living. Both wonder where love has gone.

Above all, the question of Dhani's personal fulfilment occupies central place. The symbol of the modern urban Indian woman, she has been educated and knows that her intellect is rusting because of disuse. Why can't her husband see that her talent is just as deserving of nurture and development as his?

The title is the message—*riyaz* (practice) makes perfect, both practice of one's talent and practice at a marriage, but neither at the expense of the other. The only weak link is the ending, which resolves everything perhaps too quickly and too simplistically. Otherwise there's some fine acting, directing and design; a touch of class in Ila Arun's scripting of dialogue, with a sensible blend of realism and humour (not too serious, yet balancing the perspectives of both partners), as well as the symbolism of music and theatre.

And even a comic subplot in which an elderly couple provides a marital contrast of mutually acceptable, conventional, pre-feminist, arranged-marriage division of labour. Ila Arun shows a lot of potential for thought-provoking drama.

Let's hope *Riyaz* is no flash in the pan.●

Ananda Lal/Calcutta



SANSKRIT SAGAR

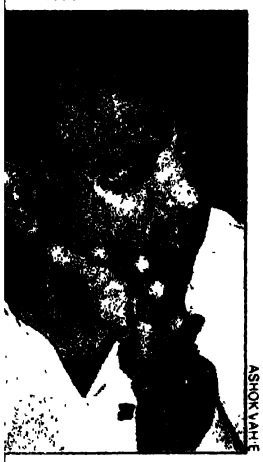
Ila Arun and K.K. Raina in a scene from *Riyaz*: stark reality

Curbing Pawar

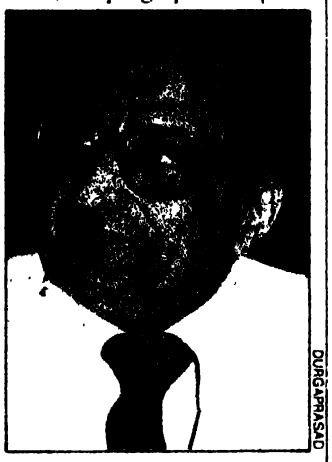
V. P. Singh snubs the Maharashtra chief minister


MAHARASHTRA

It is a coup of sorts. Prime Minister V.P. Singh has created a flutter in Maharashtra's political circles by giving the green signal to the formation of three development boards in the state. And by doing so, he has won the hearts of the people belonging to the three backward regions—Marathwada, Vidarbha and Konkan—where these boards are to be set up—although some politicians are clearly miffed.


ASHOK VAHILE




DURGAPRASAD

Pawar's (left) detractors within the Congress (I) are overjoyed with Singh's (centre) decision. But Palkhivala (right) feels that the formation of the boards could lead to protracted litigation

Singh's move has put chief minister Sharad Pawar in a fix. The Prime Minister ignored Pawar's demand for a board in his constituency, Western Maharashtra, the stronghold of the state's powerful sugar lobby. The Dandekar Committee, set up in 1983 to look into the development profile of the state's districts, had categorised Western Maharashtra as a backward area. But it had also observed that the region topped the state's literacy list and was lagging behind because its physical resources remained untapped.

The chief minister's immediate reaction to Singh's decree was to call a press conference in which he regretted the Centre's discriminatory attitude. Pawar revealed that Western Maharashtra comprised 80 per cent of the state's chronically drought-prone areas, 85 per cent of its hilly terrain and some of the most inaccessible tribal areas such as Akrani and Akkalkuva. That is why, said Pawar, the state legislature had adopted a resolution recommending four development boards in the state. Pawar, however, was careful not to antagonise the Centre on this issue. "There is room for dialogue and I hope to try that route," he said, keeping options open.

The only politician of consequence to oppose the move in its entirety is former chief minister S.B. Chavan. "The boards would lead to the disintegration of the state," he glooms, implying that Vidarbha may, in the long run, demand complete statehood. And there is little doubt that Chavan's followers in Pawar's Cabinet are backing him up.

But what has surprised political observers is the criticism voiced by the noted jurist, Nani Palkhivala, against the concept of development boards. He issued a press statement recently saying that "public interest demands" that the "President of India be advised to make a reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution so that the government and the public have a clear guidance on the baffling questions which arise under Article 371". Palkhivala feels that if the President did not intervene to stop the formation of the boards, "years of protracted litigation to decide several fundamental questions" is likely to follow.

It is true that Article 371, which provides for the setting up of development boards for backward areas, is not clear about the structure and power of such bodies. But the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesman, Dharamchand Chordia, feels, "This can be solved by putting on the boards experts from various fields and legislators and MPs from the respective regions. Allocation of funds can be made on the basis of area, population and the magnitude of the backlog."

Pawar's detractors within the Congress(I), led by former chief minister A.R. Antulay, are obviously overjoyed with the Centre's decision. They had organised a seminar on 29 July to pressurise the government into forming the boards and feel that Pawar is trying to make the best of a bad situation by straining to present a cheery visage. Antulay, as well as Congressman Nilangekar Patil, avoided taking part in the Nagpur meet despite having been its important convenors because Pawar had, supposedly, convinced Congress(I) president Rajiv Gandhi against the need for such boards.

Once the bodies are formed, the chief minister's wings are likely to be clipped though it is not yet clear how much power the Governor would weild as the special authority on fiscal and executive matters of the three boards. But Pawar is unlikely to let his opponents within his party stage a cakewalk and may indefinitely postpone the formation of the boards by initiating court cases with the help of his supporters. And with Palkhivala virtually on his side, the new arrangement might still be a long way off. ● ***Olga Tellis/Bombay***

Killed in custody

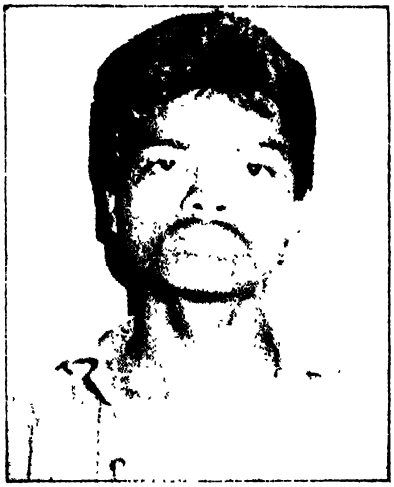
The Karnataka police is accused of murder



KARNATAKA

In Karnataka recently, the long arm of the law proved to be a shade too short. Three policemen have been charged with the killing of a young man in police custody. The COD (Corps of Detectors) wing of the police responsible for the case finds itself unable to solve it, even after a month. Meanwhile, the case has assumed political overtones.

It all began in Tumkur, a small town near Bangalore. On 8 July, 20-year-old Narasimharaju, a petty thief, was picked up by two constables near his house. He never returned. His impoverished family members suspected foul play and soon the case snowballed into a major controversy. It was suspected that certain political parties were involved. Moreover, with the current focus on cop brutality, the case further threatened to tarnish the battered image of the Karnataka police. The government quickly roped in the state's elite COD to work on the case.



Narasimharaju: a victim of brutality

The accused are still at large and a key witness backtracked on his statement. People suspect that the COD was pressurised to drop the case



Veerendra Patil, promising justice

Initially, they made some progress. And filed a case of "wrongful confinement and disappearance, alleged death and destruction of evidence". Then, four constables were arrested and a hunt launched for the three main accused—a sub inspector and the two constables who had picked Raju up. After that, however, the COD appeared to have reached a dead end. The accused are still at large and a key witness backtracked on his statement.

As a result, people suspect that the COD was pressurised to drop the case. The opposition is threatening to expose the Veerendra Patil government and the local Congress MLA made matters worse by issuing a statement dissociating himself from the case. And all the while, the aggrieved family pleaded for the case to be taken up by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The case was complicated by the involvement of two teenagers, whose families were influential in Tumkur. Along with Raju, these two were earlier booked in five cases, for lifting two-wheelers. While Raju had been acquitted in all, the other two had been let off under the Probationary Offenders Act in one case. This meant that the two would face jail in the event of a future conviction.

So, when the theft of two mopeds was reported, these three were suspected. Only Raju was picked up. People suspect that this was to corner him into taking the rap, so that the other two could go free. He was shifted from the Tilak Park police station to the town police station, where they have a special "crime room" for conducting interrogations.

According to a petty criminal present during the interrogations, Mutta, Raju was severely beaten up by the police on 12 July. Mutta also claimed that he had been asked to put Raju's body in the police van. The arrested van driver, Habibullah Khan, admitted to the COD that he had been asked to drive beyond the district's border and dump Raju's body on the highway to make it look like a hit-and-run accident. He even guided the COD to the spot. Further investigations revealed that the Chikmagalur police had picked up Raju's body, declared it unidentified and buried it. The post-mortem report mentioned multiple injuries on the body and specified that death was due to shock.

Unfortunately, Habibullah went back on his statement. He declared before the sub-divisional magistrate Sandeep Dave that he had no clue about Raju's death or the disposal of his body. He even mentioned that because his van had some engine problems, he had left it at the town police station.

This was not true. Enquiries revealed that Habibullah had dumped the van at a repair shop after the police had disposed of Raju's body. Although a key witness has been lost, the COD seem optimistic. "The absconding policemen will not go scot free," says a top COD official. "We are still investigating and we have a strong case."

But Raju's family is not assured. "They will just hush it up, as the COD is a part of the police force," says Kumbaiah, Raju's uncle. "That is why we want the CBI to take over. When will we get justice?" His view seems justified in the wake of recent developments. Police atrocities are on the rise and has resulted in at least four deaths in police custody in just four months.

Things have reached such a stage that chief minister Patil, who holds the home portfolio, has intervened. "The government will not tolerate police excesses and the accused in this case will certainly be nabbed," he promised.

And somewhat sceptically, Raju's family waits for that day of justice. ●

Gayatri Laxman/Bangalore

The great escape

Undertrial prisoners stage a daring getaway in Delhi



DELHI

The scene was straight out of Frank Sinatra's famous *Von Ryan's Express*--or very nearly so. In the cliff-hanger war-time film, over 400 allied prisoners escape from a German train during the Second World War. The prisoners had cut a hole through the belly of one of the train carriages and escaped to freedom one by one.

The sequence was closely re-enacted by some undertrials of Delhi's Tihar Jail earlier this month. On 10 August, some 56 men—mostly petty criminals—were being transported to the Shahdara courts for remand proceedings. Six armed guards were sitting in the front and back of the jail van. Almost half way to Shahdara, the van stopped at a traffic signal at the Shakarpur crossing and a bystander noticed the head of one of the undertrials popping out from below the vehicle's chasis. He cautioned the driver, who immediately inspected the van and caught a prisoner in the act of slithering out of a hole made in the floor of the van. A headcount revealed that seven undertrials had already escaped by then.

Senior Delhi Police officers feel the escape was well-conceived and meticulously planned. "It looks like a premeditated attempt. The undertrials managed to come out of the bottom stealthily, and proceed in different directions," said B.S. Brar, the deputy commissioner of police, east district, who is handling the investigations. He added that following the daring escape, security arrangements for transporting undertrial prisoners to courts had been strengthened and that police teams had fanned out to track down the fugitives.

The attempts of the police, however, met with marginal success. Raju, an undertrial facing a murder charge and believed to be the brain behind the getaway, and four others were still at large six days after the incident. On 12 August the police managed to nab one of the escapees, Shankar, while he was proceeding to board a train for Bombay. The following day, Basanta, who was being tried on a robbery charge, was arrested in Gaziabad. Shankar was caught while he was on his way to Old Delhi Railway Station, with a muffler around his face. It was a bad enough disguise and an alert police party was quick to pounce on their quarry. And on 16 August, Noval Kishore, involved in 33 cases of murder and robbery, was arrested in Shakarpur. "We have spread our dragnets in neighbouring cities too and will soon trap the others," said an optimistic Brar.

Delhi Police officers feel that the daring act was meticulously planned and was the most sensational one in recent times

The interrogation of those who have been re-arrested revealed that the wood and iron boards of the van's floor were a little loose. This set the prisoners into action. While some began to sing and clap loudly, Raju and others made a hole in the floor. Shankar and Basanta disclosed that the plan was for all the undertrials to flee through the opening.

The 10 August getaway was the most sensational after the escape of Charles Shobraj from Tihar Jail on 16 March, 1986. On that day, Shobraj and some of his accomplices had faked a "birthday party" in the office of the prison's deputy superintendent. The unsuspecting jail officials were fed drugged custard. They were knocked out within minutes and Shobraj and his friends drove out of the prison in a jail van. Later, Shobraj was re-arrested after a massive man-hunt in Goa.

This time the prisoners were no high-profile criminals. But then human ingenuity knows no class. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

Street darbar

A BJP MP's way to solve people's problems

The venue: a footpath near a busy bus terminus in Ahmedabad. The scene: about 500 people—half of them women—squatting on the ground, with about a hundred others standing around. All eyes are rivetted on a tall man wearing a saffron scarf. He is accompanied by four or five others sitting on a slightly raised platform. Vehicles whizz past the crowd as it drizzles. But no one takes any notice.

This is the footpath durbar of 50-year-old Shankarsinh Vaghela, Lok Sabha MP and chief of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Gujarat unit. He gives a patient hearing to each person and tries to solve his or her problems on the spot.

Veghela has held 15 such roadside *lok* darbars in various parts of his constituency, Gandhinagar (which includes parts of Ahmedabad), and his popularity has soared.

Two days before such durbars are held, people of the locality are informed through leaflets. With Veghela arriving on the dot, the meeting begins after the men and women take their seats under a simple pandal erected by BJP volunteers. Once the written ques-



The head-hunt

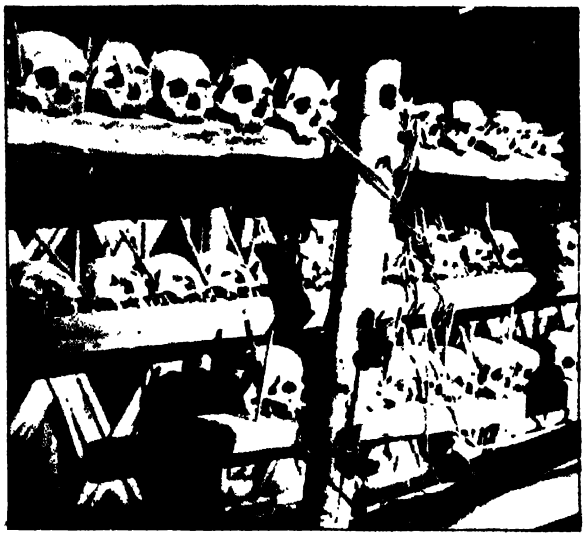
Many are beheaded as Naga tribes clash



NAGALAND

In the sleepy hilltop village of Tobu, the dawn of 17 August saw a swarm of Naga tribals in traditional battle gear block the escape routes amidst war-cries. The Konyak Nagas had attacked the Chang Nagas, a minority in the village. As terrified women and children slipped and fell while scrambling down the hillside, they were grabbed and their heads chopped off. At least 20 heads were taken away, very few of adult males, and six victims died later. Not satisfied with this, the Konyaks marched ten kilometres to Saochuo village, found it empty and set it ablaze.

The Chang Nagas were not ready to take this lying down. Even as chief minister Vamuzo was frantically organising detachments of the Assam Rifles and the Nagaland armed force, news of vendetta reached the capital



A Naga chief's home: the shelves of pride

The heads were carried off to a nearby hamlet and kept on a platform dedicated to a chief

The Changs had beheaded at least four Konyaks, including a policeman.

The state authorities swung into action. Helicopters ferried troops from Zakhama to the affected areas. A round-the-clock curfew was clamped on about 40 villages. There were shoot-at-sight orders and the suspension of arms licences in the disturbed districts. Deputy chief minister (CM) I.K. Semare, who held fort as the CM rushed to Delhi for consultations, told SUNDAY that although the situation was brought under control by 20 August, the area was still very tense. "Anything might happen anytime," he said.

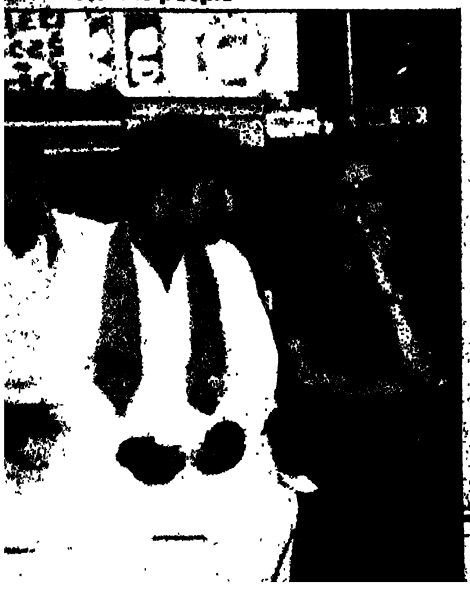
To calm the warring groups down, all kinds of measures have been taken. Chingwang Konyak, a Congress(I) stalwart and Nagaland minister, was hustled to the spot on a peace mission. Overwhelmed by such medieval behaviour, he reprimanded his tribesmen and asked them to own up and go back home without creating further trouble. The heads were reportedly carried off to a nearby hamlet and offered on a platform dedicated to the memory of an *ahugh* (chief of Konyaks).

Apparently, the trouble began with the transfer of Tobu to the Mon district. The village is on the border between the districts of Mon and Tuensang. The Konyaks dominate this village, own most of the shops here and discourage the Changs from getting a foothold. In 1987, there was a burst of violence when the former objected to the latter building a community hall and five persons were killed. Their traditional animosity is heightened by their conflicting political views. While the Konyaks are the force behind the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland), the Changs support the Phizoite NNC (Naga National Council).●

Santanu Ghosh/Silchar

tions or complaints are handed over to the MP, he calls complainants—women getting preference over the menfolk. The problems discussed range from an open manhole, low pressure in taps, non-availability of edible oil to violence by goons and even domestic squabbles. The local municipal councillor, legislator and *taluka* or district *panchayat* members are generally near at hand and take note of every complaint.

Veghela (with spectacles): working for the people



But Veghela, MP since 1976, doesn't have solutions for all the problems. "I frankly say 'no' if I am unable to solve any problem," he concedes.

Indeed, Veghela's footpath meetings have proved to be a runaway success — with people preferring to attend his durbars rather than go all the way to Gandhinagar Sachivalays to meet officials concerned, who often ride roughshod over them.

It was the late Jaiprakash Narayan from whom Veghela first got the inspiration to mingle with the masses and feel the pulse of the people. Once his party became a partner of the ruling coalition in Gujarat in March this year, he took the plunge. Egged on by the fantastic popular response, the BJP chief has asked other MPs and MLAs and even the party's ten ministers to organise such programmes. If this happens, it will not be hard for the BJP to outclass the Janata Dal and capture power in the state in the none-too-distant future. ●

Mahesh Trivedi/Ahmedabad

Stop press!

Government officials are told not to speak to the media



MADHYA PRADESH

The revenue commissioner of Bilaspur division went to meet the press some time back. And guess what he did at the conference: refused to talk. He accepted the invitation of the Press Club of Bilaspur where—as was to be expected—he faced a barrage of questions. But the official refused to oblige newsmen, saying that he had received categorical instructions from the commissioner and secretary of the department of information and publicity, L.K. Joshi, prohibiting government officials from speaking to the press directly. This holy business, according to him, was reserved for the state's public relations officer.

The pressmen had reasons to be agitated by this unexpected government fiat preventing free flow of information. But the very next morning, the information secretary issued a clarification that—not surprisingly—created confusion instead of sorting things out. Joshi made it known that there were no restrictions on officials and they could speak freely to the press. Contrary to what the revenue commissioner claimed, Joshi said that he had, in fact, asked government officials to cooperate with media-persons by giving them full information about government activities.

Barely had Joshi's explanation sunk in, when a senior policeman from Rajnandgaon district told a local paper that police officials had been instructed not to give any information to the press about Naxalite activities in the area unless there was a major incident.

The official explained that the state government felt the Naxalites were indulging in petty activities and were publicity hungry. Press reports, according to the government's perceptions, only helped build their image. In fact, he further revealed that the superintendents of police in all Naxalite-infested areas had planned a meeting with the editors and reporters to discuss the problem with them.●

M.V. Kher / Raipur

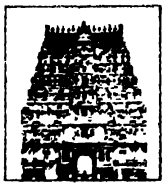


MALA MURASU

'Auto' Shankar (second from right): dead or alive?

The man who knows too much

'Auto' Shankar's escape from jail fuels speculation about the involvement of government officials in the incident



TAMIL NADU

What is the public and the government in Tamil Nadu most excited about these days? All the gossip, legislature discussions and Tamil media headlines are being hogged by a dreaded killer, who, in the early hours of 21 August, escaped from the 'high-security' Madras Central Prison along with two of his accomplices. Two other prisoners, lodged in the same cell for different crimes, also escaped with them.

'Auto' Shankar, arrested during the President's Rule in July 1988, was among the most important inmates of the prison, having been involved in at least six murder cases during 1987-88. He headed a 16-member gang of criminals, many of whom were from his own family. Shankar's main vocation at that time was the distribution of illicit liquor and running a brothel in Thiruvanmaiur, which is close to the Adyar beach.

The apellation 'auto' got attached to his name because he was employed, in the early period of his crime life, by a brothel mistress to 'deliver' girls to her clients in his autorickshaw. From then on, Shankar quickly graduated to big-time crime with the alleged blessings of influential politicians and police officers. When he was finally nabbed during the President's Rule that followed chief minister M.G. Ramachandran's death, the bodies of his victims were dug out from under buildings he built.

The victims included one of his many wives. They were killed because of jealousy and disputes over his 'business' interests. Half a dozen policemen, including one deputy superintendent of police (DSP), were suspended for allegedly cooperating with Shankar in his crimes. The case created a sensation when it first came to light andvivid details of the involvement of influential officials and politicians with Shankar were widely reported in the local press. What shocked the people most was the disclosure by the investigating sleuths that some video films gave evidence of Shankar's

close links with senior police officers and politicians.

It appears that his ties with officialdom stood Shankar in good stead even in prison. When his escape was discovered during a headcount on 21 August, the government immediately deduced the involvement of jail staff in the embarrassing episode. Chief minister M. Karunanidhi, who informed the state Assembly about Shankar's escape, also announced that 12 jail staff were placed under suspension. Of them, three were arrested and criminal prosecution initiated against them for their complicity in the case.

The chief minister, looking visibly embarrassed, told the House, "Auto Shankar and four others lodged in the same cell have escaped between midnight and 4 am. The door of this particular cell was not locked at night and the usual check to ensure locking was also not done." A special cell was immediately set up to launch what could be described as the biggest manhunt in Tamil Nadu.

The chief minister announced a judicial enquiry into the escape, but that did not prevent the Opposition from launching a tirade against him. The PCC(I) president, Vazha Padi K. Ramamurthy, demanded the chief minister's resignation along with those of the chief secretary, M.M. Rajendran, the home secretary, R. Nagarajan and the police chief P. Dorai. "Only their stepping down can uphold the high traditions in public service," Ramamurthy declared.

The Congress(I) whip, S.R. Balasubramaniam, flayed the DMK administration during the Assembly session, saying that MLAs would face threats to their lives if they spoke out against Shankar. "The judicial enquiry, though welcome, could take a long time to complete. What we need is an investigation by the CBI," the Congress legislator urged.

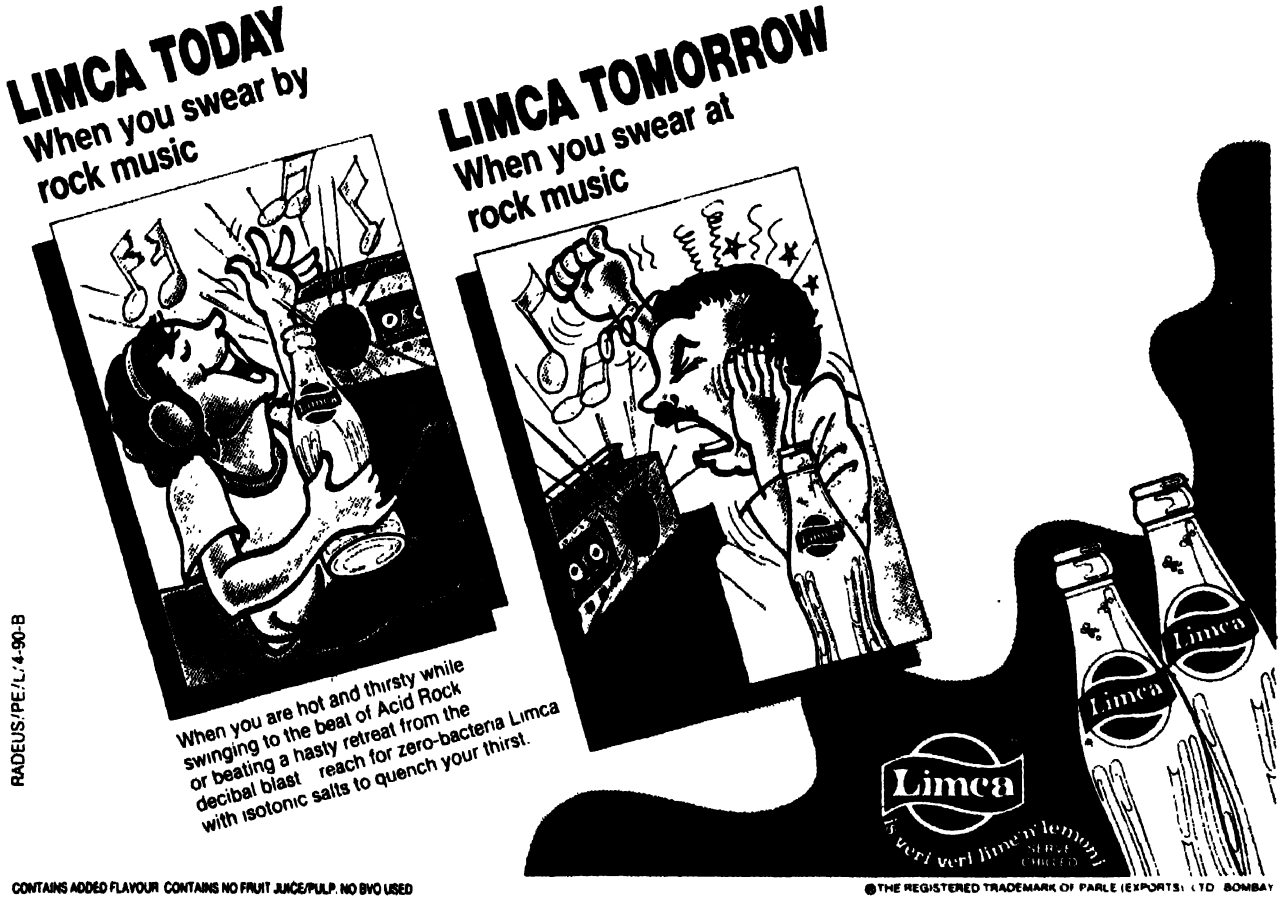
While the theory of the jail staff helping Shankar to escape has many buyers (including Karunanidhi), it is also rumoured that Shankar was deliberately allowed to slip out of his cell so that an encounter could be engineered to finish him off. This may have become necessary, many suspect, to preclude the possibilities of Shankar exposing the politicians who once maintained links with him.

Said Balasubramaniam: "There are several police officers who are now living in fear of exposure by Auto Shankar. There are rumours that they have finished him off already. Others say he would never be caught alive but shot down in a fake encounter."

Chief minister Karunanidhi scoffs at these speculations. "There are no orders to shoot down Shankar on sight. We are confident of nabbing him soon," he has said.

Added police chief Dorai: "Special squads have already fanned out to look for Auto Shankar. One team has gone to Thanjavur and another to Tirupati." The trip to Tirupati for the special squad became necessary following reports that the fugitive was at the temple town in a disguise. When other reports suggested that he may try to flee to Sri Lanka with the help of Eelam militants, another investigating team was despatched to the Thanjavur shoreline. If the master criminal is not caught fast, the DMK government's image might suffer a severe blow. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras



Culture vultures

The former National Museum's director-general, Dr Laxmi Sihare, may be their first victim

From the grand, sprawling offices of the National Museum to the cramped premises of the Vigyan Bhavan annexe is definitely a comedown. Eight months before he was due to retire, the National Museum's director-general, Dr Laxmi P. Sihare, has been unceremoniously ousted, from the post he brought much controversy to. And now he is designated officer on special duty (OSD) to the institution he transformed, during his six years and four months long tenure, into one of the finest museums in the world.

The marching orders, which were reportedly issued with the express approval of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on 22 August, came as the culmination of a concerted campaign, mounted only to get rid of Sihare. Since, it was almost impossible to point a finger at the museologist's professionalism, he was accused of displaying "unorthodox behaviour" and of "rubbing too many people the wrong way". Admittedly, his brusque, no-nonsense style of functioning, did earn him a lot of enemies. But beyond the tough exterior, Sihare remained a man who unfailingly put the museum's interests above those of individuals. And eventually had to pay for it.

Sitting forlorn in his bare new office, Sihare refuses to comment on the government's decision to divest him of his post. Or on the fact that now he also ceases to be associated with the National Museum's Institute of the History of Art, Conservation and Museology, which he has worked tirelessly to establish over the last two years. He doesn't comment on his new assignment either, which includes the preparation of a comprehensive manual, laying down procedures for documenting and cataloguing museum items in the country. A task that a man of his qualifications and experience should take no more than a month to complete.

What is much more demeaning, however, for a man who has contributed 20 years to the Indian art world is the concerted attempt to discredit him. Controversies which had long died a natural death are now being resurrected just to make a case against Sihare, and ensure that he is kept safely out of the way.

In recent months, the art expert has been waging a relentless war against the auctioning abroad of the Nizam of Hyderabad's jewels (*Sunday 8—14 April, 1990*) and other art treasures like the Baroda silk carpet which he claims are part of India's national heritage. Sources close to Sihare allege that it was not his boorishness, but his battles to protect India's art treasures that resulted in his ouster.

Officials in the ministry are keen to stress that Dr Sihare is not being punished, but has been transferred because his expertise was required in another area (display and documentation) before he retired. But this version doesn't really hold water because it will be tough replacing Dr Sihare—even his worst enemies admit that there are few people whose knowledge of museology surpasses his.

The most serious charge against Sihare pertains to his permitting the use of the National Museum premises for a cocktail party hosted by a leading American banking organisation (*Sunday 15—21 July, 1990*). Sources close to Sihare say that the case is now well and truly closed with the former culture secretry J. Veeraraghavan, submitting in writing that he had given his express permission for the event. Moreover, the charges against Sihare, in a letter to the Prime Minister, dated 17 January, by 400 employees belonging to the Museum's Non-Gazetted Officers' Association, that they were victims of Sihare's high-handed behaviour, have yet to be substantiated by the courts.

Sitting forlorn in his bare new office Sihare refuses to comment on the government's decision to divest him of his post

Sihare (left) with President Venkataraman making a round of the National Museum in New Delhi



Sources close to Sihare allege that there is a nexus between the Nizam jewel case and the one being fought by the National Museum's union. Both are being fought by the same advocate. "It is evident that the Nizam is greasing the palms of the union leader from the fact that the same lawyer is handling the Rs 300-crore Nizam jewels case and that of the union leaders," says a Sihare supporter.

He adds: "Pupul Jayakar, a known opponent of Dr Sihare is very close to the Nizam s auctioneers in London, and also to his legal counsel, J.B.Dadachanji. For them, it is a big victory to see Sihare go." Jayakar, whose running battle with Sihare has been hitting the headlines over the last five years, went so far as to write to V.P. Singh—soon after he took over as Prime Minister—complaining that she had received an impertinent letter from the museum director.

Besides, government sources also disclose that they are examining another complaint about Sihare's rude behaviour, sent in by Indira Mansingh (wife of Indian Council forCultural Relations' former director-general, Lalit Mansingh). "She thought she could persuade Dr Sihare to agree to sending exhibits like the Didarganj Yakshi to Singapore, works that had never been allowed to leave the country even for the festival in Japan," states a source close to Sihare. In fact, "She was about to sign an agreement when he intercepted the text." Later, the lady complained that Sihare's rudeness had reduced her to tears.

What is interesting about the Sihare saga is the fact that it was the PMO itself that worked on his removal. When all the so-called enquiries against Sihare were cleared at the ministry level, why did the PMO take a personal interest in sidelining an official who had only eight months left to retire?

"It couldn't have been merely that Pupul Jayakar or another official thought he was rude, or that he was unpopular with his employees for being a hard task-master that led to his removal," says a colleague in the art world.

Some people allege that it was the Allahabad lobby in the PMO that was responsible for his downfall. This version has it that Vinod Pande and





Bhure Lal (left) and Vinod Pande: were they instrumental in ousting Sihare?

Bhure Lal worked on former culture secretary M. Varadarajan, the present secretary Bhaskar Ghose, and joint secretary, R.C. Tripathi who is known to be close to H.P. Sharma, the Raja's private secretary. "The Allahabad lobby in the PMO finally decided that Sihare was better out of the way."

Not because he had raised a hue and cry about the Nizam of Hyderabad's designs to deprive the country of vast sums of money and some invaluable treasures. But because Sihare was embarrassing the government by insisting that it adhere to certain decisions on privy purses taken by the Indira Gandhi government.

Two months ago, Sihare demanded that the ceremonial regalia of the erstwhile ruling families, that they were allowed to keep during the time of the merger of the state, should be returned to the state. According to Sihare, these items, like crowns, jewellery and thrones were no longer necessary after the royal titles were seized and that they were now part of the national heritage and should be handed over to the government. "It is these powerful lobbies that felt Sihare was a threat to them and worked through their connections in the PMO to get rid of him," alleges a source close to Sihare.

Though Sihare is maintaining a low profile so as to not jeopardise his last few months in service, it is unlikely that he will give up without a fight. Judging from the past, it will be unusual if he accepts defeat so easily.

Sihare's ouster may have provided temporary respite to his enemies. But it is unlikely that the controversy will end here. •

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

V GANGADHAR

Untruth involves us all

Madhu Kishwar takes on Arun Shourie and the Indian Express

A belated realisation: What are guest columns in magazines for? To do the dirty work for the editor? The 'guest writer' is free to take on any issue or any personality, and the editor can shrug off any controversy with the comment, "What had appeared in print is the personal opinion of the guest writer and did not have anything to do with the editorial policy of the magazine!"

I have just finished reading a most astonishing guest column which appeared in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (August 19-25). Titled, "Just Malice", it is authored by Madhu Kishwar, who is an active member of the "Independent Initiative", an organisation which invites itself to supervise poll practices at selected constituencies represented by people it generally does not like.

Kishwar's ire, for a change, is not directed at Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress. In a six-page article, she tears into the *Indian Express* and its editor, Arun Shourie, particularly for their harangues against Chaudhary Devi Lal and his son, Om Prakash Chautala. Probing into the 'vested interests' which had mounted a vicious campaign against Devi Lal and his followers, Kishwar reaches certain conclusions about the *Express* and Shourie which had been fairly obvious to the impartial media watchers for several years: their investigative reporting is selective, they hit below the belt, they act more like king-makers than practitioners of fair, objective journalism.

Such an attack on Shourie and the *Express* sounds natural when it comes from someone like Mani Shankar Aiyar (and he has been dishing them out too). But Madhu Kishwar and Independent Initiative? Hadn't the accused and the accuser, all these years, been fighting together for human rights, value-based politics and blaming everything which went wrong in the country to Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress? Didn't they vent their ire against state terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir while ignoring the mass killings by terrorists? Wasn't the Independent Initiative as selective in exposing corruption and poll malpractices as the *Indian Express* and its celebrated editor?

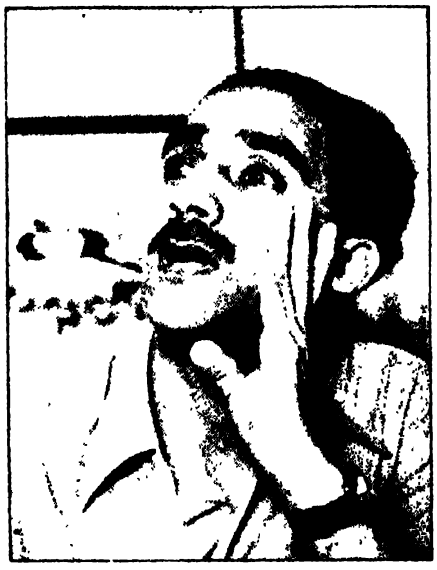
Why the fallout then? Kishwar is among the urban elite, who seem to have developed a guilty conscience over the treatment given to Devi Lal and his followers in the media, particularly the *Indian Express*. The leader of this newly-organised pack is the *Weekly* editor, Pritish Nandy, who is only too ready to make room for such guest columns. Some days back, Olga Tellis of SUNDAY wrote her "Point of View", for the magazine, strongly supporting the views expressed by Devi Lal in his celebrated interview with Nandy.

The sudden awakening of rural-consciousness among a section of our urban elite is certainly interesting. Why all this consideration for Devi Lal and Chautala? Have they forgotten the hue and cry raised over the "accidental death" of Supriya, the granddaughter-in-law of the Tau? Strangely enough, the *Express* which was strongly pro-Devi Lal in those days, did not launch an investigation on the death. How times have changed!

The Kishwar guest column attacks Shourie on the means he uses to attack those who come in his way. The Independent Initiative found large-scale rigging at Amethi and Baghpat (Ajit Singh's constituency) but Shourie chose to highlight only the Meham happenings. He is silent on the antics of Dr Sanjay Singh—deeply involved in the Syed Modi murder case—who was the campaign manager for Rajmohan Gandhi at Amethi. Singh, besides playing around with badminton belles and finishing off their husbands in straight sets, is an expert in booth-capturing and leading gun-toting hoodlums in the "battle of the ballots". Why go soft on him?

Shourie, according to Kishwar, follows the Bombay film formula, seeing life in black and white terms, the good guys vs the bad guys, with no shades of grey. Often the *Express* guys (Goenka, Shourie, Gurumurthy, Jethmalani) themselves are the good guys, self-righteously frightening away the





Hadn't Madhu Kishwar (left) and Arun Shourie been fighting together for human rights, value-based politics and blaming everything which went wrong in the country on Rajiv Gandhi? Why the fallout then?







Says M.A.K. Pataudi (above), "The overreaction from both adversaries makes one question Gavaskar's (left) objectivity as well as Bedi's right to interfere in what has nothing to do with him"

supposed villains into behaving better.

So concerned is Ms Kishwar with Arun Shourie's unholy crusade (which is quite unthinkable for a liberal), that she even detects good qualities in her earliest victim, former Maharashtra chief minister, Abdul Rehman Antulay (administrative skills, efficiency). "Even his corruption, it is widely acknowledged, was more on behalf of the party than for himself." Shourie went for Antulay, concludes Kishwar, because he is a Muslim. There are other interesting statements. The Arun Nehru-Arif Mohammad Khan (Shourie's favourites) gang is among the most adept at juggling party funds. We can't afford to forget Nehru's likely involvement in the Bofors deal and his well-known role in aiding, abetting militant fundamentalists in Kashmir, and instigating riots to bring down the Abdullah regime and implant his own dummy as the chief minister.

Kishwar points out that Shourie remained a starry-eyed admirer of Rajiv Gandhi despite the massacre of Sikhs in 1985 and the ruthless killings of Muslims by the Meerut Provincial Armed Constabulary. Yet, there are some gaping holes in her narrative. Why did Shourie ditch Rajiv and turn into his implacable enemy? What is the real motive behind the Ambani vendetta? Why doesn't Shourie's all out support to Ramakrishna Hegde figure in the article?

She lists the lies and the half-truths of the *Express* to denigrate Devi Lal and his followers. While every newspaper in the country commented on the impressive (not massive though) turnout at his Kisan Rally in New Delhi on 9 August, the *Express* dismissed it as "poor turnout" quoting the police estimate of 1.3 lakhs. Devi Lal's cut-out was dismissed thus: "Even his awesome plywood look-alike craned its neck forward to catch a glimpse of the original Jat." Concludes Kishwar, "This is not to suggest that the Meham rigging should be condoned, but only to point out that the out and out villainous image of Devi Lal being projected by the *Express* is deliberate.

"What are Shourie's motives for launching such a campaign? There is very little doubt that Devi Lal is being hounded out by the *Express* mafia basically to clear the way for the BJP to take over Haryana and after that, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat." Or read this attack: "It is not just that Devi Lal has to be seen out of the government ...The type must be seen out of Indian public life...They flaunt mediocrity, lack of knowledge and education, as qualification...They assert mediocrity and unletteredness as the norm, vulgarity as a right, sheer numbers and muscle as right."

The *Express* and Shourie are obviously disturbed at the entry of the masses into politics and regretfully notes the disinclination of the white collar elements, and certainly the more outstanding among them, to join politics. One remedy, according to the paper, would be "cajoling the good guys" from educated, elitist backgrounds, into sacrificing their life and privacy and get them to enter Parliament through the backdoor, as in the case of Ram Jethmalani from Bangalore and Sanjay Singh from UP.

Kishwar's conclusions are rather disturbing: "Very clearly, Shourie is very uncomfortable with the democratic process if it doesn't suit his personal and political predelictions. In short, Shourie aspires to snuff out whatever little we have by way of democratic institutions and disenfranchise the vast majority of Indians. Democracy is to be tolerated only as long as the urban, educated, elite can dominate the political institutions."

At times, Kishwar is entirely fair to Shourie. But by and large, her arguments do hold water. It is encouraging that the eyes and ears of some of our intellectuals are slowly opening to the dangers of this kind of 'press freedom'. A recent editorial in the *Express* said, "our legislatures are no longer a fora for informed and reasoned debate, of analysis and examination. Their proceedings are marked by abusive personal attacks and the spewing of intemperate rhetoric and shop-soiled cliches..."

Kishwar has a point that this description fits the *Express* kind of journalism no less than it fits parliamentary proceedings. Such comment, however, are not likely to have any impact on Shourie, who is on to a fresh game: Mandal-bashing.

The last word

The most objective analysis of the Bishan Bedi-Sunil Gavaskar feud comes from M.A.K. Pataudi, editor of *Sportsworld*: "The overreaction from both adversaries makes one question Gavaskar's objectivity as a serious journalist as well as Bedi's right (while he is an official on tour) to interfere in what has nothing to do with him." •

Bending rules

The BCCI tries to make domestic cricket a little more exciting

The much-expected changes in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) did not quite come off. With the Indian cricketers still struggling to save the Test series against England, a plan was hatched to change almost the entire structure of the upper echelons of the BCCI, together with moves to give the board far more powers over men and matters. But these decisions were postponed till after the annual general meeting planned on 22 and 23 September at the Taj Bengal hotel in Calcutta. The working committee meeting of the BCCI in Bombay in the second week of August did, however, produce some changes relating to the game itself.

The rules of the Ranji Trophy tournament have for long frustrated the budding cricketers in the weaker sections of the competition. Players from states like Assam and Andhra Pradesh, for example, would get just one opportunity to prove themselves against some of the toughest sides in the group. In the preliminary rounds of the competition, three days were set for each match, which barely was enough for more than an innings each. So, players from the weaker sides would get just one crack with the bat and the ball.

The board has now ruled that preliminary matches would be played over four days instead of three. In the knock-out stages of the tournament, the matches would be played over five days, thereby increasing the chances of outright victories, instead of the laboured exercise of a first innings lead.

More important, however, is the move to alter the quotient rule, which had caused so much controversy in the past. The practice was that in case the first innings of a match was not completed or in the event of a tie, the winner was decided on the runs-per-wicket-lost basis. But now it will be the runs-scored-per-over that will count, which will encourage a positive approach to the game.

A graded system of bonus points has also been adopted, with a minimum of one point for over 250 runs to four points for a score exceeding 400. Similarly, in the bowling sphere, one point from three wickets taken would scale up to four points for nine or ten wickets. The targets in both the areas would be reduced for bonus points in the second innings.

The bonus rules apply to 120 overs in the first innings and 55 in the second. Earlier, it used to be 90 overs in the first and 40 in the second. The rules for penalty points have also been modified. Previously, the penalty for bowling less than the required number of overs in an innings was a mere four runs per over. This has been increased substantially to 12 an over.

Another decision taken by the working committee of the BCCI was with regard to the pitch. So far, there were no rigid rules relating to the surface. Now, the board has decided that all matches conducted under its rules would have to be played on turf.

On the international front, too, some important decisions have been taken. Heading the list was the Sharjah jamboree. The board has again decided not to send an Indian team to play there this year. Although the board secretary, Ranbir Singh, said that the decision had nothing to do with the alleged Pakistan bias of the Cricketers Benevolent Fund Series (CBFS), the plea that the cricketers would be 'jaded' by the time they take on this tournament does not really convince anyone. The feeling is further reinforced because Sri Lanka has been invited to play a series of one-day internationals in December.

But one stand taken by the board will please cricket-lovers in India. When Pakistan –the country was to stage the Asia Cup—declined the offer, the BCCI requested the Asian Cricket Conference to allot the tournament to India. Pakistan, according to the board secretary, made a 'sly' move by asking Bangladesh to host the competition. But as things stand now, if the tournament is held at all, it will be staged by India, which is scheduled for November-December. As it is, Sri Lanka is coming in December and Pakistan have an official tour of this country



SUJIHALIT PAI

coming up in January next year.

The BCCI is in favour of neutral umpires for all official competitions. But it is not easy to implement this since the host nation would have to bear the entire expenses of the umpires, who will be coming from a third country or countries.

One line of thinking is that the question of having neutral umpires should be decided by the two playing countries—or all participating nations. If the agreement is unanimous, then each nation could be asked to contribute equally towards the expenses of the umpires. If it is a two-way contest, then the visiting country would have the option of choosing between paying equally for the umpires or settling for the host nation's match supervisors.

What is very heartening for the players is that the long-standing demand of the Association of Indian Cricketers (AIC) has been met by the board. This mitigates, to a large extent, the disappointment in cricketers' circles over the statement made by the board secretary that the BCCI will not recognise the AIC and that all decisions with regard to players in international competitions will be discussed with the captain of the team.

The issue of payment to players had created a lot of bitterness. Until the last season, the preliminary rounds of the Ranji Trophy fetched just Rs 300 per month for each player. This time, the board has accepted the recommendations of the committee set up to look into the payment rates. In the opening rounds, the players will receive Rs 500 per head. In the pre-quarters and quarters, the sum will be raised to Rs 700. In the semi-finals, each player will get Rs 1,000 while in the final, it will further go up by Rs 500. The Duleep Trophy matches will also fetch the players more than double the amount they have received so far. For these revised payments, the board is giving each state association an additional grant of Rs 20,000 per season.

RASHBEHARI DAS



NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA





The BCCI president, **Biswanath Dutt** (extreme right), felt that **Bedi** (middle) did not do the right thing by criticising **Gavaskar's** (left) decision to reject the MCC's offer of life membership

The only discordant note struck at the meeting was the Bedi affair. The manager of the Indian cricket team went on record saying that Sunil Gavaskar had shamed the country by rejecting the MCC's offer of life membership. The BCCI president, Biswanath Dutt, made it clear that Bedi did not do the right thing by addressing an open letter to Gavaskar as manager of the Indian cricket team. In fact, secretary Ranbir Singh has been asked to write a letter to Bedi asking him to explain why he had used official nomenclature. Several members had felt an immediate explanation was called for, but considering the effect it could have on the touring Indian team, it was decided that the letter—which is not a show-cause notice—would be served as soon as Bedi returned home.

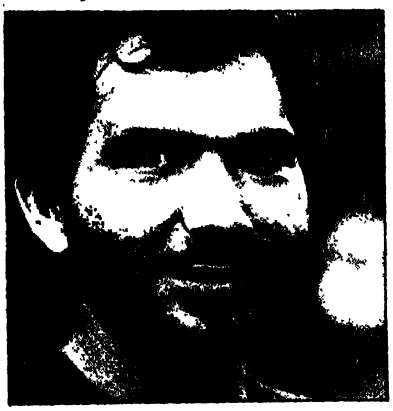
The changes sought to be made in the playing conditions and the players' emoluments have gone down well in cricketing circles. But a note of dissent has been sounded by the 'thinker' among cricketers, Arun Lal. The opening bat welcomed the increase in players' fees, but said the new quotient rule would only serve to ruin the game. He has given a classic example by saying that a side scoring a mammoth 600 runs in 120 overs for the loss of just one wicket would still lose if the opposition managed to score 40 runs for the loss of as many as nine wickets, provided these runs came in seven overs or less. If a situation like this occurs, there will be again a hue and cry over the quotient rule.

But these possibilities are far from the minds of all members of the board as they gear up for the elections next month. After all, power is the name of the game. •

Arijit Sen/Calcutta



A Ranji Trophy match in progress: will the new rules work?



Arun Lal sounded a note of dissent. He welcomed the increase in players' fees but said that the new quotient rule would only serve to ruin the game

Jesus Christ, B.C.?

New research pushes back the date of the Messiah's birth by two years

What does Santa Claus do with his furs and woollens and pointed pompom cap if we start celebrating Christmas in mid-summer? We might, if we go along with astronomer R. Subramaniam's theory.

If Subramaniam, director of the Birla Planetarium, is right, then Christ was not born on 25 December, Zero AD, but on 17 June, 2 BC. And the "Star of Bethlehem", which heralded the birth of the Saviour, was not a new star, as suggested by the Magi, but a conjunction of Venus and Jupiter, the two brightest planets in the night sky.



PRATIK KANJILAL

"The conjunction was the most prominent celestial phenomenon in the period of ten years before and after Zero AD," says Subramaniam

This rare conjunction took place again on 13 August, 1990. The brightest planet, Venus, was just 0° 2.4' north of Jupiter, the second brightest planet. "But the conjunction in 2 BC was closer than this year's," says Subramaniam. "The angular separation was of only a few seconds." Being almost superimposed on each other, the planets would have appeared to be a single, dazzling celestial object. This, in all probability, the Magi hailed as a "new star".

Astronomers of this century, however, have believed the Star of Bethlehem to be either a comet, or, more likely, a supernova explosion. The latter is preferred as an explanation, since the phenomenon of an ageing star exploding makes it many times brighter than our sun for a few days, and that could easily have been taken as a miracle signalling the arrival of the Son of God. But Subramaniam frowns upon both these explanations.

"In ancient records, comets are always described as "a star with a tail," says Subramaniam. "And there is no mention of a tail in the case of the Star of Bethlehem. He also discounts the supernova theory, because the object would have lit up the sky for much longer than the Magi describe. Also, that would have been recorded by other cultures, which isn't the case. "This was certainly the most prominent celestial phenomenon in the period ten years before and after what we now take as Zero AD," says the astronomer. So, if the star of Bethlehem was not a figment of the religious imagination, it most probably was this planetary conjunction.

But A.K. Bhatnagar, director of the Positional Astronomy Centre, Calcutta, doesn't quite agree. "It is not very likely that the Magi, known as the 'wise men of the East', would mistake a planetary conjuction for a new star," he says. They were probably familiar with the detailed astronomical records at Alexandria, Babylon, Greece—maybe even India.

Subramaniam began work about five years ago on the peculiar conjunction of last month. Working backwards to the last such conjunction—with the help of Herman Mucke, director of the Urania Observatory in Vienna—he had placed the date at 17 June, 2 BC. The correlation with the birth of Christ hit him when he realised that this was the brightest phenomenon in the night sky around that time.

Surprisingly, the Bishop of Calcutta, the Rev D.C. Gorai, has no qualms about accepting a new date of Christ's birth. "Christmas is a later development, made to coincide with the already existing time of festivities," he says. "The Orthodox churches like the Armenians, for example, celebrate Christmas on 6 January.

Other scholars seem to hold similar opinions. "The theologian Clement of Alexandria once suggested 2 May," says Rev. Sujoy Bannerjee, vice-principal of the Bishop's Theological College, Calcutta. According to Rev. Bannerjee, celebrating Christmas on 25 December began in the fourth century AD, probably to divert people from the pagan festivals of the winter solstice. However, Rev. Bannerjee has certain reservations. "It is believed that Herod killed all first-born male infants in an effort to eliminate Jesus, and we know that Herod died in 4 BC," he clarifies. "So, how could the Massacre of the Innocents have taken place, if Christ was born after 4BC?"

And the underdogs of the science of star-gazing, astrologers, believe the Saviour was born even before. "Given the peculiarities of Christ's life," says Amritlal, a leading Calcutta astrologer, "it is likely that he was born on 25 December, 7 BC at 10:18 pm. Under the planetary conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces." But he admits that a birth under the conjunction of Venus and Jupiter would be highly significant, since these two planets have the greatest religious powers. "Jupiter being the *Devaguru* and Venus the *Asuraguru*, anybody born under their conjunction would have fantastic religious powers," he adds. "In fact, the influence of either one would be impressive. Zoroaster, Buddha and Vivekananda were all born under Jupiter."

However, whether another founder of a world religion was born last month under this rare conjunction, the astrologer cannot tell. Only time will.●

Antara Dev Sen/Calcutta

A noble example

■ There couldn't have been a better way to encourage the Dattak Putri Yogna , (the female adoption scheme). The additional chief secretary of the Madhya Pradesh government, D.G. Bhave, announced recently that he would adopt one girl child each from the seven districts of Bhopal and Hosangabad divisions to give a fillip to the practice of adopting orphan girls in the state. Bhave, who is in charge of the department of rural development which drafted the Dattak Putri Yogna , made his announcement in Bhopal during a meeting to review the progress of measures taken under the women and child welfare development programmes. And to prove his sincerity, he urged the seven district collectors of Bhopal and Hosangabad as well as the joint director of the *panchayats*, who were present at the meeting, to select one child for him from each district. Going by the success rate of most government-sponsored social welfare programmes, Bhave's attitude is definitely worthy of emulation.

On the road with culture

■ The authorities at the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay have come up with a novel scheme for reaching out to more schools and children, particularly those belonging to the weaker sections of society. The Rs 25 lakh project is the brainchild of Sadashiv Gorakshkar, director of the museum, who believes that "a museum's activities should not be confined to its premises. It has to reach out to the people."

The scheme, currently awaiting the approval of the Union ministry of culture, involves mobile exhibitions, lecture-demonstrations and slide shows on various aspects of Indian culture. Says Gorakshkar, "If schools cannot reach us, we will go to them."

The idea for this project occurred to Gorakshkar when he saw how thrilled a group of roadside children were when they were brought to the museum by a social service agency.

He also plans to start a children's library in the museum, which will stock books and video cassettes catering to their tastes.

Charnock's Cocktail

■ Charnock's Cocktail! A drink with which revellers can toast Calcutta's tercentenary? No. It is a publishing house which brings out a travellers' guide—*Frequent Traveller*—edited and published quarterly from Calcutta. It provides a mine of information on flight schedules and choice hotels all over India.

It also contains a comprehensive list of domestic flight details which is titled "The frequent travellers' nightmare". There is also information on international flights. This pocket guide is really handy for it is filled with myriad details not only on beautiful tourist resorts dotting the country but also provides the Indian traveller with lists of foreign missions all over the globe

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Radha Seth



Dimple Kapadia

THIS INDIA

RAJNANDGAON: An official of Ambagarh Chowki has had to take charge of eight posts simultaneously following large-scale transfer or suspension of officials on charges of corruption and irregularities. Naib tehsildar Bhattad, now holds charge as tehsildar, municipal administrator, block officer, deputy registrar, zonal convener of census, in-charge of sub-treasury and another post of naib tehsildar besides his own post. Ironically Bhattad himself had been transferred to Hairagarh by the Madhya Pradesh government but could not be relieved—*Indian Express* (M.T. Sampath Kumaran, Bangalore)

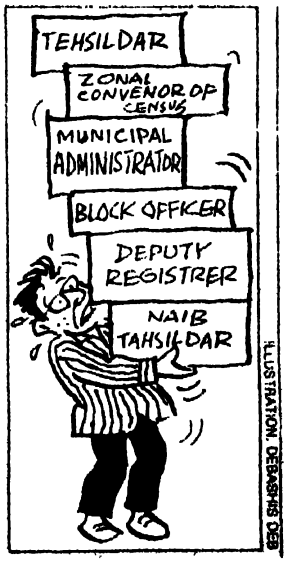


ILLUSTRATION: DEBASHIS DEB

LUCKNOW: In their apparent haste to catch a train a couple took away someone else's child, leaving their own crying at the Charbagh railway station. Two couples were sleeping in the station's waiting hall with their baby boys of almost identical age. But when Pradip Kumar of Sitapur and his wife woke up they found their five-month-old son missing. In his place was another child of approximately the same age. Pradip Kumar has lodged an FIR with the GRP who are finding it difficult to look after the stranded child—*The Times of India* (Anjali Khare, Faizabad)

CALCUTTA: Women police in Calcutta will have to wear trousers while performing outdoor duties according to an order issued by the city police chief B.K. Saha. According to the police gazette, women police personnel "shall perform duties in working uniform comprising white slacks, white shirts, belts, black shoes and helmets. They would also carry small batons. The women police in the assistant commissioner rank will wear khaki uniforms."—*The Telegraph* (Ajanta Dasgupta, Howrah)

BEGINNING 2 SEPTEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



Friends and relatives will be helpful to you. You may have to go through a lot of hardships, but do not worry, for good times are ahead. A letter will bring good news. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 2, 5 and 8
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



There will be important changes this week. Make the best use of the opportunities that come your way. You will be able to overcome most of your obstacles. Romance is not on the cards.

Good dates: 4, 6 and 7
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



This is a memorable week for lovers. A friend will be helpful. Employees will progress steadily. Artists should be more imaginative. Students will be very busy. A favourable week for mediamen.

Good dates: 3, 4 and 6
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Professionals will do well if they play their cards properly. Financial gains are indicated. But check extravagance. The time is ripe for romance and matrimonials. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 2, 3 and 5
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July—20 August)



Businessmen will do extremely well. Financial prospects are bright for all of you. This is a lucky phase for lovers. A pleasure trip is in the offing. A favourable week for doctors and scientists. Watch your health.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 8
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



The time is favourable for matrimonials. You may have to bear some physical hardship now. Legal problems might cause concern. A family member might fall ill. Businessmen must avoid investments.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 8
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This is a lucky week for all of you. Most of your problems will be solved. You will be able to win over your foes. The domestic front will remain peaceful. Your children will be a source of joy to you.

Good dates: 3, 6 and 7
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 5
Favourable direction: West

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



Those in service might be promoted or transferred to places of their choice. Businessmen must not fritter away the chances that come their way. Romance is in the offing. You can also strike new deals.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 6
Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: East

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is a good week for business meetings and fundraising. The period may not be an eventful one. But you will gain a lot during this phase. Your health will improve. Your domestic affairs will take up much of your time.

Good dates: 2, 4 and 7
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: North-west

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



The financial front looks bright. Some of you will inherit property. This is a fairly good week for romance. Do not neglect your work. Keep an eye on your health. Avoid unnecessary risks.

Good dates: 3, 5 and 6
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: West

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



Good fortune is in store for you. Romance is in the offing. This is not the time to lend or borrow. Be on the guard against deceit. You may have to shoulder added burden. Your efforts may not bear fruit.

Good dates: 2, 3 and 8
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: South

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. Those in service must not neglect their work. Be careful on the financial front. Consult your elders before taking any decision. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 7
Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 5
Favourable direction: East

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—CAPRICORN

The Scorpio woman will be very appreciative of the Capricorn man's ambition and his devotion to his career. But the Capricorn man should not go overboard, for in the long run his career might come in the way of their relationship.

Give my jeep back!

Those of the Tau's former protégés who thought they had got away with letting down the Chaudhary, have another thing coming. Devi Lal, in his infinite wisdom, has now hit upon a novel way to get back at them.

It's very simple, really. The Tau had given all his supporters jeeps during the last election to help them campaign in their constituencies. Now the former deputy prime minister wants them back. And fast.

Predictably, the recipients are refusing to surrender the vehicles.

But the Chaudhary is not going to give up without a fight. He has already lodged a police complaint in Faridabad against Janata Dal MP Vishwendra Singh,



Devi Lal: getting tough

who had refused to return his jeeps. The police raided the member's house to recover the vehicles.

Vishwendra Singh, however, was prepared for this contingency. And had sent the jeeps to his constituency so that the police could not seize them. Not content with that, the honourable member complained to the Speaker, asking him to take action against the police.

But it is only a matter of time before the Tau gets his possessions back. For, the papers of all the vehicles are lying with the Chaudhary and the MPs may have no option in the matter.

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL

We thought that Devi Lal would be this century's Charan Singh, but judging by V.P. Singh's courtship of the backward castes, he himself is the new Charan Singh.

A BITTER JANATA DAL MP

Beyond Pepsi

The behaviour of George Fernandes, the maverick minister of railways, is causing some concern to the Prime Minister's supporters.

When he was fired as minister for Kashmir affairs, Fernandes held his peace. When the new industrial policy—which goes against all his beliefs—was in the news, he refused to embarrass V.P. Singh.



George Fernandes: he's got the Raja thinking

But now, George's firebrand temperament is resurfacing. On *Khula Manch*, he gave as good as he got and was outraged when P.Upendra chopped out all the fun bits. He even went public with his criticisms. *(See Doordarshan Pvt. Ltd, page 10)*.

And last week in Calcutta, he took on Jyoti Basu at a public meeting to complain about his notoriously inefficient regime.

George's friends say that he hasn't gone over to Chandra Shekhar despite rumours to this effect. But the Raja's camp is worried about what the maverick will do next.

CASTE-O-METER

Who's against the Mandal Commission report—and who's for it

- **Arun Nehru:** The minister for commerce believes that the implementation of the Mandal recommendations will divide Indian society on caste lines, and completely destroy the country. Has tried to make the Raja change his mind, but with a remarkable lack of success.
- **Arif Mohammad Khan:** Even when the Janata Dal manifesto was being finalised, Khan had objected to the inclusion of the reference to the Commission. Nobody paid much attention to him then. And that situation persists.
- **Ajit Singh:** Resolutely opposes the implementation of the report. There isn't much to the allegation that his unhappiness stems from the fact that the Jats have been kept out of the reservation lists.
- **Sharad Yadav:** Led the campaign to get the report's recommendations implemented. It was, apparently, the textile minister's persuasive skills—and talk of caste combinations at the next polls—which helped the Raja make up his mind.
- **Ram Vilas Paswan:** Is convinced that his support base will increase once the reservation policy gets going. Therefore, Paswan doesn't mind adopting a confrontationist stand on this matter.

Free hand? Not really

When Virendra Verma had been appointed Punjab Governor, the Raja had promised to give him a free hand in solving the problems of the state. It now turns out, however, that the Prime Minister was less than serious.

For one thing, it is minister of state for home affairs, Subodh Kant Sahay, who has been entrusted with the responsibility of getting the problem state in order. And Sahay has already begun touring the border areas and issuing instructions to state government officials, much to Verma's chagrin.

To add to the Governor's resentment, he was not even allowed within handshaking distance of the Prime Minister during the Raja's recent visit to Punjab. The tour itinerary was fixed by Sahay and Verma was kept out of things totally.

Of course, the official version is that Verma was far too ill during V.P. Singh's visit to appear in public. But his miraculous recovery after the Raja zipped back to Delhi does make one wonder. ●

Shadow minister for AIIMS?

Has the Bharatiya Janata Party lost use for A.B. Vajpayee's famed oratorical skills?

Yes, if the monsoon session of Parliament is anything to go by.

While party president L.K. Advani initiates debates on national issues in the Lok Sabha, J.P. Mathur performs the same role in the Upper House.

Atal Behari, on the other hand, finds himself restricted to raising such matters as the current strike at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).



A.B. Vajpayee: losing out

Sorry, but you'll have to walk

Madhu Dandavate may have been nominated to the National Security Council. But he certainly doesn't have much luck with the security personnel stationed at Parliament.

Recently, the finance minister drove into the main gates of Parliament, only to have his car flagged down by the guards. His car, the securitymen informed the bemused Dandavate, did not have the required parking label on the windscreen. Hence, they couldn't possibly allow it to proceed to the House.

But didn't they know who he was, asked the astonished minister.

Yes, of course they did, came the indignant answer. But rules, you know, are rules.

Dandavate got off the car and walked to the main building.

But the matter didn't end there.

The incident was reported to the Speaker who was asked to enquire as to why the security staff had been so disobliging. After all, several cars without parking labels are allowed inside, if the person inside the vehicle is identified.

So, why the discrimination against Madhu Dandavate?

HEARD ON THE STREETS

V.P. Singh *ki antim iccha, Brahmin Thakur maange bhiksha.*

PRO-MANDAL COMMISSION SLOGAN

V.P. Singh *ki antim iccha, padhe likhe chalayen riksha.*

ANTI-MANDAL COMMISSION SLOGAN



Madhu Dandavate: the car stops here

AMPLIFIER

The noisiest members of the Rajya Sabha

■ **S.S. Ahluwalia:** Congress(I) member from Bihar. Insists in intervening in every parliamentary debate even if he knows nothing of the matter under discussion. His propensity to throw his weight around had led to many reprimands from the Chair.

■ **Ratnakar Pandey:** The man who mourned Mamata Banerjee prematurely. Pandey makes a lot of noise but remarkably each intervention consists of the same less than erudite statement: "Resign. Resign. V.P Singh, resign." It is rumoured that by the next session he will have learnt a second phrase.

■ **Shankar Dayal Singh:** Come back Kalpnath Rai, all is forgiven. Singh, a Janata Dal member from Bihar, makes more noise than Rai used to. Oddly enough, he is most voluble when the Raja is in the House.

■ **Pramod Mahajan:** More sensible than the Congress(I)'s megaphones. But the BJP member from Maharashtra's policy is: anything they can do, I can do louder.

Auto pilot

The deadlock over the choice of a new managing director for Indian Airlines continues. V.P. Singh had decided to give the job to Shekhar Singh who had flown the UP government's plane when he was chief minister. Vinod Pande tried to implement this decision while Arif Mohammad Khan, the minister, agreed to go along.

Unfortunately, UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav objected to the proposal. And just as VP thought he had got around Mulayam, the Public Enterprises Selection Board decided not to shortlist Shekhar Singh for the job.

The Cabinet secretariat persuaded the board to yield enough to interview him but it has now refused to recommend his name.

At Air India, Arif wants to follow the sensible, if obvious, course and confirm Subhash Gupte, but such is the state of the government that even that hasn't come through.

Only Vayudoot, whose MD does *not* get on with Arif, seems to be unaffected by the chaos at the aviation ministry. ●

What did the Skypak Man say to the girl from Singapore?

"Don't kill me with your charm! I have a job to do..."



We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK **The worldwide couriers.**

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059

No ban, no challenge... just a burning desire.



ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION □ RS 7.00

GOLDEN GIRLS: INDIA'S ACE SPRINTERS

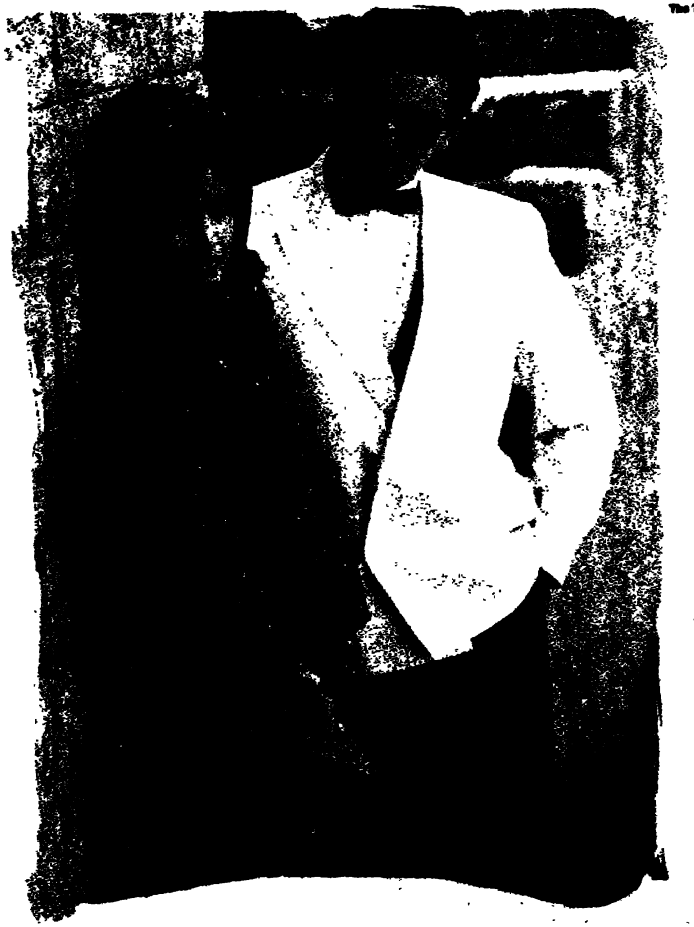
SUNDAY



THE IMAGE CRUMBLES

Is the uproar over the Mandal Commission the beginning of the end for V.P. Singh?





Creations for a Masterpiece.

JCT FABRICS

SUITINGS • SHIRTINGS • DRESS MATERIALS

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 36 □ RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
9—15 SEPTEMBER 1990



28
COVER STORY
The image crumbles
Is the uproar over the Mandal Commission the beginning of the end for V.P. Singh?

14
CONTROVERSY
Assault on a green
A parliamentary controversy erupts over SUNDAY's Maneka Gandhi article. Also, the green minister replies to the charges.



24
PROFILE
Does anybody remember this man?
Mufti Mohammad Sayeed: the invisible home minister.

48
TEXTILES
All that glitters...
Four centuries later, the Banarasi silk industry still thrives.

70
PHOTO-ESSAY
Golden girls
With Ashwini Nachappa beating sprint queen P.T. Usha in a recent race, the top honours for women's athletics is wide open. Who are Usha's contenders?



76
BOOK EXTRACT
The pen is mightier
Arun Shourie's account of the *Indian Express*' battles with the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi regimes.



84
SPORTS
Mixed fortunes
Though the Indian cricket team lost the Test series, its tour of England was not a complete disaster.

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
SIGHT AND SOUND 9
COUNTERVIEW 12
BODYLINE 18
SOUTH BLOCK 19
NEWSWATCH 23
Jyoti Basu vs the party
MANI-TALK 40
SPOTLIGHT 44
BUSINESS 50
BUSINESS DIARY 57
NEWS 58
KHAAS BAAT 69
MEDIA MUSINGS 82
MILESTONES 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency: Gautam Patole

Cover artwork: D.S. Thapa

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise, North-eastern states: 30 paise



Death of democracy

The cover story (*Fired!*, 19—25 August) was absorbing. The dismissal of Benazir Bhutto's government by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan has dealt a severe blow to democracy in Pakistan, as the army has been allowed to reassert itself.

Benazir had to pass through a turbulent time during her truncated tenure as Prime Minister. Being a woman in an Islamic country, she was always viewed with a jaundiced eye by the fundamentalists and the army.

It was widely felt that with the introduction of a democratic process in Pakistan, a new era would begin. But the present situation has shattered such hopes.

Shashank Prasad, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

■ The dismissal of Benazir's government by the Pakistani President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan was both constitutional and unconstitutional.

It was constitutional because Bhutto's government failed to maintain law and order in the country, specially in her home province of Sind. The country was in turmoil ever since she came to power, with ethnic riots paralysing life in Sind.

But her removal was unconstitutional because she was elected democratically. Therefore, the present situation suggests that Pakistan is back to the dark days of military dictatorship.

S. Bachan Jeet Singh, Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

■ The cover story was a timely evaluation of the factors that led to the ouster of the Benazir government in Pakistan. The democratic process has suffered a severe setback. The reasons behind her ouster are the following:

The Pakistani Army could not stomach the fact that democracy was back and an elected government was in power. The Islamic fundamentalists could never accept a woman as Prime Minister. Moreover, Benazir's inept style of functioning, rampant corruption, and ethnic violence in the country, especially in Benazir's home province, Sind, queered the pitch for her.

Thus, Benazir failed to live up to the expectations of the people of Pakistan. Also, India did not gain much from her rule, for the Kashmir problem worsened, thanks to the active support given by the Pakistani Army to the Kashmiri militants. And India's hopes of improving relations with Pakistan suffered a rude shock.

Amitava Sen, New Delhi

■ The article on Benazir was both informative and interesting. Her assertion that she took Kashmir out of cold storage, something which all her predecessors had failed to do, was, however, ludicrous. It was ironical because she herself was ultimately thrown into cold storage in her own country. Besides this, her allegations that her ouster must have made Indians happy are totally baseless. One feels sorry not for her ouster, but for the fact that democracy in Pakistan received a very severe blow.

Prabhakar S. Harsole, Indore (Madhya Pradesh)



Benazir Bhutto with husband Asif Zardari

■ The write-up on Benazir's dismissal was excellent. It is unfortunate that the people of Pakistan could not ensure the survival of democracy. The Pakistani Army was mainly responsible for the present state of affairs. The military and the fundamentalists could never accept a woman as the country's Prime Minister. President Ishaq Khan has also been a party to the conspiracy against a democratically elected government. Had he been fair, he would have allowed Benazir to seek a vote of confidence before dismissing her on charges of corruption. Actually, the whole idea is to keep Benazir out of power anyhow and install someone who is willing to toe the line of the generals.

Khursheed Ahmed, Patna (Bihar)

■ Benazir's dismissal goes a long way in establishing the fact that democracy is something which the Pakistani Army and the fundamentalists are allergic to. Moreover, of late, the President of Pakistan had a strained relation with Benazir. She, on her part, also failed to live up to the expectations of the people. But with the sacking of the Bhutto regime, democracy seems to be the main loser.

B.N. Bose, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Rule of the mediocre

The write-up on the Mandal Commission report (*Promoting mediocrity*, 19—25 August) was timely and appropriate. The implementation of this report will certainly lead to a deterioration of standard in every sphere. Undeserving candidates may end up as technocrats, or for that matter, hold important positions in government institutions. Needless to say, merit will suffer. Besides, the nation will be divided along caste lines. The move was clearly aimed at cornering the backward caste vote banks

and points to the possibility of a mid-term poll.

At a time when the country is beset with problems in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam, the National Front government has added to its troubles by deciding to implement the Mandal Commission report. What is worse is that none of the political parties has protested against the government's move. Are they scared of losing the vote bank?

Deepak Kumar, Patna (Bihar)

■ In an attempt to steal the show in his ongoing tussle with Devi Lal, Prime Minister V.P. Singh has dropped a bombshell by accepting the recommendations of the Mandal Commission report. There is no justification in making upper castes—if they can be really called that—the scapegoats. Instead, the government should have made education free for all and allowed students to compete for jobs without discrimination.

Krishnendu Chakrabarti, Howrah (West Bengal)

■ By deciding to implement the Mandal Commission report—which had been gathering dust since 1982—V.P Singh has only betrayed his cynicism. As employment opportunities become scarce, concessions, like the one the government has given to the backward classes, are sure to be resisted by students all over the country.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

■ The central government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission report is a highly retrograde step. It will jeopardise the future of lakhs of students throughout the country. By going in for the reservations the government is aiming to build a second rate nation. The decision seems to be a highly motivated one. The National Front is using this as a ploy to win over the backward caste vote bank. It is also deplorable that none of the other parties such as the BJP, the leftists and the Congress(I) has condemned the Centre's policy.

The government should provide the so-called backward classes with proper education facilities and better opportunities to improve their lot. Reservation is certainly not the solution.

Rohit R. Das, Bangalore (Karnataka)



Students protesting against the Mandal Commission report: their future is in grave danger

Under pressure

The write-up on *(The siege of Mahanta,* 12—18 August) raises a few questions. The gruesome murder of the SP(Superintendent of police) of Dibrugarh shows the latest strategy being adopted by the ULFA activists. While Bhrigu Phukan, the home minister tendered his resignation owning moral responsibility for the killing, the Mahanta government should have done the same.

The state government of Assam does not know how to deal with the situation while the ULFA seems determined to cripple the administration and hold the innocent to ransom. Unless some serious steps are taken, things may go out of hand.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

ULFA guerrillas: holding Assam to ransom



True history

The interview featuring Govind Talwalkar *(Transfer of power,* 12—18 August) was excellent. The time has come for us to know history in its true perspective before getting carried away emotionally. Talwalkar seems to be a level-headed person and India needs more of his kind at this hour.

Sandip K. Tagore, Director, Indian Culture Centre, Osaka (Japan)

Frankly speaking

The interview with Rajiv Gandhi *(Time to be frank,* 12—18 August) made interesting reading.



Rajiv Gandhi: ruing his fate

Rajiv's version that V.P. Singh had conspired for the top post in the country cannot be denied completely. After all, V.P. Singh's image of a crusader of truth has come to be questioned. And at this stage, Rajiv's electoral defeat can be attributed to the fact that he and his team were largely misrepresented as computer boys, whiz kids and the agents of Bofors.

What the country needs is a leader who can lead and not a set of leaders who are determined to perpetuate misrule under the garb of collective leadership.

G.V. Prasad, Mangalore (Karnataka)

A mockery

Incredible as it may seem, there was hardly a paragraph in the report (*Friend? Who, me?* 22—28 July) that was not fatally flawed with bloomers. For example, the authors state that before 1974 both Bombay Dyeing and Reliance imported DMT. Bombay Dyeing has never imported DMT, which is a raw material for polyester that they do not manufacture themselves. In 1986, Bombay Dyeing started manufacturing DMT for sale to polyester producers. Similarly, in 1974, Reliance was just a small private fabric weaver. It only went public in 1977 and into the polyester yarn manufacturing business in 1982.

The statement that the Reliance project at "Patalganga is a dud..." really takes the cake. The plants have been operational for years, working to capacity, making polyester fibre, polyester yarn, LAB, PTA, paraxylene etc. As a matter of fact the customs authorities inspired by Mr Wadia's zeal to destroy Reliance, recently issued the company a show-cause notice alleging that it produces more PTA and paraxylene than the Mr Wadia gave it permission for.

As for finances, the results of the year ended 31 March, 1990, which were announced recently show that the company performance had gone up in all sectors and that its low debt-equity ratio indicated a borrowing power of over Rs 2100 crores.

It is also incorrect to link the L&T suppliers' credit issue to Reliance's financial future. This credit was no grant or gift, to put cash into Reliance's pockets. It was a credit specifically dedicated for the supply of L&T equipment for the gas cracker project at Hazira. The Rs 820 crore debenture issue was no "neat plan" for easy cash. These debentures were meant to provide partial financing for a Rs 1425 crore investment plan, in which suppliers' credit was less than half.

Needless to say, the report is factually wrong in stating that Nusli Wadia did not receive any blessings from the new government. Departing from the long term fiscal policy, the Janata Dal government retained a low customs duty rate of 80 per cent despite the crash in world prices of paraxylene from $900 a tonne to $350 a tonne. The duty on other similarly affected petrochemicals like MEG was raised from 90 per cent to 150 per cent but not paraxylene, vital to Bombay Dyeing. With landed costs of imports around Rs 13,000 per tonne compared to Rs 18,500 per tonne for domestic supplies, Wadia gained a huge windfall profit. He was allowed to import 4000 mt of paraxylene in February 1990, followed by a further clearance to import 8000 mt in March, curiously enough just hours before the new import policy was announced. In April, another licence to import 14,500 mt was given to Mr Wadia.

On 2 May, the DGTD cleared the way for another 30,000 mt, without caring to fulfil the Exim policy which required prior clearance from indigenous manufacturers. This total of 56,500 mt, well exceeds Bombay Dyeing's annual requirement of 40,000 mt but a benevolent government is disclaiming the imports approved in the previous year, i.e. before 31 March, 1990. It is ironic that while the government is urging everyone else to conserve scarce foreign exchange and reduce the imports of petroleum poducts, it is blithely allowing imports to Bombay Dyeing worth nearly Rs 40 crores, despite offers of local supply from Reliance and IPCL. The price differential compared to domestic prices gives Bombay Dyeing a huge windfall profit of nearly Rs 30 crores.



Dhirubhai Ambani: losing out to Wadia?

If Wadia received no favours, was it a coincidence that the National Front government decanalised paraxylene on 30 March, and placed it on the Limited Permissible List, thus allowing discretionary treatment in issuance of import licences? Was it not strange that the government bent further backwards in the first week of May by allowing all items on the Limited Permissible List to get 18 months requirement under Automatic Supplementary Licence, regardless of domestic availability? It also allowed any new items in the Limited Permissible List, which was earlier in the canalised list. Somehow, there was only one product which fit the bill. No marks for guess work. It was indeed paraxylene.

To make a further mockery of the Janata Dal government's much professed decrial of not taking sides in a corporate war, it has dropped all the FERA and other cases listed in the Company Law Board report on Bombay Dyeing after the *Indian Express* adviser, S. Gurumurthy, reportedly interceded on Mr Wadia's behalf with the Government of India. The enforcement directorate had even imposed a penalty of Rs 1.14 crores, which has not been enforced. There were also dozens of other cases which have all been conveniently dropped.

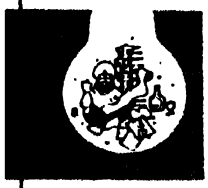
In his recent speech at the Annual General Meeting, Mr Wadia made much of his needs to import paraxylene for lack of availability of domestic production. Reliance has several letters on the file sent to the government expressing its willingness to sell paraxylene. Bombay Dyeing has never sent any correspondence asking Reliance or IPCL whether it has paraxylene for sale.

The effect of all these generous privileges accorded to the Janata Dal's most favoured company has been reflected in their share prices which have soared from Rs 80 to Rs 250. Surely, Bombay Dyeing's share price did not soar because a value-based government decided to bless him with an Indian passport. Who can say that Wadia does not have friends? With friends like the *Indian Express* who needs the government?

Tony Jesudasen, Group Adviser, Corporate Communications, Reliance Industries Ltd, New Delhi

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Yugoslav exposure



I have never been to Yugoslavia but have had quite a few Yugoslav friends. Ever since I read Ivo Andric's *A Bridge on the Drina*, I have made it a point to pick up whatever works I could find in their many languages in English translations and read them. They are not many. And hardly any available in Indian book stores. Fortunately, the present Yugoslav ambassador and his wife happen to be academics and as generous in lending books as they are in dispensing Slivovitch. I got a haul of books, mostly Slovenian, from their collection: Ivan Cankar's autobiography *My Life*, Ciril Kosmac's *A Day in Spring*, Ivan Potrc's *The Land the Flesh*, Vitomil Zupan's *Minuet for a Guitar* and Dominik Smole's *Antigone*. I had never heard of anyone of them.

The first thing that strikes the reader about the modern Yugoslav writer is that though influenced by European and American writers, there is a unique Slavonic flavour in their writings. As in other countries, they rebelled against the social order. Most of them like Djilas were not only against Stalinist communism but even against its tepider version imposed by Marshal Tito and his successors. Many had their books banned and suffered imprisonment. Others went underground, wrote for proscribed underground literary and political journals.

Of the clutch of books I got, I was most impressed by Dominik Smole's *Antigone*. It is a play based on a Theban episode with very little dramatic content and just four main characters. Antigone was the daughter of Oedipus. She and her sister Ismene are living with King Creon and his son Haimon. Teiresias is the king's counsellor, a sort of Greek Chanakya. The play revolves round the siege of Thebes. It is repelled but amongst the dead is Polyneices, the brother of Ismene and Antigone. King Creon believes he played a traitorous role and his body should be let to rot or eaten up by scavengers. The two sisters are equally firm that he should be given a decent burial so that his spirit is at rest. Against the king's wishes, Antigone goes out of the city walls looking for her brother amongst the dead. She does not appear in the play at all but her relentless search for her dead brother is what one play is about.

The sage Teiresias speaks for the establishment. "All wars are senseless, without rhyme or reason, but one thing's certainly sure: that in the last account we have a non-event," he proclaims. Creon has his own obligations to stand by tradition; and tradition demands that Polyneices' body must remain unburied. He loves both Ismene and Antigone; but he will not allow his affection for the princesses to stand in the way of his duty. "A king should have restricted contact with his people and keep modest profile," he says. "A man when king, does not view the world from the centre of the scrimmage; but climbs a hill which has no colour and no sunshine, hoping to have a clear, objective view. Affection, tolerance and pity are emotions most appropriate for the family circle. A man made king knows only: investigation, trial and sentence."

Teiresias fully backs the king. He tries to persuade Ismene to tell her sister to give up seeking her brother's body.

"Sin, conscience, innocence and guilt—fine words indeed. But what of life, reality and circumstance, dear lady, position, situation, and those factors, hard and solid which buffet you and which you have to struggle with. Harsh facts, my child,
All else is but a stream of high-falutin's verbiage, a hollow jingle beside the hard and sad reality of daily life."

And adds:
"And in our dealings with the dead we cannot add nor take away for if you wish to foist on them some attribute or label, to shower them with glory or to press their dead heads in the mire, you waste your effort to no purpose! What's the use if all you get in answer is a stony smile and bye-bye. Toddle-oo. I am no more."

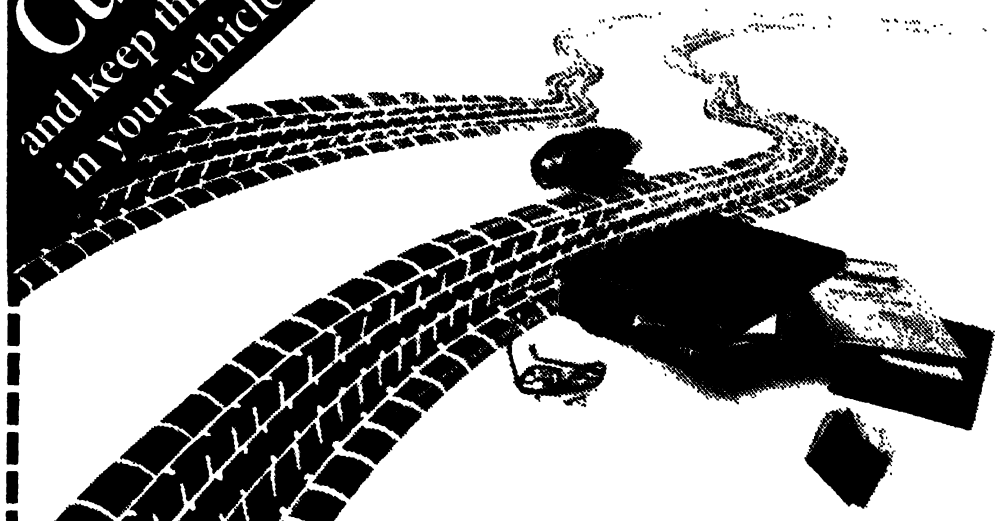
Ismene represents the conscience of humanity and refuses to compromise:
"For those whose conscience does not rise above the gutter,
who for a bowl of soup or a snug corner
by the fire would pawn their hearts and souls
who have no sense of pride and no idea of honour
With such, dear sage, Ismene does not deal!"

She tells Teiresias: "True peace and reconciliation are the work of noble minds, not fixers and accountants." And to the king: "Wisdom without mercy is an ignoble, hollow thing." She adds, "Nothing will be right tomorrow which is wrong today." Her alter ego is her page with whom she is evidently in love—"A happy child, radiant creature, glowing with an inner light—anxious as an early flower, which trembles as it submits to that fluttering butterfly, the world." And so on.

One is not sure whether Polyneices' body is found; Antigone claims she has given it a proper burial but this is far from clear. The play is summed up by a chant of the chorus addressed to the page. "Unlucky servant, faithful only to yourself, loyal only to your own advantage, and even more unhappy boy, unhappy Thebes and Creon too, who thought by evil to accomplish good. But evil, born of evil, evil bears in an unending line."

The first thing that strikes the reader about the modern Yugoslav writer is that though influenced by European and American writers, there is a unique Slavonic flavour in their writings

Cut and keep this ad in your vehicle.



You'll need it in case somebody is knocked down accidentally.

It can happen to the safest driver. As you are driving, suddenly, you knock down somebody. And the person is injured, sometimes fatally.

If a third party is injured, or property is damaged, do the following:-

- Though not obligatory under motor insurance, please help to move the injured person to a hospital for treatment.
- Inform the insurance company describing the nature of injury or damage.
- Please follow the advice of the insurance company. Do not promise any compensation to any third party who is involved in the accident without consulting the insurance company.
- In case of Police prosecution, seek legal counsel and keep the insurance company informed.
- If your paid driver is involved, please take down the particulars of his driving licence. Please see that the driver is available in future for investigation.
- If you receive any notice of claim from the third party, Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, or a Court of Law, intimate your insurance company immediately.
- Send all notices and summons you receive concerning the accident to the insurance company. The insurance company will attend to all of them on your behalf.

If your own vehicle is damaged, follow the procedures carefully for making a motor insurance claim.

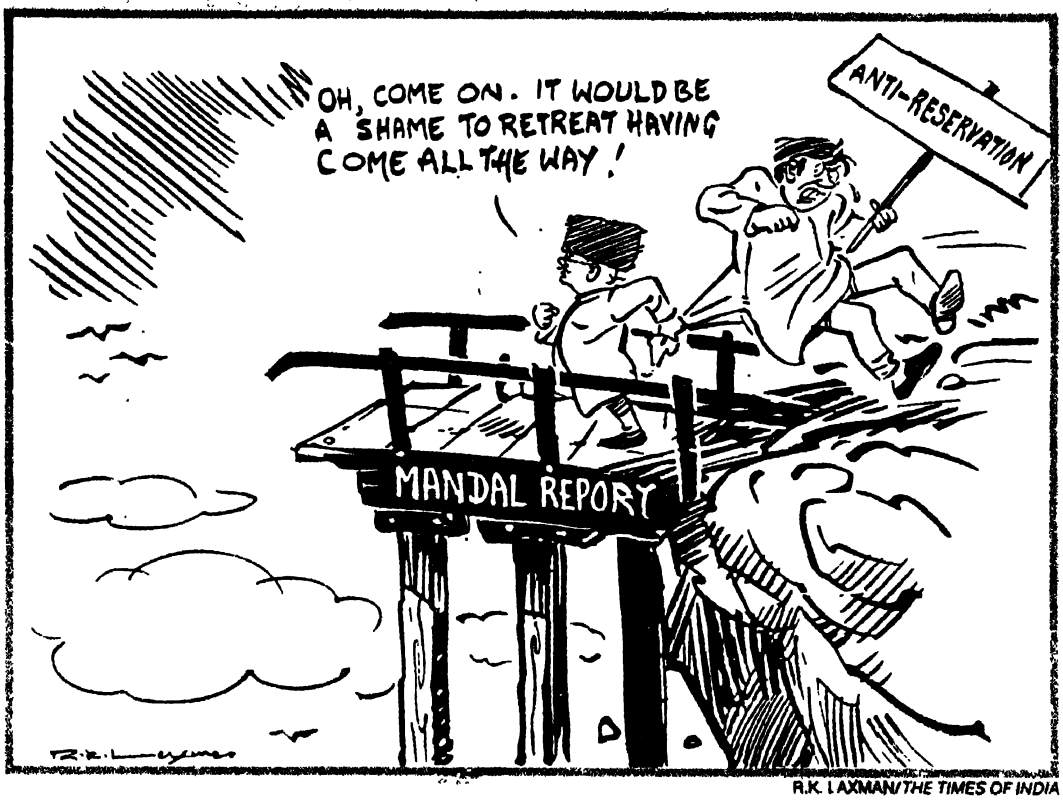
Please help us to help you in getting the claims recovery faster.

File your claim right and it will be processed in the quickest possible time.

GENERAL INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED · THE NEW INDIA ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED · THE ORIENTAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED · UNITED INDIA INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

R K SWAMY/GIC/768 B



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ Treating unequals as equals is the greatest injustice.

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister*

■ After all ours is a democracy, you listen to our views, we listen to yours. We are not among those who can be cowed down by terror tactics and show of force.

MUFTI MOHAMMAD SAYEED, *Union home minister, in Assam*

■ I would like the next poll to be in 1994.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president, on the possibility of a snap Lok Sabha poll*

■ Everyone is groping. I am also groping, not about what to achieve but how to achieve it.

I.K. GUJRAL, *external affairs minister, on his recent visit to Kuwait to ensure the safety of Indians there*

■ When the questions concern the Prime Minister, it is desirable that he attend the House. It is a tradition, a wholesome tradition, and it should be maintained.

S.D. SHARMA, *Rajya Sabha chairman, admonishing V.P. Singh for arriving late during Question Hour*

■ You can ask me any number of questions. You can lay me on the table of the House if you like.

MADHU DANDAVATE, *Union finance minister, in the Rajya Sabha after announcing the hike in car prices*

■ We (Pakistan and India) have already fought three wars. How much more before we realise the need to be together?

KULDIP NAYAR, *Indian high commissioner to Britain*

■ This government too can do what it wants.

DHIRENDRA BRAHMACHARI, *controversial godman, on the corruption charges against him*

■ We are not like those who swear by the Constitution and then forget all about it.

LALOO PRASAD YADAV, *Bihar chief minister*

■ I never think of who is with me and who is against me. I only think of what is right for the public.

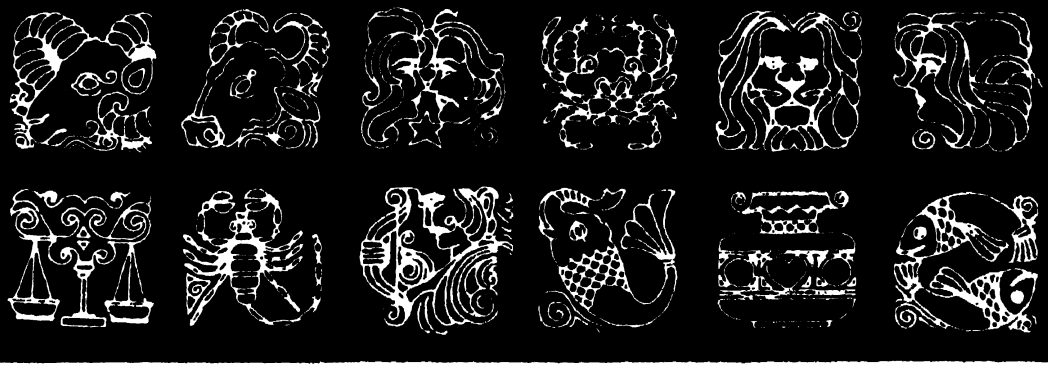
MULAYAM SINGH YADAV, *Uttar Pradesh chief minister*

■ People who are always listening to electronic music are actually destroying themselves by reducing their life span.

USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN, sarod *maestro*



BE THE MASTER OF YOUR OWN DESTINY.



CANSTAR

Earn 50% or more return per annum for a lifetime on initial investment after 10 years

Canbank Mutual Fund has, since its inception, built up an excellent track record The best of professional skills, financial acumen and intimate knowledge of the corporate world combine to bring to you high return yet safe investment opportunities Scheme after scheme, launched by us, has succeeded in turning market opportunities into lucrative returns Look at the total payout of **CANSHARE** alone -- **over 100%** in less than 30 months excluding market appreciation (Market price Rs 22 50 as on 31st July, 1990)

HIGHLIGHTS:

- A well established Mutual Fund with the largest investor base
- Professionally managed with proven track record of success
- Tax benefit under Section 80L of the Income-tax Act, 1961 upto Rs 10,000 or Capital Gains* benefit under Income-tax Act
- Easy encashability -- to be listed on Bombay and other Stock Exchanges after one year
- Buy back any time after three years
- Easy Transferability

* Separate application forms available

Minimum Repurchase price for 1000 Canstars:

A. On completion of

3 Years	–	Rs 15,150
4 Years	–	Rs. 17 400
5 Years	–	Rs 20,000
6 Years	–	Rs. 23,000
7 Years	–	Rs 26,500
8 Years	–	Rs 30,500
9 Years	–	Rs 35,000
10 Years	–	Rs 40,000

B. Option on completion of 10 years
Receive monthly income @ 12 50% p a. calculated on accumulated amount
and
Receive an annual bonus/appreciation from the 11th year onwards

OFFER CLOSES ON 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1990

CANBANK MUTUAL FUND
Orient House, Adi Marzban Path (Mangalore Street), Bombay 400 038
Principal Trustee : CANARA BANK
Always a step ahead

Concern

VINOD MEHTA

Take a bow, Srichand!

The Hindujas seek to get even with Arun Nehru



Two of the most unattractive figures on the contemporary scene are once again fighting for our attention. My first instinct is to ignore their shenanigans, but their manipulative skills are awesome and in their quest for survival they have managed to embroil one serving, one ex-Prime Minister, sections of the press, issues of probity and, of course, that ever-blazing 155 mm howitzer, Bofors. These are all booming in concert, shedding more heat than light and demonstrating yet again how low and despicable public life in India has become.

In one corner are the Hindujas, masters of intrigue, duplicity and chicanery. If tomorrow a Bofors cheque was discovered in their bank account they would produce an affidavit from that very bank denying its existence. They think nothing of flying editors ("bring your wife and family along") to London, all expenses paid, but a friend who worked as a consultant found them haggling over 50-rupee bills. He resigned in disgust. The Hindujas are unctuous, and in their attempts to 'buy' journalists they are embarrassingly straightforward. "How much?" is the first question they usually ask.

Tired and visibly panting in the other corner is Arun Kumar Nehru. Ancient and implacable enemy of the Hinduja brothers, his political career encapsulates some hitherto unstated Parkinson's law. In the early 80s, his power was legendary and so was his capacity for rudeness. Journalists trembled in his presence while Congress politicians approached him head down. Every dirty trick Indira Gandhi planned was executed superbly by this faithful. Rajiv used him for similar purposes before abandoning him for more talented hatchet-men. However, it must be conceded that in the corridors of power, Arun Nehru enjoys a formidable reputation for ministerial competence. His desk, rumour has it, is bereft of pending files.









The Hindujas: masters of intrigue, duplicity and chicanery. If tomorrow a Bofors cheque was discovered in their bank account, they would produce an affidavit from that very bank denying its existence

As every literate Indian knows, the Hinduja brothers are struggling to keep out of jail. Naturally, every underhand stratagem is being explored. Therefore, their interest in a report published in a Bombay daily *The Independent* on 29 August is understandable and so is *The Independent's* eagerness to extract the maximum mileage out of it. Newspapers prosper by disclosure, even though one might ask how photostats of the report reached the hands of Congress MPs in Delhi on the very morning the story was published in Bombay. But that is a minor cavil.

The report itself, alas, does not amount to much. Interestingly, even before it appeared, another Bombay morninger, *The Daily*, spoiled the 'scoop' through a front-page story that the Hindujas, courtesy friendly editors, were circulating anti-Arun Nehru disinformation which was expected to hit the headlines very soon. On 30 August, *The Daily* reported: "More documents related to Bofors are now available to *The Daily*. This time pertaining to Arun Singh's talks with the Swedes when he was minister of state for defence in the Rajiv Gandhi government." The paper went on: "It is obvious from the documents that by the time the actual negotiations for the gun started, Arun Nehru had been completely sidelined." Clearly, we are witnessing a new phenomenon in Indian journalism—a document versus document war with Hindujas arming one side and Arun Nehru the other.

The Independent report which set the stage for the war is, as I suggested earlier, small change.

- I don't think it will come as any great surprise to even cursory followers of national affairs that Arun Nehru was a major player in the initial discussions with Bofors and the Swedes. His assurance to a Bofors executive (Martin Ardbo) that his company had a "realistic chance" of winning the contract cannot be seen as out of line or suspicious.
- Neither can the Arun Nehru observation, that "an agreement on the political level was crucial" before



INDRAJEET AURANGABADKAR

the deal could be clinched, be considered startling. Indeed, it was the obvious remark to make. Bofors finally won the contract precisely because of a political agreement at the highest level—between Rajiv Gandhi and Olaf Palme.

• The New Delhi-based Swedish official's communication to Stockholm that Arun Nehru sought to create the impression that he was the *eminence grise* of the Bofors deal will provoke nothing beyond an 'interesting' response from followers of the Bofors mystery trail. Actually, Mr Nehru at the time was not just the *eminence grise* of the Bofors deal but of the entire Rajiv government.

• Arun Nehru's insistence that his and Rajiv's name be kept out of the negotiations is of a piece in the context. Now, if the commerce minister had said that only his name be kept out, that would have been news, big news.

• A tit-bit of the controversy--the allegation that the *Indian Express* suppressed the documents—is the only revelation in the report. However, here too it can be argued that given the paper's self-proclaimed editorial bias, the censorship, though regrettable, was perfectly understandable.

In Parliament an orchestrated din has been duly registered with shouts from the Congress benches for a full debate or the suspension of Zero Hour. A routine visit to Stockholm by V.P. Singh, when he was finance minister in the previous regime, is being seen as "clear proof" that the Prime Minister was involved in the Bofors scam and is "hiding his role". Surprisingly, the thrust of the Opposition attack was not directed at Arun Nehru. In fact, not a single Congress MP even mentioned his name as they sought to establish a "nexus" between this government and the Bofors scandal. Who, then, was the target? Vishwanath Pratap Singh, of course. We are being asked to believe that the present Prime Minister authorised the presence of middlemen or, at the very least, organised the paperwork.

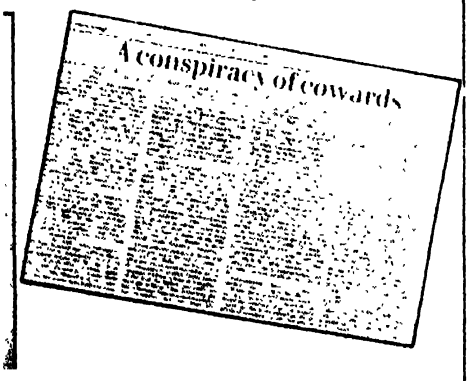
It is such a preposterous charge that only an Opposition as cretinous as this one could have made it. If V.P. Singh was even obliquely involved—we should not rule out that possibility completely—would Rajiv and his coterie, who have had access to every scrap of information on the deal, have kept quiet? If they had discovered just one signature by the Prime Minister on any file, which could conceivably have been interpreted to suggest that he was privy to the details of the agreement, one can be certain that V.P. Singh's name would have been dragged through the Bofors mud. The truth of the matter is that VP played absolutely no part in either negotiating the contract or deciding on the purchase of the gun. The attempts to implicate him directly only show up the bankruptcy of the Opposition.

But why, one should ask, is Arun Nehru being shielded? For obvious reasons. Whatever role the 'fat man' played, whatever negotiations he conducted in Sweden, Austria and New Delhi, whatever portion of the illegal gratification he or the party or 'others' kept—all of this had the approval and consent of the supreme leader. Such was the complexity, size and international scope of the contract that AKN could not have made a solo run.

In India there are two individuals who know everything there is to know about Bofors, Rajiv Gandhi and Arun Nehru. In that order. If it was possible for the Congress through fabrication, forgery or fact to de-link Rajiv and link AKN with the commissions, the deed would have been done a long time ago.

But they can't. Because Arun Nehru knows too much. He will only keep silent as long as Rajiv keeps his part of the bargain. Any effort to pin part or all of the blame on him by his cousin will mean that the real Bofors story begins to be screened before the nation. Who knows then where the buck will stop. The Congress spokesperson, M.J. Akbar, when asked why his party, though in possession of all documents on Arun Nehru had hitherto preferred silence on the subject, replied, "The Congress government has chosen not to behave irresponsibly and disclose Cabinet secrets. What is a secret for this government remains a secret." Given the Congress record in selective leaking, the recourse to the high moral ground is fatuous.

As in the past, the Bofors agenda is being set in the press. Whether it is the CBI or the Hindujas or the Bachchans or Arun Jaitley or Chitra Subramanium, the dirty work is being done in newspapers. The government and the investigative agencies merely react or comment on allegations and denials in the media. As a result, the Bofors conundrum is fast becoming an enigma with the electorate, the first and final loser. All those who were promised the full facts in 15 days can today only be certain of one fact: vast sums were paid as illegal commissions and most of these went into Congress pockets. The answer to the question of who, when and how much, remains as distant as ever. Perhaps we shall never know.●


A conspiracy of cowards

Pritish Nandy and his article in *The Independent*: the Hinduja brothers are struggling to keep out of jail and therefore their interest in the report published on 29 August is understandable and so is *The Independent's* eagerness to extract the maximum mileage




V S RAMANATHAN

Arun Nehru: implacable enemy of the Hindujas, his power encapsulates some hitherto unstated Parkinson's law. In early 80s, his power was legendary and so was his capacity for rudeness

Assault on a Green

A parliamentary controversy erupts over SUNDAY'S *Maneka Gandhi article*

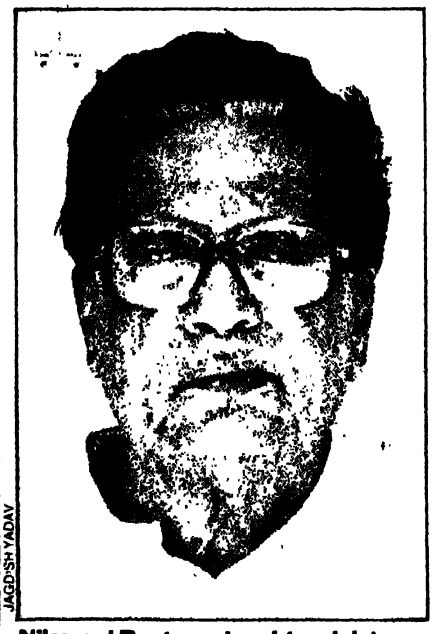
It was an unusual feeling. After eight months of unblemished media adulation, Maneka Gandhi suddenly found that the tide had turned.

The storm began with an issue of SUNDAY which carried a story on the squabbles within the environment ministry. The story did not dispute Maneka's basic assertion that she was far more sincere in her commitment to the cause of the environment than Nilamani Routray, the Cabinet minister for environment and forests. But, it suggested that many of the Gandhi-Routray rows were unrelated to environmental issues.

Instead, the two ministers were squabbling over such matters as the use of the ministry's aircraft (presented by a United Nations body for fire-fighting purposes) and the division of responsibilities. Moreover, Maneka's personal style was resented by bureaucrats who were not used to ministers scrawling things like "the CM is mad" or "illiterate comment" on letters and files.



Maneka Gandhi: outraged



JAGDISH YADAV

Nilamani Routray: doughty minister



NITIN RAI

V.P. Singh: keeping shut

The story found its echo in Parliament shortly after SUNDAY hit the stands. Jayanti Natarajan, the Congress(I) MP from Tamil Nadu, read from SUNDAY and demanded an explanation from environment minister Routray who was present in the House. Other MPs took up the chorus and asked if it was true that Routray-Gandhi relations had deteriorated to the point where the senior minister was writing angry letters to the Prime Minister about his minister of state's behaviour.

This afforded Routray a splendid opportunity to debunk the SUNDAY story and to deny that he was at loggerheads with his junior minister—even if he did not wish to go so far as to defend her.

The uproar in Parliament continued for two days. On the second day, Maneka released the text of a letter to SUNDAY (carried overleaf) which gave her side of the story. (The letter reached the Press Trust of India before it reached SUNDAY's Calcutta offices.) And on the third, she appeared in the Rajya Sabha to hurriedly read out a statement making the same points.

The rebuttals made some sense—as readers can judge for themselves—but they did not alter the impression that the environment ministry is a house divided with the doughty Routray and the sharp and articulate Maneka seeking only to undermine each other's position.

Maneka's outrage over the leak of documents from the environment ministry to SUNDAY was genuine. How, she asked, did a confidential letter from foreign secretary Much-

kund Dubey to environment secretary Mahesh Prasad find its way to the press—particularly as she had never heard of the existence of such a letter? Moreover, if Routray had written to V.P. Singh complaining about her behaviour, then surely somebody (either Routray or the Prime Minister) should have told her about it. Why did she have to first read about it in SUNDAY?

But such outrage only provokes derisive sniggers in the environment ministry. Says a senior official: "She started the leaks. She took the battle to the media in an effort to discredit Routray."

The prevailing view in New Delhi's political circles is that Maneka still retains much of her credibility. But that however hard she might try to explain away all the notations on letters and files, the feeling that she is brash and perhaps a little arrogant is hard to shake.

This is not the view of the environment ministry, however. The vast majority of Pariyavaran Bhavan's officials are on the side of Nilamani Routray.

They question Mrs Gandhi's vision of herself as a Joan of Arc fighting to free the environment from the grip of heavily armed vested interests. Innumerable explanations are offered in support of their contention.

Among them is Maneka's claim that she has opposed moves to limit the role of the environment ministry. On 30 August, the United News of India creeded a report saying that the ministry had submitted a set of proposals to the Cabinet which would raise the investment ceiling for projects requiring environmental clearance "in contradiction of the minister of state for environment, Mrs Maneka Gandhi's plea that the investment ceiling for environmental clearance be reduced to Rs five crore."

Nonsense, say ministry officials. "We have the files where all these decisions have first been sanctioned by her, with her personal signature, and then by Routray." No doubt if Maneka persists with the claim, more documents will be leaked to the press.

In the final analysis, all the responses to the SUNDAY story—from Maneka, Congress MPs and ministry officials—all tend to confirm our original thesis. The environment ministry is deeply divided. And very many of the disputes have nothing to do with the environment. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

The prescient notation

A new controversy over a telex

A new controversy has erupted over Maneka Gandhi's claim that she had informed officials that she would not be using an air-strip in Nepal. The foreign secretary, Muchkund Dubey, complained to the environment ministry that neither the foreign ministry nor the Nepalese government were told that Maneka would not be landing in Nepal at all. And that the Nepalese waiting to receive her were most upset when she did not turn up.

Maneka says that she cancelled her trip on 29 May 1990, three days before the scheduled departure and told Mahesh Prasad, the environment secretary, about it the same day. Further, she adds, her additional private secretary, Vijay Samnotra, reminded the ministry on the 31st.

In support of her contention, Maneka offers a telex message dated 1.6.90 (330) spelling out that the visit has been cancelled. On the telex is a handwritten notation by her personal staff directed at a joint secretary in the environment ministry asking him to inform the Indian embassy in Nepal. Obviously, the joint secretary did not do so.

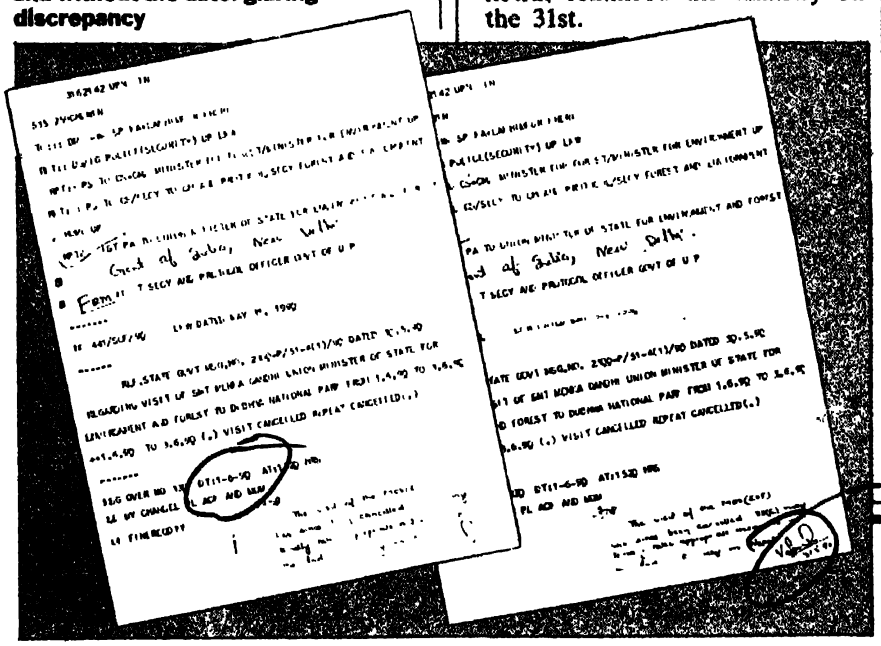
It is this notation that has created the controversy. Environment ministry officials say that it was fabricated later. They offer two grounds for believing this. One: that the joint secretary was away in Geneve at the time so it would have been silly to have expected him to call Kathmandu. And two: the notation is dated 31.5.90. How, they ask, could her staff have made a notation a day *before* the telex was issued?

To be fair to Maneka, the copy of the telex she sent SUNDAY does not support this reasoning. The photocopy is so faded at the end that it is impossible to read the name of the man who signed the personal notation, let alone make out the date.

However, there is another copy of the telex which officials say was circulated by Maneka before the gaffe was discovered. On that copy, the date is visible.

And yes, her additional private secretary does appear to have made the notation on 31.5.90, a full day before the telex was issued!

Copies of the telex message—with and without the date: glaring discrepancy



The other side

Maneka replies to the SUNDAY *story about the squabbles in her ministry*

This is with reference to the item in SUNDAY (19—25 August) entitled *Maneka Gandhi versus everybody*. I would like to clarify the facts for your readers.

I was surprised to see press reports based on a secret letter written by the foreign secretary to the secretary (environment & forests) regarding an embarrassment caused to Indo-Nepalese diplomatic relations, which has been attributed to supposed carelessness on my part. I was not even aware of such a letter until I saw it for the first time in press reports. I am astonished that a secret letter could find its way into the press.

The facts are that I had proposed to visit the Dudhwa National Park on an official visit as I had received complaints regarding the conditions in the park. The park also falls within the area of the Modern Forest Fire Control Project of the ministry, which I was to review. Accordingly, my office had asked the secretary (E&F) on 25.5.1990 to obtain necessary clearances for the project aircraft to land on the Nepal side of the border, which is a few kilometres from the park. A request to the ministry of external affairs had been sent from the joint secretary in my ministry to make necessary arrangements.

Due to circumstances beyond my control, I had, on 29.5.1990, cancelled my visit; ie, three days before the scheduled departure. The secretary (E&F) was informed about this the same day. On 30.5.1990, the joint secretary concerned had recorded: "I was told by Secretary (E&F) that MOS(E&F) had cancelled her proposed visit to Dudhwa National Park." My APS, Shri Vijay Samnotra, further reminded the Ministry on the 31st. Thus, the officials concerned had sufficient time to inform the ministry of external affairs and/or the Indian embassy in Nepal of the cancellation of my programme. Apparently this was not done. The supporting documents are enclosed.

Further, if due to oversight of the officials concerned, some embarrassment had been caused, this should have been brought to my notice so that I could have expressed my regrets and personal apologies to the Royal Nepal Government for the inconvenience caused due to circumstances beyond my control. However, this was not brought to my notice and I first learnt of it from the press reports which have appeared in the last few days.

I would also like to clarify that, out of 71 hours flying time logged by the project aircraft since I became minister, I have used it for only eight hours. Of these eight hours, six hours were logged in visiting the project area. Only two hours were outside the project area to Jaipur on World Environment Day, as I had to attend official functions in Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi within the space of a few hours. I would like to mention here that my visit to Jaipur was on the occasion of the World Environment Day on 5 June, 1990. The schedule for that day was particularly tight. Beginning with a programme to start the "Greening of Delhi" at 7.00 am in Delhi, I proceeded to attend three meetings in Rajasthan, viz, a meeting with the CM to declare the new forest policy; to address the NGOs for greening of Rajasthan in a function at the HCM Institute and opening a park in Jaipur. On returning to Delhi at around 4.15 pm in the afternoon of the same day, I proceeded to Manesar (near Gurgaon district) to launch the EEC-aided Arawali Project for which my ministry had procured Rs 36 crores. I also held a meeting with Haryana officials and businessmen at Maruti factory in Gurgaon to allocate planting land.

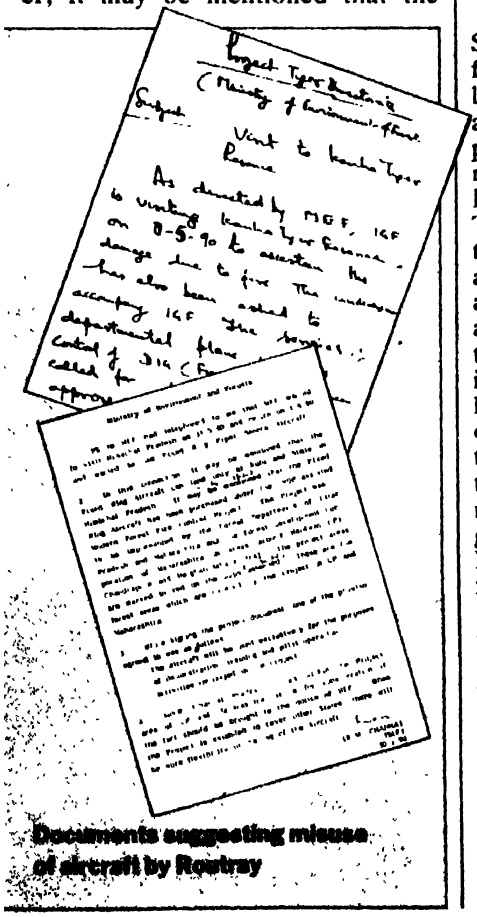
I would further like to mention that, after the tragic demise of my husband, late Shri Sanjay Gandhi, I have an aversion towards flying, particularly in

Maneka Gandhi at an exhibition in Rajasthan: busy schedule



small planes, and do so only when unavoidable.

I was shocked to read that Mr Routray in his letter to Prime Minister on 13 July, 1990 mentioned that "I feel embarrassed to write to you that the aircraft has been extensively used by her in the past to make trips to Bareilly, contrary to the conditions imposed by the UNDP under which the aircraft cannot be used for non-project work". It is pertinent to note here that the minister (E&F), Mr Routray, permitted the inspector general of forests to visit Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh on 8.5.1990 and the project aircraft was away to Kanha from 8.5.1990 to 13.5.1990 where it did 20 hours of flying and also stayed at Bhopal for two days. The minister never thought it embarrassing here even though Kanha Tiger Reserve does not fall anywhere near the UNDP Project area. The same IG(Forests), under the instructions of minister (E&F) also went to see elephant corridors on the India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders in the UNDP Project aircraft, for which the flying time was over 20 hours. Further, it may be mentioned that the



Documents suggesting misuse of aircraft by Routray



The Kanha National Park: too far to fly

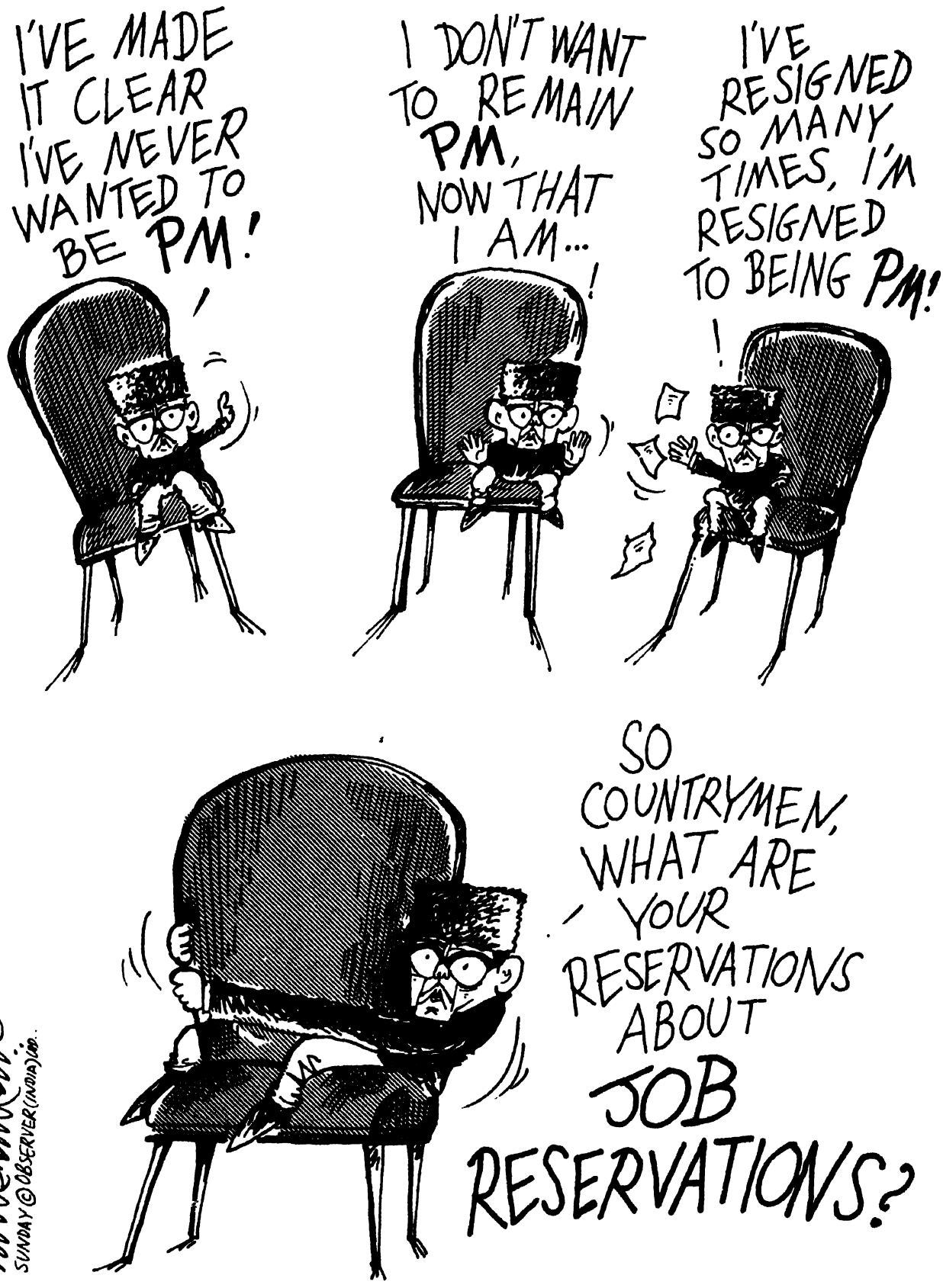
secretary himself visited Haldwani en route to Pantnagar. The Union minister himself had wanted to use the aircraft to visit Shimla and Kulu in Himachal Pradesh on 31.5.1990 and 1.6.1990—both places nowhere near the project areas.

The note of the joint secretary (F), Shri K.M. Chadha, dated 15.5.90 refusing the permission also categorically states that in one of the proviso, the aircraft will be used exclusively for the purpose of demonstration. It is pertinent to note that 10 states namely Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh have been asking for demonstration of planes and want extension of the project to these 10 states which has also been incorporated in the joint secretary's letter which states "when the project is extended to other States". Therefore, two hours of the demonstration flight to Rajasthan should not be made much of an issue as the plane had also gone for demonstration to Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur etc for over 20 hours.

With regard to the other points raised about allegedly derogatory remarks made by me on official files, I would like to give you the brief background of the cases in question. In one case in which I have noted "illiterate comment", the facts are that this was with reference to a very important project on tigers being conducted in Karnataka, which officials were trying to scuttle on the basis of mere suspicion, even though there was a report of the wildlife officials exonerating the project investigator, Shri Ulhas Karant. Therefore, my remarks have to be seen in this context. With reference to another case in which my noting has been quoted, I would like to clarify the context in which the word "mad" was used. I have been vehemently opposed to the reduction of the 'no construction limit' for hotels and beach resorts in Goa. In a meeting held on 18 May, 1990 with the chief minister, Goa, I had refused to concede the demand for the relaxation of the no construction zone from 500 metres to 200 metres from the high tide line. The chief minister on his part was not agreeable to the involvement of non-officials as members of the monitoring committee set up by my ministry to ensure the compliance of environmental safe-guards for the construction of beach resorts. Following this meeting I felt that the chief minister of Goa was annoyed/angry with my stand on the issue and the word "mad" was used merely in the colloquial sense to convey this feeling.

While my being termed "arrogant" is a subjective opinion, I maintain that I have not in any way been careless in my official dealings. On the other hand, I have been meticulous in pursuing the various environmental issues which I feel are of paramount importance to this country's future. This selective leak of documents appears to be a coordinated conspiracy by vested interests to malign me and make naught of all my efforts for the environment by deliberately obfuscating the fundamental issues involved.●

RAVI SHANKAR



INDER MALHOTRA

Hands off the Gulf

India turns its back on a grave international problem



Several Third World leaders in the past, such as Ahmed Sukarno and Kwame Nkrumah, whenever confronted with a difficult domestic problem, tried to 'solve' it by diverting attention to some foreign issue and even by going abroad on a fairly protracted visit. V.P. Singh and his government appear to have reversed this pattern almost completely.

By creating an avoidable country-wide upheaval over the reservation of 27 per cent of government and public sector jobs for the "other backward classes", a crass euphemism for intermediate castes, many of which wield considerable economic clout, the South Block has seen to it that the Gulf crisis, in some ways the most ominous the world has witnessed in the 45 years since the end of the Second World War, is ignored not merely by the government but also by the country as a whole. Few except the relatives of the Indians stranded in the area are talking about it. Parliament has given it a go by after one perfunctory discussion. Almost everybody in the corridors of power in the Indian capital is busy calculating the electoral dividends and social losses of the move to mobilise the so-called backward castes' votes.

No wonder then that on the wider world stage, 850 million Indians just have no say in how the life-and-death issue in a region of utmost importance to them is going to be resolved. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council have been acting in concert, not just the two superpowers alone. They are parties to no fewer than five successive resolutions of the council, including the one sanctioning the use of force against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Their views on how and when force should be used, of course, differ. But in their resolve to oppose and defeat Saddam's stupid aggression they remain united.

The situation by itself should have given New Delhi sufficient incentive to reflect on India's undoubted diplomatic skills. But never before has a government in this country turned its back on a grave international problem so casually as the Janata Dal team has done this time. We seem to have no other interest in the whole affair except to get the stranded Indians back home safely.

To his credit, Inder Gujral did undertake a strenuous journey to Moscow, Washington, Aman, Baghdad and Kuwait. But, apparently under the mandate of the Cabinet, his mission was confined to working for the safe repatriation of the Indian nationals. This was underscored by his elaborate statement in Parliament. Surprisingly, not a single MP bothered to raise the wider issues involved in the crisis. The government alone is not to blame. The entire country seems to be abdicating its international role.

Sadly, VP's own contribution to the discussion of the Gulf crisis has been limited to precisely three sentences during his Red Fort oration on 15 August and some stray remarks at encounters with the press, Indian and foreign. The utmost the Prime Minister persuaded himself to do was to tell a Yugoslav interviewer that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) should take some intiative over the Gulf.

This was a classic case of passing the buck—this time to a government which is even more immobilised by domestic worries than ours. In any case, in heaven's name, when has NAM been able to take an initiative without the impetus coming from India, not just a founder member of the movement but also the largest one in the body of 104 nations? Some ministers are to meet in Belgrade on 15 September. By that time, the Gulf might well have blown up.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has opted to send troops to Saudi Arabia under the US scheme of things and thus incur the thanks of its American mentors and military allies. It can be taken for granted that Islamabad would demand and get ample *quid pro quo* for services rendered. There is no dearth of practical suggestions by recognised experts on how a UN-sponsored collective security scheme, in which India would take part, can ensure that Indian interests would not suffer in the Gulf in the long run. No one in authority is, however, listening.

Tragically, even the plans to evacuate more than 200,000 Indians from Kuwait and Iraq has run into difficulties. The Jordanian route is choked. And Iran have gone back on its earlier promise to allow Indian civilian and military transport aircraft to overfly its territory and bring back the Indians in distress. International insurance companies are no longer insuring any passenger aircraft touching down in the danger zone. ●



GAUTAM PATOLE

Indians returning from Kuwait: the crisis deepens



"RISE, SIR LEGEND"

MRF CONGRATULATES SIR RICHARD HADLEE ON HIS KNIGHTHOOD

And on Indian roads, MRF Legend continues to be India's favourite car tyre.

Whichever field they're on, legends are recognised for their outstanding performances. On June 16th, 1990, Richard Hadlee became the only cricketer to be knighted while still on the field. Meanwhile, back in India, MRF Legend keeps proving itself on the toughest roads all over the country. Which just goes to show that once you have a legend, you have a winner.

LINTAS M MRF FHP 216 2334

LIKE THE WARMTH IN YOUR HEART



TERENE/WOOL WORSTED FROM GWALIOR SUITING

Losing ground

Jyoti Basu is under pressure from CPI(M) Young Turks

At 76, Jyoti Basu is easily the most charismatic communist in the country. But contrary to popular belief, the West Bengal chief minister does not wield absolute power within his party. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) believes in the concept of democratic centralism, which, simply put, means collective leadership. Major decisions have to be endorsed by senior party fora like the state and central committees. In West Bengal, the party's supreme decision-making body is the state committee, which traditionally has been under the control of the party's organisational bosses. This body till 1982 was tightly controlled by the state party chief Pramode Dasgupta. Jyoti Basu then was the mere head of government. His job was not so much to make policies as to implement those decided upon by the state party leadership.

After Pramode Dasgupta's death, Basu staged a coup of sorts by packing the party's state committee with men loyal to him. Basu had perhaps hoped that he would emerge as the *de facto* head of the Bengal unit of the CPI(M). For a few years it seemed that he had indeed succeeded. In the Bengal unit of the party, Basu's every wish was a decree. But that did not last. For, a sizable section of the party continued to subtly oppose him and his rightist policies. They questioned the chief minister's Marxist credentials and resented his attempts to clip their wings.

A number of senior Bengal Marxists like Samar Mukherjee openly challenged Basu on a number of issues. But men like Mukjerjee were old and increasingly incapable of playing an active, assertive role in state politics. Basu consequently managed to sideline them. What he perhaps did not quite expect was the emergence of a clique of junior leaders who would one day effectively challenge his authority. These junior leaders, most prominent among them Biman Bose and Buddhadev Bhattacharya, had been promoted by the late Pramode Dasgupta and were given a tremendous amount of organisational responsibility. Today, they have emerged as key figures in the CPI(M) in West Bengal and are beginnig to assert themselves.

Basu obviously is not too pleased at what is happening and has time and again tried to put them in their place. But it has been a close battle. Basu's advocacy of the Ambanis and Hindujas, for instance, only helped the Young Turks to score a point against him. They increasingly circumscribed Basu's functionings and suggested that the chief minister should concentrate more on government affairs and leave the nitty-gritties of political management to the party. Just how powerful they became can be gauged from the fact that they succeeded in ousting former Calcutta Municipal Corporaton mayor Kamal Basu, a friend of the chief minister. Biman Bose openly criticised the rampant corruption that prevailed in the corporation's affairs and ultimately managed to instal his man, Prasanta Chatterjee, as the mayor. Now, the corporation is investigating into the deals made by the former mayor involving Jyoti Basu groupies like Amal Dutta, MP, who had floated a number of real estate projects.

Alarmed by the sudden increase in the clout of the Young Turks, the chief minister shrewdly decided to cut them down to size indirectly. He began promoting state finance minister Asim Dasgupta as his likely successor. Buddhadev Bhattacharya, information and civic affairs minister, who had all this time been considered as Basu's replacement, found himself slighted by the government. When the Congress(I) called a bandh on 16 August, Basu initially said that party cadres would not be used to resist the bandh. This attempt to snub the rebels, however, backfired and the chief minister had to give in. When ex-Congress(I) MP Mamata Banerjee was murderously assaulted by party cadres and the bandh was declared a success, the chief minister once more found an apportunity to assert himself. He told the party that such coercive tactics would not work in Bengal. He insinuated that only a *bhadralok* like himself, could properly project the CPM's image in Bengal. The party could not but endorse this view. The new generation leaders had to fall silent. But the question is: for how long? ●

Indranil Banerjie/Calcutta



Jyoti Basu (left) did not quite expect that a clique of junior leaders, prominent among them **Buddhadev Bhattacharya** (middle) and **Biman Bose** (right) would one day effectively challenge his authority

Does anybody remember this man?

Mufti: the invisible home minister

When Vishwanath Pratap Singh sat down to select his Cabinet, rumour has it that he offered Arun Nehru the home portfolio. "Fine," said Nehru, "but will you let me do what I think is necessary? Can I crack down on the militants in Punjab? Fix the Kashmiri terrorists?" And so on and so forth.

At this stage, a glassy look came into the Prime Minister's eyes and he lapsed into one of his enigmatic silences. "Look," said Nehru, "it won't work. I'll take some other portfolio. But I have just the man for the home ministry. How about Mufti?"

Legend has it that V.P. Singh was less than enthused at the prospect of entrusting this key ministry to a golf-playing, well-meaning lightweight whose last portfolio had been tourism. But once Nehru started listing the virtues of the Mufti (first Muslim home minister, shows Kashmir is an integral part of India, will do what he's told, etc.) the Raja began to see the point.

And so it came to pass, that Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was duly sworn in as the home minister of India.

Within weeks, the government had reason to question the wisdom of the choice. Kashmiri terrorists kidnapped Rubaiya, the Mufti's daughter and refused to release her unless the government set free several of their imprisoned colleagues.

Farooq Abdullah, who was then chief minister and hated Mufti's guts, agreed to release the terrorists and Rubaiya was returned to her father but the episode had given the Mufti exactly the sort of publicity a home minister does *not* need. Only the extremely insensitive (i.e. Rajiv Gandhi) suggested that the government should not have agreed to the swap, but everyone began to regard Sayeed as a lame duck minister whose first action in office had been to release terrorists.

THE MUFTI tried to recover. His chosen area of operation was Kashmir.

During Mrs Gandhi's day, he had used Jagmohan to fire Farooq Abdullah so that the Congress could take office along with a breakaway faction of the National Conference headed by Farooq's brother-in-law G.M. Shah. The move had been a disaster. The new chief minister had soon been dubbed 'Curfew' Shah because violence (engineered by the pro-Pakistani elements) had swept the Valley and finally, the Congress had dumped him. (At which Shah declared: "I have always been a Pakistani at heart." Shame nobody told the Mufti about it earlier.)

Now as home minister, the Mufti thought this was the thing to do again. He sent Jagmohan back and Farooq promptly resigned. No problem, said Jagmohan, and (if Rajiv Gandhi is to be believed) set about promoting the JKLF as an alternative. (Perhaps the Mufti was trying another 'Curfew' Shah-style stunt.)

It didn't work because George Fernandes, the minister for Kashmir affairs, decided that Jagmohan was a menace who was alienating the entire population of Kashmir. Fernandes fought with Jagmohan, was yelled at by Sayeed and faced Arun Nehru's haughty disdain. Finally, V.P. Singh fired him, but he took Jagmohan with him.

And Kashmir was back to square one.

IF ALL of the foregoing sounds like a mess, consider this: it was the Mufti's moment of glory.

Bizarre as it may sound, Kashmir represented the acme of Sayeed's achievement. At least, he got rid of Farooq.

As far as the rest of India is concerned, the home minister might as well not exist. Last week, anti-reservation agitationists shut down Delhi on *three* separate days and the home ministry was unable to do anything about it. Finally, all schools and colleges had to be shut down for an unprecedented 30 days to help restore order to the capital.

As for Punjab, the Mufti trotted off to the Golden Temple, placed the regulation hanky on his head and murmured sweet nothings (along with V.P. Singh) shortly after the government was elected. After that, he has done precious little and stood on the sidelines while the situation in the state has got far worse than anyone thought possible.

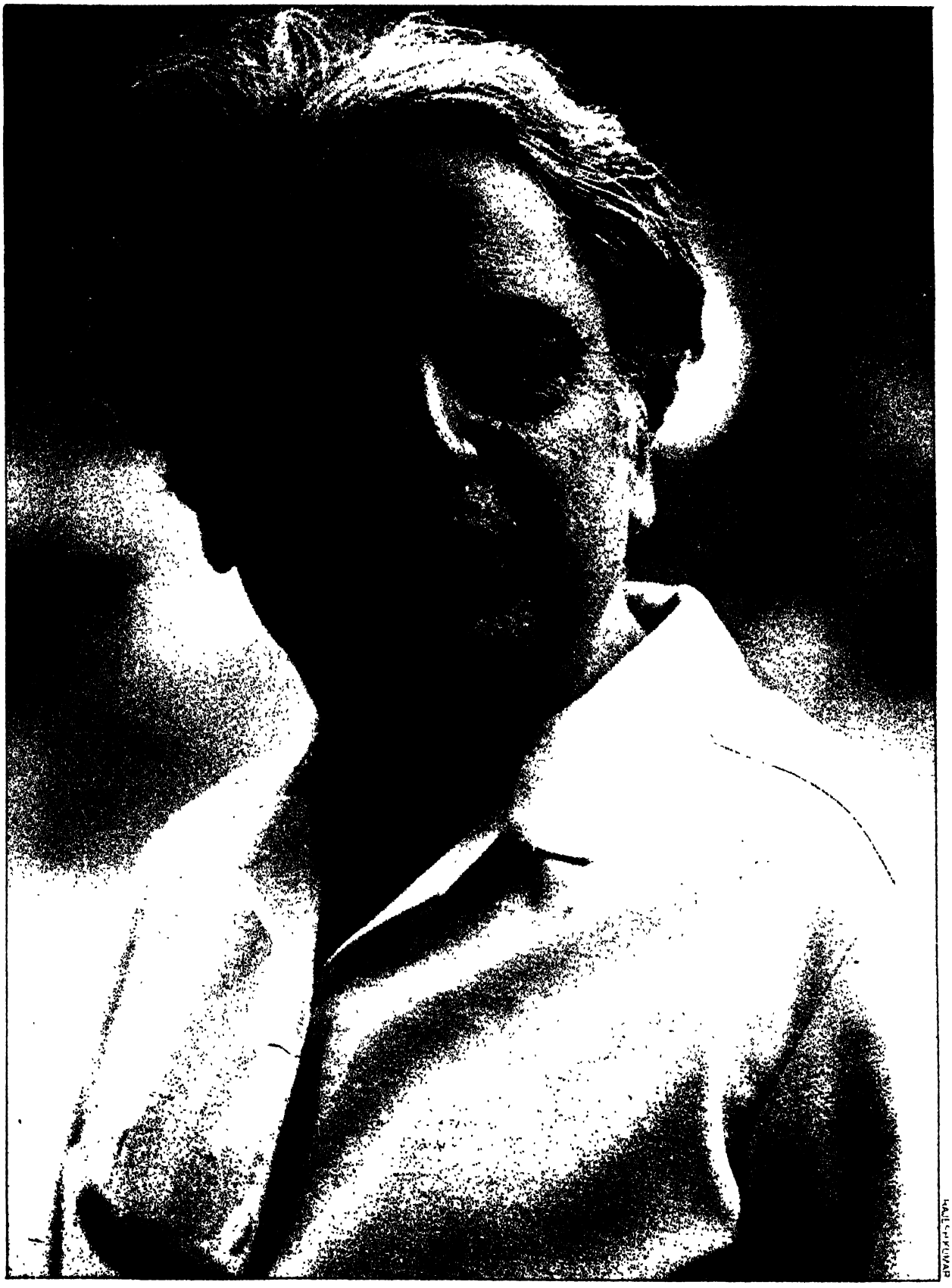
On Assam, Mufti's role has been similarly non-existent. ULFA terrorists gun down businessmen and government servants at will, the government seems incapable of handling the violence and the home ministry has no grip on the situation, either.

The same is true of nearly every other part of India where violence has broken out. The Mufti either has no interest in doing the job he was appointed to or—and this is more likely—he is simply not up to it.

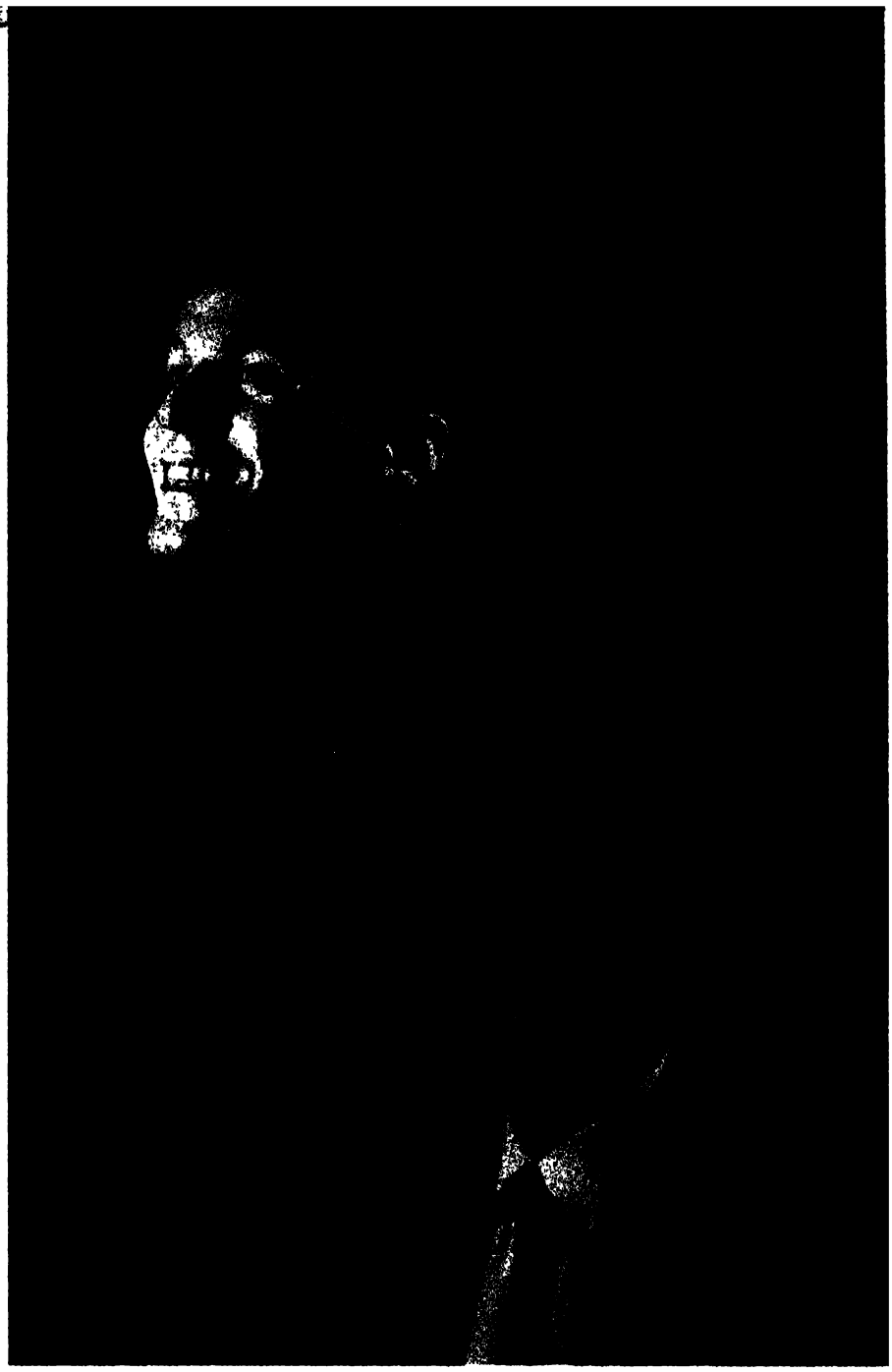
Politically, he is even more of a lightweight now than he was last December. He is no longer as close to Nehru, has few real friends in the Cabinet, and would probably lose his security deposit in a municipal election in Kashmir.

The only time people are reminded of his existence is when he appears on Doordarshan addressing audiences of 400-500 in Kashmir (the cameras shoot the meetings in tight close-up). Such is his low profile that though law and order has reached the lowest point since 1984, nobody even blames the home minister.

He has become the invisible man of the Cabinet. ●



NOTHING WORTHWHILE WAS EVER ACHIEVED WITHOUT SOMEONE STICKING OUT HIS NECK.



Do you know why our customers swear by us? Because we are infallible? Hardly. Like everybody else we make our share of mistakes. It's because we never let them down. What matters to us is the spirit of commitment and not the small type in a contract.

Take the case of the mudgun motor we designed and supplied to the Bokaro Steel Plant.

In 1977 one of our agents supplied 50 KW flame-proof motors to the Heavy Engineering Corporation. It was only by chance that we found out later that the motor had gone to the Bokaro Steel Plant for a very unusual operation: to replace Russian mudgun motors in blast furnaces. It was instantly clear to our engineers that our motors were unsuitable for the job.

We came right out and told the Bokaro people about this. We added that it would take us a few months to design a new motor for their mudgun. The Bokaro people agreed to the delay but revealed that there were no specs available.

It was like entering a maze blindfolded. These motors had never been manufactured in India. But we decided, nothing ventured, nothing gained. We said yes.

The whole essence of import substitution is a strong and perceptive engineering team with the patience and commitment to work for months, even years, till they design and manufacture a totally satisfactory replacement for the original.

What do mudgun motors do? During the manufacture of steel, molten metal flows out through the base of the blast furnace. Once the metal is drained, the outlet is sealed with wet clay fired from a distance by a mudgun. The wet clay hardens and forms a strong and secure lid. If the hole in the blast furnace is not totally sealed, the furnace itself will burn and bring steel production to a halt.

Our engineers realised that the motors would require an extremely high torque for short periods. They work with multiple starts and stops in high ambient temperatures. Thanks to the glutinous nature of the clay which they handle, they would have to withstand extended stalling conditions.

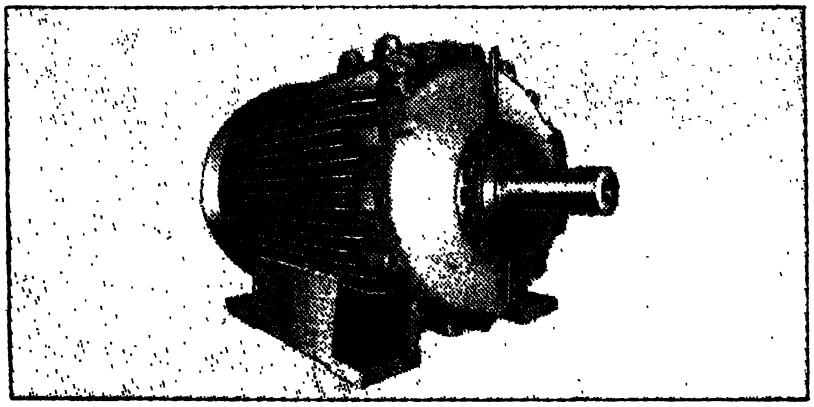
The KEC team returned home and in consultation with HEC determined new specifications for a 50 KW, 415 volts frame motor. Today our mudgun motors are in operation in several steel plants. And going great guns.

But Kirloskar Electric is more than the sum of all the firsts it has earned over the years. We are India's leading industrial electrics and electronics company in the private sector. We make some of the finest standard AC and DC drives, transformers, welding equipment and systems, motorised gear units, equipment for defence, electronic control equipment, CNCs, etc. But the one single reason why we are the prime movers in our field is because the centre of gravity at Kirloskar Electric is the customer. Our hi-tech, engineering expertise, superior quality and reliability are all geared to anticipate and respond to his needs.

KIRLOSKAR ELECTRIC CO. LTD.

INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICS AND ELECTRONICS

Regd. Office : Industrial Suburb, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560 010.



When nobody else can do the job, Kirloskar Electric will.

Pratibha/KEC/265/

MR CASTE

V.P. Singh's image crumbles as civil war breaks out in his party—and in the streets

This wasn't the way it was supposed to happen. Just over a month ago, Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh recast his image. His advisers told him that he was personally popular but was perceived, nevertheless, as being weak and indecisive. Moreover, his Janata Dal lacked a base of its own and was much too dependent on Devi Lal's Jats. So, Singh proved that he could take tough decisions by firing the Tau. And in an attempt to create his own base, he played caste politics in the cow belt by accepting the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

But then, things began to go wrong. The cheers that followed the dismissal of Devi Lal faded much too quickly. And while political pundits greeted his hasty cobbling together of a caste coalition with murmurs of admiration, the doubts soon set in. Within two weeks of his triumphant Independence Day address, Vishwanath Pratap Singh suddenly looked less and less like a savvy political wizard and more and more like a small-time cow-belt mainpulator who, having being entrusted with the future of India, chose to barter it away in a desperate attempt to squeeze in a few more weeks at Race Course Road.

In a matter of days, *everything* appeared to be going wrong.

- Anti-reservation agitators brought all of north India's towns and cities to a standstill. The nation's capital was shut down thrice in a single week and finally, schools and colleges were closed for 30 days.
- The agitators were upset about the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, but their anger was directed at the Prime Minister personally. In Delhi University, students even revived a variation of that old school-boy doggerel: "Inky, pinky, ponky; V.P. Singh is a donkey."
- The Mandal recommendations split the Cabinet. At a stormy meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA), Arun Nehru and Ajit Singh bitterly attacked the decision to play caste politics. Only Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan backed the Prime Minister.
- The National Front's allies also distanced themselves from the decision. The CPI(M) attacked the recommendations and the BJP claimed that a minority government had no right to make such drastic changes in the structure of society.
- In Orissa, chief minister Biju Patnaik publicly rejected the Mandal Commission report, made rude noises about cynical attempts to win votes in the Hindi belt and snubbed the Prime Minister.



A HELL OF A WEEK ☐ *The beginning of the end?*



VIOLENCE

Unprecedented violence rocks New Delhi and the rest of north India as the stir against the Mandal Commission recommendations spreads





DISSIDENCE

The Cabinet splits down the middle over the Mandal Commission recommendations. Rumours spread that Nehru and Fernandes have quit



REBELLION

Biju Patnaik declares that he will not implement the Mandal Commission in Orissa, regardless of whatever the Centre says



• There were other problems too, unrelated to the Mandal mess. Law minister Dinesh Goswami submitted his resignation as relations between the Janata Dal and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), its National Front ally, plummeted. Goswami was finally persuaded to stay, but the resignation drama suggested that the National Front was not holding together.

• Unfortunately for Goswami, his resignation was overshadowed by rumours that Arun Nehru and George Fernandes had resigned. The rumours were denied but Fernandes, who openly attacked the censoring of his *Khula Manch* TV programme, was regarded as a dissident by the Prime Minister's camp.

• Nehru soon became the focus of another controversy when Bombay's *The Independent* newspaper printed documents linking him to the Bofors deal. There was nothing incriminating in the papers, but they raised the question of why the Raja's hit squad had not bothered to investigate the commerce minister, especially when its members seemed quite willing to leak stories about nearly everybody else.

• Central to the Nehru controversy was the charge levelled by *The Independent* that the *Indian Express* had suppressed the Nehru documents for two months to save the Raja embarrassment. But, in a sense, it hardly mattered. The *Express* had turned against the Prime Minister and even *India Today*—his other great friend in the media—turned viciously anti-V.P. Singh, slamming him as a "vote-hungry power-broker shamelessly using the two elements that ever bloodied and divided this nation—religion and caste".

• But *India Today* did not content itself with demoting its "artful dodger" to "demagogue". A MARG poll conducted for it by Prannoy Roy forecast that even with seat adjustments, the National Front and its allies would not get an overall majority if an election were held tomorrow. Moreover, if there were no adjustments—which is now a near certainty—the Congress(I) would get an overall majority on its own.

Suddenly, V.P. Singh began to look less and less like a Prime Minister. And more and more like a lame duck.



ANGER

The *Indian Express* and *India Today*, two of the Raja's strongest media supporters, denounce him as a demagogue



RESIGNATION

Law minister Dinesh Goswami submits his resignation as relations between the AGP and the Centre plummet. Finally, he withdraws it



ISOLATION

The all-party meet on Mandal ends in chaos. Apart from the Congress (I), even the BJP and the CPI(M) make it clear that they won't support its implementation

The howitzer backfires

Troubles and squabbles mar the Bofors investigation

They have been the longest '15 days' in history. Shortly before the last general election, National Front spokesmen assured the media that were the then Opposition to win the election, the names of the Bofors recipients would be out in 15 days.

Nine months later, it is clear that the corruption investigations are in more trouble than anyone ever thought possible. And even V.P. Singh has stopped talking about the corruption issue.

The investigations face the following problems.

• **Sloppy framing:** Even if one goes by the government's official version, then its Letter Rogatory (LR) in the Bofors case was 'returned' (in fact, it was rejected) because it was badly presented.

• **Inadequate preparation:** But this explanation does not account for the ruling of Judge Murbach of the Geneve Cantonal Court. And even if it does, it doesn't explain why the HDW LR has also been returned. Clearly, the Indian investigators do not fully understand how the Swiss legal system works.

• **Charges of vindictiveness:** Last week, *Dagens Nyheter (DN)*, Sweden's most respected newspaper, apologised once again to Ajitabh Bachchan for alleging that he was involved in the Bofors affair. The settlement came in the wake of a Swedish legal action and afterwards, Bachchan said that thanks to information provided by *DN*, he was now going to charge the investigators with criminal conspiracy for having leaked his name to the paper. There was no evidence to link him to Bofors, he said, but his name had been smeared as part of a vendetta against Rajiv Gandhi's friends.

• **Allegations of selectiveness:** The uproar over documents printed by Bombay's *The Independent* engulfed the investigation. The LR named 47 persons and entities as suspects in the Bofors case. In the vast majority of cases, there was no prima facie evidence against these 47. So, why had the sleuths fought shy of at least investigating Arun Nehru who had some involvement (no matter how marginal) in the Bofors negotiations?

• **Internal squabbles:** Till now, the corruption enquiries had been associated with a group of politicians, civil servants and journalists, known loosely as the *Express* lobby. After Ajitabh Bachchan won his case in London, the first cracks appeared in this group. But after the Arun Nehru controversy erupted, the *Express* lobby split down the middle.



Had the investigators played into the hands of the Hindujas? They had believed the sixth account story and now they were paying the price for it

What had gone so wrong? The way the critics of the investigation told it, the problem was simple enough: the entire campaign had been based on a vendetta and this could not be sustained. The investigators told their own story: yes, they said, there had been problems with the LR but basically, they were the victims of slander and disinformation. (This view was best summarised by Mahesh Jethmalani in last week's SUNDAY.)

As the controversies mounted, a third theory emerged. Had the gullible investigators been duped by the ever-resourceful Hindujas? According to this hypothesis, the basic problem with the investigation was that the sleuths had been in such a hurry to prove that the Bofors trail led to Rajiv Gandhi, that they had failed to follow the logical procedure and first establish that the Hindujas, Win Chadha, et al, had received the money.

Instead, they had fallen for the oldest trick in the book: the suggestion by the Hindujas that they had passed on the Bofors commissions to Ajitabh Bachchan who was handling Rajiv Gandhi's money. We now have a court judgement to prove that this was not so, but seven months ago, this was exactly what the investigators wanted to hear.

So, they jumped the gun and upon hearing that there was a sixth account (now conclusively established as belonging to Jubilee Finance, a Hinduja company), immediately assumed that it belonged to Ajitabh. The entire Bofors in-

vestigation was predicated on this (false) conclusion and finally, it all blew up in the investigators' faces.

Now that the Bachchans have been cleared, the Hindujas need a new diversion. And who better than their old *bete noire*, Arun Nehru?

This hypothesis may make some sense, but it does not explain why so many schisms have developed within the *Express* lobby. The divisions are as follows:

- Ram Jethmalani was kept out of the drafting of the LR (though S Gurumurthy was consulted) because of his links with the Hindujas. Jethmalani is now openly attacking the investigators for shielding Arun Nehru.
- Chitra Subramaniam and N. Ram were co-opted to the *Express* lobby after their problems with *The Hindu's* Kasturi. Then, Subramaniam stopped allowing Ram to add his byline to her pieces. Now the two disagree over the Arun Nehru revelations.
- Subramaniam filed a story in June 1990 suggesting that Nehru was involved in Bofors. The *Express* used excuse after excuse to not carry it. Finally, Subramaniam snapped links with the paper on this issue.
- By then, Arun Jaitley, a key member of the investigative team, and K. Madhavan, a CBI official, had decided that Subramaniam was not to be trusted. This opinion was disputed by Bhure Lal and CBI director Rajendra Shekhar.
- Oddly enough, N Ram also came out in defence of the anti-Subramaniam forces and tried to play down the importance of her Nehru revelations. An angry Ram Jethmalani dismissed N Ram as "an absolute simpleton" who had "put his name to this cover-up job". It was a terrible put-down for the self-righteous, self-styled champion of Bofors. But by then, others had begun to share Jethmalani's belief that Ram simply did not understand Bofors, especially from the time that Subramaniam had stopped allowing him to hog the credit for her work.





The squabbles mounted. Jethmalani called N. Ram "an absolute simpleton" who was part "of a cover-up". It was a rare rebuke for the self-styled champion of Bofors

By the end of last week, it was beginning to seem that Bofors would do to the *Express* lobby what it had to *The Hindu*. The regime was no nearer getting the names and the Hindujas—who actually received the money—were flushed with the success of their manipulations.

The immediate focus of the discontent was the decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. Shortly after V P Singh announced that Mandal's proposals would become law, industry minister Ajit Singh issued a statement backing the idea. From Ajit's point of view this was a mistake because the commission had ignored the Jats, his constituency.

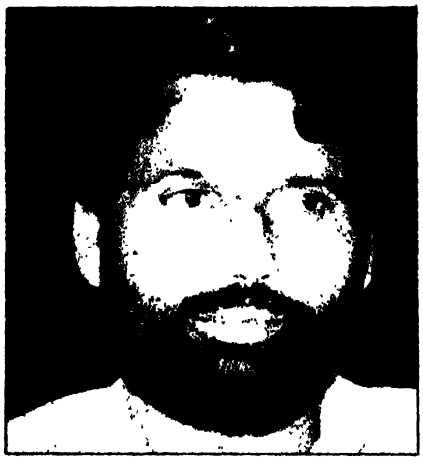
Ajit soon regretted having been talked into supporting the recommendations by Sharad Yadav and V P Singh after a meeting of the CCPA. He joined up with the dissidents in the Cabinet, a grouping that includes Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammad Khan, Chiman Mehta, Satyapal Malik, Mufti Mohammad Saveed, I K Gujral and Mohan Gurupadaswamy. All of them are peeved by the manner in which V P Singh first made the announcement and then forced his Cabinet to back him.

Once dissensions in the Cabinet became public knowledge, the Raja acted to limit the damage. He did not convene any meetings of the full Cabinet but stuck to the core group of the CCPA. But by then, it was too late. When Ram Vilas Paswan—one of the strongest advocates of the Mandal Commission—got up in Parliament to defend the report, Janata Dal MPs visibly dissociated themselves from him. Paswan made things worse for the government by declaring that 540 MPs do not make a nation. This angered the normally mild mannered L K Advani so much that he questioned a minority government's right to speak for the country. Finally, Madhu Dandavate apologised on behalf of Paswan, but what was noteworthy was that only Sharad Yadav seemed willing to associate himself with Paswan's cause.

Both Yadav and Paswan came in for some stick at meetings of the CCPA and the Dal Political Affairs Committee (PAC). Yadav had alienated most of his colleagues by urging the so-called 'backward communities' to come out in the streets and fight for reservation. Arun Nehru, Chandra Shekhar and Yashwant Sinha accused him of spreading chaos and disorder, but neither Paswan nor V P Singh came to his assistance.

As the week went on, it was obvious that the government was deeply divided on many key issues. Rumours that Arun Nehru *(see following story)* and George Fernandes had resigned turned out to be incorrect, but what

Mandal Commission ☐ *Where does the Janata Dal stand?*



RAM VILAS PASWAN

A Harijan, he is a strong and enthusiastic supporter of the proposals, though the Harijans may lose out from the extension of reservations



V.P. SINGH

A total shift of stance for a man who was the candidate of the Thakur lobby in 1980. Now loves every backward who has access to a ballot box



ARUN NEHRU

Does not agree with the principle of extending reservations at all. Is upset that the Raja made the announcement before consulting the Cabinet

was surprising was the manner in which they found ready acceptance.

Clearly, everyone has come to expect that a '79-like collapse is inevitable.

Where does all this leave V.P. Singh, the man who could have been Mr Clean but chose to be Mr Caste? The Raja was beginning to consider whether—for perhaps the first time in his life—he had made a major miscalculation.

His supporters said that he still clung to his original view that the Mandal issue would help the Janata Dal to knit together a coalition of backwards that would make it electorally unbeatable in UP and Bihar. Moreover, they pointed out, he had been vindicated in his belief that no political party could dare oppose reservation.

There were two problems with this view. Firstly, it was true that nobody had openly opposed reservation, but—sensing the mood of the media and the middle class—nearly every party had found the perfect excuse for opposing the Raja's decision to increase reservations. Generally, this was framed in terms of "we are all for the 'backwards' but we oppose the manner in which the Mandal recommendations are being implemented". That this was a politically expedient stand became clear when the all-party meet to discuss Mandal ended in chaos with each participant producing its own reservation formula. Consequently, the Raja stood isolated.

The second problem was that the electoral arithmetic only made sense if there was an election. But *would* V.P. V.P. Singh call an election? The MARG poll showed that he would lose and though his supporters pointed out that it was conducted before the decision to back Mandal, it still seemed unlikely that his party had the confidence to face the polls.

Moreover, *could* he call an election? With the mood in the Janata Dal being what it is, there is now little doubt that Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal could split the party should the Raja call elections. If that happened, the President could well ask one of the dissidents to form a government with Congress support (the Charan Singh syndrome). And if V.P. Singh did get his election, the Janata Dal dissidents would split the party's share of the vote.

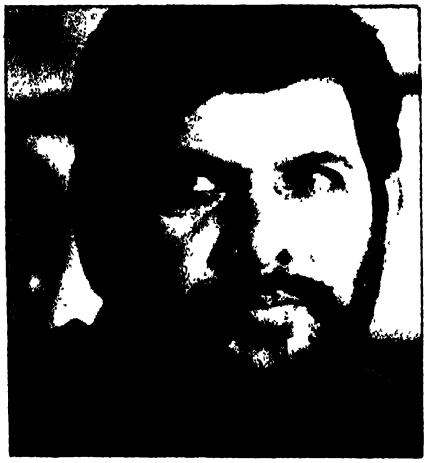
The betting nevertheless was that he would call an election this winter. Ironically, such is the Raja's credibility these days that sceptics were convinced that he would go to the





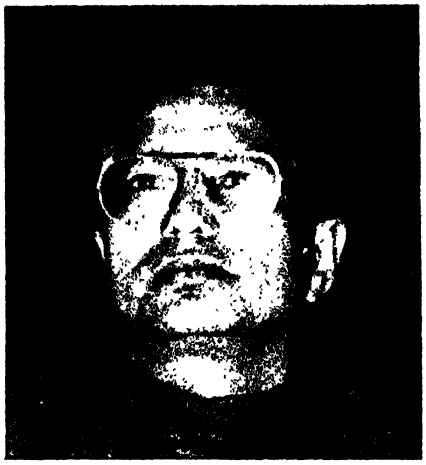
CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Has a support base among backwards, but is outraged by the current move which he thinks is a cynical attempt to win votes



SHARAD YADAV

The Yadavs will be among the principal beneficiaries of the new reservation policy, so he is probably its strongest supporter

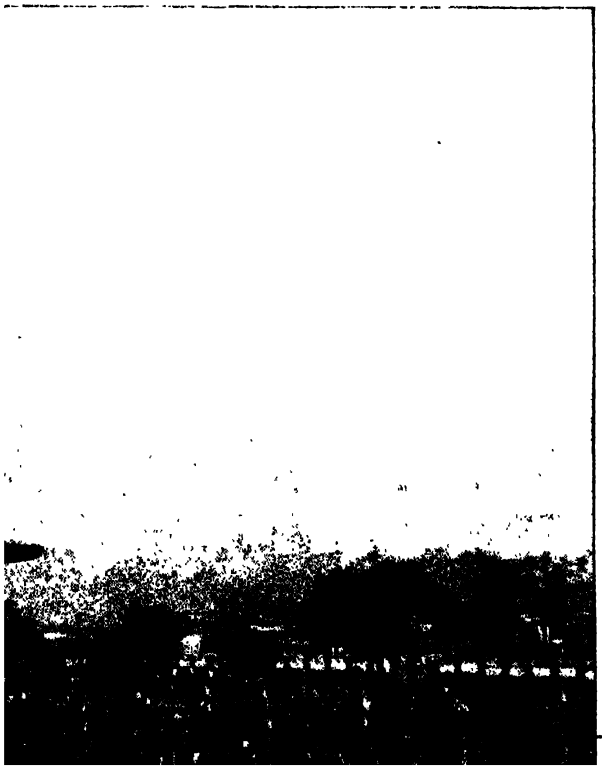


AJIT SINGH

Blames SUNDAY for calling him the 'flip-flop man'. So, we'll just say that he has revised his earlier enthusiastic support of the proposal

country only because he had declared that there would *not* be a mid-term poll. Said a member of the Chandra Shekhar faction: "Whatever he says you must believe the opposite. Remember how he told us he would not become Prime Minister?

Such cynicism, sadly, is the hallmark of today's Janata Dal politics. And much of it is prompted by doubts about Vishwanath Pratap Singh's motives. His colleagues say that in 23 years of politics, he never once uttered a word in favour of 'backwards'. When he was UP chief minister an Opposition MLA accused him—on the floor of the Assembly—of having connived at the murder of thousands of backward castes by Thakurs. (That MLA was Mulayam Singh Yadav who is now chief minister of UP.) And last week, Rajiv Gandhi told *The Times of India* that V.P. Singh had *opposed* the implementation of the Mandal recommendations when he had been a member of the Congress Cabinet. V.P. Singh's spokesmen denied the former Prime Minister's claim the next day, but even they couldn't find much evidence of pro-backward sentiment



Within two week of his triumphant Independence Day address, V.P. Singh suddenly looked less and less like a savvy political wizard and more and more like a small-time cow-belt manipulator

As the week drew to a close, V.P. Singh's supporters were convinced that the Mandal card would win the Janata Dal an overall majority. But others were less convinced. Moreover, they pointed out, even a Congress government would find it difficult to put the genie of reservation back in the bottle now that such extravagant expectations had been aroused.

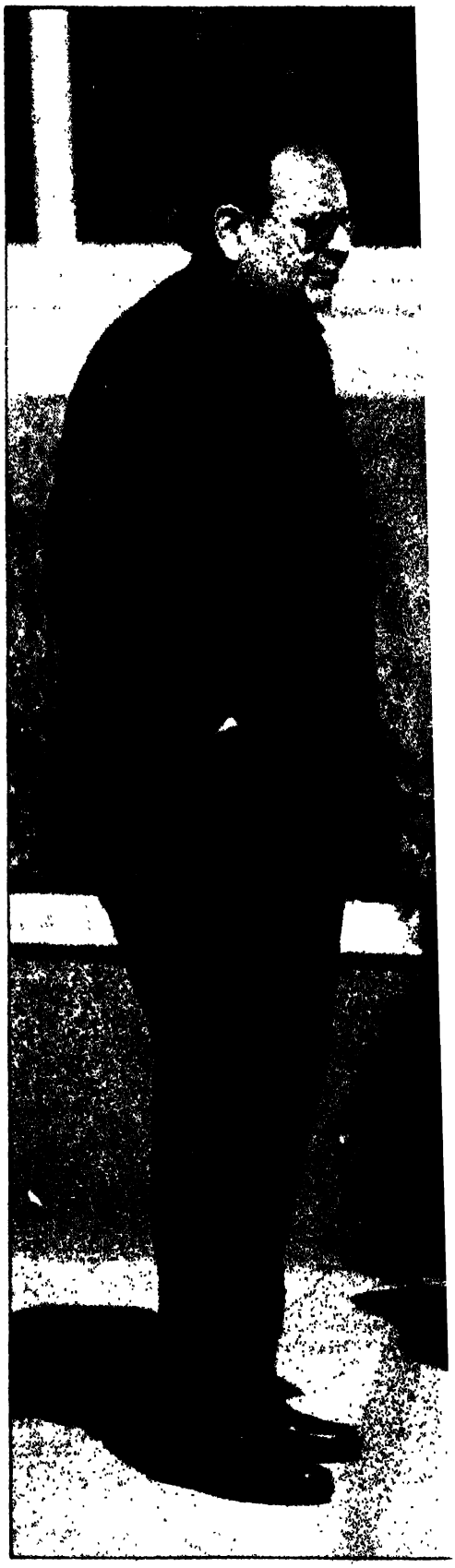
It was a fair observation and one that boded ill for an India torn apart by violent social wars and ostensibly governed by a Cabinet whose members were conducting their own wars with each other. Now, it was being suggested that even voting V.P. Singh out would not rid the nation of his legacy.

That was a truly frightening prospect. ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Ready to bolt?

Speculation mounts over Arun Nehru's future plans



He doesn't say much but when he does, the effects can be felt for months. In mid-June, Arun Nehru gave SUNDAY the only major interview he has granted since the general election. Much of the interview was concerned with his achievements at the commerce ministry but he made three significant points.

- The government was in trouble over rising prices. It was issues such as this that would determine its future. The last election had *not* been won on such issues as Bofors, corruption etc., at all.
- Consequently, it was pointless to devote so much time to FIRs and vindictive investigations. Instead, the government should use the present "for the future and not for the past".
- He was still in touch with Rajiv Gandhi and bore him no ill-will because the slate had been wiped clean.

Last week, the impact of that interview could still be felt. Nehru made it clear that he thought that the National Front government was still ignoring the real issues and banking on such gimmicks as reservation. His critics alleged that his opposition to the FIRs stemmed from his own involvement in the Bofors affair: Ram Jethmalani said it was the SUNDAY interview that had convinced him of this. And as he seemed more and more of an outsider in the new caste-based, cow-belt avatar of the Janata Dal, speculation that he would return to the Congress(I) mounted.

Through it all, the man himself maintained an enigmatic silence. What little publicity his point of view received was largely due to his lieutenant Arif Mohammad Khan's links with the media. And while nobody could claim to speak for Nehru, his friends suggested that he was treating allegations of involvement in Bofors with "the contempt that all Hinduja plants deserve".

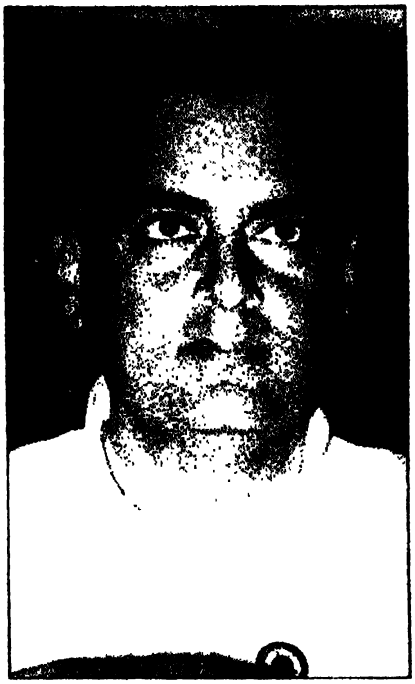
The storm was provoked by the publication of two documents in *The Independent*, the small-circulation, but nevertheless high profile, second newspaper of the Times of India Group in Bombay. The documents were secret telexes sent by the Swedish embassy in New Delhi to the foreign ministry in Stockholm. They were minutes of meetings between Nehru (then minister for energy) and Rolf Gauffin of the embassy.

It is clear from the text that the Bofors deal was discussed by the two men. Nehru asked the Swedes to fire their agents failing which, there would be no deal. Further, he asked them to lower their price, to remember that political considerations would decide the choice of weapon and to ensure that neither his name nor Rajiv Gandhi's featured in subsequent negotiations. The documents raised several questions according to Nehru's critics.

- Why was he talking to the Swedes? The howitzer deal had nothing to do with the power ministry. Yet the Swedes thought he wanted to be the *éminence grise!*
- What did he mean by political considerations? Was this a code-phrase for a kickback?
- Why should he want it made clear that neither Rajiv's nor his name was mentioned? Unless, of course, he had something to hide.

Even before Nehru could respond to the charges, Jethmalani held a press conference and urged V.P. Singh to ask for Nehru's resignation. His call found few echoes, however, and *The Independent* dubbed the silence "a conspiracy of cowards", asking why





Why should Arun Nehru stick with a man whose policies he disagreed with when he had patched up with his cousin? There was no easy answer

even the Congress(I) seemed unwilling to probe Nehru's role in Bofors.

Nehru's side offered timing as its principal defence. The discussions between Nehru and Gauffin took place on 21 June and 12 July, 1985—eight months *before* the Bofors contract was signed. Apparently, there is no document in existence that suggests that Nehru was involved after that date. So how could he have swung the deal?

Moreover, what had Nehru said to Gauffin that was so objectionable? Surely he was within his rights to urge the Swedes to fire their agents and ensure that they lowered the price of their weapon?

All of this makes some sense but it does not explain why Nehru should have been so interested in the deal that he spoke to the Swedes twice. The government signs scores of multi-crore contracts every year. What made Bofors so important to Nehru that he took it upon himself to get involved in the negotiations at an early stage?

Nehru's defenders offer half-hearted explanations (i.e. well, he was the *éminence grise* of the government in those days anyway, etc.). But none of these tells the full story.

In fact, there is an explanation for Nehru's behaviour. And not only does it explain why he spoke to the Swedes but it also accounts for the resurfacing of the documents.

The Hindujas.

In 1984, it was an open secret in New Delhi that Rajiv Gandhi and Arun Nehru had blacklisted the Hindujas because they believed that they had not passed the HDW commissions on to the Congress party. (The HDW deal was struck during Sanjay Gandhi's lifetime.)

While Rajiv had banned the Hindujas from Safdarjang Road (which was then the Prime Minister's residence), it was Arun Nehru who had taken on the task of ensuring that they received no official patronage. Foreign minister Bali Ram Bhagat was fired for meeting them and N.K.P. Salve was told that they would not be allowed to sponsor the cricket World Cup.

In mid-1985, Nehru was told by a representative of Nitro Nobel (Bofors' parent group) that the Hindujas were representing both a Swedish power company and Bofors. He went to Rajiv and they agreed that the Hindujas had to be removed from both negotiations. Therefore, when he told the Swedes that regardless of price, it was the political aspect that would dominate, he meant that India would not award the contract to a company that was represented by the Hindujas, however good its offer. Further, he told Gauffin that Bofors had still not fired its agents and the negotiations would go no further until it did so.

This became the official position of the Government of India: "Fire your agents" which meant, in effect, "Fire the Hindujas".

In due course, Bofors promised the government that the Hindujas had been sacked and the deal went ahead. It was only later that Nehru found out that the arms giant had not, in fact, fired its agents but had continued to pay them under the subterfuge of 'winding-up charges'. It was this revelation in mid-1987 that sparked off the Bofors scandal.

The Nehru camp believes that the Hindujas who were, naturally enough, informed by the Swedes of his

The new Bofors allegations

CONTROVERSY

1

Why did Nehru involve himself in the Bofors negotiations when he was power minister?

2

What did he mean when he told the Swedes that the "political aspect" would swing the deal?

3

Why did he ask that Rajiv's and his names be kept out of the negotiations?

4

The *Indian Express* sat on the story for two months. Why did it do so?

THE DEFENCE

1

Nehru's interest was in getting the Hindujas removed from the deal. Bofors said it had done so by July 1985. Nehru then moved out.

2

He meant that politically undesirable agents would not be allowed to swing the deal.

3

He had no role to play in the negotiations except for this one limited aspect. So, why should he have wanted his name mentioned?

4

Ask the *Express* why it sat on the story. How would Nehru know?

opposition to them, had access to the minutes. They held on to them hoping to leak them when it would cause the most damage to their old adversary.

This, of course, does not explain how Chitra Subramaniam got them because if there is one person who the Hindujas dislike more than they hate Nehru, it is Chitra whose investigations first exposed their involvement in the Bofors scandal.

But then, it is clear that there were several sets of these documents floating around. Subramaniam had one set. Nehru himself appears to have had another. *The Independent's* source was not Subramaniam, so that makes for a third set. And according to Jethmalani, Arun Shourie has had these documents since 1988. Moreover, there is Jethmalani's own set, which he says he procured a month *before The Independent* story.

According to the Nehru camp, Subramaniam is on the level, but many of the others—especially Jethmalani and P. Chidambaram, an old Nehru antagonist, who flourished the documents in Parliament—got their sets of the telexes from the Hindujas and acted at their behest.

Such charges are virtually impossible to substantiate—which might explain why they have been leaked to the press rather than levelled openly—but there is no doubt that Nehru's friends see the entire controversy as being Hinduja-inspired. This theory found its most open exponent in the Ambani-owned *Sunday Observer*, whose chairman R.K. Mishra is a close friend of Nehru's.

What will Nehru do now? His strategy seems to be to sit it out. He thinks that the Bofors controversy will blow over and, certainly, for about a week after the stories first appeared, most politicians—including those hostile to Nehru—seemed unwilling to turn the documents into an issue.

The possible exception was Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who told the press that he was instituting an enquiry into the allegations against Nehru. And when journalists asked him how he intended to respond to Jethmalani's demand that he fire Nehru, the Prime Minister evaded the question.

V.P. Singh's press advisers claimed the next day that he did not mean to impute any guilt to his commerce



ANTI-RESERVATION STIR

minister but only hoped to defuse the crisis by consigning it to the realms of some enquiry panel. But by then, other more sinister interpretations had made the rounds.

The most drastic of these suggested that the anti-Nehru stories were published with the connivance of the Prime Minister or even, at the behest of cabinet secretary Vinod Pande and the Raja's trusted joint secretary Bhure Lal.

This conspiracy theory found few takers, but it was clear that relations between V.P. Singh and Arun Nehru were strained. The areas of difference, however, were unrelated to Bofors.

At the political level, Nehru was said to be deeply distressed by the decision to implement the Mandal Commission report. Whatever his other faults, the commerce minister has never been a casteist and his approach to politics has been to *create* more employment rather than reserve existing jobs for potential vote-banks. Nehru fought long and hard for the industrial policy and just when he seemed to have won the battle, the Raja turned his back on liberalisation and plumped for casteism.

Predictably, this has annoyed the commerce minister who has made his displeasure known at the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs and at meetings of the Janata Dal Political Affairs Committee. In fact, even be-





ARIF MD. KHAN



ARUN NEHRU

Nehru's critics allege that he and his friend would have based their exit from the Dal on the Mandal Commission, had the Bofors documents not surfaced. But, Nehru could not leave when his integrity was being questioned. It would have seemed too much like running away

fore the Bofors documents appeared, New Delhi was full of rumours that Nehru had resigned over the Mandal Commission.

So far, at least, he has not resigned. But it is becoming clearer with each passing day, that he is a misfit in the Janata Dal. His beliefs, his style, his background and his *modus operandi* all differ so drastically from V.P. Singh's that it seems unlikely that the two men will be able to get on for much longer.

Within the Raja's coterie, it is believed that Nehru is only biding his time before crossing over to the Congress(I). The evidence for this assertion is limited so the SUNDAY interview is pulled out again and again.

Last week, Ram Jethmalani declared at his press conference that "his interview to SUNDAY was an act calculated to frustrate the (Bofors) investigations altogether, a course which would certainly earn the gratitude of Rajiv Gandhi and many Congress(I) men. If I were the Prime Minister, I would have asked him to quit that very day. Nehru has kept all his options open."

A few days before Jethmalani's outburst, Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi had met at B.K. Nehru's residence in Dehradun (where they had gone to celebrate their aunt Vijayalakshmi Pandit's birthday). The meeting set off a fresh flurry of speculation about a reconciliation and newspapers even carried stories to the effect that Syed Ashraf, a former V.P. Singh aide, had confessed to planting anti-Raja forgeries at the behest of Arif Mohammad Khan, Nehru's chief lieutenant. The stories were false (Ashraf had made no such confession) but because they emanated from Janata Dal MPs who are close to the Prime Minister, they gained a certain credibility.

Nehru's critics alleged that he had already made a deal with Rajiv Gandhi whereby Satyapal Malik, Arif and he would go over to the Congress(I). All that they needed was an issue.

According to this version, Nehru's demand that the Prime Minister sack Devi Lal was a step in this direction. He was convinced that the Tau would survive and so, he would have grounds for quitting. When, against all expectations, V.P. Singh fired Lal, Nehru found he had to stay.

The Mandal Commission would have been the second such issue on which Nehru and his two friends would have based their exit. But the emergence of the Bofors documents scotched that plan. For Nehru to have left when his integrity was being questioned would have seemed too much like running away.

Supporters of this version say that this is why V.P. Singh is avoiding giving Nehru a clean chit. And that the Congress(I)'s reluctance to attack Nehru on this score is because he is expected to cross over soon.

All this is, of course, speculation. So far there is no hard evidence that Nehru intends to quit the Dal and return to the Congress.

But, if you go by his SUNDAY interview, it does seem clear that all the reasons he gave then for being disenchanted with the government continue to be valid. Prices are still going up, the regime is still not using the present for the future, preferring instead to play caste politics, and his relationship with Rajiv has—if anything—improved.

This does not necessarily mean that Nehru will cross over. But as V.P. Singh looks more and more like a loser, any politician—let alone one who disagreed with his policies—would begin to question the merit in sticking with him.

And if recent political history has demonstrated anything, it is that nobody knows more about survival than Arun Nehru. •

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Biju's reservations

The Orissa chief minister rejects the Mandal recommendations

Memories of yesteryears haunt Biju Patnaik. The Orissa chief minister remembers with a certain amount of trepidation how a snowballing students' movement in 1964 had brought down a regime of which he was the *de facto* ruler. So this time, with students clamouring for the repealing of the Centre's reservation policy based on the Mandal Commission's recommendations, Biju decided not to take any chances.

More than three weeks after Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced his decision to implement the Mandal Commission report, Biju Patnaik turned it down, at least for Orissa, saying that it was "full of errors and incongruities". And he had not even read the report fully, as he himself admitted at a news conference on 29 August, where he denounced the commission's recommendations and went as far as to accuse V.P. Singh of "playing caste politics for getting votes". It was no secret that Biju was deeply worried over the anti-reservation stir at different places in the state, particularly in Bhubaneswar, where it had turned violent. Moreover, there were ominous signs that the movement would not remain confined to the anti-quota issue alone, but would develop into an anti-government agitation in general.

The students and lawyers of Bhubaneswar were already raising slogans like "death to the mad government" and the students of Rajdhani College had burnt effigies of the chief minister. Many members of the Bhubaneswar Bar Association took this opportunity to demand that Patnaik apologise for his alleged derogatory comments against the state's lawyers.

Initially Patnaik did not come out openly against the reservation policy. Instead, he decided to wait and see which way the wind blew. In fact, his first response towards the student agitation was of initiating stern administrative measures. He tried to suppress the movement by ordering the police to deal with students firmly in Bhubaneswar, where the stir was launched.



ALOKE MITRA

Biju Patnaik: taking no chances

The police, therefore, went on a rampage, entering colleges and beating up not only the students but also the administrative staff of the institutions. These actions only added fuel to the fire and the movement spread in a more violent form to Cuttack, where normal life was thrown out of gear. And reports from other parts of the state also suggested that the movement was catching on and acquiring a state-wide character. What is more, the students began protesting against the police atrocities as well.

The quick escalation of the agitation probably sounded the alarm in Biju's mind. In 1964, a minor clash between a shopkeeper and the students of Ravenshaw college in Cuttack, in which the police and the administration sided with the shopkeeper, developed into a massive anti-government students' movement that ultimately brought down the government of the then chief minister Biren Mitra. Though Mitra headed the ministry, the real policy-maker was Biju, who was then the state Congress president.

Biju knew that his government's record was not too bright. His decision to raise the daily wages of farm labourers from Rs 11 per day to Rs 25 and asking the police to seek permission before firing on attacking mobs have made the people suspect his wisdom and have generated a fair measure of discontent in certain quarters.

Biju feared that his opponents might capitalise on the students' disaffection and oust him. So, before time ran out, he decided to perform a volte-face. On 28 August, he wrote to Singh asking him to make two amendments to the commission's recommendations. First, he wanted an income ceiling, even for the backward castes, so that only those whose earnings were below the specified limit would be eligible for preferential treatment. Secondly, he suggested that the quotas should be maintained only for recruitment and not for promotions.

But Biju knew that writing a letter was just not enough. Surely, he had to do something more to convince the angry students that he was genuinely opposing the reservation policy. So he called a press conference on 29 August to denounce the Mandal Commission report and to announce that he was not implementing it in Orissa.

However, his turnaround may have come a little too late, for the students have shown no signs of relenting and the agitations continue despite his assurance. ●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

The resignation drama

Union law minister Dinesh Goswami quits the Cabinet in a huff, only to return three days later

It came as a bolt from the blue for Prime Minister V.P. Singh. At a time when his government is battling for survival in the face of mounting odds, the sombre and staid Union law minister Dinesh Goswami dropped a bombshell. On the morning of 28 August, Goswami sent in his resignation to the Prime Minister, owning moral responsibility for the sorry state of affairs in his home state, Assam. For the next two days, Goswami steadfastly resisted all pressures from his Cabinet colleagues and the Assam chief minister, Prafulla Mahanta, to withdraw his resignation. But on the third day, he gave in. On 31 August, Dinesh Goswami returned to his office, which he had left in a huff just three days before.

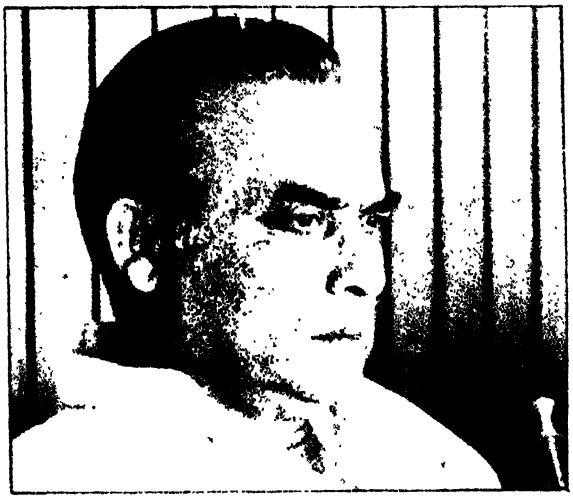
Dinesh Goswami, while being one of the five members of Parliament from the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)—the party which rules Assam—is the only representative of this regional party in the Cabinet. That, according to him, had become an impediment for him. While Goswami personally felt the National Front government had done a commendable job for Assam, his opinion was obviously not shared by the younger leaders of the AGP and the more militant members of the All Assam Students Union (AASU). Goswami began to feel increasingly isolated and was frequently caught in the crossfire between the Centre and the AGP leadership. "How can I continue to be a member of the Union Cabinet as the sole represenatative of the state if I have no say in the politics of the state?" he asked in his letter to the Prime Minister.

During a conversation with SUNDAY, Goswami explained that such problems were being faced not only by him, but by all leaders from the troubled states. "I don't think the AGP is ignoring me. I have a very good relationship with the chief minister, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, and the other AGP leaders. It is just that in Assam, as in Punjab and Kashmir, the moderates are slowly becoming irrelevant."

Dinesh Goswami added that ever since he joined the Union Cabinet, he realised there was a difference of perception between him and the younger breed of AGP leaders. "It is not a generation gap, just that the state is passing through a different atmosphere. And with Assembly elections round the corner, I knew the battle lines would be drawn."

Though Goswami insisted there was no immediate provocation behind his decision to quit the Cabinet, political observers feel his recent visit to his home state, when he was gheraoed by AASU activists, brought matters to a head. Before that, Union finance minister Madhu Dandavate and home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had visited Guwahati and were greeted by black-flag waving demonstrators. Also, in June this year, the ruling AGP government had organised a successful Assam bandh, in protest against the Centre's lackadaisical attitude towards the state. The AGP has been demanding that the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act of 1983 be scrapped and the scheme to pump excess crude oil out of Assam be dropped.

Goswami's grouse is that though he was continuously fighting for the cause of Assam in Cabinet meetings, he couldn't make his demands public for obvious reasons. The minister pointed out that the oil royalty to Assam had been increased, several refineries had been expanded and clearances given by the Centre for the setting up of a new multi-crore gas cracker plant in the state. And all this largely due to his efforts. "I was fighting for all these things in the Cabinet, but the people of Assam do not hear about them. On the other hand, being a Union minister, I cannot speak very vocally about the problems of Assam in Parliament. Therefore, I thought I would be in a better position to speak in Parliament if I was a mere MP," Goswami reasoned.



Goswami's initial decision to resign had been precipitated by the general discontent in Assam towards the National Front government

His initial decision to resign, Goswami said, had been precipitated by the general discontent in Assam towards the National Front government. "And" he said, "if that is the feeling, I lose my moral authority to remain in the Cabinet. After all, it is the people who will judge what I have been able to get for them from New Delhi. I cannot continue to be my own judge."

Goswami's was obviously a very principled stand: he quit the central government since the people of his home state felt that the Centre was doing precious little to solve their problems. But then, under tremendous pressure from the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues, Dinesh Goswami ultimately withdrew his resignation. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

The Raja of Mandal

This man will stop at nothing in his quest for power



The British describe their form of government as "muddling through". The Raja of Manda describes his as "mandaling through"!

Cornered by the Tau, threatened by Arun Nehru, intimidated by his own backward MPs, in the minatory person of Ram Avadesh Singh Yadav, and forewarned by his astrologer-in-residence that the end is, indeed, nigh, our Raja of Manda does a quick change of garb and emerges (*gillie! gillie!*) as the Raja of Mandal. If he began his political career as a Praja Socialist whose feudal retainers called him the "Raja Saheb", he ends the roller-coaster ride as a Prime Minister who won't stand for pointers to poverty "diluting" the exquisite chopping up of our community into 3,473 finely divided castes and sub-castes! The culmination of our Prime Minister's art of managing contradictions is that his contradictions are now managing him!

We—that is, the 82 per cent of us who did *not* vote for the Janata Dal in the last elections—have, of course, always known that, in the end, it would come to this—even if the editor of the *Indian Express* disingenuously protests that he didn't. For, we knew, that one who puts together a political platform based on no conception of the nation but solely on the calculus of adding one caste to another, one vertebra to another, one vested interest to another, can end up only proclaiming that the whole is less than the sum of each of its component parts. AJGAR is not only the acronym for Ahir-Jat-Gujjar-and-Rajput. *Ajgar* is also the Hindi for the boa constrictor—the serpent which swallows its victims whole!

The wise Kakasaheb Kelalkar, chairman of the first Backward Classes Commission, foresaw it all. Article 340 of the Constitution laid on government the obligation to set up a commission to identify and recommend the special measures needed to secure the social, economic and educational emancipation of the backward classes. The expression "backward castes" was deliberately eschewed because our founding fathers had driven the communalists to Pakistan and the casteists underground. Worsted at the hustings, the casteists crept back through the woodwork during the sittings of the Kalelkar Commission. Kakasaheb was, thus, left bemoaning that "in the present context, the words 'sections and classes' can mean nothing but castes, and no other interpretation is feasible" (para 56 of his 137 paragraph letter, not to mention two lengthy postscripts, forwarding the report of the Commission to the President of India).

He regretted that the main consequence of the inquiry conducted by his Commission was that "caste-consciousness, caste loyalties and caste aspirations have increased throughout the country" (para 58). And he added with infinite sadness: "Communalism and casteism are bound to destroy the unity of the nation and narrow down the aspirations of our people" (para 59). Which led him to three major conclusions, first, that "two years of experience (i e the two years from 1953 to 1955 during which the Commission had held its deliberations) have convinced us of the dangers of the spread of casteism" (para 60); second, that "backwardness should be studied from the point of view of the individual and, at most, that of the family" (para 64); and, third, that we must "try to find criteria of backwardness that would eschew



ideas of caste or class" (para 65).

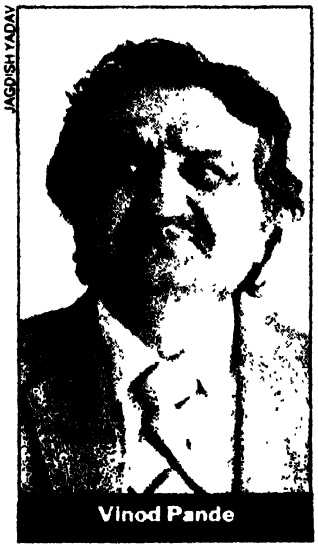
Thirty-five years after Kalelkar (after whom, so few of my erstwhile civil service colleagues seem to remember, the Delhi *babus'* colony of Kaka Nagar is named)—35 years post-Kalelkar, we have as Prime Minister of India a Robber Baron who has the gall to proclaim in Parliament that the "introduction of economic criteria will dilute the purposes for which the Mandal Commission was established"! Here we have a Prime Minister– who has packed his own secretariat with forwards extending from a Brahmin principal secretary and a Brahmin cabinet secretary to a Brahmin private secretary, a sheaf of Brahmin additional secretaries and serried ranks of sundry forwards; why not start with 27 per cent reservation in PMO?!—as I was saying, here we have a Prime Minister--who rejected the Mandal Commission when he was chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, *circa* 1980-82, remember?--telling us now that Mandal is of such overwhelming importance that, following a brief discussion in Cabinet (on an agenda which did not even list the Mandal Report in the order of business!) a matter that has been pending for ten years, needs immediate disposal. (Would that such despatch were shown over Bofors! How now, V.P. Singh, what were you up to in Stockholm in the summer of 1985? And what little game have you and your commerce minister been playing since then?)

But, to get back to the issue at hand—class without economic criteria? Karl Marx denounced the socialist thinkers who preceded him (Proudhon, Robert Owen, Saint Simon and the others) as "Utopian socialists" because they did not understand the relationship between class and economic criteria. He described his own socialism as "scientific" precisely because it established the nexus between "class" and the "means of production". Those who *owned* the means of production were the "bourgeoisie" Those who *worked* the means of production were the "proletariat". Because the bourgeoisie owned the means of production, it controlled the state. And because the proletariat merely worked the means of production, it was exploited by the bourgeoisie through the state. Hence, the forces of dialectical materialism would force through a class conflict which would destroy the bourgeoisie and culminate in the withering away of the state itself. A century after *Das Kapital*, we have our homegrown Marxists extending their principled Marxist support to a landlord *comprador* (another vintage communist abuse) who says "class" will be "diluted" if economic criteria are brought in! As poor Marx turns in his grave in the Highgate Cemetry, the gravediggers have taken to calling him Revolving Karl!

Nothing could be more ignoble—or, indeed, more short-sighted even from the electoral point of view--than the caste war which the Raja of Manda has unleased upon our country. When Gandhiji started his fast unto death in the Yervada Jail in Poona in 1932, doubtless there were political "advisers" whispering in his ear (even as his opponents exulted for the same reason without) that, with elections likely after the London Round Table Conference, and Thakur and Bhumihar zamindars "resentful", the Muslims "alienated", the Sikhs "disturbed", the Christians "traitorous", the Harijans "lost" and the tribals "out", the best course, on the whole, would be to consolidate the *swarna jati* Hindus. But the Mahatma was the Mahatma precisely because he said, "No". (He also, incidentally, swept the polls! Nothing in the Indian democratic experience shows that the road to electoral victory is paved with casteist stones.) Gandhiji refused to countenance the division of Hindu society into separate electorates for the caste Hindus and the "Untouchables". He put his life on the line. He negotiated an agreement with Dr Ambedkar, known to history as the Yervada Pact, which established the principle of general constituencies for all, with some reserved for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) candidates alone, thus ensuring that while legislatures would have several SC/ST members, none would be elected exclusively by an SC/ST electorate, nor, in non-reserved constituencies, would any other candidate secure election without the electoral backing of SC/ST voters. In a stroke, criminal injustice of centuries was ended, and the unity of the community (as also of the country) was ensured. It is a national consensus that has endured for six decades.


Devi Lal


Arun Nehru


JAGDISH YADAV
Vinod Pande

V.P. Singh: *Cornered by the Tau, threatened by Arun Nehru, intimidated by his own backward MPs, forewarned by his astrologer-in-residence, our Raja of Manda does a quick change of garb and emerges as the Raja of Mandal*

Jawaharlal Nehru gave the quietus to the Kalelkar Commission Report precisely because, Kakasaheb's subsequent forebodings notwithstanding, the Commission itself had defined "class" exclusively in terms of "caste". It was the Janata government, which assumed office in 1977 to loud hosannas from Arun Shourie and his ilk, who took the utterly retrograde step of selecting from their ranks the most avowed casteist of them all, the truly backward B P. Mandal, to head a Commission whose mandate was to rake over all the issues already gone into by the Kalelkar Commission. In the quarter century that elapsed between Kakasaheb's exertions and Mandal's last will and testament, the country made enormous progress in de-linking "caste" from "class". What Mandal did was to re-establish the nexus and equate social progress with the augmentation of the number of "backward castes", that is, from around 2,000 under Kalelkar to upwards of 3,500 in the Mandal Yuga.

Where was Arun Shourie when Morarji & Co. thus revived casteism? Loudly applauding on the sidelines, that's where he was. Where was Arun Shourie when they appointed Mandal—of all people—to head the Commission? (Kalelkar's description of the interests which the man represented fits so perfectly that I cannot resist the temptation to quote him *in extenso*: "there are certain communities who are financially well-off and, yet, are educationally backward, and a good many of them have been dominating society, especially in rural areas"! My exclamation—but that's from para 96. See also para 90: "The extremely backward communities are mostly the victims of the domination of the privileged and dominant communities among the backward classes. It would be a mockery of justice to allow such dominant communities to claim to be the natural leaders of the victims of their domination.")

But, to get back to my question: Where was Shourie when the government of his dreams proved exactly what a load of rubbish they were when they picked on B.P. Mandal, out of a hundred casteists, to do their dirty work for them? Shourie was silent—no, not on everything (for Shourie cannot go to sleep till he has badmouthed at least one Gandhi!) But silent, certainly, on what his mentors (or were they his dupes?) in the Janata government were up to. And where was Shourie when Mandal submitted his report? Drying his tears, doubtless, that Indiraji was back as Prime Minister. But did he ever have the courage—or conviction—to laud Indiraji for *not* implementing the Report—and precisely because she was unable to forge any national consensus on Mandal's equation of caste with class?



RAJESH KUMAR

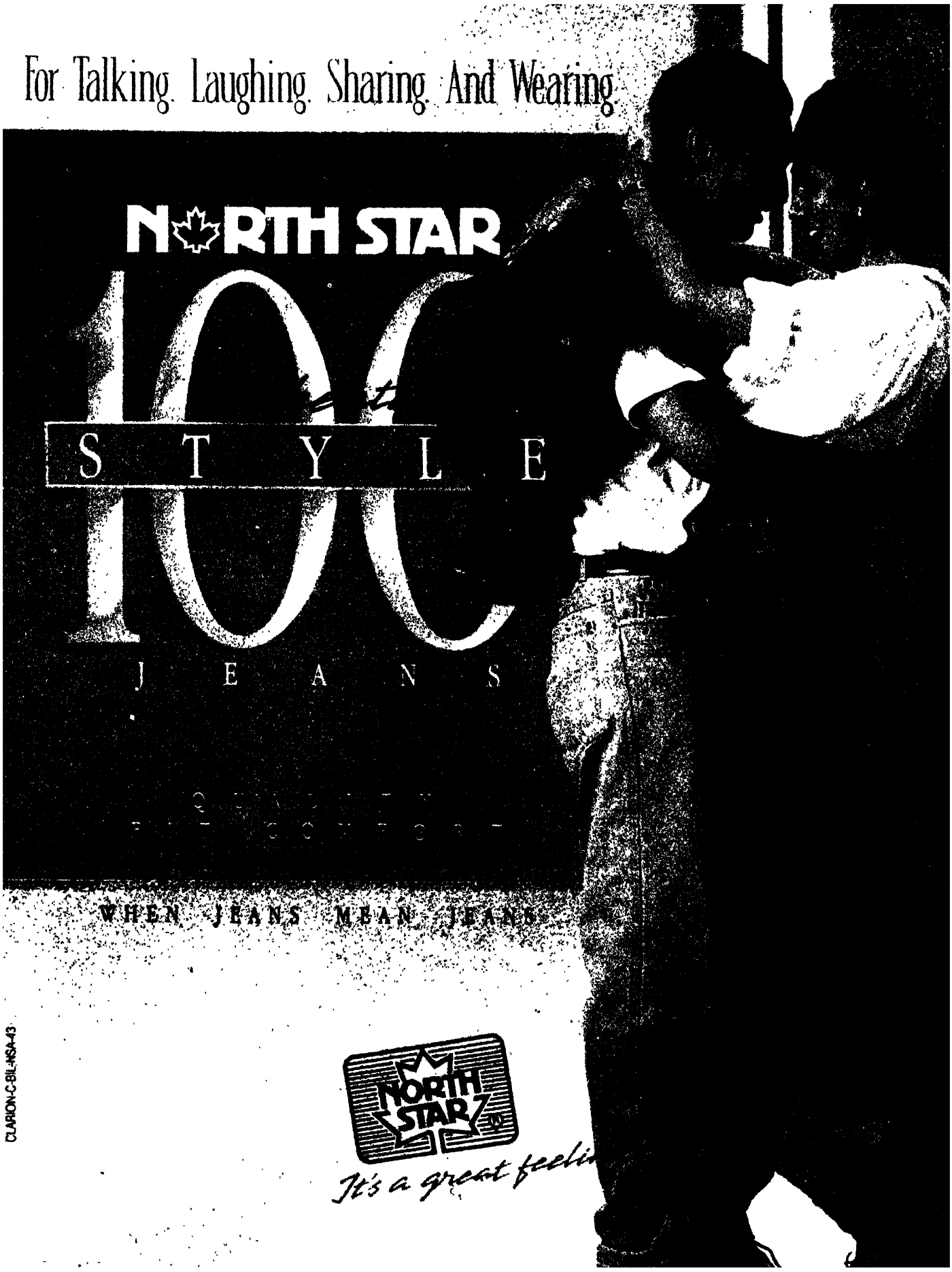
Arun Shourie: *A dangerous political operative who is using his pen to bring the BJP to power*

It is only in the last 15 years that the generality of our newspaper reading public has had to suffer Arun Shourie's hypocritical self-righteousness. I have known it for twice that time—for Arun and I were in the same economics honours class at the same Delhi University college three decades ago. It comes as no surprise to me, therefore, to see that the young fraud of the late Fifties has grown into the middle-aged fraud of the Nineties. Else, how does Arun Shourie explain this conundrum: the National Front manifesto clearly and unambiguously stated that the NF government would, without any reservation, implement the Mandal Commission Report *in toto*. (So, incidentally, did the party of communalists that is truly after Shourie's heart, the BJP—but we'll come to that in a minute.) When V.P. Singh, in the November elections, promised to Mandalise our country, what was Shourie doing? I'll remind you—even if Shourie has forgotten: he and the rest of the *chandal chowkdi* were cheering VP on! Blinded by his utterly personalised hatred of Rajiv Gandhi—and spurred on by his true gurus in the BJP—Shourie led the brigade that defamed Rajiv on Bofors, and then cheered himself hoarse when the two Bofors conspirators, Arun Nehru (not the *eminence grise* of the Bofors deal, as the Swedish diplomat has described him, but surely the *eminence gros* : please, please look that up in a good French-English dictionary) and Vishwanath Pratap Singh, were installed as the *dadas* of India! What is the point of Shourie today quoting V.P. Singh as saying he wouldn't stand from Allahabad and then standing; and wouldn't run for the prime ministership—and then sprinting? Is it only now that Shourie's painstaking researches have turned up these gems? Does he not read his own front page? Does he not read what he himself writes?

But let us not be befooled. Arun Shourie is not a hapless victim of dyslexia (the inability to read and write) or amnesia (the inability to remember). Nor is he a Socrates in search of hemlock. Shourie is a dangerous political operative, who is using his pen to bring the BJP to power. (So am I, a dangerous political operative, who is using his pen to bring the Congress to power—but I openly proclaim my political purpose. I am not an unctuous hypocrite masquerading as an "investigative journalist". When Swami Shourie finally dons a saffron safari suit, we will finally see a wolf in wolf's clothing!)

As their tryst with Ram Janmabhoomi draws nearer, the BJP has come to believe that its hour has struck. The press is its chosen instrument for destroying the Janata Dal. The Tau is gone. Arun Nehru is on his way out. Shourie has been earmarked as V.P. Singh's hitman. In a few weeks from now, the Lok Sabha will be dissolved and fresh elections called. The BJP's bluff will also be called as Rajiv Gandhi rides back to South Block. And we can then give Shourie a quiet political burial, inscribing on the headstone of the grave over his ambitions: "Lies! *Lies!* LIES! R.I.P." •

The views expressed in this article are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.


For Talking. Laughing. Sharing. And Wearing.
NORTH STAR
10¢
STYLE
JEANS
WHEN JEANS MEAN JEANS
NORTH STAR
It's a great feeli
CLARION-C-BIL-NSA-43

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE!

She fell in with the idea of an Indo-pop aggregation readily enough. And teamed up with Boy George to form the West India company.

But even before the new group had begun recording, Asha Bhosle was consumed by self-doubt. Would her Marathi-accented English be good enough for the Boy? Or would she be laughed out of the studio when she burst into song?

Whatever the reaction, Bhosle was taking no chances. And began working on cultivating an upper-class Brit accent in time for the first recording.



The West India company: getting the accent right

As it turned out, she needn't have bothered. For Stephen Luscombe, the star synthesiser of the UK group Blancmange dissolved into uncontrollable giggles when he heard the new, improved Bhosle.

"Shet up, Ashah," he recovered to advice, "you're sounding stoopid."

And a relieved Bhosle reverted to her *desi* diction

IN WITH TIPU, OUT WITH TINNU

When she retired from the world of modelling to take up photography, everybody thought that Malvika Tiwari would now remain behind the camera forever and ever.

They had reckoned without Tinnu Anand, though. The director, exercising his not inconsiderable charm, managed to persuade Tiwari to sign up as leading lady of his next film.

But even before producer Shums Merchant could decide on the title of the movie, Malvika was dropped.

Why?

Apparently, the dimpled debutante had welshed on an understanding reached with Tinnu, and agreed to play Tipu's wife in the teleserial *The Sword Of Tipu Sultan*.

Anand insisted on exclusivity.

The lady refused.

And found herself out of the film.





Malvika Tiwari (far left) in Tinnu Anand's (above) unnamed film: she preferred *Tipu*

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

On 27 August, the Mother turned 80. And greetings came from all over the world on the occasion, with Pope John Paul II and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl prominent among those who wrote in.

Mother Teresa, however, spent the day in retreat, praying to God to grant her the wisdom to choose an able successor (the election of the new superior-general of the Missionaries of Charity Order was due in a week's time). Members of her congregation offered mass and thanksgiving to God "for the gift of Mother Teresa to society, to the poor and to the world".



SRENIK SETH

Mother Teresa: 80 years and going strong

The Mother insisted that she didn't want any homage. "The only thing that will make me happy," she said, "is that all those who see the good being done may be led to give glory to God, and be helped to recognise the presence of God in the poor and to love and serve them."

YES TO FILMS

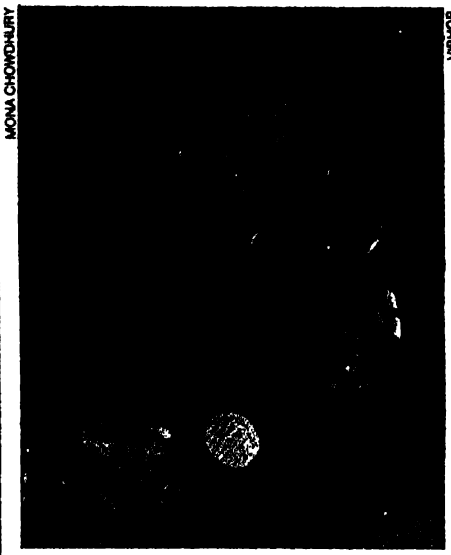
[redacted] Kishori Amonkar, one of the prime exponents of the Kirana *gharana* of Hindustani classical music, has always shied away from the crass commercialism of Hindi cinema. And resolutely steered clear of films after singing for V. Shantaram's *Geet Gaya Patharon Ne*, a couple of decades ago.

Now, after all these years, Amonkar has changed her mind about Bombay's film world, and decided to sing for Govind (*Aakrosh, Ardh Satya, Tamas*) Nihalani's forthcoming film *Drishti*.

According to Nihalani, the film, which explores the man-woman relationship in a marriage, will not feature the conventional background musical score to underline emotional movements. Instead, the director will rely on vocal renderings in between the scenes to achieve a similar effect.

Here's where Kishori Amonkar comes in. The musical virtuoso will sing ragas appropriate to the moment to hold the viewers spellbound. And, hopes Nihalani, keep the cash registers ringing.

MONA CHOWDHURY



VISHOR



Kishori Amonkar: singing for Govind Nihalani (above)

THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN

[redacted] Ever since her Miss Asia days, she's been a bit of a high-flier. Small wonder then, that Air India picked on Zeenat Aman to play the lead in their video film *Flights To Wonderland*.

Scheduled for viewing on the airlines' long-haul flights, the audio-visual treat has Captain Zeenat taking a group of kids to palaces among the clouds, which have sunshine for domes, and whose inhabitants are straight out of Aesop's Fables.

After the success with her perfume, it should signal an interesting return to celluloid for Aman.



Zeenat Aman: calling all children

PRIZE WORK

[redacted] He's never been an unknown in media circles. But the success of *The Great Indian Novel* catapulted Shashi Tharoor to instant fame.

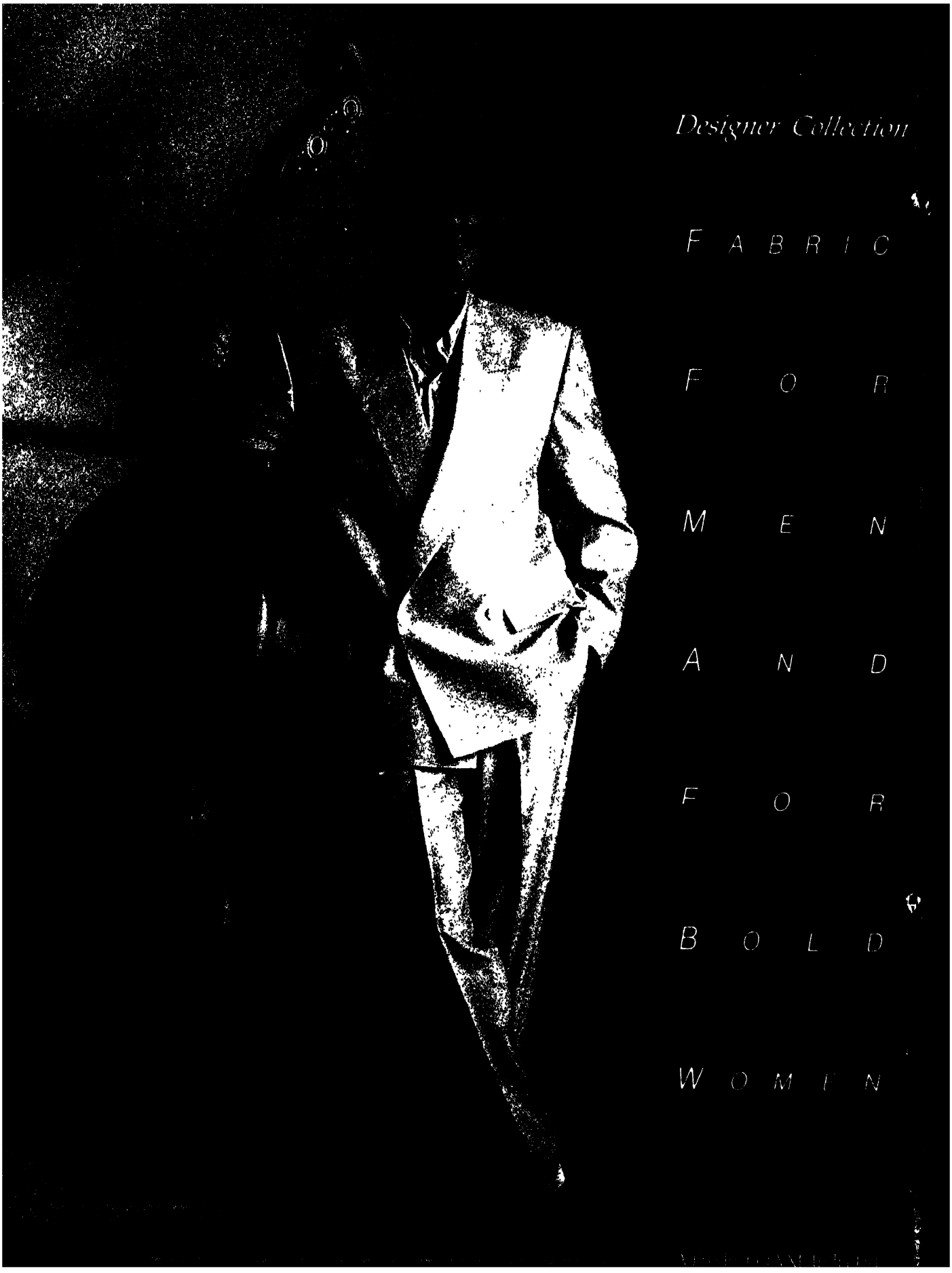
Published by Penguin India in September 1989, to overwhelming critical acclaim, the book, based on the *Mahabharat*, has sold nearly 10,000 copies in India alone, and is in its fourth reprint.

And now, the Commonwealth Foundation has decided to award the Eurasian Regional Best Book Winner prize to Tharoor for his maiden novel. The writer has been invited to Sydney to receive the £500 prize on 31 October. And he now becomes one of the contenders for the Commonwealth Writers Prize, which will be awarded to one of the five regional winners.



Shashi Tharoor: awarded

But no, Tharoor is not willing to speculate on his chances to swing that one. •


Designer Collection
FABRIC
FOR
MEN
AND
FOR
BOLD
WOMEN



All that glitters...

Four centuries later, the Banarasi silk industry is still thriving

It is an industry, if a few thousand handloom units scattered among the poky, ill-lit bylanes of Banaras, operated by women, children and a few master craftsmen, with no fixed hours of work, wages, bonuses, holidays or compensatory schemes, can be so termed. But never mind the primitive nature of the trade and the obsolete methods of production: the Banarasi silk industry manages to produce *sherwanis*, dress lengths and, of course, the fabled saris worth around Rs 240 crores every year.

For a singularly disorganised business, the Banarasi silk industry hasn't been doing too badly. Consider the figures. According to the Central Silk Board, Banarasi saris and dress lengths worth Rs 4.82 crores were exported (to the Middle East, Canada, United Kingdom, USA, Mauritius, Singapore and Malayasia) in 1987-88. In 1989, the figure rose to Rs 5.50 crores, and the first six months of 1990 alone recorded trade of Rs 5.70 crores.

The domestic scene was equally promising, with the Uttar Pradesh Handloom Corporation distributing silk yarn worth Rs 18.57 lakhs and procuring finished goods worth Rs 113.62 lakhs in 1989. By June 1990, the corporation had given yarn worth Rs 12.36 lakhs and obtained finished goods worth Rs 48.22 lakhs. The turnover of the corporation's seven retail outfits in Varanasi alone amounted to Rs one crore and 14 lakhs. There was money in *zari*, even if it never really percolated down to the worker on the loom.

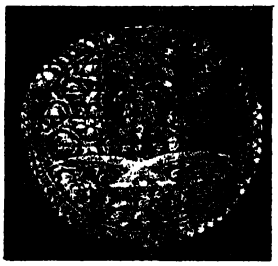
The real boom, however, was in the export sector, and catching on to the trend, many manufacturers opted for a complete switchover. One of them, Abdul Baashik, explains: "The success of the carpet industry (based in Bhadoi near Banaras) was an eye-opener to us. Its existence also facilitated our export channels and we could familiarise ourselves with the procedural formalities."

It helped, in this connection, that the second generation of manufacturers were less conservative, travelled abroad regularly, acquainted themselves with the latest styles through fashion magazines and incorporated them to their designs. "But the most important reason," says Baashik, "is the business we have been getting from the Middle East. The Gulf countries have changed our *naseeb* (destiny)."

Not that the home market is restricted, either. The demand for Banarasi silks—or even organzas and tissues done with brocade—has persisted despite the new-fangled products on offer. The reason, say manufacturers, has to do with the quality of the weave; every sari is distinctive and an artistic creation in its own right, and the mass-produced wares on sale are no competition.

The precise origins of the trade are shrouded in mystery, though there are several versions going around. The earliest reference to it comes in the writings of Ralph Fitch, a 16th century figure, who recorded that the silk turbans of Mughal royalty were made in Banaras. Tavernier, a 17th century French itinerant, substantiated the account of the flourishing textile industry. Apparently, around this time, several silk weavers from Surat migrated to Banaras, and imparted their skills to the Muslim craftsmen of Faizabad district, at the behest of the local Raja.

Such conventional colours as red, bright pink, deep purple and verdant





Exports to the Middle Eastern markets have helped the Banarasi silk industry, with certain royal families contributing their own designs. The red silk-satin piece above features the insignia of Saudi Arabian royalty

green were favoured to highlight the bold *jangla* patterns of leafy trees, flowers, birds, butterflies, deer and *paan*, spun in pure gold and silver *zari*, which was manufactured locally. But with the growing popularity of these silks abroad, especially in England (manufacturers still talk with pride of the time master weaver Subhan Mia was invited to Queen Victoria's coronation), the colours and designs used had to be suitably modified. The new patterns were generally adapted from imported English wallpaper.

Some enterprising customers came up with original ideas. A British buyer, some 70 years ago, was asked to suggest a new design. By way of answer, he simply placed a gold *mohar* (coin) on the brocade length. Today, this motif, known in trade parlance as *ashrafi buti*, is a part of every designer's repertoire.

Tibet and Nepal used to be important customers, and special *gyasas* (prayer mats in brocade), spun in rich, baroque style, were made for them. Even today, a leading manufacturer, Haji Moinuddin, makes *gyasas*, of four-metre silk lengths, which he claims are smuggled into Tibet through Dharamsala and such conduits.

The *Arabi pat*, a dress length, has been specially fabricated for the Middle Eastern market, with certain royal families contributing their own designs. Master craftsman Abdul Aziz, for instance, spun a sample for the Saudi Arabian royalty in red silk-satin, embodying their insignia of a pair of crossed swords.

Much of the yarn used came from China and Japan. But imports stopped with the Second World War, and manufacturers were reduced to using Mysore yarn. Today, most weavers use Chinese yarn, smuggled through Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.

Of late, the industry has witnessed technological upgradation of sorts, with the coming of the powerloom. But it hasn't found too many takers, despite the fact that it can produce three or four saris a day as against the one per week a handloom does. In Varanasi district alone, there are 15 lakh handloom units to 12,000 powerloom ones. According to Riazuddin, a small-scale manufacturer and prominent activist of the Weavers Welfare Association, this disparity is due to "erratic power supply, the inability to produce traditional designs on powerloom and a general resistance to change on the part of the manufacturers".

Among the traditional trade practices which persist to this day is the use of child labour. The reason proffered for employing children is that their nimble fingers can best execute the dextrous tasks which are involved in the weaving of yarn. The official story is that all the child workers belong to the manufacturer's family. But investigations reveal that they are hired workers, who are paid no wages, on the grounds that they are apprentices. Nobody is quite sure how long the apprenticeship lasts. The manufacturers pay an advance—around Rs 5,000—to their guardians, and the children are reduced to the status of bonded labourers.

Rough estimates have it that one lakh children are employed by the industry. Manufacturers insist that this is only because older workers prefer to work for the carpet industry of Bhadoi. The emergence of Banaras as a major tourist centre also has something to do with it, with most adults choosing to work in hotels or as guides.

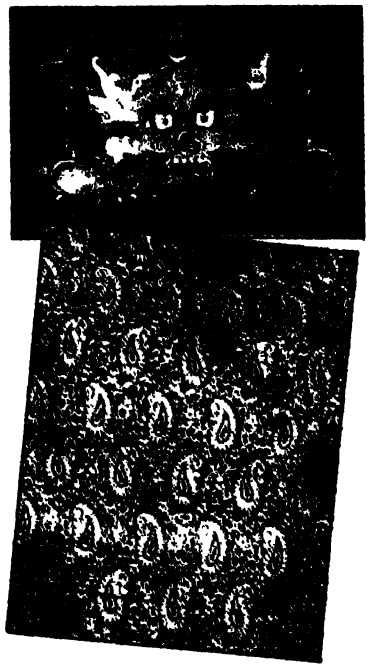
Children, however, do not qualify for these jobs. And the manufacturers prefer to employ them, since they don't have to be paid regular wages, either. Naiyyab's (12) is a typical case. His father took an advance from the manufacturer, and Naiyyab and his brothers were put to work on the loom. They work approximately for 12 hours a day, with a half-hour break for lunch, and spend the odd holiday performing household chores.

There isn't much hope of advancement, either. After working for nearly 12 years, Yaseer gets only Rs 450 a month and that only because he has managed to master a particularly complex motif. Not surprisingly then, there are frequent cases of the child workers running away, only to be caught up with in Bombay or Surat and brought right back to the looms.

In all this, however, the trade flourishes. And the Banarasi silk industry continues to do great business.●

Radhika Ramaseshan/Banaras





(Clockwise from far left) Women and children at work on the looms; a dragon motif specially woven for the lamas; and an intricate pattern on a *sherwani* length

PHOTOGRAPHS: KRISHAN SAITH

HOME SHOPPING

It's in the mail

Burlingtons' kicks off India's armchair consumerism

From slacks, Bermuda shorts and pullovers to slick lingerie and toddlers' jumpsuits. From contraceptives, cutlery and electronic items to sports equipment, cordless telephones and linen. India's first home shopping catalogue, brought out by Burlingtons' Home Shopping Pvt. Ltd, a division of the Burlingtons' Group, offers a total of 460 items for everyday wear, leisure and utility for the country's well-heeled, convenience-minded shoppers. "You could say we are delivering on approval," says André Kapur, Burlingtons' chairman and managing director. "If you like it, you keep it. And if you don't, we take it back." With a full refund.

The assumption, however, is that there will not be many returns. "We've put in a lot of effort into making sure that people will be satisfied with the products," says Kapur. For starters, the goods on sale are from top Indian manufacturers—cutlery from Kishco, menswear from Louis Philipe, Benetton and Zodiac, and shoes from Lotto, among others. Burlingtons' will be acting as a mailbox retailer for the manufacturers, but will market their products under its own label to retain the exclusive touch.

The Bombay-based Burlingtons' Group, a Rs 75 crore a year outfit with three major lines of business—garment manufacture and export, retailing at home, and acting as buying agents for some of the world's biggest names such as Bloomingdale's of New York, Lord & Taylor and the Neiman Marcus retail operations based in Dallas, Texas—launched its six-monthly catalogue in August. The initial target audience is the Rs 8,000 a month-plus earnings bracket, culled from the list of Mastercard, Visa and Diners Club credit card holders, a select group of highly paid and urbanised clientele. Business could be worth as much as Rs 10 crores for the first year, says Kapur.



André Kapur: home shopping pioneer

Later, after business picks up, Burlingtons' plans to add the Rs 5,000 a month segment to its marketing effort. For a very good reason: Kapur estimates the home shopping market to be potentially worth a staggering Rs 1,000 crores a year. The more India's middle and upper middle classes grow in numbers and get used to the idea of purchasing things from a single point outlet without having to make a trip to the marketplace, the more it will make the idea seem like a bonanza. A lot of entrepreneurs will be keeping a close watch on the Burlingtons' venture. If it clicks, urban India could well be inundated with a string of home shopping catalogue operations.

For that kind of market, the work that has gone into Burlingtons' Home Shopping has more to do with a bit of research, good timing and low overheads. The group commissioned Kirloskar Consultants Ltd of Pune to conduct a market survey, and results showed that out of 1,450 respondents interviewed, more than a thousand showed their willingness to opt for

Here comes the catalogue



home shopping—70 per cent positive response. That was enough to get Kapur perked up about the whole idea.

After that, it was just a question of buying floor space in the New Okhla Industrial Estate near New Delhi—which is the centre for accepting orders, processing them and shipping the goods out. Backed, of course, by a slickly produced catalogue—with Bombay's top models, Meher Jesia, Mustafa Eisa, Suzanne Sabloak and Nasser Abdullah, among others, to tout the products—priced at a reasonable Rs 30. The orders will be tracked and processed by computer, and, say company executives, will reach customers within three weeks.

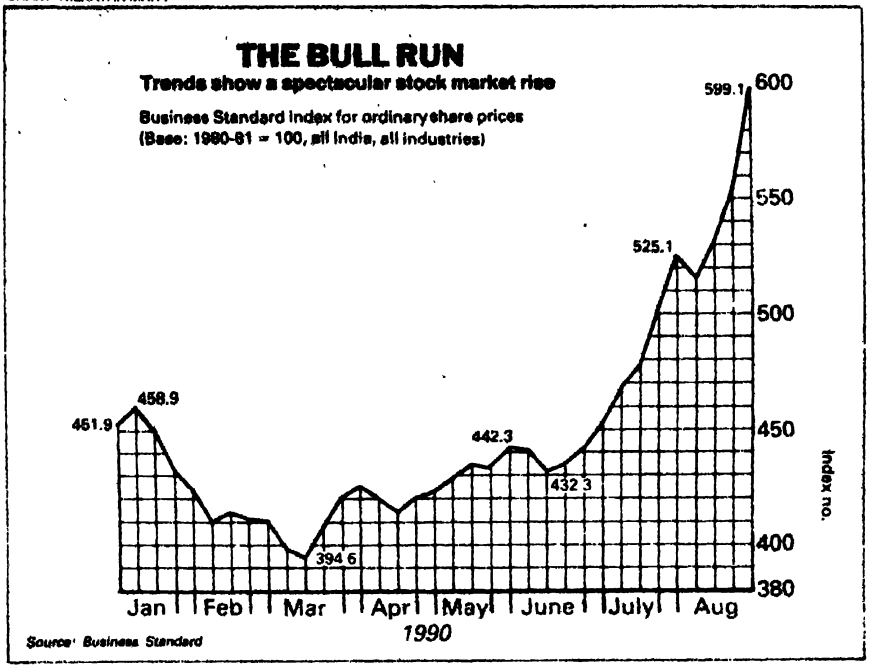
Kapur claims that the catalogued products are priced at 25 to 40 per cent below market prices. While that is debatable—pullovers for Rs 425, Lotto sneakers for Rs 595, etc.—what is *not* is the convenience of the shopping. And this is where Kapur's claim of lower prices checks out. Prices are inclusive of postage and handling charges, which are considerably cheaper than driving a distance to shop; worse, going to a number of shops in the virtual absence of supermarkets and the department store concept in India. Besides, an order for more than five items guarantees a five per cent discount on the entire purchase order. Payments can be made by money order, cheque or VPP, or credit cards. For Grindlays Visa card holders, there is another facility: the option to pay for purchases in instalments over a year.

These options should draw customer support. And Kapur says he has things worked out to combat disappointment. Ironically, because of the catalogue's production quality. "It is not so much a question of conforming to the description of a product in the catalogue...every item is presented at its best in the photo using professional models and photographers, so the reality can sometimes be disappointing."

Kapur is guarding against that eventuality by picking top names as suppliers, as well as appointing the Société Générale de Surveillance, an international agency that monitors the quality of export items before they are shipped out—to keep track of the suppliers' goods. Even if that does not work out, consumers can rest easy on one count, one that really matters. The money back guarantee. •

Lavina Dixit / Calcutta

CHART NILRATAN MAITY



STOCK MARKETS

Animal house

The bears have taken a beating, and the bulls are giving share market experts confidence—and nightmares

In end-August, presidents of various stock exchanges met in New Delhi for a panic meeting. The outcome: a decision to ask stock brokers to liquidate their carried forward business by at least 50 per cent in eight key scrips—Associated Cement Cos, Baroda Rayon, Tata Tea, Tata Power, TELCO, Tata Steel, Orkay and Reliance Industries Ltd. The reason: an attempt to cool their share prices, and the stock markets, which *should* show signs of slowing down, but have not done anything of the sort.

In fact, market prices have gone through the roof. The Bombay Stock Exchange's (BSE) sensitive index, based on 30 scrip movements, hit an all-time high of 1,247 on 30 August, a 96 point jump from the previous high of 1,151 recorded just four days earlier. Even a dip on 28 August recovered, and the galloping bulls held on to the advantage. Using broader points of reference showed the same trend. The *Business Standard* index of ordinary share prices (which includes all industries countrywide) was pegged at 611.63 on 31 August, an almost 120 point jump from end-July. Market analysts estimate that shareholders may have gained as much as Rs 24,000 crores in the past two months, thanks to an increase in stock value across the board.

Most analysts would say this is a good thing, indicative of the strength of the market, indicative of a resurgence, and reminiscent of the boom days of 1985. Despite a floundering economy, lesser number of new issues in the market compared to last year, the Gulf crisis which is already telling on India's oil stockpile, and the political chaos in New Delhi. In fact, the presence of a boom when stock markets worldwide are showing signs of a bust, appears to be a case of incredible timing.

"It is not a question of timing," says Manoj Morarka, a financial analyst with the stock broking firm of Batliwa-

"We are worried about the fall"

Bombay Stock Exchange executive director M.R. Mayya on the share market boom

M.R. Mayya has seen it all—stock market rises and falls, booms and busts, sanity and insanity. It is all a part of the share game. This time, however, there is a sense of deja vu. *The seasoned analyst, who runs India's largest exchange and is one of the most respected names in sharebiz is worried. The market is overheated, he feels, and unless someone reins in the speculators with a delicate touch, there could be chaos, and investors could be badly hurt. In a frightening replay of 1986, Mayya spoke to* SUNDAY *last week, discussing his views and fears. Excerpts from the interview:*

SUNDAY: How much of the present boom at the stock markets is due to speculation, and how much of it is thanks to genuine investors taking an interest?
M.R. Mayya: A significant portion of the spectacular rise in share prices, particularly in the last two weeks is due to speculative forces. The initial rise, that is, between mid-June and end-July could be attributed to various fundamentals.

But the rise continued despite strict action by the BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange) authorities from 31 July onwards. On the contrary, the developments in the Middle East, and other internal factors, should have led to a softening of prices. But the hardening remained on excessive speculation pressure in the market. I would, however, hasten to add that it is difficult to quantify the exact extent of the rise that is due to solely speculative pressures.

Q: What makes you so sure that there is excessive speculation?
A: One of the yardsticks for judging whether there is excessive speculation or not is the price earning ratio (PER) of the shares. The PER for the 100 companies that constitute the BSE national index was 14.6 last year. Today, it is 23.03. This is indicative of the fact that it is a speculative rise. If you have a 23 times earning capacity, then it shows the rise is much higher than warranted by the corporate results. My overall view is that it is an overbought market, and cannot sustain (itself) for long. It has to find its level.

Q: According to some stock market experts, mutual funds, which are flush with money, have contributed to the rise in share prices. They have been buying heavily.
A: The mutual funds have unfortunately contributed to the buying of shares at successive higher levels of prices.

Q: Why do you say "unfortunately"? Isn't it a good thing if they can genuinely contribute to the buoyancy in the market?
A: Let me clarify. We are not against price rise. What we are worried about is the likely fall emanating from an undue rise in prices which will shatter the confidence of the investor.


GAUTAM PATOLE

Another significant factor is that the sharp fluctuation in prices is prone to produce greater hazards. It is absolutely necessary to ensure that no default takes place and sharp variation in prices cannot guarantee this.

Q: You say that the price rise is partly due to excessive speculation. Would you say this was a sudden development? After all, speculators have always been there, so what makes this boom so special?
A: I am sorry to say that speculators are generally not content with a stable market. They are neither eternal bulls nor eternal bears. They are bulls at a particular level of prices and bears at another level. Their desired goal is to have sharper and sharper fluctuations so they can make quicker—and larger—profits. So, a stabilised market is taboo for them and it is here that BSE regulators have to play a role and take such steps as to correct the aberrations because of excessive speculative operations.

Q: But none of the steps that you have taken seems to have had any effect. Prices continue to rise. The BSE index is at 1,247 today (30 August) as against 1,099 in July.
A: Had we not acted the way we did, the market would have risen to an even greater extent. We've deployed most of the weapons at our command to contain excessive speculation. They include prohibition on increase in future positions. Payment in 24 hours of full price of purchase and even contraction of outstanding positions.

Q: In 1986, when share prices and the BSE index went through the ceiling, financial institutions unloaded shares in the market. In fact, they unloaded to such an ex-

tent that prices collapsed. This was done to cool the market, so to speak. Why haven't they done it this time? Is it because the government would like a booming stock market, irrespective of any potential hazards?

A: I cannot speak for the government. But, in my opinion, the financial institutions (FIs) should play a role. (As) they hold over 35 per cent of the equity shareholding in the country, it is not difficult for them to do so. Taking the broad contours of the market they should sell in a rising market and buy in a falling market. While giving stability to the market, they can make their profits. Some FIs are trying to do this. There are others who are not doing so. Probably, they have their reasons. Which, however, are not in the overall interest of the market.

Q: Where do you think share prices will go from here?

A: I don't expect prices to collapse as (they did) in 1985-86, because today, fundamentals are very strong. The investor base in wide and mutual funds are flush with funds. So, they won't allow prices to collapse. They have to think of their investors. But there could be a technical retreat in prices. Our endeavour is to stabilise prices by putting restrictions to ensure that a technical retreat which may take place later, does not become too serious.

Q: Is there any truth in the premise that a lot of money that has come into the stock market is from the construction and the diamond industry? Even from foreign banks, who have financed investors' share purchases?

A: There seems to be some truth in this. Some foreign banks have liberally financed the stockbrokers, which I feel is not proper on the part of foreign banks. The fact that there accelerated bullish action by the set has been brought to the notice of the authorities concerned. We are taking suitable action. But there is nothing that the stock exchange authorities can do about it as they do not come under the regulatory ambit of the stock exchange.

la and Karnani. "This market is going through a fundamental change and (the boom) is a fruition of the government's liberalisation and broadbanding policies over the last five years." He adds that India will just have to "get used to the idea of higher share prices and good corporate results".

Besides, says R.R. Nair, BSE's general manager and overseer of the exchange's research, statistical operations and data processing, "This level of share prices is not too high." Nair says there are income growth schemes in the market which promise a doubling of the invested sum in three years, "the unexpectedly good monsoons for the third successive year, the corporate results for the year ending 31 March (1990) are reasonably encouraging, and mutual funds are coming into the market. Floating stocks are very limited. And above all, since the FIs (financial institutions) are in the market, they will see to it that the market does not slip".

And by definition of stock market play, speculators, too. As always, the present boom has more to do with people who gamble on the market and not the conservative investor who buys shares when the price is low enough—or attractive enough—and sits quietly for that annual dividend payment. Or sells his shares when prices zoom up. Market analysts such as Unit Trust of India chairman S.A. Dave feel that 85 per cent of the reason behind the surge in share prices is the speculator. He moves in quickly, buys up blocks of equity—often taking refuge behind rumours and almost as often, creating them—driving up prices, and then unloading at a huge profit. The method also works in reverse, with bear operators, who drive prices down. Either way, after the killing is made, it is generally a to-hell-with-the-rest attitude.

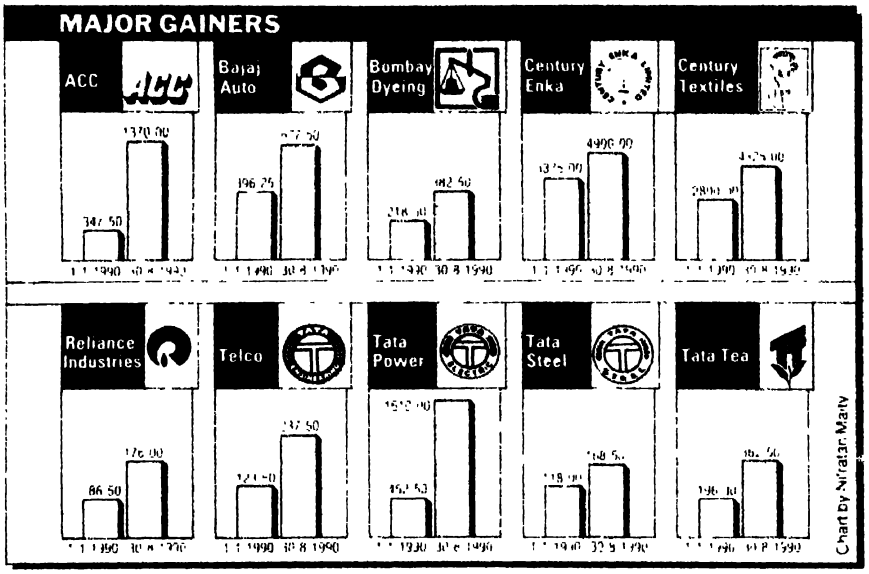
There could be some solid reasons behind the speculation. "Forty one per cent of the influence on the BSE index comes from the wholesale price index," says Deepak Raja, director of Strategic Consultants Pvt. Ltd. "In comparison, the influence of the book



DANESH THAKKAR

Mahendra Kampani: the high could last another two months

Market analysts estimate that shareholders may have gained as much as Rs 24,000 crores in the past two months, thanks to an increase in stock value across the board



value of shares is 35 per cent, and the earning per share is 21 per cent." Raja stresses on the price index, because he says inflation helps to push up profits and, in turn, this "liquidity" finds its way into the market.

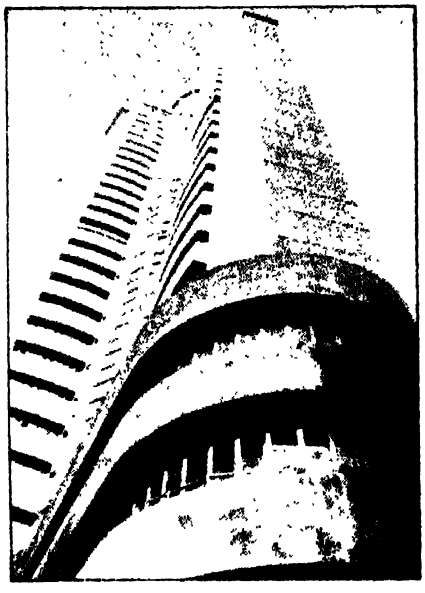
One of the yardsticks for judging whether there is excessive speculation, says BSE executive director M.R. Mayya *(see interview)* is the price earning ration (PER) of equities. Last year, the PER for 100 companies that make up the BSE national index was 14.6. In end-August, it stood at 23.03, a sure sign of speculation and danger, a rise, says Mayya, "much higher than warranted by the corporate results... my overall view is that it is an overbought market, and cannot sustain (itself) for long. It has to find its level".

Which could happen soon enough. There is not much of equity in the market. FIs hold a quarter of the stock in most companies, another massive chunk rests with a company's promoter, his family and associates, with the public being left with very little. Today, a buyer purchases already scarce stock, and in a bull run, the law of supply and demand ensures skyrocketing prices. And skyrocketing profits for speculators.

Market watchers talk about huge sums of money coming in from the diamond and building construction industry. According to sources in the diamond trade, there is a virtual crisis that began early this year and hit the mainly Surat-based trade heavily. The problem really started last year, when international diamond conglomerate De Beers—which has a stranglehold over the business—raised the price of uncut diamonds by an average of 15.5 per cent worldwide. For the Indian industry, the hike was 20.26 per cent, driving up costs, but slackening business. Added to this is a recession in the US diamond market, the main buyers of Indian finished diamonds. The situation is so bad that about half the diamond factories in Surat lie idle today

As a result, Indian diamond traders and exporters have begun to divert their money to the stock markets, playing it for quick returns. A similar situation prevails in the construction industry, which is experiencing a slump. Consequently, builders and contractors have moved in, fuelling the share scramble. Some foreign banks are believed to have liberally financed share purchases. "There seems to be some truth in this," says BSE's Mayya.

The Bombay Stock Exchange building: the eye of the storm



The danger here is that speculators can borrow large sums from banks, even as high interest short term credit, and shunt the funds for share purchases. After a quick kill, withdraw profits, pay off the bank, and live happily. And live to do it again. "The fact that they (foreign banks) have accelerated bullish action," says Mayya, "has been brought to the notice of the authorities...but there is nothing the stock exchange authorities can do about it as they do not come under the regulatory ambit of the stock exchange." He adds: "What we are worried about is the likely fall emanating from an undue rise in prices which will shatter the confidence of the investor."

An eventuality that FIs have traditionally guarded against with some orchestration by the finance ministry. It is simple: when the market is down, purchase shares to help drive prices up When it is boiling over, as some analysts feel, sell shares to keep prices down. This time round, however, FIs have *bought* equity lavishly, staying right in the middle of the speculative boom. As have state-run mutual funds. P.K. Pandit, who runs the Life Insurance Corp. mutual funds, has a ready defence, "We are guided by the needs of our investors," he says, "who subscribe to our growth-oriented schemes." Pandit declines to divulge information about how exactly he is going about playing the market, admitting only that his funds are "moderate players". Adds his counterpart, B.A. Vyas, executive trustee of the Bank of India mutual funds: "We are new entrants in the market. But we could be big players in the course of time." However, according to numerous observers, the future is already being played out right now. "The mutual funds," says Mayya, "have unfortunately contributed to the buying of shares at successive higher levels of prices."

To take the counterview, it is not a bad thing. If FIs and mutual funds can go the way of the upward market, without putting breaks on the system, then they are behaving in a free-market fashion, which really is the way things ought to function. As they do in markets abroad, where good news means a good market, and bad

news breaks up the equity run. That is precisely what is happening now, share indexes have dipped from Tokyo to New York. But that has happened because they—by virtue of international trading—are susceptible to changes.

India, with its totally insulated market where no foreigner is permitted to invest, is not. Here, prices find their level on account of a good or bad monsoon, good or bad corporate results—and speculation of a kind which mostly defies logic.

The Indian stock market high could last as long as two months more, says Mahendra Kampani, who runs Jamnadas Morarjee & Co., a major brokerage house, "unless something drastic happens". Two months is a long time for profiteering. However, despite his live-well-while-the-going-is-good attitude, Kampani is not without caution. "The macro-economics of the situation are not good," he says, "with the war clouds looming over the Middle East, and other internal factors." Simply: less oil, therefore, less of everything, the possibility of the government cracking up, and so on. Negating the solid advantages of good rainfall and corporate performances.

'Be careful', appears to be the message, whatever goes up, must surely come down. There may not be a collapse—if the government steps in—but it could nevertheless hurt investors badly. Remember 1986? Then, the market went bust mainly because fly-by-night operators did not deliver on promises. This time, the reasons are different, but the effects could be as unnerving. •

Olga Tellis/Bombay



DANESH THAKKAR

S.A. Dave: a speculators' market

DENTAL EQUIPMENT

Tooth ache?

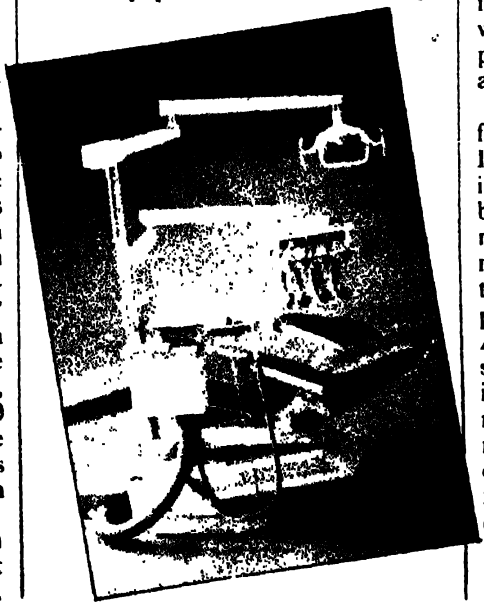
Domestic manufacturers' attitude upsets dentists

The Indian dental equipment industry is gnashing its teeth over the pro-import lobby's attempts to throw open the sector, kicking off a debate over domestic equipment versus the overseas hi-tech variety. "The government is throttling our growth by its liberal policy of import of dental equipment," says Subhashchandra Shetty, secretary of the All India Dental Equipment Manufacturers Association (AIDEMA).

Bunkum, says most of the dentist fraternity, comprising doctors in college affiliated hospitals, the Indian Army, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and private practitioners. "The local industry can in no way meet the requirements of the country as far as dental equipment is concerned," says Dr C. Naterwala, a Bombay-based dentist who has taken up the pro-imports cause. "Even today, what are they manufacturing?" The chair on which the patient sits, a unit for attaching tools of the trade such as lamps, magnifying glasses, trays, and sterilisers. Even then, 80 per cent of the parts are imported; the Indian manufacturer basically makes the shell. Annual imports are worth Rs 4 crores.

The Indian Dental Association (IDA) is playing the same tune, but based on statistics. Dr Vasant B. Kotak, IDA's president, estimates that 25,000 fresh dentists will enter the trade in the next five years. Even if all of them were not to purchase equipment, preferring instead to share them or leave it to a hospital or nursing home to provide them, the total requirement would be close to 5,600 dental chairs and units. Looking at it another way, if only five per cent of India's 15,000 dentists changed their equipment every year, it would still mean a demand of 750 chairs and units annually. A local manufacturer in Bombay opens his order books only once a year, and makes a mere 60 chairs annually. Or *if* he can handle it, a hundred. Other manufacturers—all small-scale—in Bangalore, Calcutta, Ahmedabad and Lucknow, account for less than half the industry requirement.

Dental equipment: domestic scarcity?



In addition, says Kotak, today's breed of doctors want to go in for the latest in equipment, sophisticated and comfortable for both the patient and the dentist, something Indian manufacturers cannot provide.

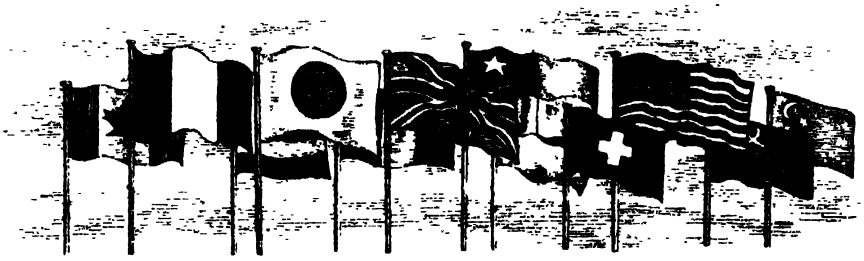
Or service, for that matter. Industry insiders say, for example, that Shetty, who runs a dental equipment firm, provides such inadequate service that a Bangalore college held up payment.

Out of 46 items that are permissible for import under the Open General Licence, only three are manufactured in India. But the domestic lobby has been influential enough. The Directorate General of Technical Development recently shifted a few more to the government's restricted list of imports. It seems like round one to the AIDEMA, but unless its members spruce up their technology, productivity and service, patients—and dentists—would suffer. And if the current trend persists, imports may be the only option, no matter that there is a foreign exchange crunch—health comes before profits, even if many profit by ill-health. •

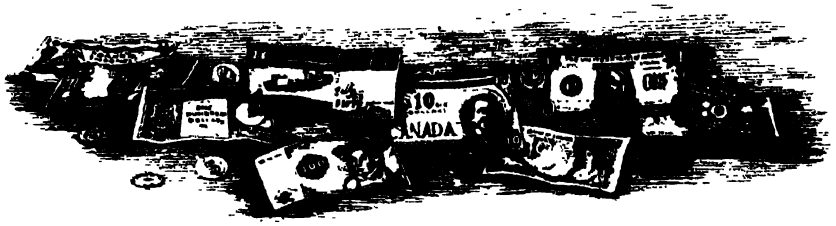
Olga Tellis/Bombay



A MINIMUM OF PAPERWORK.



EXPERT KNOWLEDGE OF WORLDWIDE CUSTOMS REQUIREMENTS.



ONE ALL-INCLUSIVE PRICE.



IMMEDIATE DESPATCH OF YOUR SHIPMENT.

CAN YOU EXPECT THE SAME DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE FROM YOUR FREIGHT FORWARDER?

RAKA:3150:B:90

When shipping around the world, most freight forwarding companies depend on outside agents to handle your packages. At DHL, however, we offer you one door-to-door service, one all-inclusive invoice, and one truly global network. You can depend on the dedication of over 20,000 professionals, spanning more than 180 countries, and supported by over 7,000 vehicles and aircraft. So why not call us if you need an immediate pick-up today?

We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories.

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS®
DHL. THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

■ Move!

It's time the government figured out what to do with Union Carbide Corp. (UCC). Touch them for more compensation, let them off, honour last year's "dishonourable" settlement, throw its subsidiary, Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL), off Indian soil, ban its batteries—something. The Supreme Court has reserved its judgement on reopening the case, and resuming criminal investigations into the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster. Fine, the court needs time to think. After all, it *is*



Soli Sorabjee: clear the mess

about the biggest industrial disaster in the world. But the court wouldn't have listened if the Government of India didn't press for reopening the case. "We are not for conviction of UCC or UCIL," attorney general Soli Sorabjee told the Supreme Court last week, "but what we want to know is how and why this accident took place." So do we, so do we. But obviously, the court needs stronger arguments than that. India's investigating agencies *did* look into the mess for over four years. They *must* have discovered a set of clues. Why not present these to the court? If a corporation has erred, say so. Present a case. The court—and the world—will listen. Vagueness is a sign of fumbling idiocy, and there's enough of that in India.

STOCK QUOTE

"There is no sense in talking about growth in a mechanistic way."

Union finance minister Madhu Dandavate

"There is no sense in saying something and doing nothing about it, either."

A New Delhi economist, who—along with other citizens—is still waiting for the government's economic modus operandi *to emerge, long after the budget and the industrial policy paper.*

■ We're back

That's what Oswal Agro chairman Abhey Oswal appears to be telling the world. No amount of blacklisting will keep me down. Oswal Agro, the beleaguered industrialist's flagship company, is expected to declare a Rs 50 crore net profit on a turnover of Rs 300 crores for the year-ending June 1990. This is a Rs 23.2 crore increase over the previous year's profits, culled from a Rs 235 crore turnover. Oswal could do with good news—ever since Rajiv Gandhi and his policymakers disappeared from the scene, the industrialist has faced tax raids and investigations. Despite the present government's attempts to appear fair to everyone, they have gunned for Oswal, however much they may deny it.

PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK

D.N. Ghosh

Chairman, Larsen & Toubro



● Nobody is sure about what exactly is happening, but if rumours prove to be right, there could be trouble for Dhirubhai Ambani. Again. There is talk that Ghosh is thinking about selling off the 50 lakh shares of Reliance Industries Ltd that L&T currently holds to financial institutions and mutual funds. At an asking price of Rs 160 per share, L&T stands to gain Rs 15 crores, because when the shares were bought, the price was around Rs 130 per share. Ghosh is trying to convince the finance ministry to go in for the move, which would help sever Ambani links with L&T. On the other hand, it would also help Reliance to pick off these shares at leisure—once they are out of the L&T clutch, the shares are fair game. May the best player win.

■ Gold rush

Foreign exchange stocks are at Rs 5356.80 crores, Rs 434 crores more than what it was this time last year. But an increased outflow to pay for expensive oil could drastically reduce it. The answer: cut expenses and increase exports. On the first count, the government's policy is a bit of a disaster. The second, which could lead to a gold rush, is not. Last week, finance minister Madhu Dandavate announced that the government would sell its stocks of seized gold—a solid 18.99 tonnes—to India's



Dandavate: gold digger

jewellery exporters. At international prices, which the minister says is 55 per cent cheaper than prices at home. The government plans to pass on the gold to the State Bank of India for sale to exporters. The move would do four things: cut back India's gold imports, reduce foreign exchange outflow, increase exports, and—hold your breath—hinder smuggling. Noble thought. Currently, there is an estimated Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 crores worth of illegal gold floating around the country, smuggled in as domestic prices are steep. Way to go, professor.

The Pawar academy

The Maharashtra chief minister finds a novel way to win over his opponents



MAHARASHTRA

Sharad Pawar is busy buying peace. Over the last few weeks, the chief minister's opponents, both within the Congress(I) and in the Opposition, had successfully managed to clip his wings by getting the Centre's clearance for the setting up of two development boards in the state's backward areas of Vidarbha and Marathwada. The boards are to be autonomous bodies under the direct supervision of the Governor, with the chief minister having little say in their functioning.

But Pawar isn't exactly the kind of person who can be expected to take such emasculation of his powers lying down. So, in a last-ditch effort to retain his sway over the entire state, he devised a novel way to silence his detractors. He decided to open colleges.

According to reports, Pawar has managed to win over the proponents of the development boards by giving them permission to set up colleges, which, in Maharashtra, is a euphemism for making money by charging capitation fees. The promoters of a college get 20 to 30 per cent of the seats as their personal quota, which they are free to auction away to the highest bidder.

And the rich are eager pay huge sums to get their wards admitted to such institutions. For instance, reports say that a businessman from Bihar paid rupees four lakh to get his son into a medical college run by a leading Congressman. Admissions to medical and engineering colleges can be had by paying capitation fees ranging from rupees four to seven lakh. The practice has been defended by Congressman N.K.P. Salve, who runs another medical college. Says Salve: "If people can afford it, why should they not pay?"

Pawar has managed to silence his opponents by issuing them permits to set up colleges and make money by charging capitation fees



Pawar expects that his opponents will reciprocate his gesture by not pressing for the development boards any further. He has, therefore, sanctioned 27 colleges in the Vidarbha area. Of these, two are medical colleges, one engineering, six B.Ed and 18 arts and commerce colleges.

Congressmen and Opposition leaders alike have benefited from this bonanza. Janata Dal legislator Netaji Rajgadkar, who runs a pen shop and owns no other commercial premises worth the mention, has been given the permission to set up an arts and commerce college. And the Congress Seva Dal leader and MLA, Ashok Dawad, hopes to run a college in the 100 sq. ft area he occupies in the Yashwant Stadium to run the Seva Dal office.

Most of those who have been given the permits have no buildings to house the institutions. But established organisations, with complete infrastructural facilities, have been ignored. It is said that the University of Nagpur, which wanted to start a B.Ed college, was not given the permission to do so.

Pawar's largesse has evoked loud protests from various quarters and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, affiliated to the BJP, is planning to challenge the move in court. But the lucky politicians are said to have already started enrolling students and charging capitation fees, though the colleges, in many cases, are still on the drawing board.

While Pawar may have thus scored over at least a section of the pro-development board lobby, his worries are deepening over the land deals in the Vasai-Virar area, about 40 km from Bombay. Pawar had dereserved about 10,500 hectares of land set aside as a green belt for the setting up of a suburban township. But a writ petition has been admitted in the Bombay high court, challenging the dereservations as malafide.

It is being said in political circles that the chief minister has already sought legal advice to find out whether he should step down if some adverse remarks are made by the court about the deals. Pawar may have his own reasons to feel shaky, but his supporters have, apparently, told him that the auditor general and the attorney general of the state had gone through the files and found nothing that might necessitate the setting up of an enquiry commission. However, there is no official word on this matter as yet, and Pawar continues to remain vulnerable. •

Olga Tellis/Bombay

Two hours of tumult

The West Bengal Speaker suspends eight Congress(I) MLAs for unruly behaviour



WEST BENGAL

"The Assembly has become a circus," said Hashim Abdul Halim, Speaker of the West Bengal legislature, a ghost of a smile playing on his lips. "At this rate, I will have to install a trapeze and a couple of swings in the house," he snorted, after a tumultous two hours in the Assembly chamber. Of the 38 clamouring Congress(I) MLAs (many were absent that morning), Halim had just suspended eight, including Satya Ranjan Bapuli, the legislature party leader.

torship of the Opposition. They are frustrating the work of democracy," raged Halim.

Refusing to leave the house, the suspended legislators lent their voices to chaos. Both Ashok Ghosh and Sultan Ahmed had to be carried out by the hefty marshalls of the house. Supriyo Bose left only after exchanging rabbit punches with the marshalls. And Saugata Roy was dragged out. The others—Sudip Bandopadhyay, Manas Bhuinya and Amar Banerjee—left very unwillingly.

But the other congressmen continued crowding the Speaker and parading around the well of the house.



A Congress(I) MLA being carried away from the Assembly: huff, puff and away

"Arrest Alam" was the Congress(I)'s war cry in the house . From her hospital bed, the state Youth Congress(I) chief, Mamata Banerjee, beaten up by Alam's brother on August 16, concurred. Badshah Alam had planned to kill her, she alleged.

Perhaps no Marxist politician has been as much of a liability as Badshah Alam, the CPI(M) Calcutta district committee leader. The presence of chief minister Jyoti Basu in the house and the Speaker's refusal to allow discussion on the Alam issue lit the smouldering fire. As Basu rose to speak, came the first boos and catcalls: "Lallu raj, Billu raj, Cadre raj *khatam karo*". A flurry of paper balls followed.

Unable to restore order, the speaker first suspended Satya Bapuli and seven others for the day, and later, for the entire session. "This is the dictatorship of the Opposition. They are frustrating the work of democracy," raged Halim.

Forced to cancel the question and answer sessions, Halim began with the mention cases which could barely be heard above the din. "How can they shout so loudly if they have been on hunger strike on the Assembly premises (another breach of the rules)?" RSP MLA Jayanta Biswas wated to know.

Between the raucous *Bande Mataram*, epithets like "V.P. Singh's *dalal*", "centre's *chamcha*" and "*ganashatru* (enemy of the people)" were hurled at the treasury benches.

With the assembly session over, the Congress(I) will take to the streets and besiege the Writers Buildings on 12 September. But chief minister Basu provides the stern counterpoint: "Let them try. I dare them to go ahead with their programme." Clearly, ahead lies a day of bloodshed. •

Srinjoy Chowdhury / Calcutta

Water babies

Three chief ministers meet over the Krishna river dispute. Or was there more?



KARNATAKA

When three Congress(I) chief ministers met at the Lalith Mahal Palace Hotel in Mysore last month, on the agenda, ostensibly, was the Krishna river water dispute. But they appeared to be meeting a little too frequently in order to sort out a problem that needs to be resolved by 2000 AD so much so that the Congress(I) high command could not help sitting up and taking notice.

The trio—Veerendra Patil, Sharad Pawar and Chenna Reddy, chief ministers of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh respectively—have been on shaky ground for some time and are trying to consolidate their positions. Their coming together is meant to tell party president Rajiv Gandhi that they should be left to manage their own affairs and spared any interference from Delhi.

Congress-watchers believe that the water dispute has provided the three leaders with a perfect alibi for meeting off and on to form their own political enclave within the Congress(I). The three had previously met at Tirupathy in April where they held meetings without aides for a while, sparking off speculation that they were plotting against the high command. And then came the Mysore meeting, barely four months after, reinforcing that view.

All three CMs have reason to scheme against the high command. From day one, Patil had to put up stiff resistance against Rajiv Gandhi's coterie. Attempts are being made to sideline Pawar by counterposing his arch-rival, former chief minister A.R. Antulay, and Chenna Reddy is besieged by dissidents who are emasculating his powers. Though the implications of the the combined show of strength by the three chief ministers is not yet clear, it may be just enough to rattle the Congress(I) boss. •

Gayatri Laxman/Bangalore

The numbers game

Hukum Singh survives, as the Janata Dal refuses to readmit eight expelled MLAs



HARYANA

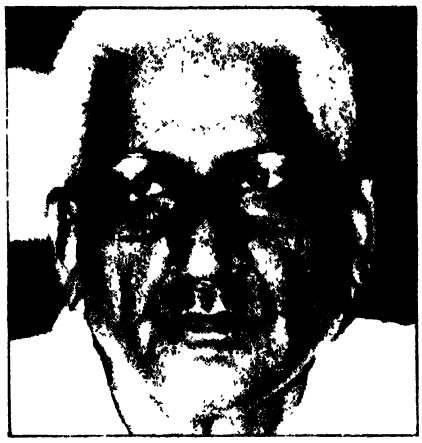
Haryana chief minister Hukum Singh continues to be lucky. He has survived yet another attempt by state Janata Dal dissidents to dislodge him. And once again it was the party s all-India president, S.R. Bommai, who came to his rescue.

Hukum Singh, a protégé of the former chief minister, Om Prakash Chautala, son of the former deputy prime minister, Devi Lal, faced a tough challenge in the beginning of last month when 30 MLAs lobbied for his ouster by demanding a legislature party meeting to elect a new leader. But Bommai refused to give in saying that since the leader of the Dal legislature party had been elected as recently as July, he could not convene another meeting to elect a new leader so soon.

A second crisis developed when the dissidents demanded that 11 MLAs who had been expelled from the state unit of the party by Chautala on 11 July be taken back by revoking the expulsion orders. The rebels, led by Banarsi Das Gupta, who was chief minister for a brief period, felt that the balance would then tilt in their favour in the Assembly. The matter was referred by Bommai to P. Babul Reddy, chairman of the Dal's disciplinary committee, and Hukum Singh's fate hung in the balance.

But Hukum, who is known as a dummy chief minister (the real powers being weilded by Chautala and Devi Lal), was fortunate. Reddy revoked the expulsion of three MLAs only, leaving eight others outside the party's fold. This arithmetic robbed the dissidents of the required number of MLAs on their side to effect Hukum's ouster once the Assembly met on 3 September.

No amount of exhortation by Banarsi Das Gupta would make Reddy change his mind. The party ombudsman clarified his stanc saying that he was unble to take back the eight MLAs "in view of the grave acts of indiscipline on their part". The three MLAs whose expulsion has been revoked are Veerendra Singh, Raghubir Singh Khundian and Ran Singh.





Hukum Singh (left) and Devi Lal (right): the winners

Reddy's decision has jeopardised the plans of Prime Minister V.P. Singh and industry minister Ajit Singh's idea of dealing the final blow to Devi Lal and Chautala by dislodging Hukum Singh from the top slot in Haryana and thus ending dynastic sway over the state's politics. VP and Ajit Singh had hoped that, deprived of his political base in Haryana, Devi Lal would cease to be the irritant he still is.

Though the Prime Minister's efforts to weed out Lal has been frustrated by

Nari Hira goes to Pune

To launch his first magazine from outside Bombay

For once, Nari Hira, of Lana Publishing, has forsaken the charms of tinsel town and launched a magazine from Pune. *Citadel*, Hira's tenth magazine, is his first publishing venture from outside Bombay.

The 86-page inaugural issue of *Citadel* is priced at Rs 6. While bringing out a magazine predominantly devoted to a particular city is not a novelty, a magazine for a city which is not really a metropolis but is developing rapidly (Pune has the fastest growth rate in the world as the press release informs us) is fairly rare in India.

Given the constraints a city magazine has to work with, *Citadel* does not come off too badly. The cover story, dealing with the housing boom in Pune and the resultant decline in the costs of flats, makes interesting reading. The other informative article is on foreign students facing racial discrimination in Pune. Editor Sunanda Mehta claims that the latter article is a *Citadel* exclusive, as is the incredible story of General Gupta, a senior army officer charged with the embezzlement of army funds.



Nari Hira: expanding his empire

Reddy's judgement, Bommai has made it clear that he isn't going to interfere.

It is not yet certain as to who would win the trial of strength. The dissidents led by Hiranand Arya, Banarsi Das Gupta and Veerendra Singh have started returning to Haryana from Gwalior, where they were made to stay in a hotel for about a month in order to keep them out of Devi Lal's reach.

Soon after Devi Lal's removal from the post of the deputy prime minister, Ajit Singh and textile minister Sharad Yadav began moves for Hukum's ouster. They brought the Haryana dissidents to Delhi, held meetings with the Prime Minister, and then packed them off to Agra and Gwalior, where they were lodged in expensive five-star hotels.

But loyalty has strange ways. In spite of the luxury trips, the dissidents have all joined hands with Hukum Singh once again. So much for plans! ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Then there are some fairly predictable features like the one on the National Film Archives of India. Articles like the one on how the city's numerous hostelites are faring and their growing attachment to Pune have a typically small-town appeal about them. The profile on Mrs Mrinalini Kirloskar, managing director of Poona Hotels Ltd, is also the kind that a Puneite would readily identify with but not the sort that an outsider would feel too enthusiastic about.

More in line with the traditional format of Lana Publication are the two pages of *Mumbai Masala* on filmstars and the rich in Bombay. Pune's glamorous neighbour is bound to impart sufficient zip to *Citadel*. The feature on fashion, with super model Rachel Reuben, spread over four colour pages adds a touch of glamour to the magazine.

It is still too early to predict how well the magazine will take off. However, going by the abundant advertisements it has received and the [illegible] mix of articles, it [illegible] ●

A fast against caste

J.K. Jain goes on hunger-strike in protest against the Centre's reservation policy



DELHI

It's not everyday that a man who is "no Gandhi" goes on an indefinite hunger strike "to appeal to the nation for the restoration of peace and sanity". Last week, Dr J.K. Jain, the BJP Rajya Sabha MP, lost seven kilos fasting at New Delhi's Boat Club lawns for seven days. He was protesting against the government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations. But what he gained was a "lifetime's experience" and the knowledge that "you can achieve your objective in a purely peaceful and democratic way".



J.K. Jain breaking his fast: the experience of a lifetime

As Jain tells it, he was observing a religious fast on 25 August, when he realised that the country was "being pushed to the brink of a civil war". Jain's objection was not to the Mandal report *per se* but to the manner in which it was announced by the government, causing large-scale student violence. "Not only was the peace disturbed, but the country had been pushed into a state of class struggle," feels the surgeon-politician. "I just decided to continue my fast, and was advised by my friends to move to a public place, since I was making a national, public appeal."

The heat and rain at Boat Club were minor obstacles for the man who normally lives and works in an air-conditioned environment. What was worse, the doctor was still convalescing after a typhoid attack. But his "moral courage" saw him through. "The students would come in hundreds, sometimes in hijacked buses to rally around me," recalls Jain. "I would tell them only one thing: eschew violence, and use only peaceful means to achieve your objectives."

Dr Jain stresses that his protest was "not partisan or sectional, but above party lines", and was intended to emphasise that the Centre should have sought national consensus before taking such an important decision.

Unfortunately for Jain, a section of the press reported that his fast had led to a rift between the BJP and the RSS, and that the party leadership did not approve of the manner in which a loyalist like Jain (he was responsible for the BJP's very successful electoral campaign for the last Lok Sabha and Assembly elections) registered his personal protest.

Jain denies that this was true. "I am a disciplined member of a disciplined party," claims Jain defensively. He says that he could not contact the party leadership on the day he decided to start the fast since all of them were out of town. Realising that talk of a rift in the party due to the fast would defeat the very purpose for which it was being undertaken, Jain declared that he would abide by the decision of the party leadership. So, when party president L.K. Advani asked Jain to call off the fast, he readily agreed.

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

The third party

A new extremist group strikes terror in Kohima



NAGALAND

Two rebel groups weren't enough: Nagaland now has another extremist organisation spreading fear in the highlands. The Naga Youth Liberation Front (NYLF), a shadowy organisation about which not much is known as yet, may soon outpace the traditional guerrilla outfits such as the Naga Federal Government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland when it comes to being trigger-happy and going on a killing spree.

The NYLF made its presence felt by sending out threatening letters to a number of MLAs, bureaucrats and businessmen, who have been accused of "looting government funds". And the Front's non-tribal targets have been asked to leave Nagaland, if they failed to reform by paying back the money they had allegedly swindled.

The organisation showed that it meant business by killing K. Nagarajan, chief engineer of the state's public health engineering department, on 25 July in Kohima. Nagarajan too had been served with a quit notice before being gunned down in his office by a young man.

The assailant and his accomplices remained untraced even a month after the incident, but it was the official's assassination that made the administration aware of the group's existence. A senior home department official has conceded: "We still do not know much about it (the NYLF) except the fact that young men are regularly leaving their homes, supposedly to join it."

Among the recipients of the letters are Tiameron Ao and Chongsen Chang, a former MLA and minister respectively. The NYLF has alleged that they had siphoned off government funds by sanctioning orders far in excess of budget limits. They have reportedly been asked to return rupees two crore, which, the NYLF says, they had made on the sly while in power.

Santanu Ghosh/Silchar

The badge of courage

A woman receives a bravery award for killing a dreaded dacoit



UTTAR PRADESH

Even the Prime Minister's meetings had not drawn such a crowd as that in the Chitrakoot Inter-College ground in Karvi town, on 4 August. Over twenty thousand people had flocked to the award giving ceremony in honour of an 18-year-old village girl, Sundi Yadav, and seven others. They had killed Santosha Yadav, the dreaded dacoit of the Bundelkhand. Ministers, MLAs, senior police officials and various dignitaries paid glowing tribute to the "courage and heroism" of Sundi. The fact that everyone was so ecstatic about the axing to death of Santosha, testifies to the terror the dacoit had struck among the locals.



Sundi Yadav being awarded: farewell to fear

The story goes that on 31 July, Sundi was attacked by Santosha in Daghiya Purwa, 15 kms from Karvi. Sundi resisted him for nearly an hour and finally the neighbours, hearing her cries for help, came running with their *lathis*, axes and spears. Yadav, confident of his authority in the village, was unarmed. The police arrived at the spot 12 hours after the dacoit was killed. Chief minister (CM) Mulayam Singh Yadav promptly announced a reward of 5,000 for Sundi and a police job if she had the requisite education.

At the time of his death, Yadav had 48 major crime charges against him. These were mostly of murder, dacoity, rape and kidnapping. At 29, Yadav was the most feared anti-social of the region. When Santosha was only ten, his father was killed by Chandra Pal Singh, a Thakur of the neighbouring village. Five years later, Santosha's relatives killed Chandra Pal. Left penniless by the subsequent court cases, the Yadav family was helped out by a Surendra Pal Gautam. In return, the women of the family were sexually exploited by Gautam, even Santosha's mother. In May 1986, Santosha burnt Gautam alive.

There was no looking back. Santosha joined the legendary Shiv Kumar Kurmi, alias Dadua, who has over 125 crimes to his name. After a stint with another dacoit gang, Santosha formed his own gang with seven associates, in early 1989. And he did not follow the usual dacoits' code of conduct. He raped indiscriminately, where other dacoits stuck to loot, murder and maybe kidnapping.

On 8 May, this year, he kidnapped 16-year-old Savitri from Badauli village under the Beheru police station, who was to be married in four days. She was gangraped and otherwise brutalised. Six days later, he descended on Lameta, under the Bhadausa

police circle, thrashed 20 villagers, raped three women, pierced the noses of thirteen men with a sackcloth needle and dragged them around with a rope through their bleeding noses. The episode so shocked the state that the CM had to personally visit the village to comfort people. This was in retaliation to some villagers informing the police about Yadav's presence in the village. Once again, the villagers had taken the step due to the desperation of the women in the village, who were in constant threat of sexual assault by the dacoit. And it was the attempt to assault another young woman, that killed Santosha Yadav.

Once the euphoria over the dacoit's death had subsided, there was one important question: would such a powerful anti-social have met with such prolonged resistance from a woman and also not put up a fight when attacked by the villagers? Even the seven felicitated for the killing are reluctant to answer. But there is a story that Sundi was Santosha's mistress. He had actually come to rape another girl, just before her wedding. To protect the girl's identity and since Sundi already had a "tarnished" reputation, she was projected as the victim. "The villagers were fed up with Yadav," said a policeman, "and no woman in these parts felt safe."

The killing, apparently, was carefully planned by the police. Capitalising on the villagers' hatred for Santosha, the police taught them ways to tackle the dacoit with their axes and spears. They were also asked to inform the police when Santosha entered the village. So, when he reached Daghiya Purwa on the evening of 30 July, some people crept away and reached the police at Karvi. Unfortunately, the circle officer the villagers trusted the most, was away. But the stars proved unlucky for Santosha anyway. And not only did the villagers charge at him, but the dacoit's accomplice, Ram Bhavan Yadav, who had Santosha's weapon, deserted him at the crucial moment. Apparently, the dacoit had raped Ram Bhavan's sister and assaulted some other women in his family.

The romantic image of the dreaded dacoit bound by his own norms was not for Santosha. As a police inspector said, "He was just another big bully, a common criminal who rose in the hierarchy only because it is so easy for anyone to procure arms these days." •

Radhika Ramaseshan/Lucknow

If you think you're hosting a conference at the Holiday Inn, Kyoto, you're thinking 6,000 km too far.



Holiday Inn, Bombay, offers you the same international facilities as any Holiday Inn worldwide.

For the business traveller, Holiday Inn, Bombay, offers a truly international range of facilities to cater to your small or medium – sized conference or seminar... just like any other Holiday Inn worldwide.

We offer fine dining, superior accommodation, conference facilities, inimitable service, and of course, the value for money you've come to expect from any Holiday Inn worldwide...

All the more reasons to choose Holiday Inn first.

Holiday Inn
Bombay
The World's First Choice

ARTIG-468A-90

For information and reservation, please contact: BOMBAY: Holiday Inn, Balraj Sahani Marg, Juhu Beach, Bombay 400 049. Tel: 6204444/6202398. Tlx: 011-78411 HOLI IN/ 011-78404 HINN IN. Fax: (0091-22) 6204452 • NEW DELHI: Holiday Inn, Connaught Plaza. Tel: 3320101. Tlx: 031-61186 HIND IN. Tel: 3010211. Tlx: 031-65526 CLAR IN • BANGALORE: Tel: 77676/77931. Tlx: 845-8668/2354 MACH IN • CALCUTTA: Tel: 412009. Tlx: 021-5421 • AHMEDABAD: Tel: 448602 • PUNE: Tel: 661752.

Trading charges

The Syed Modi murder trial begins in Lucknow

With its heady mix of crime, sex, politics and sports, the Syed Modi murder trial has become a *cause celebre*. Ever since Modi, the national badminton champion, was shot dead two years ago in Lucknow, the tumultuous events his murder triggered off were followed closely by the media. More so because the persons allegedly involved in the crime were Sanjay Singh, now a Member of Parliament who was secretary-general of the Jan Morcha during the time of murder, and Ameeta Modi, herself a national badminton champion and wife of Syed Modi. She was suspected of having an extra-marital affair with Sanjay Singh.

In September 1988, seven persons, including Sanjay Singh and Ameeta, were arrested on charges of murder and conspiracy. The other five were Akhilesh Singh, who allegedly possessed the vehicle in which the murderers were suspected to have absconded, and his accomplices, Amar Bahadur, Jitendra Singh, Bhagwati Singh and Balai Singh. They were subsequently released on bail. In November that year the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed an eight page charge-sheet, containing statements of 296 witnesses and submitted 146 documents relating to the murder. In early 1989, the case came up for trial at the sessions court in Lucknow. But it didn't make much headway, because the defendants sought repeated adjournments on different grounds.

Meanwhile, Sanjay Singh's recent nomination to the Rajya Sabha created an uproar among the Opposition, and the Congress(I) even staged a walkout in Parliament. The event rekindled interest in the Syed Modi murder case. The CBI too leaked out portions of the charge-sheet and the opinion of Shamrao G. Samant to a section of the national press. Samant is a leading authority in criminal cases, special consul for the CBI in the General A.S. Vaidya murder case and also a senior prosecutor in the Syed Modi trial.

Reacting to the revelations in the press a day after the hearing began on 16 August, Sanjay Singh filed an affidavit through his counsel, Ram Jethmalani, praying that the court should not be influenced or prejudiced by what was being reported in the press.

Expectedly, the courtroom was jampacked even as the prosecution presented its case over five days, raking up the salacious details that were frontpaged two years back. The prosecution's case, in the main, hinged around two premises: the extra-marital relationship between Ameeta and Sanjay Singh and the conspiracy hatched by Singh, Akhilesh Singh and others at Hotel Yatrik in Allahabad in June 1988 to get rid of Syed Modi. The main points were:

- Sanjay Singh's wife, Garima, had offered to leave her husband along with her three children if he thought "he had found a better companion".
- Reading out the statement of Gyan Prakash Jaiswal, a close friend of Syed Modi, Samant said that Jaiswal had confirmed that Singh was a frequent visitor to the Modis house. On 18 July, 1988, when Jaiswal had visited them, he found Modi sitting alone in their living room. On enquiring where Ameeta was, Jaiswal was told that she was watching a video film with Sanjay Singh in their bedroom. When Jaiswal suggested that they play cards, Modi reportedly went to fetch the cards, but came back, visibly perturbed and refused to play. According to Samant,



KRISHAN SAITH

Sanjay Singh (second from left) and Jethmalani entering the court: making a point

Modi had obviously found his wife in an "objectionable state" with Singh.

• Samant cited a number of examples to support his contention that Singh was ready to do anything for Ameeta. He said that Singh had got two flats at subsidised prices in a plush locality of Bombay for Ameeta's parents. The CBI counsel added that Sanjay Singh had recommended their case to the urban development minister of Maharashtra, Chandrakant Tripathi. He even read out Tripathi's statement to confirm the charge Samant further added that as the minister of state for animal husbandry in 1985, Sanjay Singh got Ameeta a job with the Provincial Cooperative Dairy Federation, Lucknow. Ameeta, he added, had resigned from her previous job with the railways even before the appointment letter was issued to her.

• When Syed Modi had objected to Ameeta's relationship with Sanjay Singh, Ameeta's mother, Pushpa Kulkarni, had reportedly asked Singh to "deal with the situation". According to Samant, Singh had assured Kulkarni that he would "silence Modi in his own way".

• Samant stated that in one of the diaries seized from Ameeta's possession, she had noted that during a New Year eve bash in Bombay in 1985-86, Modi had refused to dance with her. But Ameeta and Sanjay were on the floor all evening, during which he had held her close. Modi had even doubted the paternity of their daughter.

• Syed Modi, according to Samant, was evidently disturbed about his wife's relationship with Sanjay Singh. He had written in one of his letters, a part of which was read in court, that he did not have a single friend or sympathiser. Quoting from a diary of Ameeta's, Samant pointed out that she had once vowed that she would not have sex with Sanjay Singh but would continue meeting him. But whenever he turned up, her resolve broke and she gave in.

• Samant's observations regarding one of the prime accused, Akhilesh Singh, was that he was very close to Sanjay Singh. On more than one occasion in the past, when Akhilesh was arrested and jailed on criminal charges, Sanjay Singh had helped him out. Both had, in fact, managed V.P. Singh's Lok Sabha election campaign in Allahabad in June 1988.

Defence counsel Ram Jethmalani's main arguments were:

• The relationship between Sanjay Singh and Ameeta Modi was a platonic one, but it was being construed in salacious terms for the political benefit of some persons. Even before Syed Modi and Ameeta were married, said Jethmalani, the couple was very close to Singh. Ameeta's mother treated Sanjay Singh like her son; so Singh and Ameeta were like brother and sister.

• On one occasion, said Jethmalani, Modi did express his resentment over Singh and Ameeta's friendship, but when Singh explained what the "real nature" of their relationship was, Modi was convinced and never raised an objection again.

• Replying to the CBI's allegation that on hearing about Modi's accident through a friend of his—Neeraj—Ameeta chose to contact Sanjay Singh first instead of expressing anxiety over her husband's condition and rushing to him, Jethmalani read out Neeraj's statement which said that she approached Singh immediately because he was a good friend of her husband and would naturally help out in a crisis like this. Her reaction was therefore a natural one, and far from suspicious, countered Jethmalani.

• Jethmalani further stated that Ameeta's not attending Modi's funeral in his hometown, Gorakhpur, on 29 July, 1988, was not unnatural, since she was not in the best of terms with her in-laws. Modi's relatives had not even attended their marriage, which, in fact, was solemnised at the residence of Sanjay Singh.

• Regarding the Sanjay Singh-Akhilesh connection, the defence counsel said that they were both dedicated Congress(I) workers who later joined the Jan Morcha. Therefore, Jethamalani emphasised, their relationship and their supposed involvement in the Modi murder was being played up for political motives. According to the CBI, the conspiracy to kill Modi was hatched at Allahabad's Yatrik Hotel in June 1988. But, pointed out Jethmalani, Singh and Akhilesh were present in Allahabad at the time to campaign for V.P. Singh. Before the murder itself, Sanjay Singh had left for Delhi on 26 July and camped there till the 28th. Akhilesh too was in Delhi on 28 July and left for Hardwar on 29 July. So, argued Jethmalani, when was the so-called conspiracy hatched and executed by the accused.

• Jethmalani further informed the court that the CBI came into the picture on 2 August 1988, when the state government had expressed its dissatisfaction with the local police's handling of the case. He alleged that the CBI prepared its theory on the basis of statements rendered by three eye-witnesses who had earlier testified before the local police too. One of them was a rickshaw-puller, who said that he had seen a red Maruti car bearing the number SMD 7102 leaving the spot of the crime immediately after the shots were fired. This statement was recorded in the general diary of the police on 28 July. That very night, the senior superintendent of police ordered his personnel to intercept a white Maruti instead of a red one. Why the sudden change, asked Jethmalani? The CBI, too, later substituted the red Maruti with a white one bearing the number MG 1959.

With the atmosphere sufficiently surcharged, the case is bound to generate keen public interest and enthusiasm when the hearing is resumed on 5 September. •

Radhika Rameseshan/Lucknow



Ameeta Modi coming out of court: pleading innocence

Jethmalani's main argument was that the relationship between Sanjay and Ameeta was a platonic one, but it was being construed in salacious terms for political benefit

Getting it right

No, Uma Bharti doesn't think Madhavrao Scindia's sexy

She hasn't had it too good with the media. First, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, Uma Bharti, was quoted in *Society* as referring to Madhavrao Scindia as the most good-looking member of Parliament. Then, the story was fleshed out by cocktail-circuit gossip and the new, improved version went that Bharti had actually called Scindia the sexiest man in the House. This was duly picked up by a number of publications, including SUNDAY, and splashed in the political gossip columns, causing considerable embarrassment to the hapless Bharti in Central Hall.



Says Bharti, "I have done such good work with the refugees from Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. How come nobody talks about that?"

Says an incensed Bharti. "I used to be one of the most vocal members of Parliament. But after these stories I find it difficult to look anyone in the eye in the House. I have never thought of any man or any woman, for that matter—in terms of their sex-appeal. So, how could I have said any such thing about Madhavrao?"

Uma has her own ideas on how the story came to be floated. *Society*, she recounts, did a major feature on her a couple of months back. At the fag end of the tape-recorded interview, Bharti was asked whether she thought Madhavrao was good-looking. Uma was unforthcoming. The interviewer then volunteered that she thought that Scindia was great looking. "Do you think so?" asked Bharti.

This, says the member, was twisted out of context and reported as if she had complimented Scindia on his good looks.

There has never been any love lost between Bharti and Scindia. They'd had a bitter quarrel with members and journalists cheering from the sidelines, in Central Hall in the last session of Parliament. Therefore, says Uma, the Madhavrao camp couldn't believe its luck, i.e. the *Society* piece.

The BJP member is convinced that Madhavrao, with the help of his friends in the media, contorted the story still further. Hence the spate of items about how sexy the sannyasin found the Maharaja.

Bharti was livid. And was all set to go to the Press Council with her complaint, before BJP president L.K. Advani dissuaded her. The story would do the rounds for a couple of months and then die a natural death, he said. If, on the contrary, she made an issue of it, it would remain in the news much longer. The advice didn't go down too well with the combative Bharti, but she conceded to her party elder, anyway.

What made the situation particularly galling for the BJP leader was the fact that Madhavrao Scindia was an old enemy. True, in the days when the Scindias were one big happy family, the Maharaja would attend Bharti's *pravachans* (discourses) held in the Rajmata's palace. But ever since the great divide, he and Bharti had clashed on numerous occasions. Uma, a simple village girl with socialistic ideas, had embarrassed Scindia—when he was in government—by publicising cases of atrocities on Harijans, etc., in the Congress minister's constituency. The two often quarrelled bitterly in Parliament, with Bharti managing to get the better of the minister on more than one occasion. Says Uma: "I always got the last word in every exchange, much to his annoyance."

Now, with the item about Bharti's opinion about Scindia's sex-appeal doing the rounds, it was Madhavrao's turn to crow over Uma's discomfiture.

Not for long, though. Bharti managed to set the record straight (extracting an apology from *Society*) and salvaged her reputation from what she regards as a smear campaign.

But the hurt remains. Asks Bharti: "I have done such good work with the refugees from Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. How come nobody talks about that? I don't mind in the least if anybody attacks me on political grounds. But instead they concentrate on labelling me the sexy sannyasin and then, insist that I find Madhavrao sexy. You tell me, is there anything remotely sexual about my appeal?"

No. But it does make a good story. What's more, a story that will be read far more than any article that talks of Bharti's lecture tours in the United States, her near-effortless transition from religious preceptor to firebrand parliamentarian and her distinctive brand of committed politics.

For, when it comes to a female public figure, there's nothing more prurient than public taste. ●

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

Racial purity

A controversy erupts over the Parsi community's funeral practices

It was late afternoon, around 4.45 pm, on Friday, 27 July, when Adi Nazir, a Parsi surgeon, received a phone call. It was bad news. His young daughter, Roxanne, had been killed in a car crash. Nazir was devastated but pulled himself together with some effort to go through with the formalities of the funeral. Roxanne, a practising Parsi had to be consigned to the Tower of Silence, so that she could ascend to Chinwad, the bridge of the separator, where, according to the Zorastrian faith, departed souls are judged for their deeds in the material world.

Roxanne had married outside the community. But since she had followed the Parsi faith, her husband and in-laws wanted to consign her to the Tower. Recounts Dr Nazir, "Since I had gone to the accident site to bring her body my relatives called up the management to book a *bungli* (hall). We gave her name, Roxanne Darshan Shah. We wanted them to know from the start that she had married a non-Parsi. There was going to be no other way we were going to do it. They said okay. Then an hour later we received a call saying that the Panchyat had asked them to refuse." The bereaved family was stunned by the sudden and inexplicable volte-face.

But the Parsi Panchyat and its chairman Aspy Golwalla refused to change their mind even in face of their obvious shock. Anyone who married outside the community, they maintained, could not exit from the Tower of Silence. The Sachkar ceremony, the Sagdid, and the prayers of the Ahunavad Gathe, all of which conjoin to release the soul from the living world, could only be recited when the deceased is a 'pure Parsi'. A premium is placed on 'purity', said the trustees and no allowances could be made in this connection. Roxanne would have to be cremated.

"One feels a little sad," says Adi Nazir. "As far as I can see a Parsi Zorastrian maintains her faith in spite of marrying a non-Parsi, unless he or she implicitly renounces the religion. My daughter Roxanne had married according to the Civil Marriage Act, and also had a small *phera* ceremony. She has worn her *sudreh kusti* (sacred shirt) and she has even visited the Agiary and the Atash Behram.

"One of my family members called up Aspy Golwalla, who said, 'Sorry, a resolution has been passed by the trustees which states that a Parsi girl who has married outside her community would not be allowed into the Tower of Silence.' We had no choice but to cremate her. He should have been more sympathetic in his approach."

But, it now turns out that there never was any such rule. Says Nazir, "Three days later we gathered that there is no such resolution. I think Golwalla should have the courage to admit to either his misinformation or his inadequate knowledge of the rules. Such an issue is the last thing parents want to face at the time of death. Let it be publicly known that our ceremonies will not be performed once the girl goes out. We all know that non-Parsis are not allowed in the main hall and we follow it. But nobody is sure about this. The Panchayat should have one religious head in their committee."

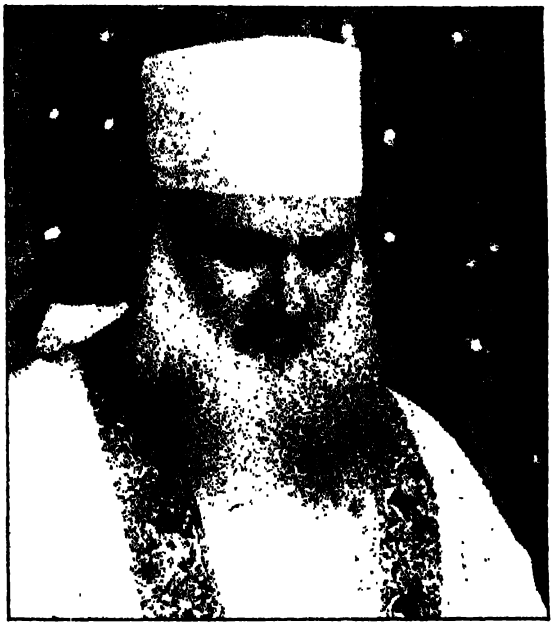
Vada Dastoor Dr Firoze M. Kotwal, one of the seven high priests of the Parsis in the world reacted with sympathy but firmness: "I can understand what the family is going through. But the Panchayat is absolutely right. Once a Parsi marries outside, even if it is a boy, they stop being Parsis. If they become *ham bistar*, that is even have a relationship with a *parjat*, they stop being Zorastrian. They may wear their *sudreh* and *kusti* and think they are still Parsis, but we do not recognise it. The Avestas are our divine utterances, we follow them. Let these reformists who are misguided say what they want to."

According to the conservatives those whom they consider outcastes are free to build their own temples, their own Tower of Silence. The high priests will not hold them back. But once they leave, they will have to stay out.

Intercaste marriages then, are not acceptable. And the dwindling number of the Parsi community not worth worrying about. In the eyes of the Zarathushtra, those who do not bow to fire, those who dismiss his customs as outdated cease to be Parsis. The purity of fire is all important.

Which is all very well. But what happens to the Roxannes of the world? ●

Cyrus Merchant/Bombay



Says Firoze M. Kotwal, one of the seven high priests, "Once Parsis marry outside the community they cease being Parsis according to the Avestas. Let these reformists say what they want to"


Take the world
in your stride
dinesh

When it comes to Punjabi pushiness there's nobody quite like Boney Kapoor.

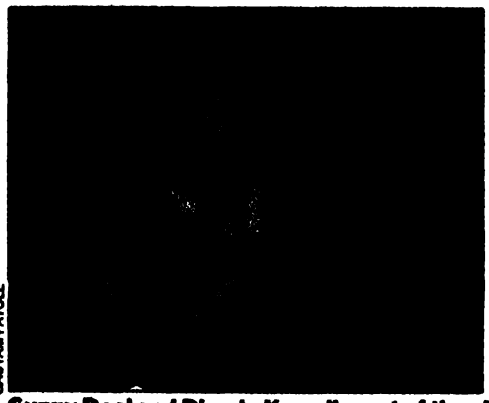
Recently, when Sridevi's father expired, the actress went into long mourning and, consequently, refused to give any further dates for Boney's *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja*.

The mercenary House of Kapoor was completely thrown. Anil's two recent films, *Amba* and *Jeevan Ek Sangharsh*, had flopped. And the brothers were banking on *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja* to revive their flagging fortunes.

So, Boney swung into action with a vengeance, such as only a truly desperate producer can exhibit. He booked virtually every available ticket on the next flight to Madras so that he could take a large party with him to commiserate with Sridevi and her family.

This included much wringing of hands and repeated statements to the effect that their (Sridevi and her mother's) loss was his loss too, and how their family was like his own.

Even by film city's standards this was a bit thick.



GAUTAM PATOLE



GAUTAM PATOLE

Sunny Deol and Dimple Kapadia: out of the closet

The Sunny Deol-Dimple Kapadia affair is rapidly getting out of hand. Dimple, apparently, is fed up with being the other woman in Sunny's life and has begun demanding her due. But, strangely enough, even Sunny is coming around to her way of thinking.

Deol seems to have tired of the happily-married facade he had been flaunting to the world (while a pregnant wife Pooja languished at home) and wants the freedom to declare that it's Dimple he really loves.

Perhaps Sunny will get away with this new defiance. Dharam can hardly afford to say anything involved as he is with Jaya Prada.

After all, the younger Deol can always turn around and ask Dad—poised on the brink of a third marriage—to shut up.



RAKESH SHRESHTA

Sridevi: getting the treatment from Boney

Q Whatever happened to the beefy male brigade that the Bombay film industry used to boast of in the good old days?

A: The male brigade defected—and promptly discovered the drag act. When a desperate Mithun does it, as in *Roti Ki Keemat*, it's understandable. When a Naseeruddin Shah dons a swimsuit you let that pass too.

That's the intense actor's way of showing that he is willing to do anything, anything at all to belong to the commercial films circuit.

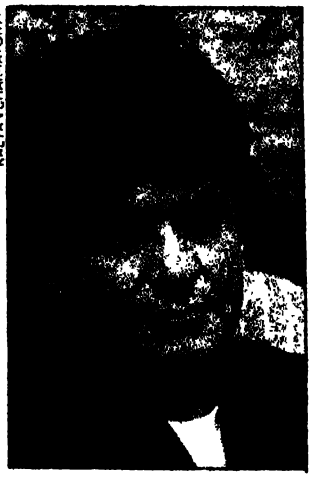
And when a Chunky Pandey plays such a role everybody knows he's motivated by a feel for the part.

But why would a strait-laced Rishi Kapoor suddenly decide to impersonate a *mujra* dancer in *Rishta Ho To Aisa?* Past experience may have something to do with it. Kapoor has always had an affinity for playing girlie roles. Remember *Rafoo Chakker*, and the effortless ease with which Rishi portrayed a girl for the better part of the film?

Well, experience should pull him through this time too.

And a peaches and cream complexion certainly helps.

Jeetendra: shake a leg



KALYAN CHAKRAVARTY

Fifty plus, never-say-die ham actor Jeetendra and wife Shobha obviously have no clue as to how one ages gracefully.

Recently, they provided ample amusement to everyone at the Piano Bar, a frequent haunt of Amitabh Bachchan whenever he feels like shaking a leg.

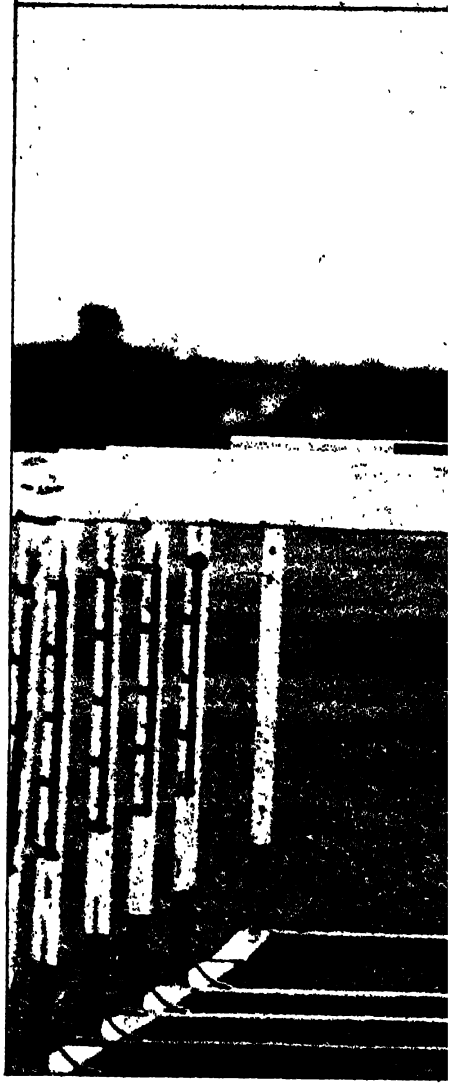
Well, this night belonged to Jeetu and Shobha. Perhaps the Big B's absence did wonderful things for the Jumping Jack's ego and he went a little overboard, gyrating and grinding his creaking bones until they squeaked in protest. But his loathsome hip and pelvic movements did keep everyone amused.

And that's more than you can say for his films.

THE QUEEN : P.T. USHA



THE OUTSIDE



Golden girls

Ashwini Nachappa and Zenia Ayrton bid to overtake P.T. Usha

Pictures by Nitin Rai

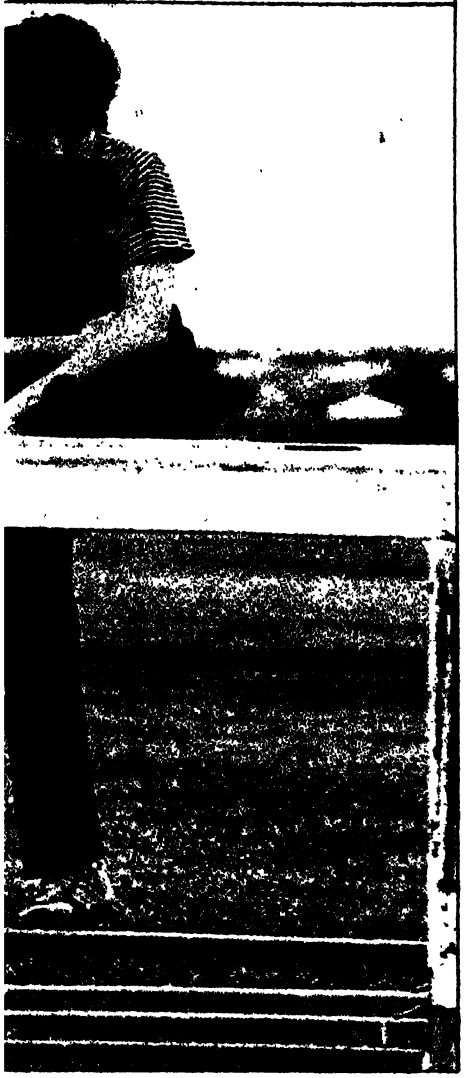
The 200 metres sprint at the National Athletics Open, New Delhi. Undisputed track queen P.T. Usha is among the contenders. And nobody gives any of the other participants even an outside chance.

The race begins. And 24.07 seconds later the winner breasts the tape. No, it isn't P.T. Usha. Ashwini Nachappa has beaten her to it, and Usha is relegated to an unfamiliar (in domestic events at least) place, clocking 24.12 seconds.

Does this mean that Usha's reign at the top is over?

Well, yes and no. The one-off Nachappa victory notwithstanding, P.T. Usha's track record was good enough for her to hold on to the top spot in athletics. But with one difference. Her right to the number one slot was no longer undisputed, and the claims of the pretenders to her throne could no longer be laughed out of the stadium. Nachappa's win had proved that Usha was far from unbeatable and the top-most position on the winner's stand not out of bounds. And when Zenia Ayrton, the gamine Bombay-based sprinter beat Ashwini Nachappa in the 100 metres race in the Escorts Masters Athletics Meet, clocking 10.87 seconds, it was obvious that the battle for the top had been thrown

'ENIA AYRTON



THE CHALLENGER : ASHWINI NACHAPPA



wide open.

Usha, without any serious competition on the domestic front for about a decade, was—predictably—less than happy at this development. And reacting to media reports about her comeuppance, retorted: "It is very difficult for me as I take part in four-five events in every competition. These girls (Ashwini and Zenia) are concentrating on one event each."

O.P. Nambiar, Usha's coach, dismissed the surprise defeat, ascribing it to the fact that his charge was unwell. "Besides," he explained, "Usha knew she had already qualified and was reserving her best for the Asian Games. In the end, it is not a question of who is beating whom, but who is keeping up the international standards. Usha is 26 years now and has been taking the strain for 12 years. But even today, if she is serious about a race, nobody can beat her in India for the next two-three years."

Nachappa, four years younger than Usha, is aware that her victory in the National Open is perceived as a fluke run by the likes of Nambiar. And is determined to prove such sceptics wrong. "Not being able to beat Usha was a great psychological barrier for which I had been doing a lot of mind training. And when I did beat her, people kept coming up to me and asking me to repeat the feat. Until I do that, my victory will lack credibility."

Sunil Abraham, Nachappa's coach, is far less charitable: "An athlete must appreciate the fact that she will be beaten one day. And when you are, you can't hide behind excuses, saying the food was not good and such things."

It was left to the petite Ayrton to put things in perspective. Despite the fact that she is a member of the brat pack baying at Usha's heel (and not just figuratively) Zenia is sporting enough to admit: "People have reached the stage when they are deriding P.T. Usha. But I think she has already done more than enough for her country. Everyone is just waiting for others to take over, and at the same time, pushing her to give her best. But it is humanly impossible for Usha to do as well as she was doing five years ago."

Such generosity notwithstanding, there's no doubting the animosity that exists between the prime conten-

READYING FOR BATTLE: COACH NAMBIAR AND USHA TRAIN IN BANGALORE



ders for the top slot. Ayrton, who lacks international exposure, keeps a low profile in the on-going battle, but Nachappa, who revels in her *bindaas* image—zipping around the 81-acre sports complex in Bangalore on her Kinetic Honda, turning heads wherever she goes—makes no pretence of liking Usha. Ashwini, whose flashy one-piece running outfits have earned her the sobriquet of 'poor man's Flo-Jo', blames Usha for the bad blood that exists between India's star athletes. "At the Seoul Olympics," she says, "we made fools of ourselves only because of Usha. We couldn't decide on the team that would run for the relay heats 36 hours before the final events, only due to her obstinacy."

Sunil Abraham, Nachappa's coach, describes the incident in some detail. According to his version, Usha did not want to run any of the trials at Seoul and insisted on walking into the finals. The other girls protested at this. Then Nambiar announced a specific time for the relay trials. But as the girls congregated on the track, Usha announced that she was unwell. The others, led by the fiery Nachappa, raved and ranted at this. And the Indian federation handed them letters of warning, instead of disciplining the star athlete.

Laughs Nachappa: "I shouted at Nambiar and asked him to mind his own business. So the federation thought I was the leader of the team which had staged a walkout."

In the end, Indian athletics was the worst loser. For, recalls Sunil Abraham: "Finally, when Usha participated in the hurdles event, it was clear that she was in no shape. She clocked 59-plus seconds, which was a bad timing for her."

In fact, maintains Abraham, over the years Usha has developed a habit of throwing tantrums and then making lame excuses when she fails to deliver on the track. "Don't her actions in Delhi remind you of what happened in Seoul?" he asks.

What's more, Usha has refused, on more than one occasion, to run with the likes of Ashwini and Zenia, the latest such instance occurring at the Delhi meet. The animosity between the sprint queen and lesser athletes runs deep.

It's much the same story at the Kangeri training camp (on the outskirts of Bangalore) for the forthcoming Asiad. Probables for the Beijing meet have gathered along with their coaches to go through their paces, and the divide is very apparent. Usha, Ashwini and Zenia are rarely to be seen together. While Ayrton, who arrived at the camp a week later than the others, is a bit of a loner anyway (though she sometimes chats up Nachappa and Reeth Abraham), Usha sticks close to the Kerala squad, with Nambiar hovering protectively around her. It takes a lot of persuading to get the athletes to pose for a group picture. And it is no coincidence that their coaches have chosen different times for their practice session.

The familiar lanky figure of P.T. Usha is much in evidence, frowning hard in concentration as she perfects her finish. Practising for the 4×100

NEW GENERATION: AYRTON GIVES USHA HER DUE



A BINDAAS IMAGE: NACHAPPA ON THE FIELD



metres relay with K. Saramma, Rachita Panda and Shantimoi Phillips, Usha clocks good timings on all the practice runs. Much pampering follows from Nambiar, who has become totally identified with Usha ever since she first began competing in the sprints at 14 years.

Declares Nambiar triumphantly: "By the start of the Asian Games, Usha will be at her peak. Many people are feeling thrilled that Usha has been beaten. But has her record been broken?"

Sunil Abraham, when he's through with berating Nachappa for a clumsy start, agrees all too readily that Usha has the edge in the current battle. "Ashwini's win over Usha was a good sign," he concedes, "but she still has to mature a lot. She is not yet championship material. It has to be understood, however, that Usha is not Indian athletics and Indian athletics is not Usha. This should be made clear to her and the Indian press."

P.T. Usha, though, continues to behave like the big star. At the Escorts Masters Athletics Meet, for instance, Usha refused to participate in the 4×100 metres relay with Ashwini and Zenia, having gone into a deep sulk after her loss to Nachappa. Claiming that she was "terribly unwell", Usha watched from the sidelines as the quartet (with Saramma and Rachita Panda making up the fourth) clocked 45.50 seconds, qualifying for the Asiad by a fraction of a second. Usha was already assured of a berth in the Beijing squad by virtue of having crossed the qualifying mark in the 4×400 metres relay in the interstate meet.

Zenia Ayrton, despite the win over Nachappa in the 100 metres sprint, clocked 10.87 seconds at the Escorts tournament, falling short of the qualifying mark for the next Asiad. But the attractive Ayrton has consistently improved her timing ever since Adil Somariwala, a former sprinter, joined up as her "personal coach". And given the fact that she has very little exposure in international competitions, and her dedication at the track, she is bound to peak around 1994, when the Beijing Asiad is held. And then, she would give both Usha and Ashwini a run for their money.

Says Sunil Abraham: "Zenia has a good coach, has had a training stint in London recently and is showing great promise. But both Ashwini and Zenia are short and slightly built, and thus have a definite disadvantage over the earlier long-limbed group comprising Usha, Reeth, Shiny Abraham, Vandana Rao and Vandana Shanbagh."

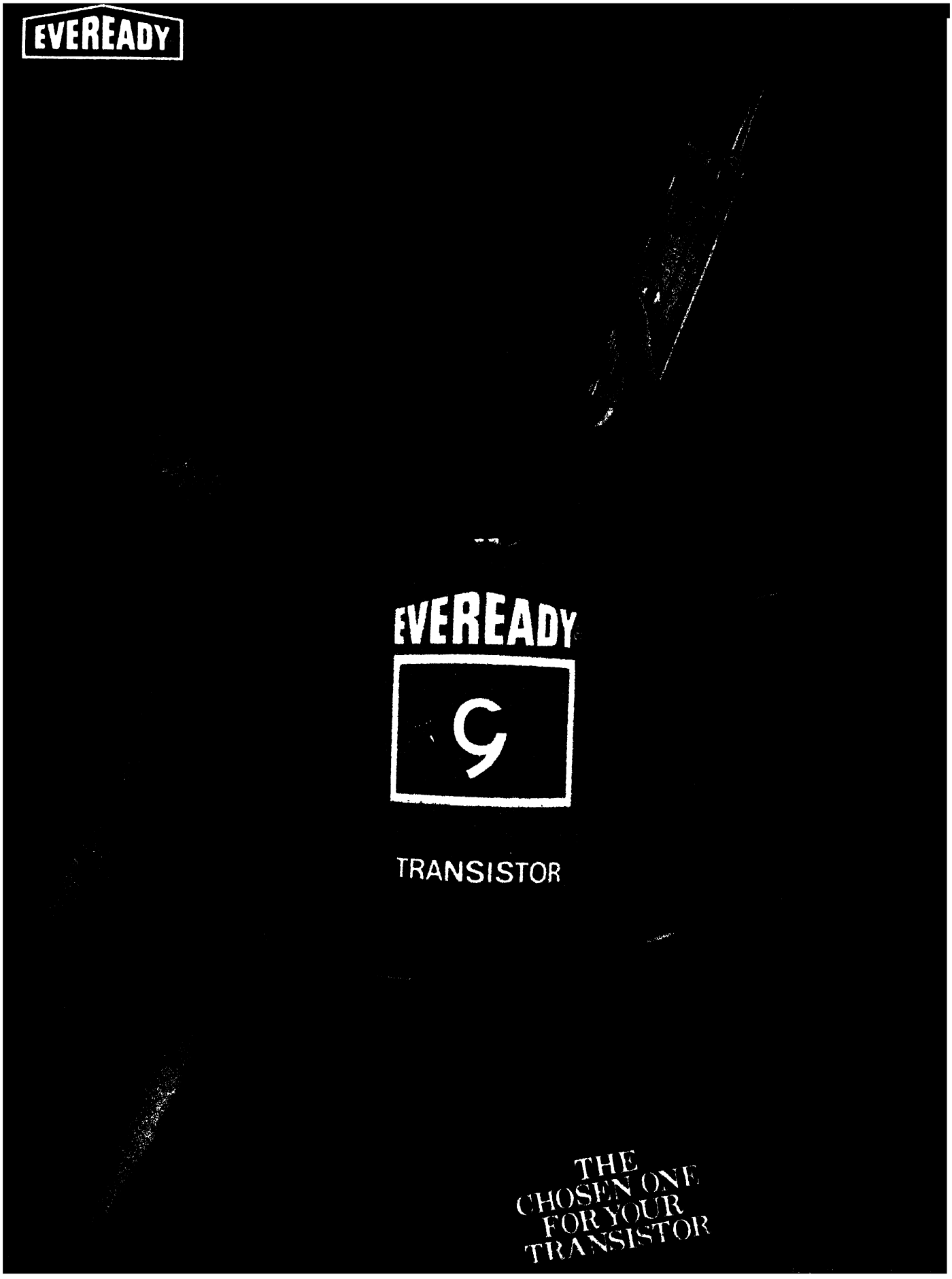
But age is not on Usha's side. And well aware of this, the sprint queen had announced her retirement from athletics after the Seoul Olympics in 1988. After a particularly bad patch, when she was severely castigated for her poor show at the Games by the media and sports enthusiasts, she was coaxed out of her retirement to participate in the Beijing Games. The argument obviously was that she was still the best India had to offer.

Usha, however, insists that it will be all over for her after the next Asiad.

The Nineties, then, will undoubtedly belong to the brat pack. •

Ritu Sarin/Bangalore

EVEREADY



Another India

A highly readable collection of contemporary literary works

In Baburao Bagul's Marathi short story, *Death Is Getting Cheaper*, a poet friend of the narrator plans to write a poem celebrating Bombay and its role in the national movement and the modernisation of India: "I will chisel these diamonds and put them in the setting of poetry, and I'll give a precious ornament to Marathi poetry," he says. Inspiration does not come easily, and he and the writer go for a walk, which provides the moving stage for vignettes of dispossessed, brutalised, violent lives lived on the footpaths and slums of the city. At the end of the story, the poet sings a different song: "I'll throw away what I wrote. I'll keep just one line— 'This is Bombay. Here men eat men. And Death is Getting Cheaper'."

Modernism in the various Indian literatures has often taken the itinerary traced by Bagul's poet– the spectacular discontinuities in the national experience of modernity, and modernisation have moved writers towards concerns and experimental forms that seek to represent and come to terms with inequality and oppression. K. Satchidanandan's Malayalam poem, *Bertolt Brecht And Gautama Buddha*, has Brecht, the spokesman for a politicised creative consciousness, demand of the Buddha:

"What relevance can
Your Three truths and Eight ways have
To the child dying of starvation
How can Nothingness ever tempt
The nameless victims of exploitation?...
Old answers do not satisfy new times
I feel no answer lasts for all time."

The Buddha's response reasserts the timelessness of the mystic:

"The mighty movements for survival
And the forward leaps of history
Do not embarrass the Wise that know
The truth of life's evolution."

Variations on such dialogues exist both within and between the many poems and stories selected for this anthology, the diversity of creative methods and materials setting up fertile echoes and contrasts. In Nirendranath Chakrabarti's Bengali poem *Fatal Evening*, Arjun speaks from Vyasa's *Mahabharata* to recount a tale of disappointment and betrayal, while Nissim Ezekiel's English poem, *Events*, has a nameless urban businessman speak a strangely similar tale of alienation, loneliness and despair. The narrator of Arun Joshi's *Kanyakumari* swims out to Vivekananda's rock but finds no epiphanies or salvation anointing his belated presence there. Two writers of Hindi short stories, Vijay Chauhan in *Birthday* and Mrinal Pande in *The Homecoming*, both offer gently nuanced memorials to lives that have diminished as the structure of the extended family changes.

And then there is the exuberant extract from Krishna Baldev Vaid's novel *Bimal In Bog*, which reminds us of the mixed blessings of our colonial experience: the "English gave our early freedom fighters balls. Ballrooms. Ballbearers. Bridge. Bearers. Beer. Badminton." Such mockery and parody are key forms in which the modern Indian writer addresses a complicated historical and cultural inheritance and context—in *Magan's Insolence* Sitanshu Yashaschandra's wonderfully irreverent send-up of the literary establishment, he describes speakers at a meeting to felicitate Magan, the reluctant, rebellious poet:

"Each one of them spoke. What oratory!
Someone mentioned Kafka, another spoke of
Mallarmeta and still another of Narsinhmeta.
Someone spoke of the love between a camel and a cow."



Nissim Ezekiel's poem, *Events*, is a nameless urban businessman's tale of alienation, loneliness and despair

The stories and poems anthologised in *Another India* all appeared previously in *Vagarth*, a journal of Indian writing, of which 25 issues were published in English between 1973 and 1979. There can be no better tribute to the journal, its editorial staff and its translators, than the fact that selected work from its pages should now add up to a highly readable and enjoyable collection. Many of the writers in this anthology are already well-known nationally, and their work is available in a variety of English translations. It is still very pleasant, though, to read representative work from each of them in quick succession.

What remains after reading this anthology though, are the inevitable questions that are skirted by the title of the anthology—*Another India* (is it symptomatic that the title was suggested by V.S. Naipaul?). Do literatures in different Indian languages, even if in English translations, add up to an *Indian* literature? Sitakant Mahapatra's *Song Of The Hunter Jara* shares a mythology with Nirendranath Chakrabarti's and Daya Pawar's poems, but what do their works share with the extract from Lokenath Bhattacharya's *The Virgin Fish Of Babughat*, with its nightmarish, Kafkaesque visions of a writers' concentration camp? Such instances can be multiplied, but perhaps the issue may be summed up in the suggestion of a different title for such a collection—*Other Indias*. For it is only out of the continuing dialogue between the "India" of nationalist discourse and the "Other Indias" of ethnic cultural consciousnesses that "Another India" will emerge. ●

Suvir Kaul

Another India. An anthology of contemporary Indian fiction and poetry, selected and edited by Nissim Ezekiel and Meenakshi Mukherjee. Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1990. Price Rs 55.



THE PEN IS MIGHTIER

Arun Shourie on the Express' *battle with the Congress*

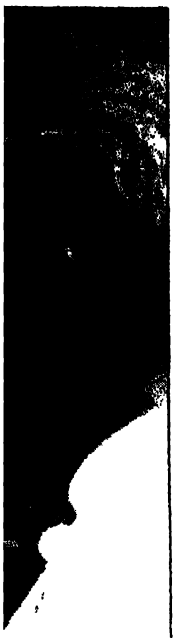
In recent weeks, the **Indian Express** ***Group has come under unprecedented attack. It is also perceived as having changed its position and ceased to uncritically support everything that Prime Minister V.P. Singh does.***

In this first person piece, extracted and abridged from his latest collection of articles, essays and lectures, editor Arun Shourie recounts why the **Express** ***was so implacably opposed to the Congress regimes of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.***

From the day—13 March, 1987—we published Zail Singh's letter to Rajiv Gandhi in which he accused the latter of misleading Parliament to the day—27 November, 1989—Rajiv was defeated in the elections, the *Indian Express* group was engaged in a great contest with the State.

I say 'the State' and not just 'Rajiv Gandhi' or even 'the government'. For numerous parts of the State were set upon the paper.

By the end over 230 prosecutions had been heaped upon the paper—by the Company Law Department, by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, by the Income Tax authorities, by the Customs Department, the Enforcement Directorate, the Chief Controller





BJP leaders A.B. Vajpayee and Rajmata Scindia outside the *Express* building: a show of solidarity; (above) Arun Shourie: fighting to the finish

of Imports and Exports...Advertisements to the paper had been slashed. Banks were just not lending up to the credit limits which they had themselves sanctioned, they had stopped even answering letters, phone calls, to say nothing of receiving us for personal discussions. An attempt had been made to appoint government directors on to the Board of the paper.

Facsimilie circuits had been turned off in Bangalore. The Delhi edition had been successfully prevented from being published for 47 days—the building cordoned off by hired *goondas* as well as mounted police. Offices of the paper all over the country had been raided. The advisor to the Group and his associate had been incarcerated. Personnel had been beaten up—six by acid hurled at them. Passports of Mr Ramnath Goenka etc had been impounded. Their houses had been raided.

The Group and everyone connected with it had been calumnised no end—over the radio and TV, through the government's propagandists in the press....An assault on the *Express* as determined as the one Mrs Gandhi launched during the the Emergency, but one even more comprehensive...

By the end we were on the brink of collapse. But as had happened in the Emergency we were saved by the mistake of the rulers: like Mrs Gandhi in January, 1977, Rajiv Gandhi called an election, and he lost. The paper survived as it had the Emergency, with just months to spare

It would take a volume to set out the thrust and parry, the feints and counter-feints, the exhilaration and tearing despair, the sterling role of so many, the betrayals by others, how we used others, how others used us. All that would take a volume, and it would have to be written by someone who can bring the drama alive.

But the contest yielded many lessons, and there is value perhaps in setting them out just seriatim.

1. The rulers must be wrong, and you must be right. And right on every count. In the end it is the relative credibility of the regime and its critics which tilts the outcome. the rulers must be manifestly working against the interest of the people, you manifestly for their welfare Precisely because this was the way the average reader perceived the government and us, the assault on us in the end recoiled on the government. the assault itself became a public issue, it became an illustration in the public mind of the character of Rajiv's regime, and proof of what we had been saying about it all along. Several things follow For instance, once it has engaged the rulers it is even more necessary —it is a hundred times more necessary —than in normal times that the paper adhere to the truth Even a minor mistake will be seized by the rulers to assail the credibility of its work as a whole

2. Not just on issues, the the paper must be right on conduct. As the 230-odd prosecutions the rulers launched against the *Express* testify, the rulers will look for every chink they can find. We were greatly helped by the fact that the Group had been under the continuous scrutiny of successive Congress governments for almost 25 years This had led the group to be not just careful but more scrupulous than even an exceptional business house in India would ordinarily be There is a two-way relationship therefore : to fight the State our conduct must be impeccable, and the fight itself cleanses our conduct.

The rulers will certainly hit back They will hit back on a wide front. And given the condition to which our institutions have been reduced to there will be little institutional resistance—from within the bureaucracy for instance—to their assault. Therefore,

- We must have both the wherewithal and the will to say the fight;
- We must be prepared to lose all in the fight: apart from his great astuteness, his immense resourcefulness, his enormous resilience, this willingness to lose everything he has built up over seventy years has been the unique strength of Mr Ram Nath Goenka: in 1942, in 1975-77 and again in 1987-88 he staked

During the on-going battle between the State and the *Express*, the Delhi edition had been prevented from being published, the buildings cordoned off, personnel beaten up, the passport of Ramnath Goenka impounded. Offices of the paper all over the country had been raided

Time and tide do not wait because we have taken on the State. The fight had to be conducted inspite of illness. Ramnath Goenka, already 85, suffered a stroke. But the illness did not touch his indomitable spirit

everything;

• We must worst them on every front: swaying public opinion, persuading the courts,outwitting *goondas* excavating facts...

4. While they will certainly hit back, we can engage the rulers with great confidence. The rulers could deploy much of the State apparatus to crush us, but as we are still a free and open society there was a limit beyond which they could not go: they had to stop short of physical violence for instance. And in the arena short of violence, the State apparatus is so inept that one can fight it with great confidence. They commenced so many prosecutions. They had the entire panoply of the legal, bureaucratic, intelligence and enforcement establishments to nail the paper on these.

This assault was stemmed in effect by just two brilliant, young men—S.Gurumurthy and Arun Jaitley—under the guidance of two



or three senior lawyers—Ram Jethmalani, F.S. Nariman. Just these four or five brilliant men, and the avalanche was stalled long enough Many factors account for this. Many who had been set on us—like the scores who would come to raid our offices –did not have their heart in it. The key men, of course, had, they were out to finish the Group But they were so incredibly ham-handed, so mediocre. The only reason they—for instance, the law officers—got so far was the condition of the institutions: we would have the lawyers, the law, but they ever so often would have the judges. That such mediocre dolts were subjecting the paper to all this, and that the custodians were cringing before them—both were infuriating. They drove one to tear one's hair in frustration.

We would be in court and Jethmalani would make an absolutely brilliant presentation: the CBI lawyer or the then Solicitor General of India. G.Ramaswamy, unable to answer a single point of law or fact or a single inference would just read, and re-read,and re-re-read the charge sheet and the judge would give the order the government wanted. It was infuriating as hell at the moment. But soon enough we gathered confidence for we saw that while many a judge was shamelessly willing to do what the Ramaswamys and Katres wanted him to do, the latter were not clever enough to lead him to the thing that would injure us.

5. And there is another reason for confidence. At the time so many used to say, 'You are fools. How many read your paper? How can you people counter the massive reach of the radio and TV? In any case, no one cares.' But as the election showed, the message *does* travel—right across the whole of India. And people *do* care. Every single dodge the rulers attempted, every single fabrication they tried to pass off, the people saw through every single one of them. And they drew the correct inference—that these were not isolated goofups, that they were not aberrations, they were the woof and warp of Rajiv's regime.

6. We learnt too that the State is not a monolith: ever so often, help came from within the apparatus—the 15-year-old circular which we did not know about but which completely demolished what the government was asserting in Court, the fascimilie of the which nailed the minister's lie, the long suppressed, tightly held report of justice Thakkar which enabled us to open another front, High Courts such as that in Bombay which stayed the hand of government...Each of these came from officers of State, and in each case the officers reached out to us of their own accord.

7. But not just from within the State. Ordinary citizens—a retired Land and Development Officer, a Land and Development Officer under suspension for years, lawyers in the know, a Director of big companies, the students who at great cost to themselves helped us re-enter the *Express* building in Delhi in December 1987 —they reached out. Some of them had experienced persecution at the hands of the rulers. But most of them reached out to the paper because they too wanted to reform 'the state of things entire'. Some of them were doing what they could in their own localities and spheres. Many others were hemmed by various constraints, and could not; they reached out to the paper with suggestions, with tips, with information because they saw the paper doing what they wished they were. Journalists often take more credit than is their due for excavating secrets. In fact, once the paper is seen to be taking up public causes, once it is seen that if information gets to it and checks out no one will be able to pressurise the paper into suppressing the facts, people reach out to the paper themselves.

8. But there is an allied lesson. More information certainly flows in, but naturally

much of it is wrong: the informant may be going by hear-say; he may, in his enthusiasm for the cause have deduced more from the facts than is warranted; he may be out to settle a personal score; the rulers will certainly try to plant false stories on the paper so as to blow them apart and thereby make readers disbelieve the other things the paper is saying about them. Thus, even as more information comes in spontaneously because the paper has joined issue with the rulers, checking and re-re-checking become doubly important. And, whenever the paper errs, the swift and unambiguous andopen admission of the mistake.

9. Just as many will reach out and help, several will not be able to stay the course. A few will do worse: they will betray you, inform on you, mislead you. We had our share of the Hindujas, of the Chandraswamys. Bitterness over their conduct saps one in the extreme, almost as much as self-pity. The only sensible thing to do is to follow the counsel Gandhiji gave when his associates felt bitter at the turnaround of Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali: we should not be bitter that they have left us mid-stream, he taught; instead we should be grateful that they have struggled by our side thus far.

10. We should not look for fights, but once one is forced on us, we must fight. *And go on fighting*. The latter is as important as the first. To take up cudgels and, when the rulers hit back, to yield, is doubly destructive—for it demoralises others who might have stood up, 'see what happened to...'But if you persevere, the rulers are apt to rush to your aid, to complete the work you have begun. The moment you point to a shortcoming and urge its rectification, instead of setting it right—something they could do ever so easily—they will make it a point to compound what they were doing. That you have urged a course makes it anathema for them. For them it is more important to demonstrate that they don't care for what you say, that you are nobody, that they have nothing but contempt for you.

11. If only you persevere, you can rely on the rulers to commit THE GREAT MISTAKE. I remember October-November 1976. The movement against Mrs Gandhi had all but completely died out. It seemed that the Emergency would never end. 'But we can always rely on her to commit mistakes,' Mr Goenka told me. 'We have to just hold out'. She did: she called the elections on 18 January, 1977, and she was out within 3 months. This time, as there was no Emergency, we could do more than just hold out. We were able to keep up an assault. There was not a week in which we let off. Rajiv reacted by compounding his conduct, thereby proving our point. And eventually he too committed THE GREAT MISTAKE: he too called the elections, and was out within forty-five days.

12. In both cases the decisive mistake was the calling of elections. And elections became necessary only because we are a free and open society. Mrs Gandhi had the Emergency to delay them, and all effective opposition to it had subsided. But she felt she had to call elections to seek legitimacy. Stalins and Pol Pots don't feel the need. Operating in what had been a free society Mrs Gandhi felt the need. And once the people had spoken neither she nor Rajiv could do a Marcos or a Noriega, neither could annul the results and continue. Hence, the greatest imperative: to keep our society open and free, one in which rulers shall not feel able to cross a limit—resorting to physical violence for instance—one in which they shall feel compelled to seek the people's endorsement, and one in which the people retain their sense of decency, of what is right, and what is wrong.

13. Thus, keep up the pressure. But be patient. India is enormous and so it takes a





long, long time for the message to get across. Millions are consumed by the struggle to merely survive: hence the misdeeds must become truly grotesque and monstrous for the people to spare attention. And rationalisations for remaining inert come so easily.

14. Those who are engaged in a battle are apt to get impatient, to throw up their hands,'Why the hell does no one care? Why aren't they doing something?' to fly the air. But the people wait. For the fly to sit. And then, 'SWAT'. We must be patient and remember that each struggle of this kind passes through many ups and downs. A precise description of the progression which I found therapeutic to bear in mins provided as usual by Gandhiji. Reflecting on the course of the non-cooperation campaign he wrote.

Every good movement passes through five stages: indifference, ridicule, abuse , repression, and respect. We had indifference for a

The *Indian Express* was saved by the mistake of the rulers: like Indira Gandhi in January 1977, Rajiv Gandhi called an election and lost. The paper survived, as it had in the Emergency



Arun Jaitley



S. Gurumurthy

The state had the entire panoply of legal, bureaucratic, intelligence and enforcement establishments to nail the paper. But the assault was stemmed by two brilliant men—S. Gurumurthy and Arun Jaitley—guided by Ram Jethmalani

few months. Then the Viceroy graciously laughed at it. Abuse, including misrepresentation, has been the order of the day. The Provincial Governors and the anti-non-cooperation Press have heaped as much abuse upon the movement as they have been able to. Now comes repression, at present yet in its fairly mild form. Every movement that survives repression, mild or severe, invariably commands respect which is another name for success... This repression, if we are true, may be treated as a sure sign of the approaching victory. But, if we are true, we shall neither be cowed down nor angrily retaliate and be violent. Violence is suicide. Let us recognise that power dies hard, and that it is but natural for the government to make a final effort for life even through repression. Complete self-restraint at the present critical moment is the speediest way to success.

(Young India, 9 March, 1921)

15. In such ups and downs, the issue changes from moment to moment. 'R.K. Dhawan and the Thakkar Commission' becomes 'the Press and the Official Secrets Act', and that in an instance becomes 'the Speaker shielding the liars'.On this roller-coaster,

- You must worst the rulers at every turn;
- You must not just worst them, you must show them up to be the fools they are;
- And having done so, immediately bring the focus back to the main issue—their character as rulers, what they are doing to the institutions of State—showing that the particular issue which had surfaced was but an example of what they habitually, compulsively, inevitably do.

16. In pursuing the contest through these ups and downs, in pursuing these ever-changing issues one's tactics naturally must vary with the issue, the phase. To recall one of a score of such changes we went through, we saw that one must at times be audacious enough and courageous enough to brave persecution, and physical danger, and calumny, and to be in the forefront—we had to brave each of these when we had to break as-under the government-sponsored closure of our Delhi edition in October-December, 1987—and one must have the humility and practical sense to remain in the background at others.

The government had succeeded, and our work too had succeeded, in isolating us from the rest of the press by mid-1988; the moment Rajiv brought his Defamation Bill in August 1988 we saw that it was not just wrong and had therefore to be fought, we saw that it was a golden opportunity to turn the tables, to unite the press and isolate the government; but the *sine qua non* to accomplishing this was that, though organising this move today and that tomorrow, each of us remain well in the background. Similarly, we were at first upset that *The Hindu* had got the Bofors documents and we had not. That was natural. Mr Goenka with his great pride in his paper too was upset

But for him no defeat is a complete defeat, no victory a complete victory. In each defeat he sees the point of advantage, the foothold on which one may stand to fight back; in each victory he detects the seed of future trouble. He therefore rallied in no time. 'It is good,' he said. 'It is better this way. They will praise *The Hindu*—to condemn us, if for nothing else. But doing so they will propagate the documents, they will own up to them.' That is exactly what happened. We were all amused in the following months when the paper which had been most strenuously propagating the government's smears—and rationalisations—'destabilisation', 'scurrilous', 'not journalism', 'corruption is only an elitist issue'—namely, *The Times of India* in every editorial it wrote mocked at us: 'And be it noted that it is *The Hindu* and not those who had been shouting the loudest which got the documents,' or words to that effect. Whether we were mocked or not, the government's apologist gave currency to the documents!

17. Time and tide do not wait because we have taken on the State. The fight had to be conducted in spite of, in the midst of illness, of traumas, of dislocations of various kinds. Mr Goenka, already 85, drove himself into a stroke. It disabled him. At times he had to be shielded from public view. The government had its emissaries who came ostensibly to wish him well but in fact to ascertain how able he was to carry on. It sent the Hindujas, it sent relatives of Mr Goenka, it sent Murli Deora, that middleman of an MP, to persuade him in his weakened condition.

As Mr Goenka fought back to reasonable health, all realised that the illness, though nearly fatal, had not been able to touch his indomitable spirit. He was as he had been in 1980. Mrs Gandhi had returned to power. And had immediately recommenced the assault. She had tried to take over the Delhi building, income tax cases were being reopened... Srichand Hinduja came over to Mr Goenka with an offer: part with the

paper...any price you name...Mr Goenka asked him, 'Have you come on behalf of the Devi? ' meaning Mrs Gandhi. 'You may draw your own conclusion,' Srichand said. '*To kya main apni gave apne hi haath se kasai ke ghar pahuchaun*?' Mr Goenka asked him, 'So, should I with my own hands reach my cow to the butcher's house?' And with a cup of tea despatched him off.

18. I do not want to suggest by any means that such spirit and doggedness are enough, or that the ***Express*** as an organisation was in fighting fettle. On the contrary, organisationally we were in very, very poor shape. To take just one instance, while nothing would have seen the light of day but for hundreds doing their job—from the typesetter to the rotary operator the key w ork —of excavating and garnering the facts, of writing, of fighting the cases, of looking after the ailing Mr Goenka, of attending to the myriad tasks that are needed for keeping an organisation going—all this had actually to be done by just a handful. As this handful got enmeshed in fire fighting cases, tax demands, fomented 'strikes', raising money—the paper was less and less able to attend to the basic tasks of a newspaper. It is of course an achievement that even in this situation the paper put out so much data—original, hard to get, and of the highest public importance. But that it was crippled even in its editorial work is also true.

19. Apart from the disabilities which followed upon the key personnel getting caught up in fighting fires, there were other costs even in regard to the editorial content of the paper. The paper had taken up the task of cleansing public life, of restoring accountability, of infusing institutions with life. It had engaged the Rajiv Gandhi government on these issues with great vigour and tenacity. Rulers like N.T. Rama Rao in Andhra and Devi Lal in Haryana were also doing everything they could to suborn institutions.

The paper, specially the editions based in the respective states, was eager to take on these rulers. But the intensity of the fight against the central government disabled us from doing so. There would have been no difficulty if we were operating in a country where governments brought to account by the press adhered to norms, where they were restrained by notions of things done and not done. But as noted above Rajiv and his government had thrown all norms to the winds. And there were no institutional restraints to hinder them. NTR and Devi Lal would have reacted in the way Rajiv had to assaults on them. We concluded that we could not take them on till we had dealt with the principal task at hand. 'Be Arjun', became our beacon.

20. In India, being merely good professionals is not enough. In other countries a paper publishes a story, other papers carry it forward, the legislatures, the courts, civic groups immediately act on the matter. In India it is the exact opposite. Other papers pull a blanket over their heads, hoping the reader too will not notice... Many others do worse: they broadcast the government's falsehoods for it, they paste motives...The legislatures and courts are in the rulers' thrall. Three things follow :

- One has to persevere much, much longer with the matter than would be the case in other democracies;
- One must deafen oneself to calumny, and assiduously avoid getting side-tracked into debates with the side-kicks of the rulers;
- One must be prepared to do a variety of tasks—from summarising things for members of Parliament, to preparing writs for courts, to helping ensure that Congress candidates would be opposed by only a single opposition candidate...

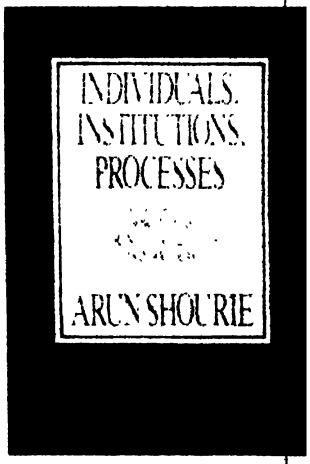
All this involves great trouble. It drives one to exhaustion, often to despair. And one can persevere only if one is a citizen first, and not just a professional. That is, if one is imbued with the spirit of reform and sees work in the paper as but part of the general work being done in the country to improve the state of affairs.

21. That brings me to the vital point. Some join the contest, others are pushed into it and then get locked into it for a variety of reasons; one because he had been pursuing one target and did not anticipate that the latter could and would marshal the State to shield himself, another because his rival had got an unfair advantage; and third because he had been outraged by a particular step of the rulers; a fourth because he saw the inter-connectedness and traced it all to the suborning of institutions. A movement arises when the moves of the rulers bring about this conjunction of individuals and groups, each driven by a separate reason to the conclusion, 'enough is enough'.

22. But while in this case we came through, there can be no guarantee that those who set out to arrest wrong always will. And so in addition to internalising this sense of purpose, one must be a bit distant from that purpose too. By the middle of 1989 the contest had ceased to impose even a little strain on me. It may be that this was so because Rajiv's assault had been stemmed. It may be that the whole thing had become routine. But I also like to think that although each of us continued to work for the purpose, we also achieved a degree of detachment from it, we came to see that the outcome was not in our hands, that it depended on millions of others. And so we acquired, if I may be presumptuous, considerable equanimity in the midst of all the hustle and bustle. Service consummated in personal deepening.

But that is just to reach the last word: like millions before us, we too learnt how very wise is the counsel of the Gita.

March, 1990 ●



Individuals, Institutions, Processes—How One May Strengt en The Other In India Today by Arun Shoune A Penguin Publication Price Rs 175

V GANGADHAR

Out, damn Agenda

This page in The Times of India *gives way for hard news*

Call it Agenda, Comment, Op-Ed. The page facing the edit page in a newspaper, is often not restricted to hard news, but also views and interpretation. Calcutta's *The Telegraph* always had a strong and interesting op-ed page, but the best was in Bombay's *Indian Post* when it was being edited by Vinod Mehta.

The Times of India, always slow to change, finally introduced the 'Agenda' page, around two years back. 'Agenda' occupied half of the op-ed page and usually consisted of two long articles spread over six columns. The other two columns were used for letters, rural news, a bit of New Delhi gossip and occasional translations from the regional press.

But from 1 September, 1990, 'Agenda' was out. The reason offered is that, in view of the rush of events at home and abroad, it has become necessary to accommodate more hard news.

Frankly, 'Agenda' never clicked and very few readers will mourn its departure. Its major drawback was the deadly dullness of the articles. Of course, they were scholarly, informative and most of the times topical, but always unreadable. Written by experts and intellectuals, the comments were often cloaked in obfuscation and pomposity. As such, the edit page in most of the newspapers, abounds in dullness, moralisings and pseudo-intellectualism and when those spill over to 'Agenda' or 'Comment' the result is obvious. We need not mourn 'Agenda', it never had any life.

A couple of days before the announcement was made, the 'Agenda' column carried a fascinating piece by Satish K. Mehta, obviously a marketing hot-shot of the Times Group. Commenting on the special quality of his product, Mehta went into raptures: "The buyer usually has great expectations from the paper. A newspaper can be his archangel, professor, mentor, friend, informant or even his pet. Everyday, he does not merely read it, he fondles it, folds it, carries it and even talks to it."

Delightful, isn't it? Who knows, some of the readers could have 'talked' like this to the *Times*:

Out, damn Agenda, out I say
Who would have thought the page
had so much dullness in it!





Richard Nixon like **V.P. Singh** had a **Vinod Pande** (left), whose name was Bob Haldeman. But Bob did not make astrological predictions about the durability of his government or silly comments about women

'Tricky Dick' Singh

V.P. Singh as 'Tricky Dick', Richard Nixon? At least M.J. Akbar says so. In his widely-read column, *Byline*, Akbar points out that Richard Nixon too had a Vinod Pande whose name was Bob Haldeman. Bob, of course, was slightly different. He did not make astrological predictions about the durability of his government or make silly comments about women.

Totally loyal to the 'boss', Haldeman along with his colleague Bob Ehlrichman, was known as the Praetoria Guard to the President. Chief of staff at the White House, he was often labelled by the press as Nixon's 'Nazi' hatchet man. Describing what he would do to a Nixon enemy, Haldeman once said that "he would leave the enemy twisting, slowly in the wind." V.P. Singh, points out Akbar, is doing exactly the same to the man who put him on the Prime Minister's *gaddi*, Devi Lal.

The Haldeman-Vinod Pande comparison is fascinating. Extreme personal loyalty to those in power can lead to frightening attitudes.

Akbar's comments open up endless possibilities. Does V.P. Singh have a Plumber's Unit as well? Nixon operated through one during his Watergate days. One of its members an ex-CIA hit-man was even prepared to assassinate 'enemies' which included columnist Jack Anderson.

It's a fascinating area for research. Political pundits have their jobs cut out. If Vinod Pande could be Bob Haldeman, who are the counterparts of Bob Ehlrichman, John Dean, Jeb Stuart Magruder, Chuck Colson and Gordon Liddy? Important members of Nixon's dirty tricks brigade, they all went to jail over Watergate while their boss slowly acquired the status of a senior statesman, while making mil-

lions from his books. And will Prem Shankar Jha make an effective Ron Ziegler, the Nixon press secretary, who was often caught lying while trying to protect his boss?

Interviewer-interviewee

Business executive, art collector, novelist, Gurcharan Das, is allowed to have his cake and eat it too. In its Independence Day special, *Sunday Review*, carried a piece where Das answers questions asked by himself! Naturally, he is against licences, permits and controls. Foreign investments must be encouraged to get the latest technology and know-how. We should not be scared of multinationals. Import duties should be lowered. Do away with the MRTP Act.

It is the typical business entrepreneur's lingo. Had the questions been raised by someone other than himself, Das could not have been so glib. Why do our factories produce so many sub-standard goods? How is it that many units fall sick and why do the owners of these units swallow even the provident fund amounts of the workers? Blaming the government is all right, but why is there so much dishonesty among our businessmen? Do we have to permit foreign investment just to obtain technology and know-how which are totally out of date? Okay, let us invite multinationals, but should we forget what happened to Chile and its president, Allende?

Das should now do a book on the ethics of our businessmen. And market it as fiction!

With a straight bat

The Indian cricket team's tour of England is over and along with most of the players, the cricket correspondents are back. They were a busy bunch. When not covering the matches, the scribes were busy interviewing and writing about some of the great English cricketers of the past.

Of course, not all of them made good copy. Lokendra Pratap Sahi of *The Telegraph* and Ayaz Memon of *The Independent* (Bombay) were easily the best. Their interviews with David Gower, Alvin Kallicharan and South African Eddie Barlow, brought out different facets of the game.



Had the questions been raised by someone other than himself, **Gurcharan Das** could not have been so glib

One feels particularly sorry for the dimunitive left-hander, Kallicharan, who was as good a batsman (even better playing spinners) as Gordon Greenidge, Viv Richards and Clive Lloyd. Yet, despite holding the West Indian team together during the Packer days, Kalli was shunted aside by the West Indies Board when Lloyd and Co. came back. An aggrieved Kallicharan decided to tour South Africa and was lost to Test cricket. If only he had continued to play for Windies, who knows, he might have tackled Australian leggie, Bob Hollan, and our own, Hirwani, much better than Richards and Co.

Sahi's write-up on Gower reveals the character of the man who had to put up with poor form, injury, desertion of girlfriend Vicki and shock treatment from the selectors. A well-read and intelligent player, Gower talks sense about his problems, captaincy and his own future in the game. That, happily, has been settled with his hundred against the Indians at the Oval and the Australians had better watch out!

David Gower: coping with poor form, injury and his girlfriend's desertion



Less cheesecake please

Nari Hira's *Parade* marches on, hitting a circulation of around 80,000 in just two years. The magazine has also started a mail order system, trying to build a network of subscribers.

Parade should not be labelled a poor, country cousin of the *Reader's Digest*. It has developed its own slot in the magazine world, carrying an interesting mix of articles on various issues. *Parade* has enough variety to please the discriminating reader.

Parade , of course is not perfect. When it has access to several international magazines, why does it ignore topical political prices, hard-hitting profiles, medical dramas and of course some light, humorous stuff? It can also do with less cheesecke. But make no mistake, *Parade* has arrived. ●

Mixed fortunes

Despite losing the Test series, the Indian cricket team's England tour was not a complete disaster

Was our cricket team's just-concluded tour of England a total disaster? While pundits may differ on the magnitude, all are agreed that from the Indian point of view, this visit is best forgotten.

A brief flurry in the initial stages—when we won both the one-dayers—was all that India had to show through the entire tour. A huge, though inconsequential 600-plus runs in the last Test only served to prove that the tracks in England could be as dead as the ones in India.

The British, of course, have gone overboard in praising the Indians. This, of course, is the routine whenever a visiting team does not perform as well as the home side. But more credence could be given to the letter Colin Cowdrey wrote to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president, Biswanath Dutt. The chairman of the International Cricket Council (renamed from the earlier International Cricket Conference)—the controlling authority for the game in the world—eulogised not only the performance of the team, but commended the behaviour of the players on and off the field as well.

In brass tacks, however, this tour was actually a sad medley. Poor team selection, in some respects, was aggravated by one of the weakest bowling line-ups India has ever had. To compound matters, impetuosity and lack of application, largely negated the exciting batting potential of the squad.

And yet, India had got off to a cracking start. The one-dayers were exciting—and extremely satisfying from the visitors' point of view. England batted first on both occasions and India managed to overhaul totals of 229 in the first instance and 282 in the second. All the batsmen were in form, Dilip Vengsarkar at the top and Sachin Tendulkar at the bottom, emphasising that there was no difference between the mature and the young in the Indian squad.

The limited-overs matches evoked great interest proving once more that they are here to stay.

But for the players, the transition is not always easy. Cricketing officials the world over could consider putting the lighter brand of the game after a Test series is over.

For the Indians, at least, it may have been a good idea. They went into the first Test at Lord's with more hope than preparation. Captain Mohammad Azharuddin carried his hangover into the vital toss. He won and, on a plumb, easy-paced surface, asked England to bat. He had done so in the one-dayers, and decided to do so again.

Bishen Singh Bedi, manager of the Indian team, told a friend that he had nothing to do with the toss, a remark that prompted columnist Sunil Gavaskar to demand his resignation. Bedi, of course, has in the past shot off several statements he had to either deny or twist when accosted later. On the New Zealnd tour, he had said the Indian team should be thrown into the Pacific Ocean. The bitterness in the statement was later twisted to just an "off-the-cuff remark made without malice".

Of course, Gavaskar's tirade also seemed out of tune — until one considered the running battle between these two former stars of Indian cricket. Each has taken turns in lambasting the other in a verbal duel that has ultimately led to the BCCI deciding to ask Bedi for an explanation. Stung by Gavaskar's demand for his resignation, Bedi had seized the opportunity afforded by Gavaskar's refusal of membership offered by the MCC. In his personal capacity, Bedi could have expressed any opinion. But he signed an open letter, which was disclosed to the press, as manager of the Indian cricket team.

The BCCI did not take kindly to this. The working committee empowered secretary Ranbir Singh to write to Bedi the moment he returned to India, asking him to explain why he had signed the letter as manager of the Indian team.

But all that came much after the hullabaloo over the Lord's Test was over. Azharuddin's mistake cost India dearly. England, aided by Gra-



Graham Gooch: runs and runs and runs



Kapil Dev: a timely ton

ham Gooch's tenacious 300-plus, amassed 653 for four wickets. India managed to reply with 454. When England declared again at 272 for four in their second knock, they left India the task of scoring 472 in the fourth innings to win. The team just crumbled to a 247-run defeat, giving England just their second victory in eight years at Lord's.the only other coming against Sri Lanka.

Moving on to Old Trafford in mid-August didn't help the Indians much. England batted first again this time accumulating 519 runs in the first innings. The Indians replied with a respectable 432, but England once again tried to force the pace, declaring at 320 for four wickets. Again, this meant scoring over 400 in the fourth innings. But India managed to salvage some pride by scoring 343 for six wickets.

The last knock also opened the floodgates of praise for the young Tendulkar, whom many were prone to place above Gavaskar in terms of potential. Sachin scored an unbeaten 119, with masterful strokes all around the wicket.

But all that was heady stuff, not meant to last. That Tendulkar will have to curb his impetuosity was amply demonstrated in the last Test at the Oval. As India piled up 606 for nine—the highest-ever against England—Tendulkar fell for just 21. It was an unfortunate stroke that ended his innings just when it was promising to turn out to be another dazzler.

But this last Test has done wonders for two veterans—Kapil Dev, knocking a century after almost two-and-a-half years and the other, Ravi Shastri, falling just 13 short of what would have been a deserving double century. Kapil, whose bowling has lost its edge, needed this knock to stay in contention for a berth in the Indian team for the winter schedule. Ravi Shastri, of course, has now strengthened his claim to captaincy.

That India had gone on the tour with a very innocuous bowling attack was admitted by all. While the British press preferred to call the bowling "friendly", Bedi was categorical in saying that it was incapable of bowling out England twice in a match. Captain Azhar held the same view.

BCCI president Biswanath Dutt felt, however, that India's performance was not too bad. Quoting Cowdrey's letter to him, he said that if the people watching the matches in England were all praise for the Indians, there was no reason for him to think otherwise.

But Dutt did admit that the bowling was not up to the standard. "Yes, if we had bowled better, we may well have had a different result. Penetrative bowling was what we lacked. Our batsmen did well, but there was no follow-up. And, if we had batted first at Lord's, we may well have won the series."

But this optimism was lacking elsewhere. With Kapil Dev losing his sting, it was left to Manoj Prabhakar and Sanjeev Sharma to spearhead the attack. But as things turned out, it was Atul Wasson who caught the eye. But even his pace—the fastest in India at the moment—could not cover up his lack of direction. In the spin department, Maninder Singh was certainly missed. Hirwani still doesn't have the guile that could win matches on unfriendly pitches. Kumble is just starting out and has a long way to go. Only Ravi Shastri and Kapil Dev continued through the Test series to take wickets, albeit at a trickle, proving that experience alone could carry a bowler forward, even if marginally.

A lot of the problems India faced on the tour could have been avoided if more experienced players had been included. The selection of the squad for England has caused considerable resentment in certain circles, which is just one more reason why Messrs Raj Singh and company are likely to be axed when the general body of the BCCI meets in Calcutta in the third week of September.

But then, the selectors can merely lead the team to the edge of the field. Thereafter, it is the capability of the cricketers that matter. In the recent past, the BCCI had axed players, sometimes for reasons other than cricketing ones. The time has come for it to come down heavily on some out-of-form players. •

Arijit Sen

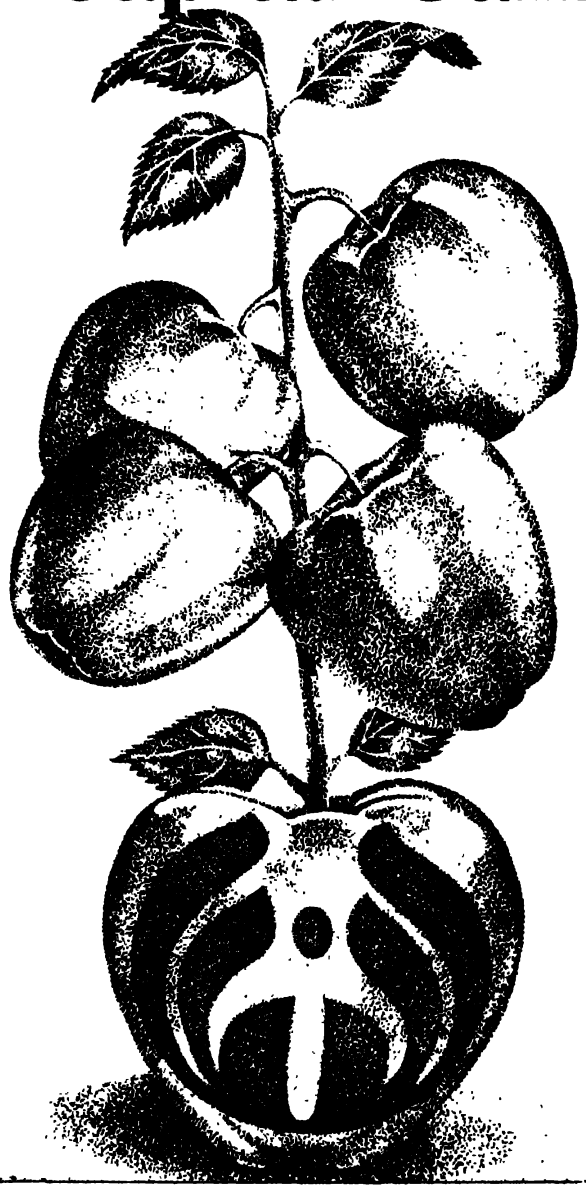


Shastri (left) with Azhar: a fruitful tour



Sachin Tendulkar: dazzling display

IDBI Capital Bonds
An attractive instrument for exemption from Capital Gains Tax.



- Available at par throughout the year.
- Exemption from Capital Gains tax under Section 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Exemption from Wealth tax under Section 5(1) (xvie) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957
- Income tax benefit under Section 80L.
- Interest at 9% p.a. payable half yearly.
- At the investor's option, interest for the full period of 3 years can be paid in advance on discounted basis.
- No deduction of tax at source.
- Outstation cheques accepted and cost of collection will be borne by IDBI.

For further details contact the nearest IDBI office or write to Manager

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA

IDBI TOWER, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay 400 005.

Sobhagya-8/IDBI/89

ODDS AND TRENDS

Small is beautiful

■ Calligraphy is the art of beautiful handwriting. Kushal Das of Calcutta, however, is a calligrapher with a difference—he inscribes words on tiny objects, such as a single grain of rice or mustard or a strand of hair! And what's more, he even paints pictures on these minuscule objects—a map of India on a grain of mustard or the figure of Charlie Chaplin on a grain of rice.

Das took to this unusual hobby about four years ago when he began to practise script calligraphy (the art of ornamental writing) all on his own with a little help from the various books (on the subject) available in the market. Soon, his initial interest developed into an obsession as he began to specialise in not merely script calligraphy but in microcalligraphy—the art of writing/painting minute figures on tiny objects. And four years of hard work have finally paid off, for not only has Das mastered all forms of script calligraphy, but he is now an expert in pictorial microcalligraphy. And what makes his feat even more astonishing is that he does it all without the help of magnifying glasses.

Das is now not only gearing up for a place in the *Guinness Book Of World Records*, he is also trying to organise an exhibition to display his works. But the problem with his tiny exhibits is that they are too small to be seen by the naked eye—unless, of course, seen from very close quarters—and if each specimen is to be magnified with the help of lenses, it makes the whole venture extremely expensive. But Das is hopeful that sooner or later his work will gain recognition.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Chimanbhai Patel



Swraj Paul

Good Samaritan

■ With nearly a third of the world's leprosy patients living in India, the disease is a major health hazard in the country. Apart from control and eradication what is needed is increasing awareness of the problem.

Photo-journalist Pranab Mukerji has been working to this end for the last two decades. On 1 January, 1988, Mukerji began a series of mobile exhibitions of photographs taken by him to educate people about leprosy. Comprising pictures taken in remote villages, congested city slums and rehabilitation centres, etc., the exhibition was recently held in the Academy of Fine Arts in Calcutta, on 20 August. Inaugurated by the West Bengal minister of health, Prasanta Sur, the exhibition was jointly sponsored by the National Insurance Company Ltd and the Catholic Relief Services.

MILESTONES

DIED: Chitra S. Narayanaswamy, noted industrialist, in Madras on 25 August of heart failure.

DIED: Sumitra Devi, veteran Bengali and Hindi film actress, on 26 August at a private hospital in Bombay, after a protracted illness. She was 67.

DIED: Ujjwal Narain Sinha, former Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, in Patna on 29 August. He was 81.

DIED: B.B. Gurung, vice-president of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and vice-chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, in Calcutta after a protracted illness. He was 66.

KILLED: Krishnan Lal Sood, BJP district (rural) secretary of Punjab, in Nakodar on 29 August, by his bodyguard—SPO Subhas Chandar.

WON: Manoj Kothari, the Arthur Walker Trophy and was crowned the World Amateur Billiards Champion on 25 August in Bangalore.

WON: Ramesh Krishnan, tennis player, the OTB international tennis tournament, beating Kelly Everden of New Zealand at New York on 26 August.

CELEBRATED: Mother Teresa, her 80th birthday in Calcutta on 27 August.

DRAWN: The third and final Test of the series between India and England at the Oval on 28 August.

SELECTED: Mark Tully, the BBC bureau chief in India, for the 11th Munshi Prem Chand National Award for creative writing and excellence in journalism by the Shimla-based All India Artists' Association on 25 August in Shimla.

RESIGNED: Vishwendra Singh, Janata Dal MP, from the Lok Sabha in New Delhi on 30 August to express his dissatisfaction with the government's decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

SUSPENDED: Irengbam Tompok Singh, from the membership of the Manipur Assembly on 29 August for four years for urinating on the chair of the Manipur Assembly Speaker.

POSTPONED: The telecom engineers' strike which was to begin on 28 August, following an assurance by the department of telecommunications of speedy implementation of the agreement reached between the two sides in May.

BEGINNING 9 SEPTEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



Success lies in store for you this week. Social activities, speculation and business deals are well indicated. Married people might have a few problems. Be cautious on the domestic front.

Good dates: 9, 12 and 15
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: South

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



A week of mixed fortunes lies ahead of you. Businessmen should be cautious with their deals. Your problems will tide over. Do not ignore your friends or the elders of your family.

Good dates: 10, 11 and 14
Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



On the professional front, a fair measure of success lies in store for you. Businessmen can forge ahead with new deals and contracts. The domestic front does not look bright. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 15
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: East

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



This is not a bright week for you. Romance and matters relating to the heart are not on the cards. You will be able to recover your money from your debtors. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 12
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: North

LEO (21 July—20 August)



Financially, this is a bright week for you. You will be able to repay your debts. On the professional front, there may be a few setbacks. Your current assignment may fall through. But do not be disheartened.

Good dates: 12, 13 and 15
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 5
Favourable direction: South-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



The stars are favourable for lovers. Your partner will be extremely helpful. The time is ripe for marriage. You can go ahead with your expansion plans, but avoid investment and speculation.

Good dates: 10, 12 and 14
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: West

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This is not a favourable week for you. There might be problems on the professional front. An elderly member of your family might cause concern. Your spouse will not be particularly understanding.

Good dates: 9, 11 and 13
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: North

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



A favourable week lies ahead of you. Financially, this is a rewarding phase. On the professional front you will face competition, but your confidence and luck will see you through.

Good dates: 11, 13 and 15
Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: East

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is a good week for love and courtship. Problems will be resolved and you might get married. Children will be a source of joy. The domestic front will remain calm. However, be on your guard against deceit.

Good dates: 12, 13 and 14
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: North

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



A favourable week for romance. But marriage is not in the offing. On the professional front, postpone your plans for the moment. Be cautious on the domestic front for there might be a few problems.

Good dates: 9, 11 and 12
Lucky numbers: 2, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



This will be a week of changes. A sudden turn of events is likely to relieve you of a great deal of anxiety. Businessmen are likely to make steady progress. Friends and relatives will contribute to your happiness.

Good dates: 10, 11 and 12
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: West

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



Keep an eye on your health. This is going to be a hectic week for you. The financial front looks bright. Romance is on the cards. Friends and relatives will be helpful. The domestic front will remain calm.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 13
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: East

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—CAPRICORN

The Capricorn man will be appreciative of the Scorpio woman's efforts in making life enjoyable and comfortable for him. The couple will be well off financially. This will make the union happy and stable.

Who needs the press?

The Raja hasn't just turned casteist. He has also turned virulently anti-press.

At a recent Cabinet meeting, Vinod Pande pointed out that, perhaps, the implementation of the Mandal Commission report



Sharad Yadav: it's only the *Express*

hadn't worked out as well as expected. Instead, it had succeeded in alienating the media from the Dal government, with all the major publications in the country taking an anti-reservation stand.

Sharad Yadav objected to that. No, he clarified, it was only the *Indian Express* which was against the Mandal report. And that, only because it wanted to wreck the government.

Pande disagreed. The *Express* was not alone, he insisted, all the magazines and newspapers were trotting out the same line.

Before the argument could get any further, the Raja intervened. Only to snub his cabinet secretary.

"What difference does it make if newspapers oppose the government's reservation policy?" he asked Pande petulantly. "Everyone knows that they are run by the capitalist lobby, which has very little credibility with the people."

Pande saw the point, and kept very quiet for the rest of the meeting.

And no, he didn't give any interview to *The Hindustan Times* afterwards, either.

HEARD ON DELHI'S STREETS

Inky, pinky, ponky.
V.P. Singh is a donkey.

AN ANTI-RESERVATION SLOGAN

Doctor in trouble

There seem to be troubled times ahead for video doctor J.K. Jain.

First, Atal Behari Vajpayee raised the matter of Jain's fast at the BJP parliamentary party meeting. How had Jain unilaterally decided on such an action, Vajpayee wanted to know. And if he hadn't, who had given him the necessary permission.

Madan Lal Khurana defended Jain, or at least, attempted to. And only succeeded in getting into a sharp exchange of words with Atal Behari.

Barely had the good doctor recovered from this trauma that trouble erupted in Madhya Pradesh. The Patwa government had allotted Jain some land in an area re-



Atal Behari Vajpayee: did he ask permission?

served for journalists. And the media was up in arms at the thought of the doctor availing of the press quota when he didn't belong to the profession.

The MP government's defence was that Jain had been producing video films for various politicians and therefore, he did belong to the electronic media.

But nobody's buying that. And if the adverse publicity gains strength, Jain will find it difficult to keep up the brave facade he's been presenting to the world this past fortnight.

For old times sake

The youthful Syed Ashraf, who'd enjoyed a remarkably close relationship with V.P. Singh before they fell out rather messily, now finds himself on the wrong side of the Dal regime.

So much so, that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently raided his houses in Delhi and Sira (about 100 kms from Bangalore). Says Ashraf: "In the beginning I did not even know about the raids. Later I found out that they had searched my houses while investigating a forgery."

Apparently, the forged letter that had led to Devi Lal's ouster from the Cabinet had also led the CBI to Ashraf's door.

The former Raja aide pleads innocent, disclosing: "When I asked the DIG of CBI how I was connected with the forged letter, he had no answer."

But these protestations don't seem to be having much effect on his former mentor. For Ashraf continues to be shadowed wherever he goes and receives threatening calls by the dozen. "They are after my blood," he says. "I have information that the government's *goondas* are planning to eliminate me physically."

But surely the Raja wouldn't do this to his former blue-eyed boy.

If only for old times sake.

MANDAL-WATCH

Chief ministers and the Raja's reservation policy

■ **Biju Patnaik:** The Grand Old Man of Orissa has announced that he will not implement Mandal's recommendations in his state. No, not even if party unity depends on it.

■ **Chimanbhai Patel:** The Gujarat chief minister believes that the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) coalition has broken down. And that even if the Raja comes up with a new caste-combine, it will not work.

■ **Jyoti Basu:** The Marxist leader could have forgiven V.P. Singh anything but this. Claiming that the Raja was setting up caste barriers instead of breaking them, the West Bengal CM has distanced himself from the Dal.

■ **Mulayam Singh Yadav:** He owes his rise to prominence to backward caste support. Not surprisingly then, the strongman of Uttar Pradesh is squarely behind the Prime Minister on this one.

■ **Laloo Prasad Yadav:** The Bihar chief minister has been lobbying for the implementation of the report even when he was a lowly member of the Lok Dal. Is pleased with the Raja's decision, because his community—the Yadavs—stands to benefit most.

Ek ya do, bas

After the Emergency experience, the Congress regime was always a little ambivalent on the issue of family planning. But, obviously, the Janata Dal does not share its apprehensions.

Recently, during Question Hour in Parliament, health and family welfare minister Rashid Masood was holding forth at length on the Dal's ambitious plans to solve the nation's population problem. The



Laloo Yadav: nine is the upper limit

members heard him out patiently enough, but his grandiose schemes proved too much for some BJP backbenchers.

Provoked into interjecting, they asked Masood how he could make such tall claims when a chief minister of his party, Laloo Prasad Yadav of Bihar, had as many as nine children.

Even before Masood could recover his wits and retort in an intelligible manner, textiles minister Sharad Yadav was on his feet. "The chief minister has been instructed not to expand his family any further," he announced grandly.

When it comes to family planning, at least, the Dal pulls no punches.

The sins of their fathers..

Everybody seems to be having reservations about reservations.

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL

Reservations should come into play when the prime ministership is decided as well. That way, even Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan will be in with a chance.

A DISGRUNTLED JANATA DAL MP

Yes, even the progeny of the esteemed ministers of and secretaries to the Government of India.

If sources in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) are to be believed, the daughter of a senior Cabinet minister (belonging to the erstwhile Jan Morcha group) and the son of a secretary in the finance ministry have masterminded the anti-reservation stir which paralysed Delhi for three days.

Lesser functionaries of the student movement include the children of at least six Union ministers and more than a dozen bureaucrats of secretary-level rank.

Not only do these teenagers make no secret of their support for the agitation, they are in the forefront of the groups putting up road blockades and generally making a nuisance of themselves on New Delhi's streets.

But despite the manifest annoyance of the PMO, there doesn't seem to be any way of disciplining them.

Or if there is, it hasn't occured to Vinod Pande yet.

CHECK-LIST

More New Delhi feuds

■ **Romesh Bhandari vs Natwar Singh:** Are related to each other by marriage and have been great enemies since their Foreign Service days. Natwar joined politics first and did better than Bhandari. But now, the Foreign Service view that he is a lightweight seems to have spread to the Congress. Bhandari, on the other hand, is in the ascendant.

■ **R.K. Dhawan vs Shiv Shankar:** Dhawan holds Shankar responsible for his persecution at the hands of Justice Thakkar. Since his return to favour, he has spent his time thinking of new ways to torture the hapless Shankar. He is currently engaged in getting his protégés in the Rajya Sabha to flout Shankar's authority as leader of the House.

■ **Madhavrao Scindia vs Sardar Angre:** According to Scindia, Angre's influence over his mother has created schisms within his family. Angre says that Scindia is a coward who failed to stand by his mother. Each accuses the other of persecution: Scindia says the BJP government in MP is out to get him; Angre says the Congress regime victimised him.

■ **Sanjay Singh vs Arun Nehru:** Singh saw himself as one of Sanjay Gandhi's men and resented Nehru's rise to prominence during the post-Sanjay era. During the Rajiv period, he did his best to spread stories that Nehru was conspiring against his cousin. Now, Nehru is resolutely opposing his entry into the Cabinet.

■ **Devi Lal vs Inder Gujral:** Nobody knows what the Tau has against the unfortunate Gujral, but he has hated him from before the election. When they were colleagues, the Tau would sneer at him at every Cabinet meeting and when Gujral resigned over Chautala's return, Devi Lal phoned to threaten to beat him up.

The room next door

Now that the Tau is out of government, his ground floor office in Parliament House is up for grabs. And there are many contenders for the room, situated as it is next to the Prime Minister's office and in the VIP special security zone.

Home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who works out of the next room, wants to expand his office



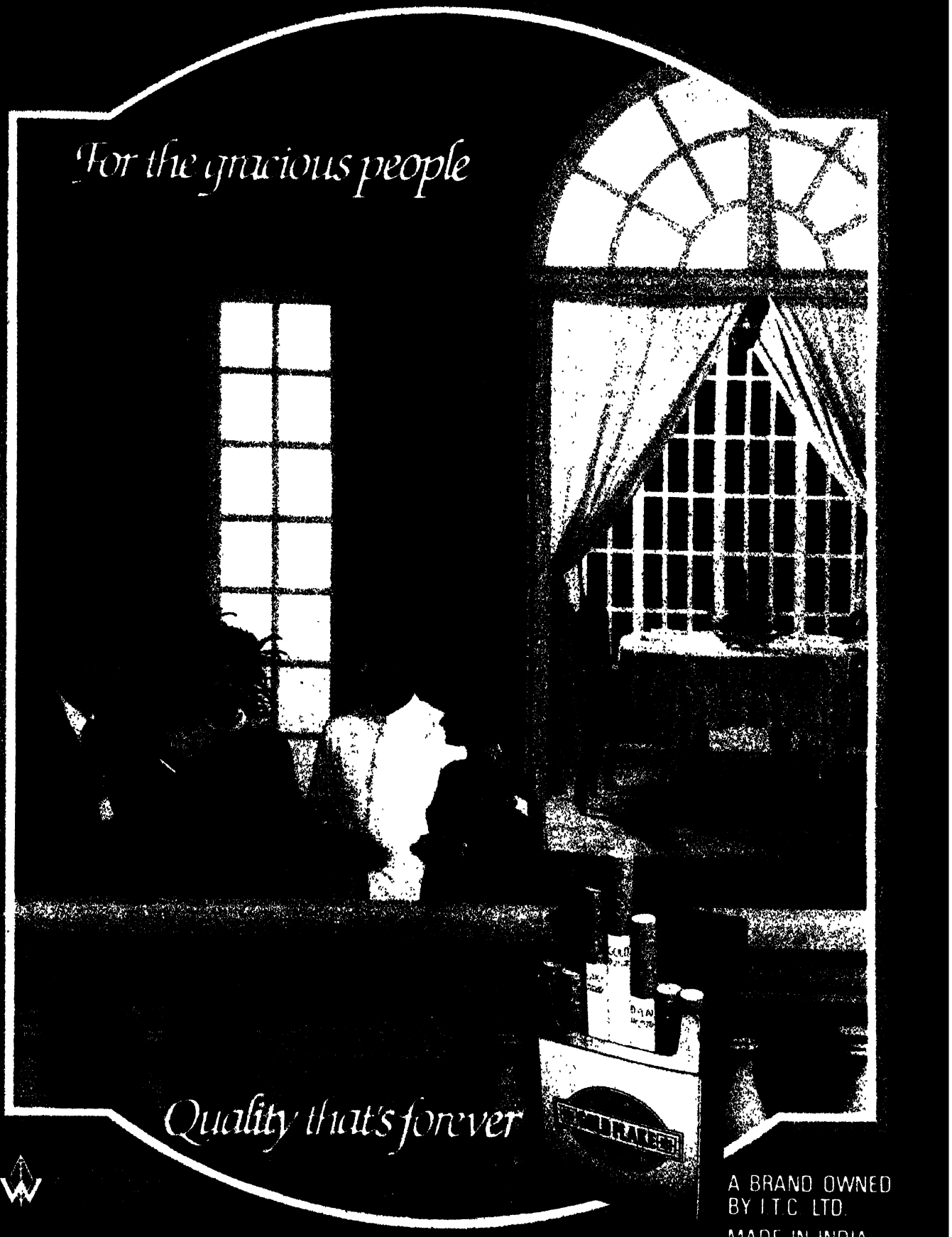
Mufti Mohammad Sayeed: will he get the Tau's room?

by adding Devi Lal's den to it. But his minister of state will have none of that. Subodh Kant Sahai, who does not have an office of his own and meets visitors in the Mufti's room, insists that he will be the one moving in.

Only to come up against textiles minister Sharad Yadav and labour minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Both of them declare that they are specially close to V.P. Singh, and that they should, by rights, be allotted the room next door.

The Raja has yet to give his verdict on this one.

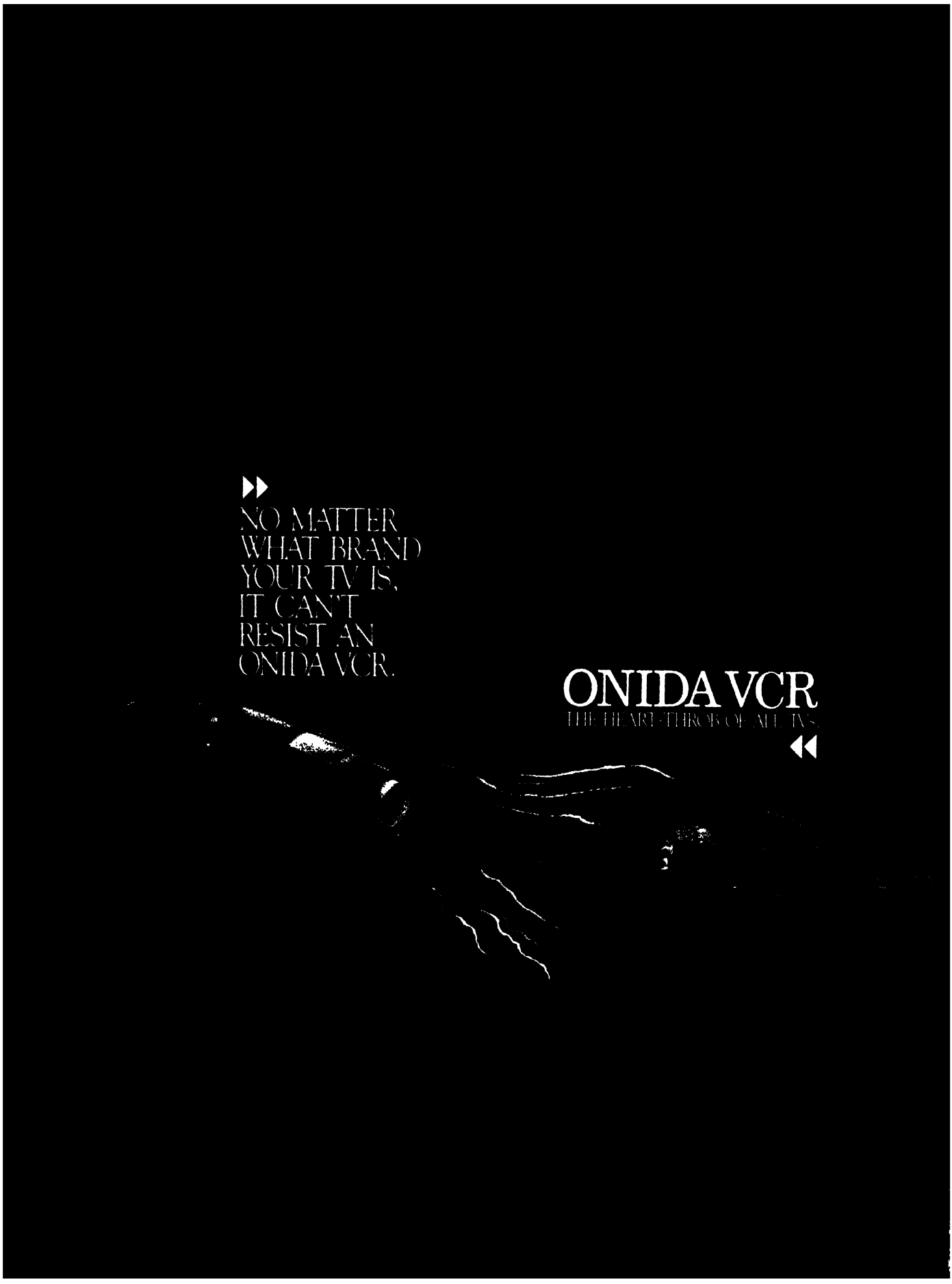
For the gracious people



Quality that's forever

A BRAND OWNED
BY I.T.C. LTD.
MADE IN INDIA

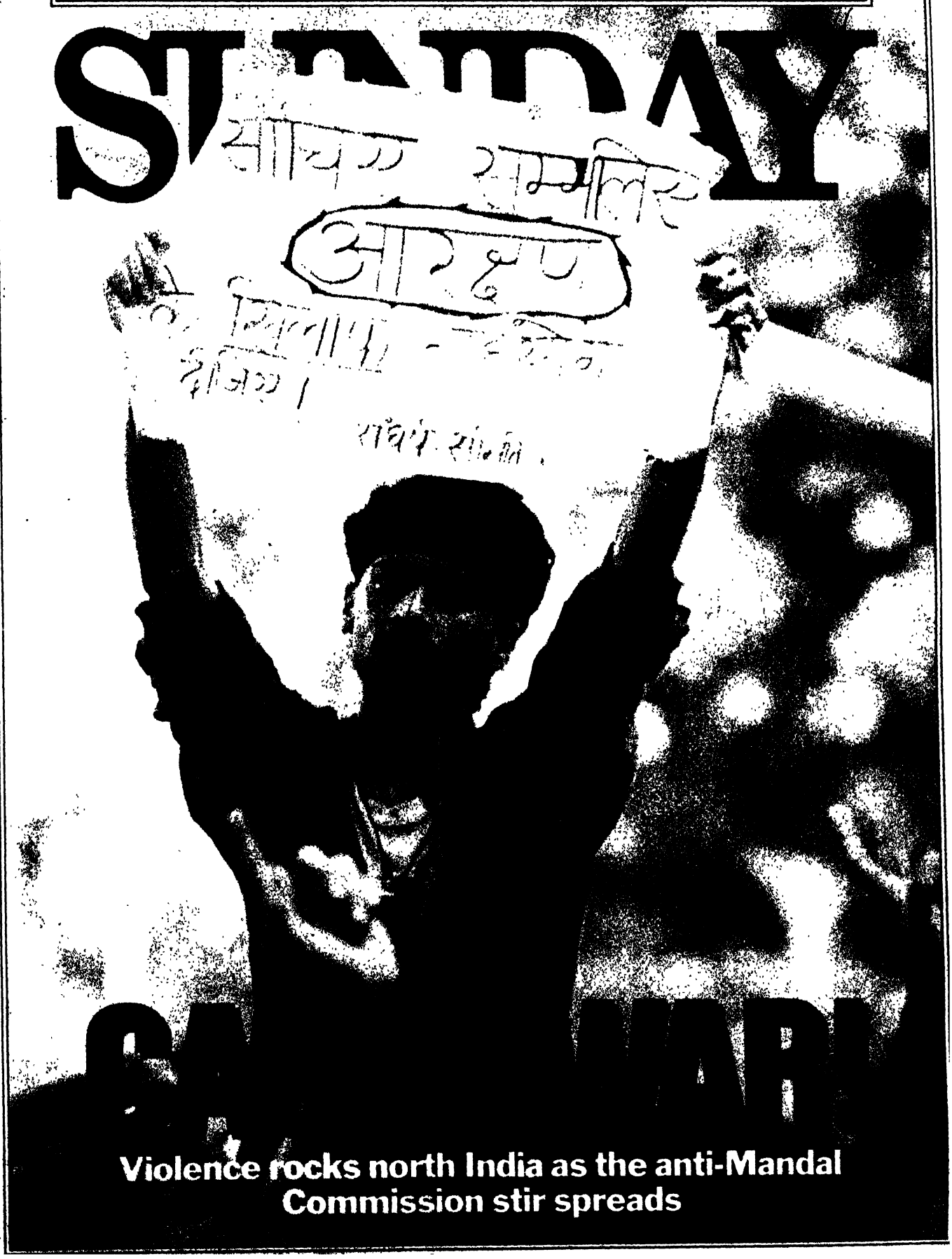
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH


NO MATTER
WHAT BRAND
YOUR TV IS,
IT CAN'T
RESIST AN
ONIDA VCR.
ONIDA VCR
THE HEART-THROB OF ALL TVs

16—22 SEPTEMBER 1990 □ AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION □ RS 7.00

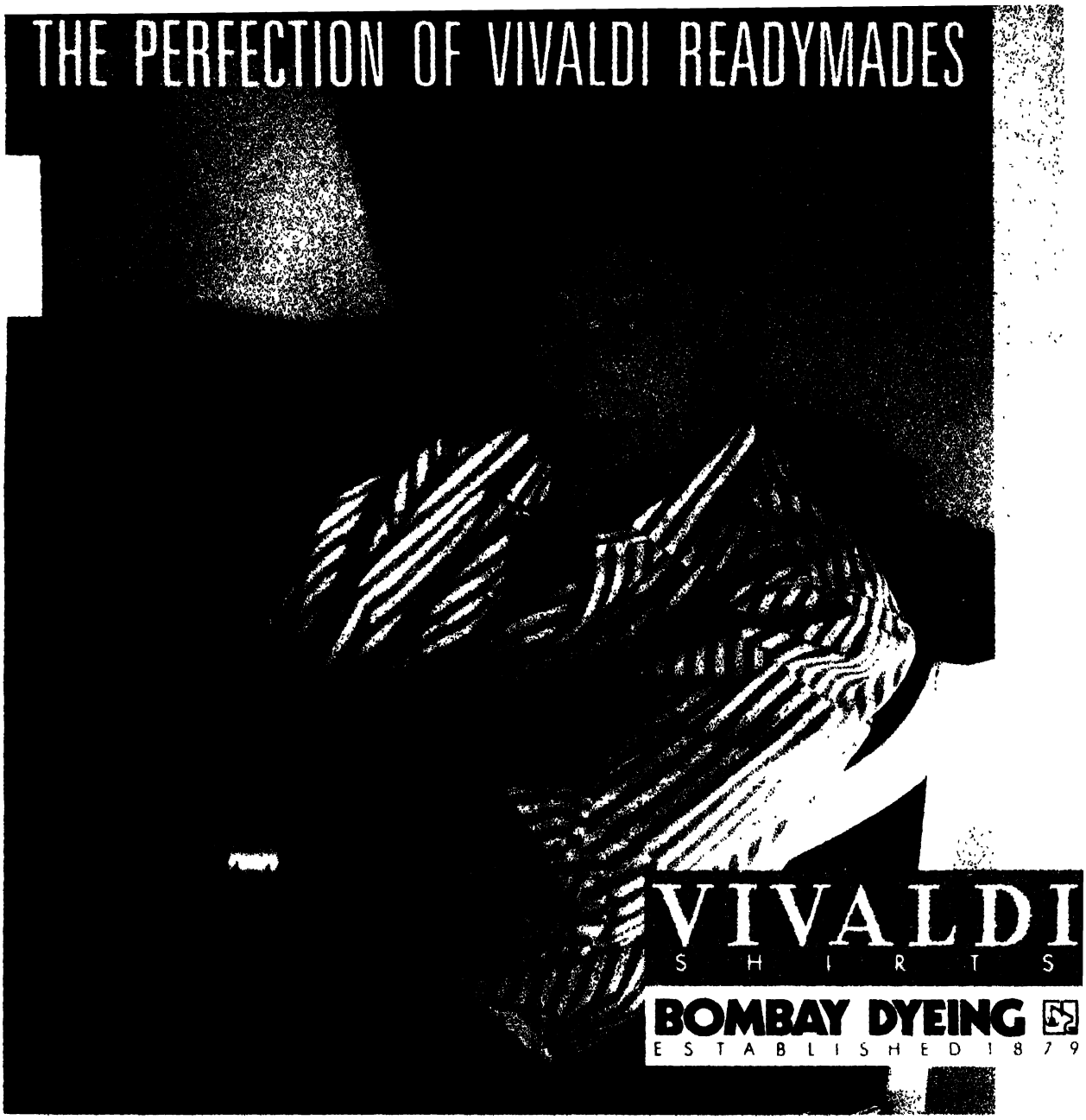
BASU'S BENGAL: CHAOS AND COLLAPSE

SUNDAY



Violence rocks north India as the anti-Mandal Commission stir spreads

THE PERFECTION OF VIVALDI READYMADES



When the people who excel in shirting fabrics decide to excel in tailoring them — the result is readymade perfection. Vivaldi Shirts from Bombay Dyeing. From the selection of fine cotton and polyester cotton fabrics, right down to the last button, you won't find a thing out of place in a Vivaldi Shirt. What you will find, shirt after shirt after shirt, is a perfect fit. At Bombay Dyeing, the attention to quality is absolute. Because we know that the professional in you expects it.

--------VIVALDI. THE THREAD OF QUALITY RUNS RIGHT THROUGH--------

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 37 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
16—22 SEPTEMBER 1990



27
COVER STORY
Caste war!
Violence rocks north India as the anti-Mandal Commission stir spreads

11
SPECIAL REPORT
Basu's Bengal
After thirteen years in office, the legend is crumbling—and so is Bengal.



22
SCIENCE
Enter, the Hyperplane
Indian scientists have designed an aerospacecraft that will revolutionise space travel.



48
BUSINESS
"India needs the US"
A frank interview with Abid Hussain, India's ambassador to the US.

67
ENVIRONMENT
Campus greens
In Madras Christian College students fight for plants, not jobs.

72
BOOK EXTRACT
Girls on film
Elisabeth Bumiller on Bombay's actresses.



82
CURTAIN RAISER
Go for gold
The Indian squad gears up for the Beijing Asian Games.

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
SIGHT AND SOUND 10
BODYLINE 18
SOUTH BLOCK 19
PROFILE 38
Apply, apply, no reply
MANI-TALK 40
SPOTLIGHT 46
BUSINESS DIARY 51
NEWS 54
MEDIA MUSINGS 62
DE JURE 64
TELEVISION 81
Buddhism is best
SPORTS 84
It's not cricket
CAPITAL MATTERS 85
THIS INDIA 86
SUNDAYWEEK 87
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency: Rajesh Kumar

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Brij Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North eastern states. 30 paise



Bound to collapse?

A (*Mid-term poll?*, 26 August—1 September) mid-term election will certainly be suicidal for the National Front government. It is high time V.P. Singh did something to improve his tarnished image. Instead of embarking on grandiose projects like the reservation of backward classes, conservation of petrol by idiotic policies, the Prime Minister should do something constructive. He should try to contain the high rate of inflation and solve the problem of unemployment

The Prime Minister should be wary of his main opponents —not Rajiv Gandhi or Devi Lal or Advani— Chandra Shekhar, who is highly ambitious, cunning and ruthless. He has masterminded most of the moves against V.P. Singh and if he is not checked, the Front government is bound to collapse.

Dr U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

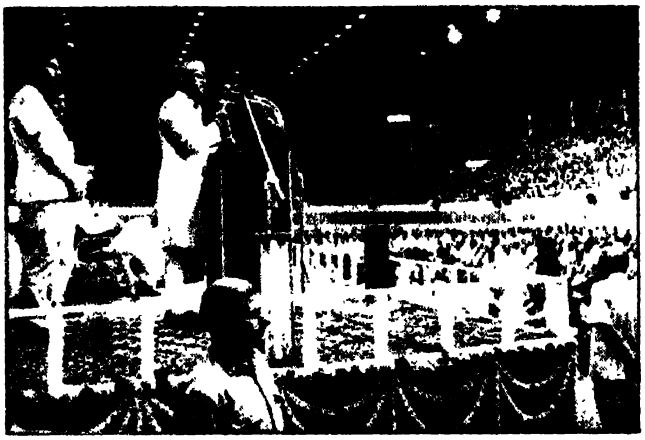
■ The cover story was bold, timely and informative. The people are really disillusioned with the way the National Front government is functioning. The recent price rise, the implementation of the Mandal Commission report, all account for the failure of the government in keeping to its election promises. The Prime Minister's Independence Day speech was quite impressive and one hopes that he will shake off his lethargy and get down to business rightaway.

B.N.Bose, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ The cover story raises a very important question, which is vital for both the nation and the National Front government. If one goes by the performance of the government, then the Front might be on a sticky wicket, if a mid-term poll is called. The recent price hike, the agitations against the implementations of the Mandal Commission report and the failure of the government in resolving the Punjab and Kashmir problems, are clear indications of the Front's dismal track record.

V.P. Singh should realise that he is left with no other alternative other than opting for a mid-term poll. For, L.K. Advani of the BJP has already made his intentions clear. Advani feels that it is the opportune moment to distance his party from the National Front government. Therefore, in these circumstances, it would be absolutely right for the Prime Minister to seek a fresh mandate from the people.

Kallicharan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)



V.P. Singh at a rally: time to wake up

Rare breed

The profile of Arif Mohammad Khan (*The loyal soldier*, 12—18 August) was a remarkable piece. He belongs to the rare breed of politicians who stand by certain principles and also truly believe in value—based politics. Arif was instrumental, along with his mentor Arun Nehru, in helping V.P. Singh to take a tough stand regarding the Chautala incident and also urged him to sack Devi Lal from the Cabinet.

Arif will be remembered by one and all for his secular and principled stand in life and politics. He is one of the few who made a genuine effort to practise what he preached.

Harekrushna Mahanta, New Delhi

Arif Mohammad Khan: a value-based stand



Jai kisan!

The article (*Rallying around Lal*, 19—25 August) is timely. It is unfortunate that someone, who has worked more than any of the contemporary leaders for the uplift of the rural people and the downtrodden has fallen prey to the conspiracy of vested interests.

It is not Devi Lal who is trying to create the so-called rift between rural and urban India, but some power-hungry capitalists who have all along exploited the rural poor since Independence and this is the latest example of their evil designs. If India wants to progress in every field, then such imperialist forces should be defeated and destroyed at all costs.



Devi Lal: the farmers' man

Bijendra Singh, New Delhi

The lost emperor

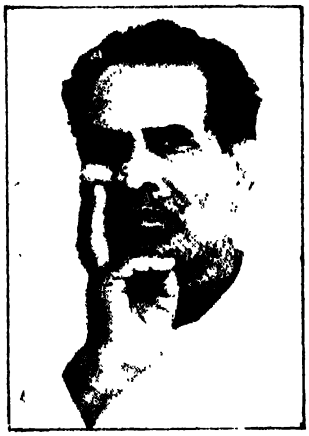
The interview of Rajiv Gandhi (*An Indian perestroika*, 19—25 August) was shocking. According to him, if the present government had not advocated a policy of drift in Kashmir, we would not have faced the problem that presents itself today. This leads one to believe that Rajiv was responsible

for the present state of affairs, though he is accusing the present government. Also, that Gandhi has not learnt any lessons and he still has that same arrogance and imperiousness that characterised him earlier. One wonders how such a person managed to rule the nation. And still aspires to make a comeback.

S. Chhina, NOIDA (Delhi)

Truth hurts

Chandra Shekhar was excellent in his interview (*"Devi Lal would make a better Prime Minister"*, 26 August—1 September). The astute politician that he is, Chandra Shekhar will certainly make a better Prime Minister than both V.P. Singh and Devi Lal. He will definitely get the cooperation of the majority of his partymen if



Shekhar:coming clean?

he really aspires for the top post. And one also hopes that support from the BJP and the leftists will be spontaneous.

K.V. Rajagopalan, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

■ Chandra Shekhar's interview was not only interesting but also meaningful. He made a clean breast of everything. Unlike V.P. Singh, who is an artful dodger, Shekhar is not the man to mince words. In fact, this put him in a lot of problems and has led to a considerable tarnishing of his image. Owing to his outspokenness, he has made more enemies than friends. For truth always hurts. He is right to say that overambitiousness at the cost of the country's interest is not good.

R.K. Gulati, Siliguri (West Bengal)



A320: bad grades

Enough is enough

Your report on (*Time to fly*, 15–21 July) on the Airbus A320 was very disturbing. I am sure that the various bodies involved have vested interests, and are deliberately 'leading' or 'misleading' the court of enquiry with technical jargon into semantic mazes, so that no blame comes to either the organisations themselves or their equipment. In this process, the nation is suffering. With the Airbus A320s grounded, there is great uncertainty as to whether the purchase of additional aircraft will be shelved or not, and what's to be done with the aircraft we already have.

What puzzles me is that in the interest of 'economy', our government, in all its wisdom, disbanded the National Transportation Safety Board, which had earlier done a commendable job in various enquiries of air/train crashes etc., and was perhaps the only body in the country capable of taking a fair view, without being influenced by considerations which colour the perceptions of the DGCA, Airbus Industrie, National Airport Authority, pilots associations and other vested interests.

Ashok Bhargava, New Delhi

Rule of the average

The implementation of the Mandal Commission report (*Promoting mediocrity*, 19—25 August) is certainly a very serious matter for students and workers in various establishments. It not only amounts to promoting mediocrity but sanctions criminal discrimination against 'upper castes'.

The Prime Minister must have won the hearts of the backward classes, but he has certainly alienated a major section of society. The backward classes should be provided with better educational facilities, so that they can compete with the others.

Prabhakar S. Harsole, Indore (Madhya Pradesh)

■ The protests and agitations in various parts of the country against the Mandal Commission recommendations are very much reminiscent of the anti-apartheid demonstrations in South Africa.

If discrimination in South Africa is based on colour and race, in India it is based on caste and creed. There is certainly no excuse for saying that our Constitution has made provisions for discrimination, because even the South African Constitution has made provisions for apartheid and that country's Supreme Court has upheld its validity. Therefore, whatever the means being adopted by the anti-reservationists, they certainly deserve our sympathy.

K. Ramachandra Rao, Mysore (Karnataka)

Paswan's Box

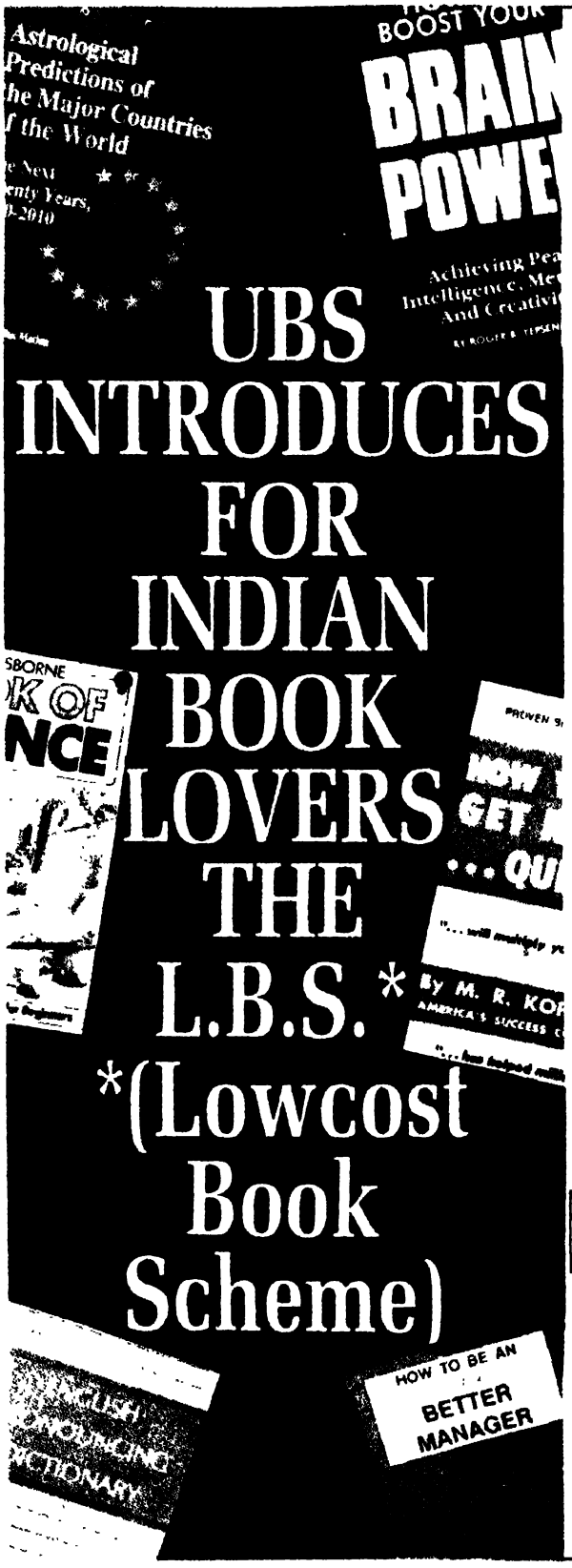
The interview of Ram Vilas Paswan (*"We will not yield to pressure"*, 26 August—1 September) reveals the true character of Paswan. He is a senseless



Paswan: too much too soon

hypocrite who is bent on pitting one section of society against the other. According to him, 74 per cent of the country's population constitute these "special Hindus". Then what about the 'normal' or the 'ordinary' Hindus and the religious minorities? One hopes that these people are not as mentally backward as the powers that be make them out to be. Therefore, why this discrimination?

Samir Banerjee, New Delhi



Indian reprints of limited edition foreign / Indian titles, now available at unbelievably low cost. Check out the titles under the Lowcost Book Scheme.

DICTIONARIES	PRICE
Business Dictionary	40.00
Dictionary of Computing	40.00
Dictionary of Criminology	40.00
Dictionary of Ecology and the Environment	40.00
Dictionary of Cost and Politics	40.00
Dictionary of Information Technology	40.00
Dictionary of Marketing	40.00
Dictionary of Personnel Management	40.00
Dictionary of Printing and Publishing	40.00
Elementary Scientific and Technical Dictionary	45.00
Everyman's English Pronouncing Dictionary	60.00
Illustrated Computer Dictionary	40.00
Illustrated Electronics Dictionary	40.00
Law Dictionary	40.00
Medical Dictionary	40.00
MANAGEMENT	
Effective Interviewing	[illegible]
How to be an Even Better Manager	40.00
How to Give Quality Service to Your Customers	[illegible]
How to Plan Exhibitions and Conferences from A to Z	[illegible]
How to Talk so People Listen	[illegible]
Never Take No For An Answer — A guide to Successful Negotiation	25.00
Practical Problem Solving for Managers	40.00
Productivity Plus + — How today's best run Companies are gaining the competitive edge	40.00
Selling to Win — Tested Techniques for Closing Sales	40.00
Superordinate Through Self-Talk	45.00
The Ethics of Management	45.00
The 44 Most Common Management Mistakes and How to Avoid Them.	25.00
The Wall Street Journal on Management	40.00
The Wall Street Journal on Marketing	40.00
Tomorrow — Global Executive	40.00
SELF-IMPROVEMENT	
Arabic for Beginners	40.00
How to Boost Your Brain Power	45.00
Improve Your English	[illegible]
Improve Your Wordpower	25.00
Very simple Grammar of English	25.00
Yoga Postures for Higher Awareness	[illegible]
"PROVEN SUCCESS METHODS" SERIES	
Here's Help! To Get Rid of Your Problem	45.00
How to Get Whatever You Want	45.00
How You Can Get Richer — Quicker!	45.00
Thoughts to Build On	45.00
SCIENCE/COMPUTERS	
Basic Computer Programming	25.00
The Usborne Book of Science	150.00
The Usborne Science Encyclopedia	175.00
GENERAL	
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	25.00
Astrological Predictions of the Major Countries of the World The Next Twenty Years, 1990-2010	45.00

To Buy Books through the L.B.S.: Step 1: First tick the books you want to purchase from the given list. Step 2: Fill your name and address in the coupon. Step 3: Tear out this ad and mail it to UBS at the address given below along with your Money Order/DD/Cheque/VPP (post free). That's it, we will then send the books to your address free of delivery charges.

Yes, please send me the books ticked in the list above. I enclosed please find my Money Order/DD/Cheque/VPP (post free).

Name: _____

Address: _____

UBS Publisher's Distributors Ltd.
5, Ansari Road, New Delhi-110 002
Branches: Bombay, Bangalore, Madras, Calcutta, Patna & Kanpur

UBS

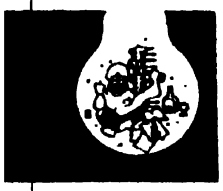
India's last word on book distribution worldwide.

Available at all leading book stores

Pen a Tra : ud 2 8

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Navratan Abdur Rahim



Facing Nizamuddin along the Delhi-Mathura road, there is a large mausoleum of red sandstone with a massive dome which has been denuded of all its tiles. The archaeological department has been able to save it from total destruction but with its limited funds not been able to restore to its original glory. When it was first built, in the reign of Emperor Akbar, it rivalled in grandeur the neighbouring Humayun's tomb. It is the resting place of Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khana (Lord of Lords) one of the *navratans* (nine gems) of Akabar's court, amongst the most powerful pillars of state of his time and renowned poet in Turki, Arabic, Persian and Hindi. He was also fond of classical Indian music. Historians have not given him the importance he deserved, being more taken up by wits like Birbal, sycophants like Abul Fazal and administrators like Raja Todar Mal. Some amends have been made by the publication a few days ago of a biography *Khusrau Kitab Ghar* by Sheikh Saleem Ahmed of the bureau for the promotion of Urdu. Saleem Ahmed has written on Amir Khusrau and the Sufis and is also a writer of short stories.

Abdur Rahim, born in Lahore in December 1556, was the son of Bairam Khan, a Shia Turk who helped Humayun to recover his throne. He was also the victor of the Second Battle of Panipat and tried to persuade young Akbar, then only eleven years old, to hack off the head of the vanquished Hemu. Bairam Khan ran the state till Akbar was old enough to take over. With some intrigue Akbar was able to get rid of Bairam Khan and was relieved to hear that he had been murdered on his way to pilgrimage to Makka. Abdur Rahim took his father's place and led Mughal armies to victory in Gujarat, Golconda, Mewar and was made Khan-e-Khana and then Prime Minister. Most of his service years were spent in the Deccan. He was involved in the War of Succession but was rehabilitated by Jehangir. He was taken ill at Lahore and brought to Delhi for treatment where he died at the age of 81. All his four sons had died in his lifetime.

Abdur Rahim being a Turk certainly knew his mother tongue as well as Persian and Arabic. He was said to have had an aptitude for languages and spoke many Indian dialects. His literary achievements remain somewhat of an enigma. There is a corpus of poems in Persian and Hindi ascribed to him on the assumption that he used the poetic pseudonym Raheem and its variation Raheeman in many couplets. His Hindi *dohas* were on people's tongues as much as those of Bhakta Kabir. Some scholars are of the opinion that they are from the pen of Khan-e-Khana. Others believe the Raheem of the Hindi *dohas* was some other person. I can add to their confusion by drawing attention to one quoted by Saleem Ahmed which is almost identical with a couplet ascribed to the ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, which was incorporated in the *Granth Sahib* (compiled in 1604 A.D.) by his son Guru Gobind Singh sometime between 1700-1708 A.D.

Dukh mein simran sab karey, Sukh mein karey na koi
Jo Sukh mein simran karey, dukh kaahey ko hoi?

In times of troubles everyone prays, no one prays when he is happy

He who prays when he is happy, why should sorrows afflict him?

Did Guru Tegh Bahadur take these lines from a Raheem who lived before him? Or Raheem, who came later, take them from the Guru?

Perhaps I am overstepping my bounds.



Sheikh Saleem Ahmed



Khusrau Kitab Ghar

Abdur Rahim was a renowned poet in Turki, Arabic, Persian and Hindi. Though historians have not given him his due, some amends have been made by the publication of his biography *Khusrau Kitab Ghar*

Jaisee kisee ke buddh hai, taisee kahey banaee
Tako bura na maneeai, lein kahaan ko jaae?

Let a man measure his speech by his knowledge; Take not ill the speech of one who oversteps his bounds. Where can he go to find what he does not know?

Film-struck Madras

In Madras it is usual for bus passengers to refer to bus stops by names of cinema halls closest to them. Amby Kaushik of Delhi was not aware of this practice. He took his seat behind two ladies. When the conductor approached them, one replied, "Shanti". He clipped a ticket for her. "Devi", replied the second and got her ticket. When the conductor came to Kaushik, he said "Amby"

(Contributed by Shashank Shekhar, Meerut) •

VINOD MEHTA

The Mandal bungle

But V.P. Singh can't get out of it now



During a brief visit to Delhi I got within hailing distance of Vishwanath Pratap Singh twice in one day. Since then I have been observing him rather closely on television. He looks a sad, harassed man. Dark rings have emerged under the eyes, the smile is forced, even that magnificent razor-sharp moustache shows signs of wear and tear. Not a bit like our Rajiv who never let Bofors or Zail Singh or a thump on the head with a rifle cloud his beaming face. A Janata Dal minister close to the Raja confessed that what had hurt V.P. Singh most was not the riots over reservations but the viciousness of the personal attacks against him by those he considered friends and allies.

The minister, not a rabid Mandalite, then discussed the sociological origins of the attacks and sagely concluded that the class composition of the ruling elite and the English press made antagonism inevitable. What we were watching, he said, was an aristocracy on the run, an aristocracy incapable of recognising anything but its own privileges and now alarmed at the prospect of losing them. Just before I left, the minister admonished, "You people are angry because you feel betrayed by a man you thought was one of your own. If Mulayam Singh Yadav had been Prime Minister and announced that he was going to implement the Mandal Commission Report, the reaction in the press would have been qualitatively different." By then I had received enough lecturing for one day and did not tarry to ask him what he meant by qualitatively different.

George Orwell once wrote that the vocabulary of politics is as important as the politics itself. If language is corrupted, the ideology that language purports to debate cannot remain unpolluted. I may be wrong, but I don't think in the last ten years a Prime Minister has been as mercilessly mauled as V.P. Singh has been over Mandal. I make no value judgement, but simply report the facts as I see them. From this assault it would be reasonable to conclude that the new reservation policy announced by the government has divided the Indian polity as never before.

Mr V.P. Singh's perception that he has been stabbed by India International Centre intellectuals is unexceptionable. He has always been sensitive—too sensitive in my view—to the opinions and prejudices of this group. (I am not being disparaging about these gentlemen and a few ladies; some of my best friends are India International Centre eggheads.) Privately, the Prime Minister has been telling friends that the vehemence of the abuse heaped on him, by the *Indian Express* in particular, has shocked him. In the past, when V.P. Singh spoke about the unholy nexus be-



tween big money and the press, he was referring to Dhirubhai Ambani's efforts to hire some of India's best journalists and then neutralise them. Last week in Parliament when the PM made a similar reference he was clearly pointing to the *Express*.

Meanwhile, at the India International Centre a heavy air of gloom and despair pervades. I popped in one afternoon and found that the sense of betrayal was, if anything, greater. Mandal was seen as such a hydra-headed, all-pervasive, unqualified evil that the defeat of the Raja and the return of Rajiv Gandhi was considered preferable. The battle lines, then, are clearly drawn with no possibility of moderation or climb-down by either side.

If V.P. Singh submits his government's resignation, the President, R. Venkataraman, is constitutionally bound to invite Rajiv Gandhi. Once that invitation is offered, the permutations and combinations are endless. And Rajiv Gandhi is sure to succeed





The sad, harassed look on V.P. Singh's face reflects the poignancy of his self-inflicted predicament. He is in a no-win situation. Whatever the Janata Dal's election promises, it is now quite obvious that the prolonged Devi Lal boxing match left the Prime Minister terrified. On 7 August, two days before the Haryana patriarch's Boat Club Rally, he pulled Mandal out of a hat, convinced by God knows who that it would cut his foes, actual and potential, down to size. It would also give him a ticket to guaranteed electoral victory. Perhaps some pints of blood may be spilt, but that could be explained to the electorate as the unfortunate consequence of radical social engineering.

Alas, it has gone wrong, horribly wrong. Not only has Vishwanath Pratap Singh irrevocably lost the sympathy and support of the urban middle class and the intellectuals, a constituency largely responsible for bringing him to power, but even the election mastercard is turning out to be a non-starter. For two reasons.

V.P. Singh cannot pass a magic wand and dissolve Parliament. He heads a minority government and if he submits his government's resignation, the President is constitutionally bound to invite Rajiv Gandhi. Once that invitation is offered the permutations and combinations that might emerge are endless. There is at least a 50 per cent chance that Mr Gandhi will succeed in luring the requisite 60 MPs needed to form a new government.

The second reason is even more crucial. Whatever their sentiments on the Mandal Commission, the 144 National Front, 86 BJP and 43 Communist MPs, not to mention the MLAs, are petrified of a fresh election. A BJP Member of Parliament told me he was sure he would be thrashed with "chappals and shoes" if he went back to his people so soon requesting re-election. Thus, even if V.P. Singh plans an early poll, the rank and file of the Janata Dal, BJP and CPI(M) will resist the move. The Prime Minister is, therefore, left with a mastercard he cannot play.

What does he do with Mandal, then? He can't back down because he is riding a tiger. It is easy to get on the Mandal tiger, impossible to get off. Indeed, given the presence of dangerous hot-heads like Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav in the Union Cabinet and two equally belligerent Yadavs in UP and Bihar, any backtracking on the reservation policy could mean a civil war in India. Such is the Prime Minister's dilemma that even the option of delaying implementation of Mandal by a year or so, through the appointment of, say, another commission to look into the huge and numerous inconsistencies in the report, is not available to him

Some backtracking is visible even now, but not at the expense of Mandal. The Prime Minister is handing out lollipops to every passing lobby. You are upset about caste being the basis of preference, we will add economic criteria and reserve another ten per cent. You are upset that Muslims, Sikhs, Christians are excluded, we will make the necessary provision by reserving a quota for them too. Women, ex-servicemen, physically handicapped, in fact any group with a social, economic or bodily disability can make a representation, and chances are V.P. Singh will find ways and means to accommodate them with quotas. At this rate, forget the 50 per cent Supreme Court ceiling, we may end up with 105 per cent reservations for 100 per cent of jobs and admissions into educational establishments. If it weren't so deadly serious it would be funny. And all because Mr V.P. Singh dare not go back on his famous 'promise'.

So, with no possibility of playing the mastercard or reneging on his 'historic' commitment to 52 per cent of the population, and with mounting caste strife spilling on to the streets and continuing vilification in the press aimed directly at him, what does V.P. Singh do? I can see very little room for manoeuvre. Even the disarray in the Congress, exacerbated by Rajiv's ineptitude, is no help because this is essentially an internal crisis of the Janata Dal—and it must be resolved internally.

In the past, Mr V.P. Singh has shown dazzling expertise in managing contradictions, an art which he claims is the essence of governance. Well, if he can manage to get out of this blind alley he will have earned the sobriquet, Houdini of Indian politics. ●



R K LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ These are bad days for me, and I receive brickbats and abuses with a laugh

SANJAY SINGH, *Rajya Sabha MP*

■ If I have to choose between power and the rights of people. I would opt for the latter

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister*

■ He has this dangerous habit of saying or telling you whatever you want to hear

M J AKBAR, *Congress(I) spokesman, on V P Singh*

■ This is not a political stunt, what I am performing is a national stunt.

MULAYAM SINGH YADAV, *Uttar Pradesh chief minister, on having mastered a few Tamil words*

■ The people are acknowledging the National Front as a disciplined body and this gives the government the security it needs.

N.T. RAMA RAO, *National Front chairman*

■ Whether illegal or legal, I am not going to push them back into Pakistan.

BHAIRON SINGH SEKHAWAT, *Rajasthan chief minister, commenting on the hundreds of refugee families which have arrived in Jodhpur from Pakistan*

■ It is like renting a house and then throwing out its owner. .

MAHENDRA SINGH TIKAIT, *BKU leader, commenting on Devi Lal's ouster from the Cabinet*

■ I do not believe in violence.

SHARAD YADAV, *Union textiles minister*

■ A fraud and a cheat like Hegde is hard to come by easily, even in the annals of history.

SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY, *Janata Party president*

■ If it is good enough for the 15 crore Muslims in the rest of India, so is it not good enough for the 49 lakh Muslims in Kashmir?

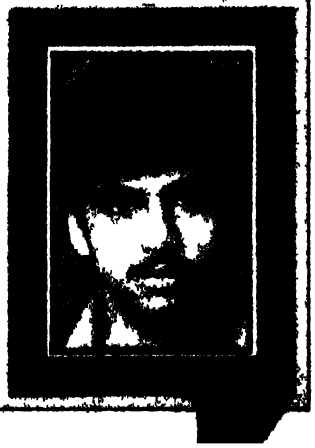
JAGMOHAN, *former Jammu and Kashmir Governor, on why the Act forbidding the misuse of religious places is not extended in Kashmir*

■ I love journalists. In my next birth, I will be one.

AMITABH BACHCHAN, *actor*

■ You have to be cold-blooded to play chess.

VISHWANATHAN ANAND, *national chess champion*



Basu's Bengal

After 13 years in office, the legend is crumbling—and so is Bengal



SUNDEEP SHANKAR

Marxist chief minister Jyoti Basu (above) at one time was the embodiment of decency. He stood for democracy and ethics in political life. Today, his policemen do not hesitate to assault women if they happen to be political opponents



Calcutta is not exactly notorious for roadside assassinations, transistor bombs and motorcycle gunmen. The city might be a living hell but terrorists have so far kept away. Yet, there is one locality in Calcutta which is guarded like a fortress. Every evening, armed constables of the Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR) posted at the mouth of every road leading into this residential colony peer into passing vehicles, occasionally stopping one for a thorough inspection. This routine, familiar to Delhi-ites, is totally incongruous in Calcutta, and a little mystifying considering that burglaries in the area continue unchecked. Not too many people know who exactly the police are guarding and the purpose of the checkpoints is yet to be officially explained.

However, it requires just three sets of facts to clear the mystery. One: the locality is Salt Lake, a sprawling residential township, where the West Bengal chief minister's son has built a house. Two: the chief minister visits his son virtually every evening. Three: the CM has of late become obsessed with security. The facts in themselves do not suggest anything unusual. The strange part is the Marxist chief minister Jyoti Basu's recent transformation. For, Basu has grown up in a hostile political environment: he has lived through the Naxalite years, been arrested, faced angry mobs and, for most of his life, has battled the establishment. He had ultimately succeeded in emerging as a people's leader and the undisputed patriarch of Bengal. The irony is that the street-fighting Basu, in his September years, has himself become the symbol of the establishment, not secure even within the cordon of Special Branch policemen and haunted by fears of possible assassination.

Two decades ago, Basu broke the barricades, led the protests and threatened to storm the bourgeois bastions. Today, he *is* the bastion, assailed by hordes of protesters and threatened by shadowy extremists. In the past, Basu rallied Calcuttans against fare hikes, he railed against police brutality, protested against electoral irregularities and vociferously denounced successive state governments for neglecting West Bengal's economic development. Today, his policemen do not hesitate to beat up women or fire at unruly mobs; the biggest bus and tram fare hike in the city's history has been ordered by his regime; it is his party that openly subverted the Calcutta Municipal

Corporation elections this July; and it is his government that presides over a state that increasingly appears to have missed the economic growth path. It is *Animal Farm* all over again. Only, more banal and more tragic.

The ironies have become more than apparent in recent months. Even till the first quarter of this year, Basu was God. Then, something happened. Public perceptions about Basu changed almost overnight. Suddenly, the impeccable *bhadralok* in his starched, white *dhoti* was not so dazzling after all. It was not that people all over the state were beginning to abuse him or preparing to come out in open revolt. The transformation really had more to do with attitudes, and not with anything directly measurable. It was reflected in small things: conversations in buses, local street-corner meetings and, most dramatically, in the way people responded to the two *bandhs* called in protest against the fare rise decision.


ALOKE MITRA

The first *bandh*, called by the Congress(I), which happens to be the largest opposition party in the state, was a runaway success, contrary to the expectations of the state's Marxist rulers. The overwhelming majority of traders kept their shops closed and Calcutta roads on that day (16 August, 1990) looked grim and deserted.

Marxist musclemen deployed to maintain 'order' failed to inspire public confidence; what they did was attack and grievously injure ex-Congress(I) MP Mamata Banerjee. The unabashed attack on the female Congress(I) leader and her subsequent hospitalisation showed how brutalised the CPI(M) ranks had become. There was talk of a 'Red Mafia' taking over Calcutta and the Bengal countryside.

Perhaps the most significant part of the 16 August *bandh* was the tacit support it received from members of the CPI(M)-controlled State Government Employees Coordination Committee. Judging from the abysmal attendance even in the state secretariat, the Writers' Buildings, hundreds of Coordination Committee members had absented themselves from work. This staunch middle class segment has traditionally been a faithful supporter of the left, but its fervour is clearly waning. The *bandh*, in retrospect, was immensely successful not because of the Congress(I), but because of the growing disillusionment of the common man. Jyoti Basu, the Left Front and Marxism are no longer the exciting vanguard of a new age. They increasingly represent the old, decaying, twilight order.

Just how dispirited the [illegible]age person in Bengal had become was evident when a fringe political outfit, the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI), called a second statewide *bandh* on 3 September against the fare hike. The SUCI is far from being a major political player in Bengal, yet its *bandh* call was a stupendous success. Newspapers reported that the *bandh* had been total in Calcutta, Howrah, North and South 24 Parganas, Nadia and parts of north Bengal. This was unprecedented. But chief minister Basu claimed that the people had rejected the *bandh*, and argued that if shopkeepers had downed shutters it was because of a "general sense of panic" created by the Opposition. The chief minister did not seem to realise that he was admitting to a certain failure, that his own administration could no longer make the people feel safe. He refused to admit that people had lost all faith in his police force and in his party cadres. In fact, the word 'cadre' had become synonymous with 'muscleman'.

Every sign indicates that the masses are becoming more and more discontented. Small one paragraph reports in local newspapers on spontaneous demonstrations—against power cuts, kerosene shortages or the poor maintenance of public buses—are appearing with increasing regularity.

The conflict is sharpest in Calcutta, a city that has been woefully neglected by the Marxists. For the first time in decades, a group of civic-minded citizens have decided to hold a silent, torchlit procession to protest against routine power cuts. A leaflet produced by the protesters declares: "For almost 20 years we have lived with what is described as the power problem. We have listened to the reasons and we have waited. But now we are fed up." That about sums up the public mood. And the people are not fed up merely

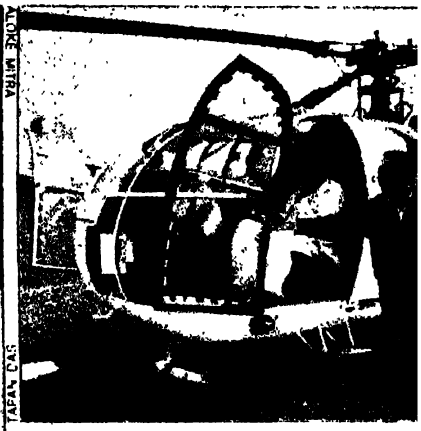
with the power shortage. In 1977, when they swept Basu and his Marxist colleagues to power, they had voted for freedom and change. Thirteen years later, they have realised they had only manoeuvred themselves into a blind alley, walled in by a defunct ideology and a dogma that spells stagnation.

Basu's fall was not gratuitous. At least four distinct factors contributed to it. And everything happened almost at the same time. The first had to do with democracy: the Marxists had always talked loudest about democratic rights and had successfully campaigned against the blatant rigging resorted to by the Congress regime in 1972. The left pretended that it stood for ethics in political life. By denouncing the Naxalites for their strategy of armed struggle, the CPI(M) leadership openly sided with the advocates of parliamentary democracy and won over a sizeable section of the middle class intelligentsia. Jyoti Basu, in those years, embodied everything decent and *bhadrolok* in a polity that was dominated by the murderous Naxalites and the unprincipled Congress.

The use of armed musclemen and terror tactics in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation polls held in July this year successfully demolished the Marxists' democratic image. Earlier, the CPI(M)'s political opponents had cried themselves hoarse, alleging electoral malpractices which included systematic deletion of names from the voters' list by the Marxists. But nobody had quite believed that the Marxists could deliberately subvert the electoral process. Now, the average Calcuttan at least is prepared to believe the worst.

Not only are the Marxists ready to fix elections, but they also seem to have no compunctions about stifling dissent and using muscle power to intimidate political rivals and the media. There have been numerous instances of press photographers and television cameramen being manhandled or assaulted. Photographer Tarapada Banerjee of the Bengali daily *Anandabazar Patrika*, who managed to record the attack on Mamata Banerjee on 16 August, had his arm smashed by furious CPI(M) supporters. Doordarshan, cowed down by the CPI(M)'s constant threats, meekly omits airing any news of CPI(M)-inspired violence. But newspapers continue to frontpage news of the 'Red Terror' that appears to be sweeping through the state. One of the most appalling incidents occurred on the outskirts of Calcutta at a spot called Bantala this May: two female state government employees were sexually assaulted, one of them subsequently strangled to death, and the driver of the car brutally killed by a group of CPI(M) anti-socials.





The street-fighting Basu is a figure of the forgotten past. At one time, he led protests and courted arrest. The image of a solemn Basu behind bars (far left) had once stirred Bengal. Today, Basu has become the very establishment that he fought all his life. He uses a helicopter for his election tours (above) and at times uses a Toyota (left)

The second factor that has contributed to the growing disenchantment with the Marxists is the feeling of fundamental insecurity that has gripped the people of the state. After Bantala and a couple of other stray incidents, Basu's one-time boast about women in Bengal being safe sounds terribly hollow. The state administration has failed in its basic commitment to ensure the safety of life and property. The debilitated police force, riddled with unionisation and corruption, is hardly an institution that the common man can turn to. Even filing a First Information Report (FIR) with the police without paying







Basu had made his career by campaigning against authoritarianism. He maintained that Congressmen were hoodlums. Today, CPI(M) *goondas* are accused of beating up Congress(I) leader Mamata Banerjee (above) and demonstrators are routinely tear-gassed (top) and lathi-charged (left) for protesting against basic issues, such as the bus fare hike

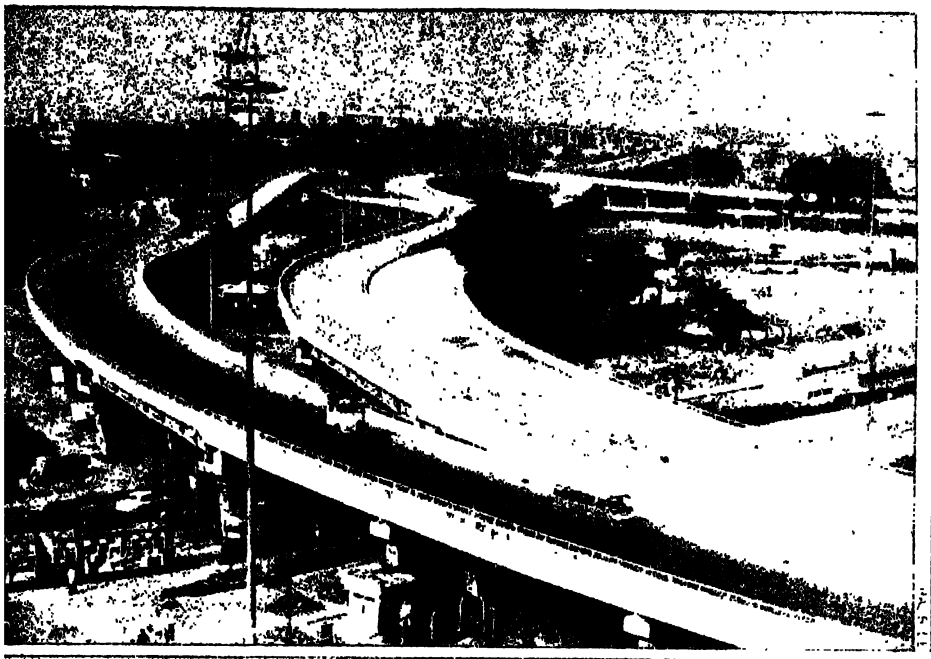
some form of bribe has become impossible. Increasingly, justice is available only to the influential and the rich.

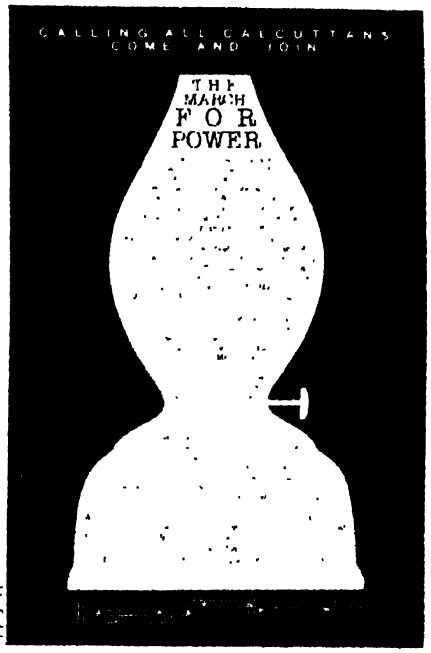
Thirdly, there is the farce about the 'friendly' government at the Centre. For 13 years, the Marxists had expostulated against the injustices of the Centre, blaming it for all of West Bengal's economic ills and for 13 years, the state's inhabitants had patiently listened. After the November 1989 elections, the Marxists declared that they would support the National Front government because Vishwanth Pratap Singh had pledged to fulfil the long-standing demands of the left. Many of the 19-odd points raised by the left parties related to the economic development of West Bengal and it seemed that the state could expect a better deal at long last. But the expectations were largely belied

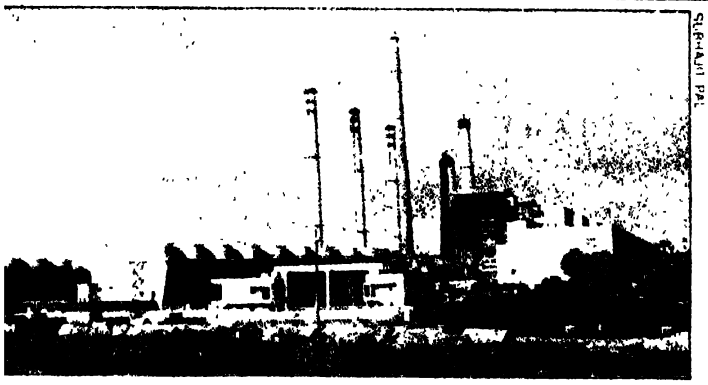
True, the state government managed to rope in the Tatas for the ambitious Haldia Petrochemicals project and compelled the Centre to okay Soviet participation in the Bakreswar thermal power project, but nothing else materialised. On the contrary, the chief minister's promise to reopen closed, sick units like Bengal Potteries backfired with Union industry minister Ajit Singh declaring that he was opposed to nationalisation of sick units. The demand for the end to the discriminatory freight equalisation policy on coal and steel seems to have been forgotten. The state government has also stopped making an issue out of financial demands like the writing off of central loans and increasing central monetary transfers to the state. This, despite the fact that people like the former state finance minister, Dr Ashok Mitra, had made a career out of these demands.

Chief minister Jyoti Basu had at one time been the strongest advocate of the view that Centre-state relations should be drastically altered. He had berated both Mrs Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi for being authoritarian and not allowing state governments to fulfil their role in the Indian federation. All these demands were quietly buried once the National Front came to power. Basu was silenced with promises of a slice of power at the Centre.

Now, there is not even a murmur of protest from the Marxists when the Union government starts soft-pedalling plans for the modernisation of major West Bengal-based public sector units like the Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) at Burnpur. Nor is there a word of protest from the state government when the Centre unilaterally stipulates that the entire foreign exchange required for the Haldia project would have to be raised through exports by that unit. This, and the condition that the Haldia unit would have to raise foreign exchange required for importing its basic raw materials through export, have effectively rendered the project unviable. But Basu is more busy







In the past 13 years, Calcutta has turned increasingly nightmarish. During this period, the Left Front has not been able to complete the state's solitary power project at Kolaghat (left) and the Second Hooghly Bridge (above left). People are less inclined to accept the state government's failures. A recent pamphlet (above) declares: "...we have waited. But now we are fed up"

holding briefs for dubious industrial tycoons like Dhirubhai Ambani and the Hindujas, who happen to be one of the principal accused in the Bofors kickbacks case.

The sense of stagnation is highlighted by the return of prolonged daily power cuts throughout the state. Even after 13 years of undisturbed rule, the Marxists have proved utterly incompetent about running their power plants. At a time when the Centre is being blamed for not sanctioning fresh power projects for West Bengal, the fact that the state government has been unable to complete its major power project (the 1,260 mega watt Kolaghat Thermal Power Plant) in 13 years is conveniently underplayed. At any rate, the suffocating power cuts that plunge vast areas of the state into darkness every evening are symbolic of the stagnation perpetuated by Jyoti Basu and his comrades. An entire generation in Bengal has grown up with 'loadshedding' and it is time to ask questions: what have the people got from the Marxists? Not democracy, not law and order, not economic development—not even electricity.

The tragic part is that the election of the Left Front to power 13 years ago had initially promised a new era. On assuming office, Jyoti Basu acted fast: hundreds of political prisoners, including Naxalites, were freed; the rights of trade unionswere restored; education upto the middle school level was made free, moribund *panchayats* and municipalities were revived through elections, land reforms were implemented, and a massive programme for institutionalising the tenancy rights of sharecroppers (the famous Operation Barga) was introduced. The left brought with it not just hope but a breath of fresh air. Here at last was a political party that was non-sectarian, non-parochial, non-communal and devoted to the uplift of Bengal.

In the first few years, the Left Front did manage to infuse many sectors with a new dynamism. After winning the 1982 Assembly polls, a radiant Jyoti Basu declared: "The unlimited love and affection of the people for our party, the Left Front and the government is what we have gained." In a similar vein, writing in the CPI(M) organ *People's Democracy*, Basu commented: "I hope that as we have developed over the years with the support and love of the ordinary people to become an invincible force in West Bengal, in the same way, in the near future, we will be able to draw them towards us in all the states of the country." That, in retrospect, was too optimistic a statement.

If Basu seriously thought that West Bengal would set a shining example for other states, he was mistaken. Jyoti Basu might have earned respect all over the country for being a relatively clean, non-sectarian head of government

We've covered cricket matches
When the pundits forecast rain





We've paid out bills of hospitals
And helped to ease the strain

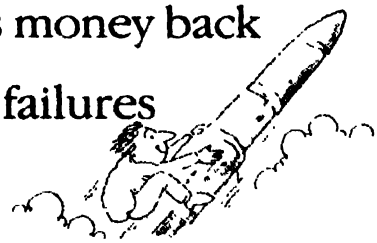
Gompa in the Himalayas
Can now protect his yak





If Kondiah loses his boat
He could get his money back

Offshore wells and crop failures
Rocket launchings too



And now a great new venture
That's tailormade for you



GIC GRIH VITTA LTD

Together we shall make your dream come true

General Insurance Corporation of India
Bombay-400 020

National Insurance Company Limited
Calcutta 700 071

The New India Assurance Company Limited
Bombay 400 023

The Oriental Insurance Company Limited
New Delhi - 110 002

United India Insurance Company Limited
Madras - 600 014

GGVL Service Centres :

Bangalore GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at United India Insurance Co Ltd., Regional Office, Shankaranarayana Bldg., 25, M G Road, Bangalore - 560 001 Tel. 573617/573583 **Bombay** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at The New India Assurance Co Ltd., New India Bhawan, 2nd flr, 34-38, Bank Street, Fort, Bombay - 400 023 Tel 2861621. **Calcutta** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at: National Insurance Co Ltd., Everest House, 4th floor, 46C, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700 071 Tel 44-2651/54 Dir 44-0107 **Hyderabad** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at: United India Insurance Co Ltd., Regional Office, P.B No 1020, 3-5-817 & 818 Basheer Bagh, Hyderabad 500 029 Tel 231996, 231894. **Lucknow** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at The Oriental Insurance Co. Ltd., Lucknow Regional Office, 43, Hazratganj, Lucknow - 226 001 Tel - 234886 **Madras** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at United India Insurance Co. Ltd., Head Office, 24, Whites Road, Madras - 600 014. Tel - 473993/473007 **New Delhi** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at The Oriental Insurance Co Ltd., Regional Office, 86-88, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001. Tel: 3329233. **Panaji** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at: The New India Assurance Co. Ltd., Panaji Divisional Office, Velho Bldg., 3rd floor, Rua Conda - De Torres Nouas, Panaji - 403 001. Tel.: 3770, 4297.

Multimedia Aquarius/GGVL/2/90





RAJIB BASU

ASHOK MAITRA

Yesterday's vanguards have today switched places with the former oppressors and are having to train their guns on the masses (top). Even the media is not spared intimidation (left)

but he cannot exactly be admired for the performince of his regime. Calcutta, the seat of the state government, has become one of the world's most depressing cities. Nothing works. The Second Hooghly Bridge that has been under construction for as long as anyone can remember continues to haunt the Calcutta skyline, the roads remain rutted; phones do not work; traffic moves at a crawl; and the buildings, obscured by ugly hoardings, look more derelict with every passing year

The Marxist-controlled Calcutta Municipal Corporation, which is supposed to ensure that the city works, has become a den of corruption, according to admissions of CPI(M) leaders themselves. Virtually every institution—from the city police force to the universities—has been thoroughly politicised. Development work by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Agency (CMDA) has virtually ground to a halt.

The Left Front government has, at times, argued that the countryside—and not Calcutta— is their priority, despite the fact that one-fifth of the state's population lives in and around this metropolis But, the Left Front cannot today claim that it has transformed the countryside either. True, it has revived the *panchayati* system, poured crores into providing education, built warehouses, markets and village roads. But in two principal areas, it has largely failed: irrigation and power supply to the rural areas. The area irrigated by government canals actually declined from 10.17 lakh hectares in 1980-81 to 10.06 lakh hectares in 1986-87. Even today, barely a third of arable land in the state is irrigated. Without assured water and power, agricultural production continues to be erratic. Also, immense poverty, landlessness and illiteracy continue to prevail in the Bengal countryside.



The Marxist dictum that the point of all philosophy and power is to change the world has conveniently been forgotten. The bourgeoisie is out and the people's government in, but little has really changed. And today, the police are guarding te vanguard. The retreat has begun. ●

Indranil Banerjie/Calcutta

BODYLINE

RAVI SHANKAR



INDER MALHOTRA

Off the back-burner

It is high time India took China's policy shifts seriously



On the morning after the meeting between Inder Kumar Gujral and the visiting Chinese vice-foreign minister, Qi Huaiyuan, only two of the five leading national newspapers I read every morning found this news worthy of the front page. One of the two disposed it off in three short paragraphs. Every evening I take three major outstation English language papers. All of them, too, had pushed the significant encounter—between the Indian foreign minister and the leader of the Chinese delegation to the second meeting of the joint working group—to an inside page. So much for all the claptrap about "Asian giants", the world's two most populous nations anxious to live in peace and harmony with each other despite 1962 and what have you.

Contrast this with the front-page space devoted by the papers to the earlier talks between foreign secretary Muchkund Dubey and his Pakistani counterpart at that time, Tanvir the Terrible, who has since been deservedly kicked aside to the Pakistani Embassy in Paris, and the point I wish to make becomes clear. It is that the *swadeshi* Fleet Street is no less remiss in comprehending and projecting this country's interests and concomitant foreign policy priorities than other relevant institutions such as Parliament, political parties, think-tanks and, of course, the foreign office itself.

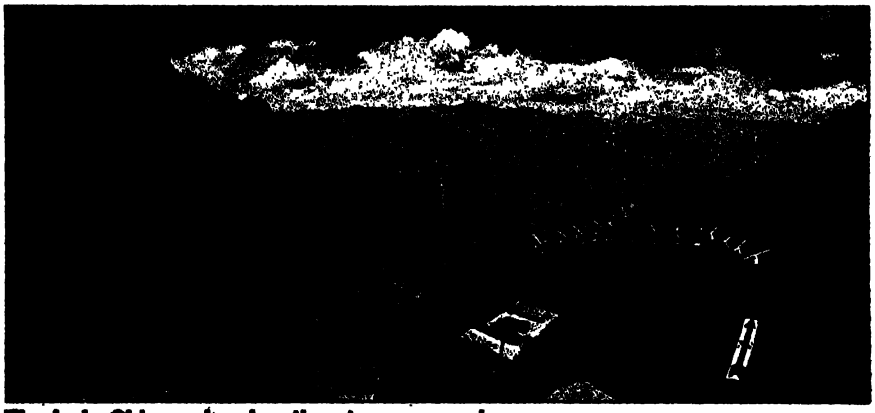
By the time the latest round of the India-China dialogue ended, the publicity situation had improved, but only marginally. This was so presumably because no spectacular results flowed from the conversations except for the institutionalised arrangements between the military commanders of the two sides to maintain peace and tranquillity along the line of control. But no great results should have been expected for the simple reason that India, convulsed by a series of grave internal problems and ruled by a minority government, is not yet in a position to state what kind of a compromise on the vexed boundary question can and should be accepted.

However, if the boundary question is placed on the back-burner, as it should be until we can do our homework, prospects of better understanding and purposeful cooperation with China can surely improve.

Scepticism about a rapid improvement in India-China relations, even in the event of the border issue being sidestepped for the present, cannot be dismissed out of hand. There have been several false starts before. Of late, the atmosphere between the two countries has become more pleasant—with the visit of a delegation from the National Defence College this summer, military contacts with China were resumed after an interval of 30 years and a reciprocal Chinese military delegation is expected in February. However, in substance, very little has happened so far. Caution is, therefore, in order.

However, in recent days, there have been small and subtle but significant indications of a Chinese willingness to put a little more pep and content into the hitherto verbal goodwill. Just before the arrival of Qi, who is not only the first vice-foreign minister (equivalent to our foreign secretary) but also a member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese sources were heard saying that his mission was not confined to discussing the border only. He was, they said, interested in an across-the-board comparing of notes with India on all global, regional and other problems of mutual interest.

If this is a correct appraisal of the situation, the opportunity surely needs to be seized. And the projection of the Chinese policy may well be correct if we read it along with the major speech to the Chinese National People's Conference by Prime Minister Li Peng. In this, Li Peng clearly stated that with the US-USSR *détente* and allied developments, there had been an 'imbalance' in the world that needs to be corrected. It is also noteworthy that while China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has voted for all five resolutions on the Gulf, on the need to avoid the unilateral use of force by the US, it has been talking the same language as India.

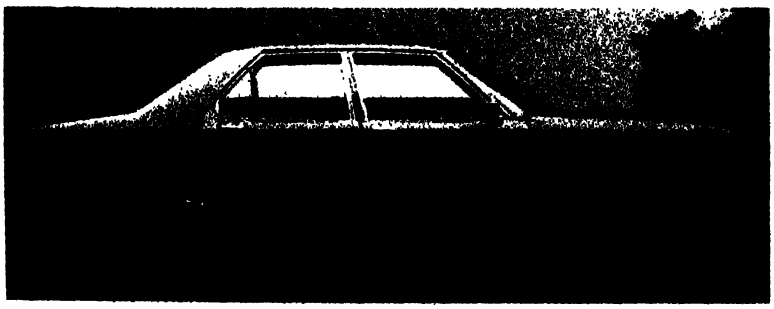


The Indo-Chinese border: time to compromise

It is also instructive that despite much greater hostility between China and the Soviet Union than between this country and China, the Sino-Soviet parleys have progressed faster and further in two years than the India-China dialogue has in a whole decade. This is another 'imbalance' requiring correction. Mikhail Gorbachev's suggestion is for a triangular cooperation between India, China and the Soviet Union. For the Chinese this could at best be a very distant goal. For the present, their overwhelming emphasis is on bilateralism by which India has also sworn over the years. •

The Contessa Classic. Usually found parked





Contract HM 22166A

Accessories shown in the picture are not part of standard equipment.

A Limousine to every other car

at the final milestone on the road to success.



Measuring a man's success has always been difficult. And while most successful people have grabbed wildly at every passing status symbol, a few have resisted the temptation.

The Contessa Classic is their car. And makes a more forceful statement about them, than any of their other possessions.

A fuel efficient 1.8 litre Isuzu engine displays their ability to use power.

Five forward gears, including an overdrive, indicate just how fast they can move.

An impressively responsive steering places them in complete control of any situation.

Power disc brakes help them respond to any possible contingency safely and smoothly.

And, of course, a plush interior, an independent suspension and air conditioning show an appreciation of the finer things in life.

But there's really much more to the Contessa. So why not get in touch with us. And take a closer look at a car that spells success quite differently.

Contessa
Classic 1·8 GL

Enter, the Hyperplane

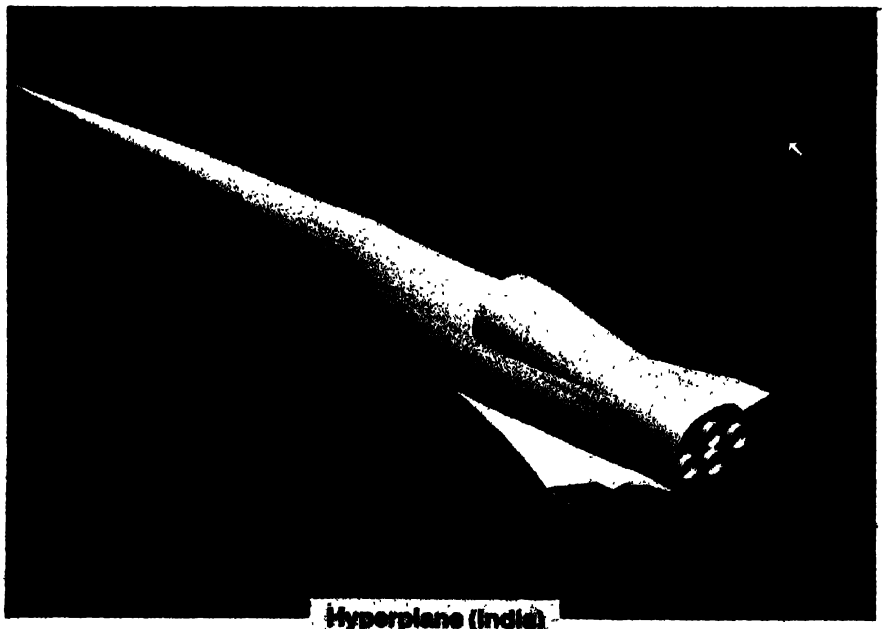
Indian scientists have designed an aerospacecraft that could revolutionise space travel

It looks like something out of sci-fi: a hybrid machine for some Darth Vader to speed through the reaches of outer space. Only, this half aircraft, half rocket, has not been conjured up by any special effects wizard. It has been painstakingly constructed out of several hundred mathematical equations run on a computer by a team of Hyderabad-based scientists. It is the Hyperplane—unreal only to the extent that it is still just a concept projected on computer displays. And this concept, proved by years of hard theoretical work, could well revolutionise thinking on space travel. Air Commodore R. Gopalaswami, the scientist-technocrat who has led research on the Hyperplane, says that their concept, far from being fanciful, represents a breakthrough in space technology and has even been acknowledged worldwide. "The concept is fantastic and we know it will work," adds Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, director of the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) and head of the successful Indian missile programme.

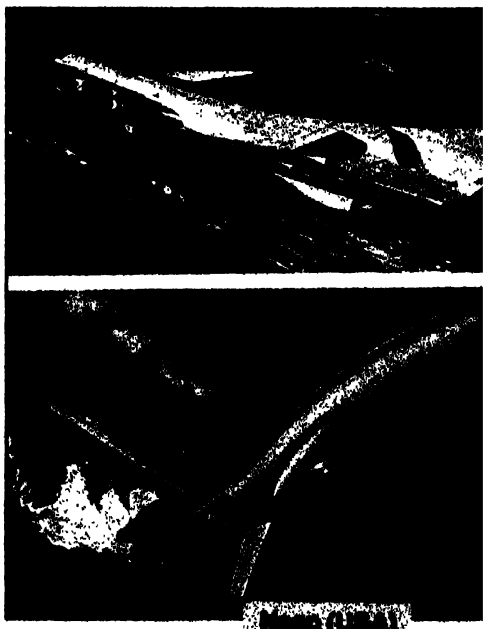
The excitement over the Hyperplane stems from the fact that the era of giant rockets is gradually coming to an end. Even the superpowers are beginning to lose interest in the great conquest of space, an idea that had spurred a feverish global race in the 1960s and 1970s. Several countries, chief among them the United States, the Soviet Union, China and France, had been building larger and larger rockets. Visionary scientists had drawn up plans for gargantuan space stations: the slowly revolving hollow wheels populated by human beings and aired by hothouse plants. The more pragmatic space technologists worked on ways to trap solar energy, conduct scientific experiments, grow weird crystals and metals, or construct giant anti-missile lasers in space. But all these grand ideas increasingly crashed against a basic constraint: the limited capacity of conventional, chemically-powered rockets to haul large masses into the orbit. It gradually began dawning on policy-makers throughout the globe that the massive costs involved in sending men and material into space was just not worth the effort, time or money. Most of the space programmes today consequently are aimed at placing relatively lightweight satellites for telecommunication, remote sensing and spying purposes into the orbit.

And that is the way things are going to stand in the foreseeable future. That is, unless the concept of the Hyperplane takes shape. The Hyperplane's creators claim that they have found a new design concept which will allow them to transcend the limits imposed by chemical rocket engines. Their machine promises to be a safe, reliable, low cost means of mass transportation to space. In a paper presented to the International Astronautical Congress two years ago, Air Commodore Gopalaswami and his team members pointed out that the world's most advanced rocket launchers' maximum payload capacity is only 2.5 per cent of the total launch weight. For example, the American space shuttle, which uses the world's most advanced rocket engines, has a

WORLD AEROSPACECRAFT



Hyperplane (India)



launch weight of 2,000 tonnes of which the payload is only 30 tonnes. The cost of conventional launches is even more because at best only a small part of the launcher is re-usable. The Hyperplane concept, in contrast, promises a way out of all these dead ends.

Instead of blasting off like a conventional rocket, the Hyperplane is designed to take off like a normal aircraft using air breathing turbojets and cruise to an altitude of 50 km. During the cruise phase, it would suck in atmospheric air and convert it into liquid oxygen (Lox). In conventional rockets as much as 70 per cent of the total launch weight comprises Lox, which combines with liquid hydrogen to provide thrust (power) for the rocket. The Hyperplane would be much lighter than a conventional rocket because it would not lift off with a massive Lox load; instead, it would acquire the Lox required while in flight. Once in the outer reaches of the atmosphere, the rocket engines would be fired and the Hyperplane would roar out to a 300-km orbit. After completing its mission, the aerospacecraft would gently glide back into the atmosphere and land like an aircraft. The significant part is not the Hyperplane's novelty but the fact that its payload capacity would be dramatically higher than that of other spacecraft. In fact, the payload could be as high as 15-25 per cent of the total launch weight. This means that the Hyperplane carrying the same payload (30 tonnes) as the US space shuttle would weigh ten to 16 times less than the shuttle. This, according to the Hyperplane's designers, would constitute a strategic leap forward in the greater utilisation of space.

"The concept is fantastic and we know it will work"

Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, director, DRDL



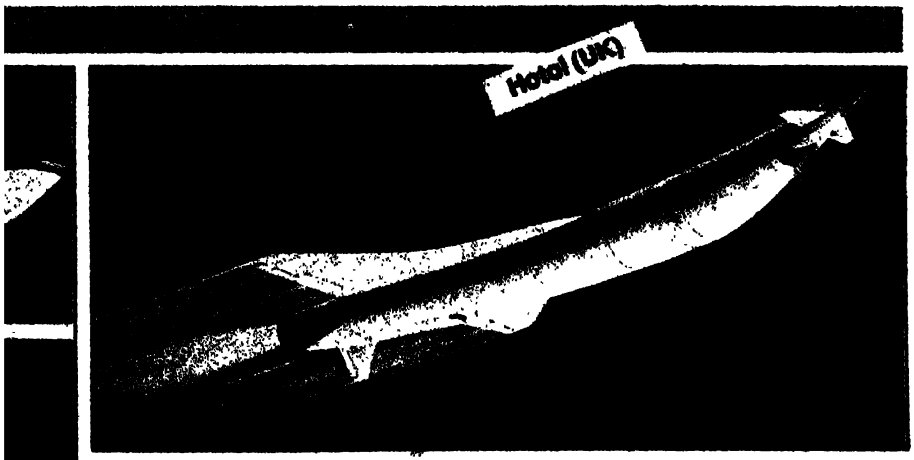


"The Hyperplane would help begin the colonisation of space"

Air Com. R. Gopalaswami, Hyperplane's designer

The idea of a 200-tonne aerospacecraft ferrying 30 tonnes into space effortlessly like an aircraft appears too good to be true. Not surprisingly, when the design was first unveiled it was greeted with scepticism. "The impressive design is so far only on paper," Dr Rogen Elo of the University of Berlin dismissively commented. Cambridge University's propulsion expert, Dr Graham Dorrington, declared that the Indian concept was an old one and added that the design was seriously flawed because even the largest liquid air plant in Britain could not produce Lox one-tenth at the rate required for the Hyperplane. He said it would be impossible to build a plant weighing only 2 tonnes that could turn inlet air at 1,500 degrees centigrade into Lox. While much of the criticism was predictable, it was not entirely justified.

"What we have shown is that the concept is workable and different from any other similar concepts floated earlier," says Gopalaswami. The idea of an aerospacecraft taking off and landing like a normal aeroplane has occurred to others: Great Britain plans to develop a somewhat similar craft named the 'Hotol' and the United States is working on an aerospacecraft termed 'Nasp'. The Soviets, on the other hand, are in the process of developing a colossal aircraft that could carry a re-usable spacecraft into the upper reaches of the atmosphere for launch into the orbit. The Indian, the British and the US aerospacecraft , however, only have surface similarities. The Hotol is rocket-propelled and incorporates air collection to a very limited extent. The Nasp uses air breathing engines for atmospheric flights but does not consider air collection at all. The Hyperplane, on the other hand, visualises the use of both air breathing engines and massive air collection during atmospheric flights.



The Indian, the British and the US aerospacecraft only have surface similarities. The Hotol is rocket-propelled and incorporates air collection to a very limited extent. The Nasp uses air breathing engines for atmospheric flight but does not consider air collection at all. The Hyperplane, on the other hand, visualises the use of both air breathing engines and massive air collection.

The Hyperplane's design is innovative to the extent that nobody has considered the possibility of massive mass additions during atmospheric flights. Most scientists had presumed that it would be both theoretically and practically impossible to collect oxygen from the atmosphere and convert it into Lox during flight. Gopalaswami's team, however, has proved that this is not an impossibility. As a matter of fact, one of the team members, M. Nagarathinam, has already applied for a patent for an air collection and liquification machine. While the actual fabrication of such a unit will take years of difficult engineering work, new advances suggest that super conductor-based thermoelectric cool-

The Berlin wall wasn't the only European barrier to fall last year!

In Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and Switzerland another kind of change swept over.

In these countries, an Indian company, in its very first year, exported over 50 percent of the yarn it manufactured.

A company as Indian as Indo Rama, manufacturer of the finest quality yarn in the country. Spun at a 25,344 spindle plant that is equipped, quite naturally, with the very finest in machinery. Manufacturing yarn that is electronically-cleared, spliced, knot-less and contamination-free.

And while premium Europe welcomes India, we allow ourselves a small smile.



After all, we have the entire future to look forward to. And many more yarns to spin!

INDO RAMA SYNTHETICS (I) LTD.

We / have / only / scratched / the / surface

R K SWAMY/IRS/5895

ers and cryogenic heat exchangers could be used to successfully build the Hyperplane's liquefication plant.

"There are three key areas where we need to do further research and hone our concepts," explains Dr Abdul Kalam. Apart from the Lox generation plant, considerable work needs to be done in the fields of materials development (i.e., development of the composites and alloys required) and propulsion systems. "We need to involve many laboratories and research institutions to work on the Hyperplane's various subsystems," Kalam adds. For the moment, Gopalaswami and Kalam are trying to identify the areas that require further research and study. "We are going to deploy people within our organisation—the DRDL—to further research the concept and then we will take the project to the government," says Kalam.

Despite Kalam's optimism, considerable uncertainty hangs over the ambitious project. The most daunting part of the Hyperplane project is the cost involved. After studying other space programmes, Gopalaswami and others have worked out that they will need a total of Rs 5,000 crores over the next 7-10 years. That is big money and the Indian government is in no mood to commit that kind of funds for a space project. The Hyperplane's designers feel that if the Indian government cannot afford it, then it should rope in foreign participants or the United Nations for a project which would benefit mankind as a whole.

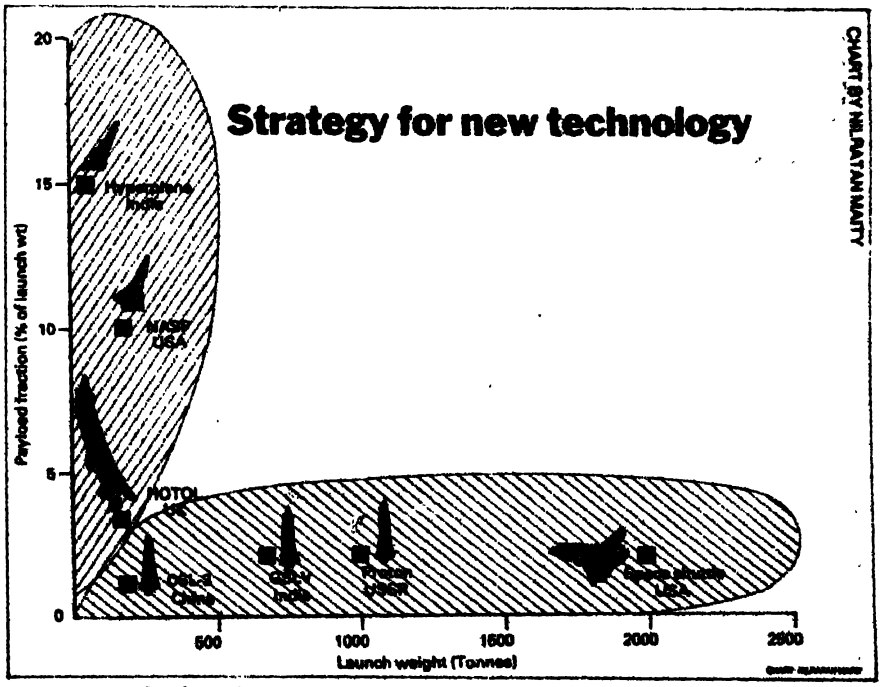
Would it be worth it? Yes, say the dream machine's designers. For one, if the Hyperplane is a product of international cooperation, it would not be the monopoly of any one nation and the chances of it being used for the militarisation of space would be low. At another level, it would take far less time to complete the project if know-how from all over the world is pooled in for the project. And in the ultimate analysis, the world would have a low cost means to build beneficial installations in space. The per tonne cost of payload carried by the Hyperplane would be only 1.6 million rupees compared to 25 million rupees for the space shuttle, which is the most advanced conventional spacecraft today. The Hyperplane, moreover, promises to be far cheaper than the huge rockets currently being built by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). For example, the cost per flight of the Hyperplane will be 25 times less than

It has been estimated that the Hyperplane project will need a total of Rs 5,000 crores over the next 7-10 years. But the Indian government is not willing to commit that kind of money for the project

that of ISRO's Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV). ISRO, however, has not shown the slightest interest in pursuing the Hyperplane project.

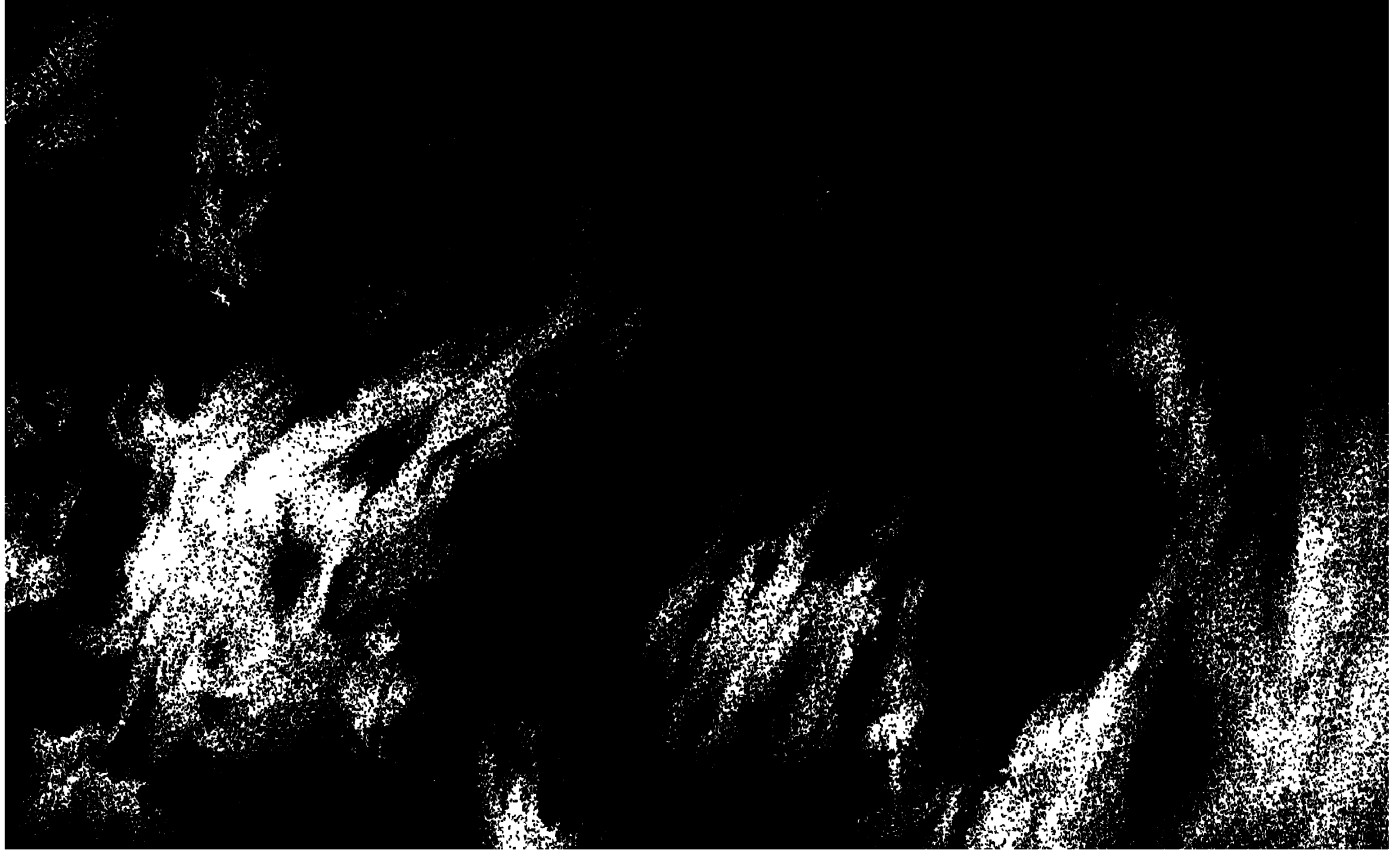
A couple of foreign agencies, Aerospatiale (France) and the space agency of the Soviet Union had exhibited considerable interest in the Hyperplane. Experts from the two countries had flown down to Hyderabad to study the designs. Aerospatiale went to the extent of working out a memorandum of understanding with DRDL to develop a Hyperplane in collaboration. The Americans were also interested but the Indians were wary on account of the much publicised Star Wars programmes and they did not want to share any information that might help a superpower built military stations in space. Both the French and the Soviets also backed out at the last moment. The Indian scientists were flabbergasted. For, the foreigners had taken their designs and billion dollar ideas and disappeared with lame last minute excuses. "We will continue to get exploited till the time we develop our own technology in key areas—if that happens, then foreigners will be compelled to share information and the project might fructify," feels Gopalaswami.

The real problem, however, seems to be one of vested interests and inertia. Like NASA, Aerospatiale and other space agencies, ISRO too has invested vast amounts of money in developing conventional, chemically-powered rockets. The Hyperplane or any such aerospacecraft project envisages an entirely new line of thinking, which if pursued could render all of ISRO's work irrelevant. It is clear that no space agency in the world, least of all ISRO, is going to change tracks on its own, or without considerable resistance. The stakes are too high. But then the world does not always plod along; at times, circumstances compel it to take revolutionary leaps. With the global energy and environmental crises threatening civilisation, the day is perhaps not far off when India along with the rest of mankind will have to take a headlong leap into outer space. And when they do that, it will not be on mammoth rockets but on the Hyperplane or one of its versions. ●



Indranil Banerjie/Hyderabad

No ban, no challenge... just a burning desire.



CASTE WAR!

As violence rocks north India, the anti-Mandal Commission stir spreads

30 August: *Police open fire on an anti-reservation procession in Cuttack, Orissa. One person, Alok Mahapatra, is killed and four others are seriously injured in a separate incident at Ravenshaw College Square.*

1 September: *The situation in Orissa takes an even more serious turn as five more deaths are reported in cases of police firing in Puri district. Agitators set a train engine ablaze and then, prevent fire tenders from reaching the spot.*

3 September: *A 12-hour Ranchi* bandh *is called in protest against the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. Six persons are injured in sporadic incidents of violence and at least 30 persons are arrested for trying to forcibly close shops and offices and for stone-throwing.*

3 September: *Jagdish Prasad Mishra, a Ph.D. student attempts self-immolation in New Delhi. The police arrest him for attempted suicide, but not before he has incurred minor burns.*

4 September: *An anti-reservation rally in Patna turns violent. The police move in and three persons die of bullet wounds. The fourth succumbs to injuries sustained in a bomb explosion.*

5 September: *In Andhra Pradesh, anti-reservationists set fire to a bogey of the Rayalaseema Express. They also ransack the railway station at Machilipatnam, and delink bogies of a passenger train.*

6 September: *In Jaipur, Rajasthan, a* dharna *is staged against the police firing which resulted in the death of one person. A 100-odd people are taken into custody for violating prohibitory orders.*

The setting may have been different, but the story was much the same. All over the country protesters took to the streets to express their unhappiness over the Raja's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report. And predictably enough, the agitation turned violent as the anti-reservationists clashed with the police, who were under orders to put down the stir whatever the cost. Whatever the official figures for the dead and the



SHOOTER

injured, there was no doubt in the minds of anyone that India was witnessing a caste war of tremendous proportions. And whoever emerged the victor, the country would never be the same again.

The scene in Patna, for instance, was very reminiscent of the heydays of JP's Total Revolution movement. With one difference: this time the crowds were out to agitate against the decision of a government which swore by his ideals day in and day out.

Even heavy rain failed to dampen the spirits of the anti-reservationists as they gathered in Patna on 24 September for a massive rally. The turn-out was impressive, and according to some more than what Jaya Prakash Narayan was able to command at the height of his popularity. With feelings running high, the meeting held at Dharna Chowk couldn't remain peaceful for long.

The police asked the students to disperse as they were violating prohibitory orders. Instead, the students threw stones and brickbats and nearly broke through the police cordon. Umesh Tyagi, among the processionists, was brutally assaulted by the police and left lying in a pool of blood. He later died.

And as the agitators became violent, the police went quite berserk. In the two-hour long pitched battle, no less than 30 rounds were fired and as many as 125 tear gas shells were brought into use.

Result: four students lost their lives on the spot, while another, Guddu (14), died of injuries sustained after a beating by a rifle-butt.

The students extracted due revenge, smashing roadside kiosks and billboards. They then gave vent to their anger by storming the police posts between Gandhi Maidan and the Dak Bungalow, crossing and destroying the barricades set up at the Bailey Road - Secretariat intersection. The students later alleged that at least 11 persons had died and that the police had whisked away the other bodies in order to keep the death toll down.

In Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, already up to his neck in the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid mire, found that he had his share of violent students to contend with. And in the face of the UP chief minister's uncompromising stand on the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations, the situation in the state got progressively worse.

In the face of continuing violence the two hill universities of Kumaon and Pantnagar closed down as did the Lucknow varsity. In Nainital, the students of the Pantnagar University set two jeeps belonging to the institution ablaze and set up road blocks in Maldwani, Nainital and Muaali. Soon, government jeeps and buses were being attacked.

In Lucknow, the railways were singled out for attack. The computerised reservation office at the Badshahnagar station was ransacked and the computers destroyed. On 4 September, four railway bogies were burnt down in Gorakhpur, two in Deoria and one in Siddharthnagar. In Jhansi, the agitating students attacked the houses of railway officials, ransacked the railway station and set fire to a parcel godown. Result: goods worth Rs 50 lakhs were destroyed.

The attacks culminated in the gutting of the Meerut cantonment railway station on 7 September. A group of students doused the station master's office and adjoining rooms with petrol and set them on fire, to register their protest against the Raja's move.

The militant elements of the student unions of various universities got together to form what they called 'commando forces', to stoke the blaze even further. In Lucknow, on 2 September, they lobbed a crude bomb into the power transformer of the state guest house, located in the heart of the city.

Fortunately, however, the police defused the bomb in time, and no grave damage was inflicted. On the same day, the 'commandos' hurled a bomb at the residence of the vice-chancellor of Banaras Hindu University.

In such a scenario, the police could hardly be expected to exercise restraint. On 3 September, a mob of about 1,500 marched towards the police station in Salempur town, after damaging two police vans and setting fire to a couple of buses belonging to the state transport corporation. Unable to control the procession, the police opened fire, killing one and injuring many others.

THE ANTI-RESERVATION STIR ■ *Protesters all over the country take to the stre*



SHOOTER



The capital witnessed a massive student turn-out for days on end, as the disgruntled upper castes took to the streets to register their protest against what they regarded as reverse discrimination of the worst kind. As Delhi schools and colleges suspended classes, the students took up positions

at the busiest intersections of the city in order to disrupt traffic. They succeeded admirably, as all of Delhi was thrown completely out of gear.

Initially, at least, the police stood around as mute spectators to this drama of discontent. But as the situation worsened with the stir dislocating life even in west and east Delhi (only the university areas were affected at first), the law and order agencies swung into action. Pitched battles were fought between the students and the Delhi police force. While no clear victor emerged in these skirmishes, one thing was clear: it would be some time before normalcy was restored to the capital.

Bandhs, lathi-charges, rallies, demonstrations and police firing were the order of the day. If the anti-reservationists took to the streets on one day, the next saw the pro-reservationists trying to outdo their show. Giving a helping hand to the agitators in attracting crowds were sundry ministers, lesser politicians and leaders of various political parties. The most prolific speaker was, of course, labour minister Ram Vilas Paswan, who addressed two rallies on consecutive days.

But, by far the most significant event was the joint show of strength by farmers and students on 4 September at the Boat Club. Braving the pouring rain, at least 10,000 people turned up to denounce the Mandal Commission. Jeans and *dhotis*, cigarettes and hookahs, sneakers and *jootis*, mingled together on the lawns as the Tikait-led Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) supporters joined the students of Delhi University in this "fight to the finish". The slogans ranged from the slickly yuppie ("Inky, pinky, ponky, V.P. Singh is a donkey") to the robustly rustic (*"Yamunaji ke ghat pe, mila ek insaan. Hamne poocha naam to bole, main Mandal beimaan"*).

The star speaker was, without a doubt, the BKU vice-president Captain Bhopal Singh. "The students, like the farmers," Singh declared, "should be ready for any sacrifice in the cause of justice." The Captain extended an invitation to the students, asking them to join the *panchayat* at the BKU headquarters in Sisauli on 17 September, when the future course of action will be decided. Said the aggressive Singh: "Farmers will not allow parliamentarians and legislators to enter the villages if the Centre does not withdraw the Mandal Commission."

The rally, organised by the Anti-Mandal Commission Forum, was also addressed by the Panther Party president, Bhim Singh, who asked the government to refrain from taking recourse to the divide and rule policy popularised by the British.

With enthusiasm running high, a decision was taken to call a 50-hour *bandh* from 6 September onwards. The duration was later reduced to 24 hours, but even so, it came as somewhat of an anti-climax. Taxis and auto-rickshaws plyed as usual, though DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation) took around 1,000 buses off the roads.

There was trouble in the university area, though. The police forcibly entered Jubilee Hall and lathi-charged students. Tear-gas shells were lobbed into the building and as many as 70 people were injured. The police later blocked all gates out of the building and took 214 persons into custody to bring the situation under control.

Not surprisingly, the situation in the campus remained volatile for days after the police excesses. "They didn't even ask for permission before entering the building. Such an act is absolutely unprecedented," said a furious warden of the hostel. But Delhi police, which had pulled out all stops to control the agitation by now (all leave for personnel stood cancelled and a force of 50,000 was out, manning the streets), remained unrepentant.

But the anti-reservation agitators had cause for cheer, nonetheless. The much-talked about pro-reservation rally, organised by the National Union of Backward Castes, was quite literally a wash-out. About one lakh people were expected to turn up at the rally, to be addressed by Union ministers Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav among others, but no more than 2,000 people were in attendance as the show got underway.

Not daunted, Paswan got into the act with a vengeance: "People get married on the basis of caste, but when we talk of reservations they say that we are breaking the country. These anti-reservationists talk about dividing the country on the basis of caste, but everything is computed on the basis of caste anyway."

Yes, even the Raja's electoral calculations. And never mind if the country's youth goes quite wild on the streets in the bargain. •

Minu Jain/Delhi, Radhika Ramaseshan/Lucknow and Subodh Mishra/Patna





THE FINAL TABOO

V.P. Singh is the first Prime Minister of India who does not believe in a casteless society

It was Sharad Yadav who bragged that hereafter, Indian politics would be divided into pre-Mandal and post-Mandal phases. Last week, as a bloody caste war swept across north India, Yadav's prophecy began to seem uncannily accurate. Not one party was willing to get up and say what the press had been hollering for weeks: that reservation was not the way to solve the problem of poverty. But at the same time, no party would support the implementation of the Mandal recommendations either.

It was almost as though Prime Minister V.P. Singh—aided and abetted by the likes of Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan—had broken the last taboo of Indian politics. Nearly every party accepted that there were votes to be won by playing the caste card, but because most serious politicians recognised that to do so would be to mortgage India's future, consensus against the politics of casteism had developed.

Now, V.P. Singh had challenged that consensus by staking his career on a nakedly casteist move that he hoped would win him the next election. Other national politicians reacted with outrage. Jyoti Basu warned of the danger of stoking the fires of casteism for short-term electoral gain. L.K. Advani reiterated the BJP's opposition to simple caste-based formulas. And Rajiv Gandhi actually got up in the Lok Sabha and called the Prime Minister a casteist.

But however genuine their indignation, India's politicians also came to terms with one uncomfortable fact: to oppose the principle of reservation for backward communities was to play into the Raja's hands and to give him the opportunity he needed to sell himself to the cow belt as the Thakur who loved the lower castes.

And so, while north India burned and policemen clashed with violent demonstrators only a few miles from New Delhi's Parliament House, the debate in the Lok Sabha took on an artificial, curiously unreal air. Vasant Sathe lambasted the Prime Minister for playing with fire, but his rhetorical flourishes seemed empty and meaningless when V.P. Singh stood up and asked him point-blank what the Congress' stand on reservation was.

It was as though everybody knew what the Prime Minister was doing was wrong, if not immoral, but nobody was willing to come right out and say it. And so the debate floundered turgidly on the exact nature of the reservations, on the manner in which Mandal had identified his backward castes, on whether there should have been a white paper on the proposal and on other such peripheral issues.

Outside Parliament, agitating students chanted: "Inky, pinky, ponky, V.P. Singh is a donkey." But inside the House, the Raja's position seemed unassailable.

And yet, as our politicians danced gingerly around the reservation time bomb, there were encouraging signs that even in a poor and largely illiterate country, the way of the demagogue did not hold unchallenged sway.

As the anti-reservation stir spread, supporters of the Mandal proposals warned that the silent majority—composed allegedly of those backwards who would benefit from reservation—would strike back. In fact, if such a majority did exist, then it was remarkably content being silent. A pro-reservation rally called in New Delhi by the two bearded demagogues of the Cabinet—Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan—drew only 2,000 persons though the organisers (along with another failed demagogue, Syed Shahabuddin) had expected a crowd that ran into lakhs. Afterwards, Paswan was at a loss to explain the poor turnout. "Well, it rained heavily, didn't it?" was the best he could do.



(From right) Syed Shahabuddin, Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav at a pro-reservation rally: poor turnout

Within the Cabinet, there were growing fears that V.P. Singh had made the first major miscalculation of his career. Whereas earlier, the opposition to reservation had come from Arun Nehru and his friends, now, the dissenters were drawn from nearly every camp. At the last meeting of the Union Council of Ministers, V.P. Singh sat silently while his colleagues took the Mandal report apart. Among those who expressed grave reservations were Srikant Jena, Inder Gujral, Nathuram Mirdha, Raja Ramanna, M.G.K. Menon and M.S. Gurupadaswamy.

The views of Arun Nehru and his friends (Arif Mohammad Khan, Satyapal Malik, Ajit Singh, etc.) were already well-known. So finally, the Raja was left with just Paswan and Yadav along with Nitish Kumar, a Union minister of state from Bihar. That break-up—more than anything else—drove home to him the extent to which he had cut himself off from the Indian





V.P. Singh: playing the caste card

Forty-two years after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, caste is back in politics. And an unsavoury breed of politicians is defiantly upholding regressive values

political consensus.

He responded in two ways: with concessions and bravado. The concessions were relatively minor. After Raja Ramanna pointed out the dangers posed by reservations to our scientific establishment, V.P. Singh announced that the Mandal recommendations would not apply to services related to science, technology, space and atomic energy. Ramanna was only partly mollified: his criticisms had been general in scope and not related solely to his own field.

It was the bravado that V.P. Singh was really counting on. Casting himself as a messiah of the backwards he told Parliament that each time anybody came forward to help the downtrodden, vested interests always opposed his endeavours. There was no caste war, he told incredulous MPs with a straight face, the scattered violence was the inevitable consequence of a revolutionary change directed at assisting the poor and the dispossessed.

This was nonsense, of course. SUNDAY has learned that before V.P. Singh announced his government's acceptance of the Mandal Commission Report, he had asked his trusted cabinet secretary Vinod Pande to prepare a paper on the subject. Pande sent him a 40-page note, predicting that a kind of caste war would result.

V.P. Singh disregarded this paper because he needed an effective populist stunt to counter Devi Lal's *kisan* rally. The cabinet secretariat was given 24 hours to prepare another note. This time Pande left the drafting to his subordinates and a seven-page paper in favour of the report was duly forwarded to the Prime Minister.

The Raja was pleased with its contents and went ahead and announced that the government was accepting the Mandal recommendations.

In the case of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, there is very little doubt that he regards the Mandal report as nothing more than a means of ensuring his political survival. Though his enemies have sought to portray him as a casteist, the truth is that V.P. Singh has never really thought in terms of the advancement of Ahirs, Kurmis and Yadavs. What caste sympathies he has demonstrated in the course of his career have been those that have benefited his own caste: the Rajputs.

Last week, Rajiv Gandhi embarrassed the Prime Minister in Parliament by digging out an interview he had given a few months ago. Asked about reservation, V.P. Singh had said: "The Mandal report is a political strategy and it would be foolish to implement it." Why had the Prime Minister changed his stand, asked Rajiv. V.P. Singh had no answer.

The way most national politicians see it, the issue goes beyond reservation and into the nature of Indian politics. Because of the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, India managed to move away from a society that was based on caste and create a political structure in which caste became less and less important. The sole exception was made for the Harijans because it was reckoned that Hindu society had treated them so appallingly that some positive discrimination was called for.

Now, by recasting society in terms of caste, V.P. Singh was creating a situation in which caste would *never* be forgotten and in which, everybody would have to know which caste his colleagues were. The Gandhian ideal of a casteless society had been junked.

It could have been said of V.P. Singh that he had not thought the issue out in detail, but remarkably, when Rajiv Gandhi asked him on the floor of the Lok Sabha if he believed in a casteless society, the Raja chose not to respond.

Finally, that was what was worrying. For the first time in its history, free India had a Prime Minister who had let political expediency drive him so far from the post-Independence consensus that he no longer found it necessary to affirm his faith in a casteless society.

It did not help matters that his chief lieutenant in his latest enterprise was a naked casteist. Intervening in the debate on the Mandal report, Sharad Yadav told Parliament that everybody believed in the caste system. As MPs looked shocked, he challenged: "Is there anybody here apart from Rajiv Gandhi who has married outside his caste?"

It was the audacity of the approach that astonished MPs. Forty-two years after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, caste was back in Indian politics. And under the pretext of packing government offices and medical colleges with Yadavs and Kurmis, an unsavoury breed of politicians was defiantly upholding those regressive values that the liberal society had pledged to uproot.

The tragedy was that the Prime Minister of India had reached the stage where he would let them get away with it if he could cling to his South Block desk for a few more weeks. ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

That's my seat

Is it? Complaining workers, students and politicians feel the Raja's moves on reservation are political, not practical



"Respected Rashtrapatiji, By the grace of God Almighty, I have got the privilege of presenting this report to you..."

If the late B.P. Mandal knew what his 1980 letter to Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, submitting the Backward Classes Commission report would do to the country a decade later, he might have invoked divine benediction of a very different kind. Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh is luckier. He may yet have the opportunity.

But only just. Ever since the Raja decided to implement the Mandal Commission's report which recommends a 27 per cent reservation for 'backward' classes in government jobs—over and above the 22.5 per cent that already exists for Scheduled Castes and Tribes—the country started to come apart at the seams.

Scores of people have died in anti-reservation riots, hundreds have been injured and thousands arrested. As grave as the body count, the administration regularly grinds to a halt in various parts of the country—when the privileged and the underprivileged face off in a row as old as the caste system itself—closing down government offices, paralysing trade, stalling education and disrupting citizens' lives in every way. Graver still, for V.P. Singh and his shaky, nine-month-old government, is the distinct possibility that the end is near.

"Merit kahan paida hota hai?" (Is merit born anywhere?) "...if injustice is being done to the people, we should not withdraw"

—V.P. SINGH, defending the additional 27 per cent reservations

"What Mr V.P. Singh has done in the name of reservation to the backward classes is a total fraud on them

—RAJIV GANDHI

"One should not speak with an eye to catch votes. One must speak realistically..." how can you improve the lot of these people by only reserving a place?"

—JYOTI BASU

For one thing, the reservation issue over 'other backward classes' (OBCs) is enough to turn political friends into cornered enemies. For another, to turn one section of a sympathetic vote-bank into avenging angels.

Janata Dal heavyweight and Orissa chief minister, Biju Patnaik, flatly refused to implement the Raja's will in his home state. Communist Party of India (Marxist) don Jyoti Basu, the chief minister of West Bengal and a key central government supporter, reacted acidly. "One should not speak with an eye to catch votes," he said. "One must speak realistically." For Basu, like numerous other politicians wary of antagonising constituents, reality meant holding off the central diktat.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was dismissive of the recommendations and plainly angry at another of the government's suggestions: for adding a further ten per cent reservation for minorities, which will bring the reserved bracket up to 59.5 per cent. "Why not declare the entire Indian people backward?" remarked BJP president L.K. Advani.

As for the avenging angels, violence appeared to be the only way out for a chance of redressal (*see story on page 27*).

The signs are ominous. For instance, a 30-year-old officer in New Delhi's ministry of defence points out that if the OBC quotas become effective in his department—in addition to the SC/ST quotas—he will get his next promotion at the age of 53. As a result, the army captain is on the lookout for a private sector job—some National Front politicians are keen



PROTEST: V.P. Singh's decision has sparked off countrywide agitations

that reservations apply to the private sector, too, but that will mean an all-out war—and is catching up on his reading at work. Like most of his colleagues. Says he: "We have lost the will to work."

If this sentiment applies to the Air Force and the Indian Navy—besides the millions employed by the central and state governments—India could be facing its worst crisis since Independence. "Most of the beneficiaries of the Mandal Commission are just like any of us," says a senior, non-quota defence ministry official. "Extending reservations to the OBCs would mean that a good number of well-educated and well-off employees would get quicker promotions. I ask you, is this fair?"

The implicit suggestion is that sometimes, thanks to the quota system, undeserving people can get ahead of the better qualified simply by taking advantage of the reservation rules. This, say critics, would ruin efficiency completely. And casteist horror stories are already doing the rounds: do not go to a SC/ST/OBC doctor, goes one, because he is sure to kill you, he simply does not have the expertise. Do not go to a 'backward' architect, because the house he builds for you will surely fall down. Do not hire a quota-qualified engineer, he probably cannot use a calculator, and so on down the professions.

The Anti-Mandal Commission Forum, a New Delhi organisation that cropped up mere days after the government's pro-reservation policy went public, reacted caustically. It called the report a "farce in the name of social justice, a slap in the face of education and merit, a vote-catching measure based on censuses taken in 1891 and 1931 and misuse of power by the minority government...we Indians do indeed face a bleak future if we do not rise in unison against this injustice and blatant violation of the Fundamental Right of Equal Opportunity".

The anti-reservationists may have been still more upset if they knew what Mandal nearly recommended. "The population of OBCs, both Hindu and non-Hindu, is around 52 per cent of the total population of India. Accordingly," says the report, "52 per cent of all posts under the central government should be reserved for them." Perhaps the Commission, realising what a furore this would create, cut back in the very next sentence: "But this provision may go against the law laid down in a number of Supreme Court judgements wherein it has been held that a total quantum of reservation under Article 15 (4) and 16 (4) of the Constitution should be below 50 per cent...in view of this restraint, the Commission is obliged to recommend a (OBC) reservation of 27 per cent only, even though their population is twice this figure."

So, keep it all down to 49.5 per cent, a mere 0.5 per cent below the constitutionally debated limit, and all is well

This probably explains why students are at the forefront of the anit-Mandal agitation, afraid of losing out to quota-based compatriots in the rat race for better education and better jobs. Conversely, it also explains why there are as many pro-reservationists on the streets today as anti-reservationists. The "bleak future" that the Forum cites is as much applicable to the under-privileged as it is to the privileged.



M. KISHAN

ANTI-RESERVATION RIOT: setting the country aflame

And in India, the under-privileged are larger in number. A reason why the Raja, despite all sorts of protest, has stuck to his guns. "So long as 22.5 per cent population of the country (SC/ST) have just eight per cent employment in the A and B categories of the central government services," the PM told the Lok Sabha, "and so long as the backwards, despite their being 52 per cent of the population, have just four per cent share, the privileged few will continue to say that Manu has been forgotten." But what about merit? "Merit *kahan paida hota hai?* (Is merit born anywhere?)" shot back the Raja, saying that surely, all the Scheduled Castes, Tribes and OBCs were not completely devoid of merit.

Granted, the PM has a point, and a noble one. One that speaks of the best intentions of any developing society—especially one so one-sided and fractious as India's. But provided the PM went about doing it the right way. Or, had the Mandal Commission gone about it the right way.

"The Mandal Commission Report does not constitute a policy," says professor Veena Das of the Delhi School of Sociology. "It is a very populist measure and the report is severely flawed on methodological and sociological counts." The government, says Das, has taken up rhetoric of the

Going by the book

The Indian Constitution is not much help on reservation—there are far too many possible interpretations

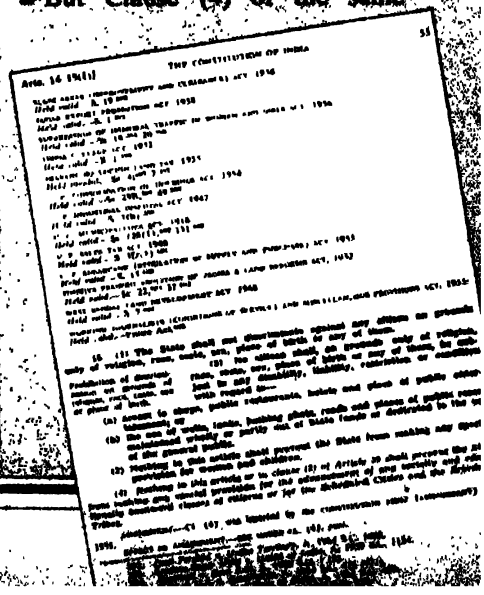
"In India, the State is by far the largest employer and the greatest dispenser of all sorts of patronage. Employment under the State and admission to various technical and professional institutions represent to an Indian citizen (the) two most important opportunities to participate in the life of the nation."
—Mandal Commission Report of the Backward Classes Commission, 1980.

The State recognises this fact. So does the present administration, who pushed through with the Mandal Commission's recommendations after two successive governments kept it on hold for a decade. The Indira and Rajiv regimes were prudent, say V.P. Singh's critics, decrying the Raja's implementing the Mandal Commission recommendations literally—for political ends. The Gandhis realised that patronage is the order of politics, they had to be selective about it, playing the cow belt against the south, playing for the minority vote while keeping the majority pacified, and so on.

The Raja is different. He has gone for the majority—"Twenty two point five per cent of the population (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) have eight per cent of the jobs, 52 per cent of the population (backwards) have just a four per cent share," etc.—citing socio-economic inequalities and constitutional rights. Only, it has backfired. The PM's additional 27 per cent reservation targeted at other backward classes (OBCs) has kicked off a massive, nationwide row.

And the Constitution is not much help for sorting things out, because while it guarantees against discrimination of any kind, it lays itself open to any number of legal interpretations, thanks to any number of provisions and sub-clauses. Prosecutors can have a field day. So can the defence.

- Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits the state from discriminating on grounds of race, religion, caste, sex or place of birth.
- But Clause (4) of the same



backward classes in a cynical way, "and this has become the substitute for real policy measures". The government, says Das, has announced benefits, but not done any homework as to who the real beneficiaries are.

Or, it is spreading falsehood. "(Labour and welfare minister Ram Vilas) Paswan says that Shudras are the most oppressed. But it is a heterogenous category which includes the rich peasant class and is very often responsible for the oppression," says Das.



PRO-RESERVATION STIR: afraid of losing out

Some reservation flaws:

■ The identification of backward classes by caste was done on the assumption that "caste being the basic unit of social organisation of Hindu society, castes are the only readily and clearly recognisable and persistent collectivities..."

Right two thousand years ago, but misleading today. Hindus are not the only Indians, low caste people hold ministerial jobs, as does Paswan, the labour minister.

■ Shudras are the lowest of the low, so they need reservation.

According to our flawed caste system, yes. But according to today's reality, no. While caste wars run rampant in places like Bihar, with Thakurs and Brahmins killing Harijans, etc., this does not prevent them getting jobs. Incidentally, 16th century India saw a number of Shudra kingdoms.

■ Defining a caste group as being permanent. The fact that caste boundaries are not solid structures any more should have been recognised. Similarly, the fact that the OBC tag is a constantly shifting one and it is virtually impossible to pin down a person as an OBC, especially from decades-old information.

■ Not recognising backwardness as an economic malady.

Ultimately, a person is underprivileged on economic grounds, anywhere in the world, except for South

Article specifies that nothing shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of socially or educationally backward classes, or for SC/STs.

■ However, there is a catch to the Clause. While it may appear to be a blanket provision, the basic problem is how to identify a 'legitimate' backward class. Besides, such "special provisions" may be struck down if they clash with the Fundamental Right of Equality guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution. For instance, according to Law Commission member P.M. Bakshi, reservation of an excessively high percentage of seats in technical institutions for such classes would be void. In fact, he says that reservation in excess of 50 per cent of available seats may not be upheld by law. (Including the Commission's recommendations for OBCs, total reservation exceeds Bakshi's premise.)

■ Judgements in at least four Supreme Court and High Court cases support the view that reservations made by virtue of Article 15 (4) cannot be "unduly wide". This is because Article 15 (4) has to be read with certain other provisions.

■ However, Article 46, a Directive Principle of State Policy, decrees that it is the State's obligation to promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, particularly SC/STs. Article 16 (4) backs this up, favouring reservation of posts for "any backward classes" which, in the State's opinion, are not adequately represented in government service.

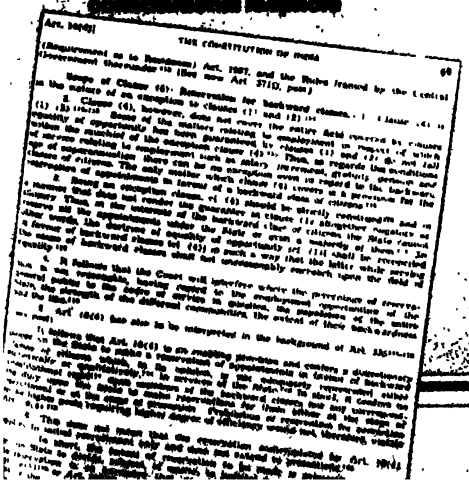
■ On the the other hand—and this is a major anti-reservationist plank—Article 335 lays down that reservation claims shall be considered in consistency with the "maintenance of efficiency in administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of a union or a state". The Supreme Court has virtually held the efficiency of the administration as a limitation on Article 16 (4).

On the reservation count, say numerous legal experts, the Constitution can be used any which way to make a point in court.

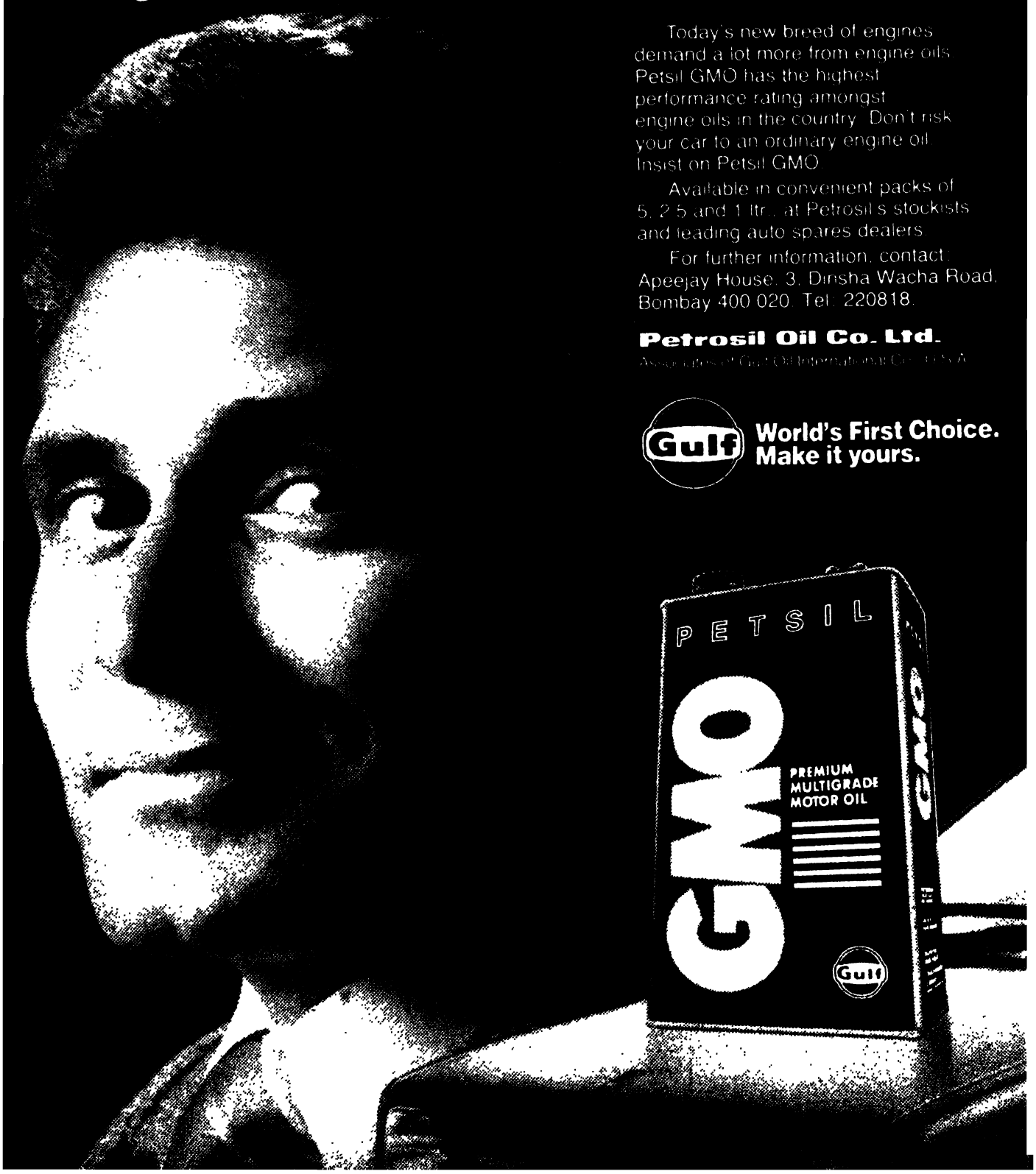
But even the Constitution—and the law—require constants. Such as current, up-to-date lists of reserved classes to haggle over, if need be.

According to Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution, the President may, by public notification, specify the castes, races or tribes to be included as SC/STs or backward in any state or Union Territory. The problem is, the Mandal Commission's lists relate to findings in 1980, and a decade is a long time for change. In Orissa, for example, 20 castes listed as OBCs by the Commission are already on the SC/ST list and several of the 224 castes and sub-castes on the OBC list are non-existent. Over to the Constitution, the Raja and Jaya-

CONTRADICTION: while Article 15(1) prohibits reservation, Articles 15(4) and 16(4) provide the constitutional loophole



"My car moves on petrol. My engine runs on GMO."



Today's new breed of engines demand a lot more from engine oils. Petsil GMO has the highest performance rating amongst engine oils in the country. Don't risk your car to an ordinary engine oil. Insist on Petsil GMO.

Available in convenient packs of 5, 2.5 and 1 ltr., at Petrosil's stockists and leading auto spares dealers.

For further information, contact: Apeejay House, 3, Dinsha Wacha Road, Bombay 400 020. Tel: 220818.

Petrosil Oil Co. Ltd.

Associates of Gulf Oil International Inc., U.S.A.

Gulf **World's First Choice. Make it yours.**

Who's what? And how

The Mandal Commission's yardstick for identifying 'backwards'

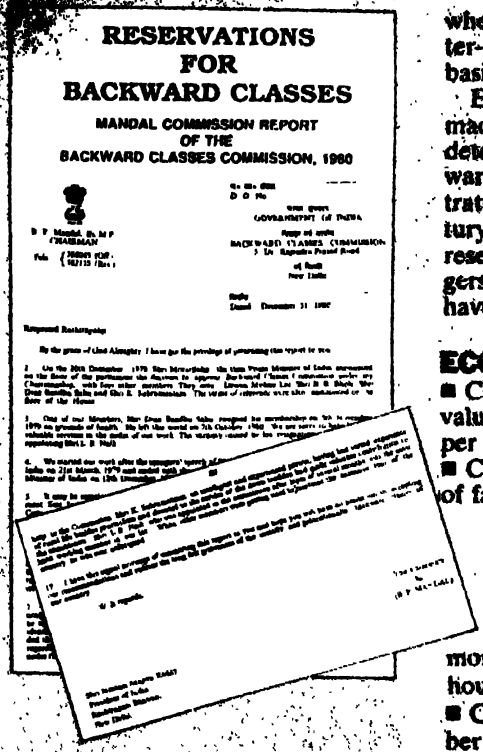
The Mandal Commission evolved 11 indicators for determining "social and educational backwardness". These were grouped under three heads—social, educational and economic—these were:

SOCIAL INDICATORS

- Castes/classes considered as socially backward by others.
- Castes/classes which mainly depend on manual labour for their livelihood.
- Castes/classes where at least 25 per cent females and 10 per cent males above the state average get married at an age below 17 years in rural areas and at least 10 per cent females and 5 per cent males do so in urban areas.
- Castes/classes where participation of females in work is at least 25 per cent above the state average.

EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS

- Castes/classes where the number of children in the age group of 5-15 years who never attended school is at least 25 per cent above the state average.
- Castes/classes where the rate of student drop-out in the age group of 5-15 years is at least 25 per cent above the state average.
- Castes/classes amongst whom the proportion of matriculates is at least 25 per cent below the state average.


RESERVATIONS
FOR
BACKWARD CLASSES
MANDAL COMMISSION REPORT
OF THE
BACKWARD CLASSES COMMISSION, 1980

CONTROVERSIAL: sociologists claim the report is flawed

The educational parameters appear to be sensible. As far as the economic indicators go, the drinking water provisi encompasses vast stretches of the countryside. And with increasing breakdown of civic amenities, big chunks of cities, where drinking water—any water—is unavailable on a regular basis.

Even if the entire government machinery was put to work to determine exactly *who* is a 'backward', it would take the administration till well into the next century to figure out eligibility for job reservations. The courts, the foreigners and the vote-banks should have interesting times ahead.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

- Castes/classes where the average value of family assets is at least 25 per cent below the state average.
- Castes/classes where the number of families living in *kuccha* houses is at least 25 per cent above the state average.
- Castes/ classes where the source of drinking water is beyond half a kilometre for more than 50 per cent of the households.
- Castes/classes where the number of households having taken consumption loan is at least 25 per cent above the state average.

Of the lot, some yardsticks are plainly nonsensical. For example, if a rich person thinks a less well-heeled soul is beneath contempt, then the latter, according to the Commission, is a 'backward'. This would include everyone in the country, except the richest person.

Africa, where the colour of skin plays a larger role. The Mandal Commission cites vague generalities such as those regarded as socially backward by "others" to determine OBCs. Incredibly, both the Commission and the Raja played down the economic side to the story.

Says Das, the sociologist: "A policy of reservation which signals that merit and excellence are at a discount will encourage a brain drain amongst students and scientists which the country can ill afford."

This comment may sound a little far-fetched, snobbish and a little like playing the prophet of doom, but this future is not impossible. Perhaps a way out, suggests Manoranjan Mohanty, a professor of political science at the University of Delhi, is to make reservation a part of a wider range of policies. "For real development of the deprived sections," says Mohanty, "the government has to formulate special education programmes, special employment drives, land reforms, increase small industry capacity. Productive assets have to be created and made available to this section." He adds: "Without these, it is futile to talk about their share in the power structure. In fact, the government has not even spoken about reservations for the Eighth Plan."

Perhaps, the government would be better off implementing the various national missions—immunisation, literacy, oilseeds, drinking water, etc.—to improve the lot of the people, *all* the people, rather than restricting itself to proselytisation through reservation. Even the Mandal report suggests criteria on economic grounds (*see box: Who's what? And how*).

The fact that the present regime has slowed down on the missions and the fact that the Raja has totally discounted reservation on economic grounds lend credence to the argument that the entire OBC issue is nothing but the election stunt of a government which senses its doom. ●

Nirmal Mitra and Minu Jain/New Delhi

Issues, not personality

Madhu Kishwar replies to V. Gangadhar



V. Gangadhar's comments in *Untruth Involves Us All (Media Musings* 2-8 September) are such a confused jumble that virtually every paragraph contradicts some other. The writer has clearly not done his homework and displays a flagrant disregard for facts. It is, therefore, necessary to set the record straight, if for no other reason than to clear Mr Gangadhar's confusion.

Gangadhar attributes my critique of the Shourie style of journalism to a recent "fall out" and asserts that Shourie and I had till recently, been working together for "human rights, value-based politics". I do wish it was true. For, it grieves me no end that someone as talented, energetic and hardworking as Arun Shourie should have parted company with human rights and civil liberties groups so long ago. I am sure my disappointment at Arun Shourie's turning against human rights groups, beginning with Operation Bluestar in Punjab, is shared by many other activists fighting for the same cause. How we wish Arun Shourie had been worthy of the charge Gangadhar levels against him, and had actually been associated with all those who "vent their ire against state terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir". Had Gangadhar actually glanced through the *Indian Express* instead of simply "musing" over it, he would have known that Shourie, much to the consternation of human rights activists, consistently supported the strong-arm politics of state repression in dealing with the crisis in Punjab and Kashmir. There has been no change in this stance, whether Shourie was pro or anti-Rajiv.

In fact, as early as January 1986, I had drawn attention to Shourie's predilection for spreading hatred and mistrust of minorities especially Muslims. In my response to his three-part article on Jinnah (*The Man Who Broke Up India*), I had pointed out that under the guise of writing about the much-hated Jinnah, Shourie was actually using the past to (a) justify the state machinery's becoming more and more repressive (b) argue in favour of a highly centralised, authoritarian polity and (c) justify the increasingly communal and anti-minority standpoint being assumed by Hindus, in the name of national unity. (26 January, 1986. *The Illustrated Weekly of India).*

This is just to remind Gangadha, that the so-called "fall out" is neither sudden nor recent.

Gangadhar accuses Independent Initiative of being "selective in exposing corruption and poll malpractices" by focusing on "selected constituencies represented by people it does not like" referring to what he thinks was its pro-Janata Dal and anti-Congress bias. But then he himself admits that Independent Initiative reported widespread rigging in Ajit Singh's constituency Baghpat, i.e., it did not spare Janata Dal leaders when it saw evidence of poll rigging being done at their behest.

Independent Initiative was a short-lived coming together of various individuals and members of human rights organisations with diverse political inclinations. The only point of common consensus amongst us was that elections should be fair and peaceful, and malpractices if any, should not go unreported. I have no hesitation in admitting that most of us who volunteered for the Independent Initiative poll monitoring exercise, had strong misgivings about the continuation of Congress rule and feared that the party would use any means, fair or foul, to "win" the elections. Also since they controlled the government machinery at the Centre and in many of the states, rigging seemed more likely to take place on behalf of the Congress party. Hence the special focus on the constituencies of Congress stalwarts, especially Rajiv Gandhi's Amethi. However, even though a few members of Independent Initiative were close to the Janata Dal/ National Front, most of us were and remained distant and aloof from the present ruling party.

The chief flaw in the Independent Initiative effort was not its political bias but its poor organisation, *ad hoc* ill-planned manner of functioning, which meant it was able to monitor only a handful of constituencies, chiefly those within easy reach of Delhi. Most of us were very unhappy with this limitation which could have easily been overcome with some foresight





I have not been, and am not, a defender of (left) Devi Lal style politics, despite its pro-rural bias. But I am against the witch-hunt being carried out by the Arun Shourie-edited *Indian Express* with Lal as the target

and systematic planning. But that is not what Gangadhar objects to. His charge relates to our wilful partisan reports and would be valid only if he could demonstrate that Independent Initiative teams resorted to untruths or deliberate cover-up exercises. Not even its harshest critics have alleged that Independent Initiative teams reported rigging where it had not taken place or that it failed to report poll malpractices in constituencies of non-Congress leaders despite being witness to them. Even though I was not among the founders of the organisation, but only one of the many volunteers who came forward to form teams for the polling-day monitoring, I can say with certainty that there was no resistance to our suggestions for including any constituency where Janata Dal leaders were likely to use strong-arm methods to get votes. That is how Devi Lal's Rohtak and Sikar and Ajit Singh's Baghpat came to be included.

Gangadhar accuses me of "ignoring the mass killings by terrorists in Punjab while giving vent to "ire against state terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir". It is distressing that 'media analysts' do not care to look at the record carefully, and stick to ill-informed generalities. *Manushi* and I have been unequivocal in condemning terrorist violence and have spoken openly against their indulging in gun battles in religious places as well as their attempts to foment a situation of civil war within the Sikh community. I suggest that Mr Gangadhar look at some of the previous issues of *Manushi*, especially number 30 (1985), number 32 (1986), number 41 (1987) and number 58 (1990).

Mr Gangadhar's contemptuous dismissal of the efforts of human rights groups in speaking against state repression is worrying. For, it represents a trend: of people becoming increasingly intolerant of articulation of grievances by groups that consider themselves wronged.

Finally, it really surprises me that Gangadhar should read my article in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (19-25 August 1990) as a defence of Devi Lal and ridicule it as "the sudden awakening of rural consciousness among a section of our urban elite" born out of "a guilty conscience". I have not been, and am not, a defender of Devi Lal style politics, despite its pro-rural bias. The Operation Hush-Up following his granddaughter-in-law's death was no less reprehensible than similar attempts to extricate Sanjay Singh from his alleged involvement in the Syed Modi murder case. My purpose in writing that article was to protest against the witch hunt being carried out by the *Indian Express* and emulated by some others as well. There is cause for serious alarm at the increasing consolidation of the "Ramlila syndrome" in Indian journalism, whereby certain politicians begin to be systematically portrayed as the incarnations of evil and are sought to be destroyed like Ravanas as soon as they lose favour with the press.

It is not just Antulay who suffered this fate. Chandra Shekhar has been destroyed in a similar fashion. Likewise, Rajiv Gandhi. He was unnecessarily projected as a goody-goody Mr Clean when he first came to power. And then rubbished in a disproportionate manner when he lost favour with certain sections of the press. The tendency of newspaper editors to join different political lobbies to bring down rival politicians is a substantial hurdle in the way of their performing the job of disseminating information with some degree of impartiality and credibility. I, for one, would be no less comfortable if the *Indian Express* began targeting Bal Thackeray or L.K. Advani for "extermination" the way it went after Devi Lal, Antulay or Rajiv Gandhi.

As for the "awakening of rural consciousness" I would request Mr Gangadhar to confirm for himself that it is neither "sudden" nor born out of a "guilty conscience". Since 1978, when the first issue of *Manushi* was published, we have tried our utmost, with modest success, to focus on the life conditions of the most disadvantaged sections of India's women, namely, the rural poor. The inaugural issue of *Manushi* deliberately chose the picture of a peasant/Dalit woman from Maharashtra to put on the cover. We have maintained this commitment despite repeated protests from many of our urban readers that *Manushi* does not give adequate coverage to the problems of the urban middle-class woman, does not highlight enough "success stories". We do it not out of "guilt" but from a sense of enlightened self-interest. For, we believe, that the urban elite can ignore the problems of the poor and disadvantaged sections of this country only at its own peril.

Attempts to create islands of opulence in big cities while letting rural India rot due to neglect, will lead the country to an inevitable civil war, jeopardising our very survival, not just our privileges. In fact, my long-standing complaint against Devi Lal is that his commitment to bettering the lot of the rural population is half-hearted and erratic, that he is too engrossed in the politics of crumb-sharing to pay single-minded attention to improving the lot of the peasantry on whose behalf he claims to speak.

Unfortunately, our mass media is so deeply steeped in its pro-urban bias that it cannot stomach even the half-hearted, erratic, pro-rural noises of a Devi Lal and must hound him out in order to silence him. •





There is no cause for serious alarm at the "Ramlila syndrome" in Indian politics, whereby certain politicians are portrayed as Ravanas and then destroyed. Both Chandra Shekhar (right) and Rajiv Gandhi suffered this fate

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Mandalam! Mandalam!

The Raja's latest mantra to enchant the electorate



Those whom the gods would destroy they first make mad. V.P. Singh is so beside himself with joy at having discovered what he thinks is the sure-fire way to rid himself of the Tau, Chandra Shekhar, Biju Patnaik, Advani, Jyoti Basu, Rajiv Gandhi and everybody else in one fell blow that he hasn't paused to consider whether Mandal is a cracker—or just a damp squib. And what boots us to mock him his moment of hope? For, the more he nurses the illusion that Mandal will lead him to Valhalla, the sooner can we all hope to see him come a cropper. Or, perhaps, it is because he knows the end is nigh that he clutches at the one straw that no one else wants to own.

If there was any sincerity to this government having put Mandal on top of the nation's agenda, surely one would have thought the Mandal Report would have warranted, at least, a section to itself in the National Front manifesto? But, no, all that the electorate got ten months ago in the NF manifesto was a throwaway line (comprising all of *nine* words!) tagged on to a turgid paragraph about the "weaker sections". No wonder neither ghostwriter Arun Shourie nor drafting committee chairman Chandra Shekhar paid it the slightest attention. And no wonder either that, Janata Dal MP, Ram Avadesh Singh Yadav (the very symbol of all that is—or could be—backward in our benighted land!) twice walked noisily out of Central Hall protesting the NF government's failure, in successive President's addresses to Parliament, to give any meaningful assurances on implementing Mandal.

And now, suddenly, nothing it seems matters more to V.P Singh than the precipitate implementation of a report gathering dust for the best part of a decade. His calculation is breathtakingly cynical. Since more than half the electorate (52 per cent to be precise) is "backward", bring them on board—and the battle's all but won. Add to this 22 per cent SC/STs—and that makes a nice three-quarters. Garnish with a twist of minority sentiment—and the count goes to 90 per cent. Throw in ten per cent reservation for the "poor" and VP has a full hand! There is no concern in any of this for the really backward. Merely an electoral stunt in the Master Acrobat's continuing display of vertebraeless twisting.

Hence too VP's shrill refrain: are you for Mandal? Or are you against him? Answer! As in this shibboleth lay the litmus test of political respectability.

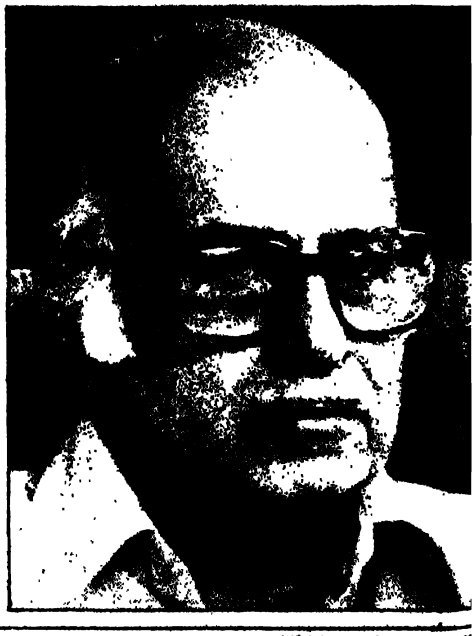
Where, might one ask was VP himself all these years?

For 18 months after Mandal gave his report, V.P. Singh was chief minister of our largest state. Not a *choo* on Mandal escaped him in all that time. He then became a minister in Indiraji's Cabinet. And for the next two-and-a-half years kept quiet as a dormouse. Not even in debates in Parliament did he vouchsafe the country that his heart belonged to Mandal. Elevated to No. 2 in the Rajiv government, the Raja displayed his ancestral courage: not a murmur escaped him, not a sigh of dissent. He tells us now that he was too overawed to speak. To squeaks of delight from his yokels, he tells of how Rajiv Gandhi's dictatorial ways gave no scope for his conscience to give tongue. Which makes one merely wonder why this brave Thakur, scion of the 1000-year old House of Jaichand, clung as tenaciously as he did to his seat in the Cabinet. And, when Rajiv booted him out, went on yowling for months, "He is my leader, my only leader!"—in a desperate bid to be taken back in. The fact is that the Commission's Report was totally peripheral to VP's concerns—until the calculus of caste vote-banks woke him up to the [illegible] of Mandal! Far be it from us to tell him everything you wanted to know about casteism—but were afraid to ask.

Which brings us to V.P. Singh's next debating point: show us the way, he taunts the Congress, by ending caste-based reservations in Congress-run Andhra and Karnataka.

Not even Jawaharlal Nehru could stop state governments from succumb-





ing to the populist folly of caste-based reservations. But he did all he could to inure the Centre from the disease. Which is why in August 1961, the Government of India formally rejected the Kalelkar Commission's lists of backward castes—pending the devising of "objective criteria" to identify the backward classes. The damage of caste-based reservations was thus contained. V.P. Singh has now reopened that Pandora's box. He is being utterly disingenuous if he can't see the difference between reservations in the states and reservations at the Centre.

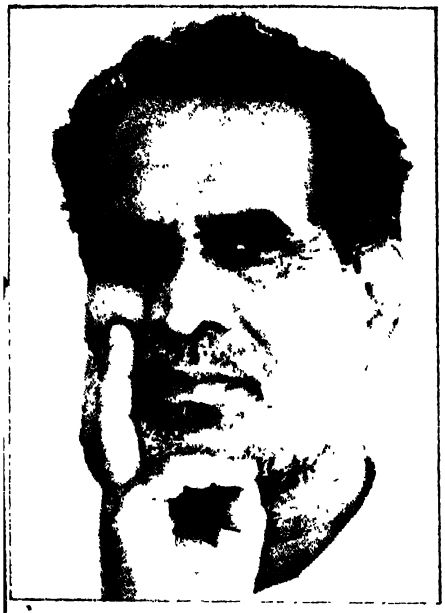
First, it is central services officers (IAS, IPS etc.) who man the top administrative posts even in the states. So, the damage done to administrative efficiency (and probity) by caste-based reservations in the provincial civil services has, for decades, been offset by the refusal to countenance such a basis for reservations in the all-India services. Now the sins of the states will be compounded by the sins of the Centre.

Second, the escape route from casteist reservations in the states has always been service under the central government. Now that route is blocked. It can only be unblocked if V.P. Singh is quickly sent packing.

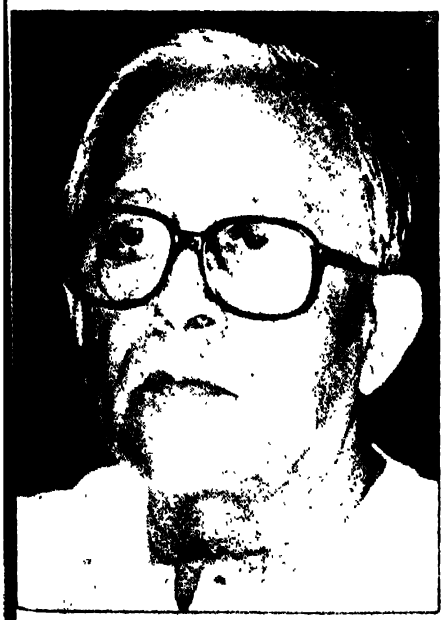
Third, the constitutional responsibility for ensuring the unity of the country vests in the Centre, not in the states. Caste-based reservations rend the fabric of our nationhood. What the states can get away with, the Centre can't.

It was from community-based reservations at the Centre that we went from unity to Partition. It is from caste-based reservations that the next greatest threat to our national integration arises. So, a word of advice in your ear, Raja Sahib: it is not enough to take the Jinnah cap off your head. It is over more important to remove Jinnah from your heart.

V.P. Singh is so beside himself with joy at having discovered what he thinks is the sure-fire way to rid himself of the **Tau, Chandra Shekhar, Biju Patnaik, Advani, Jyoti Basu,** and **Rajiv Gandhi,** that he hasn't paused to consider whether Mandal is a cracker or a damp squib









A Mandal alphabet

A if for AHIR
Whom VP says he adores
It's his vote that he's after
His real progress he abhors

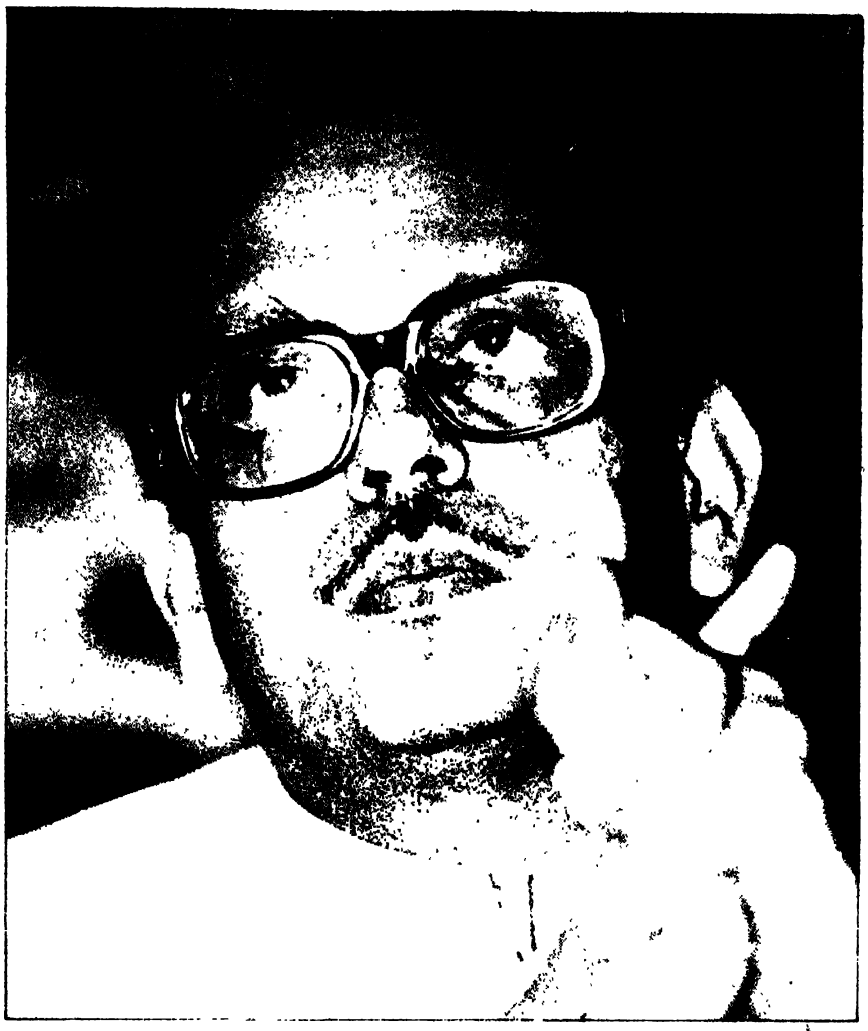
B is for BACKWARD
Emblazoned on the Raja's flag:
"With elections round the corner,
The cat's in the bag!"

C is for CASTE
Our VP's new toy
It may take us to perdition
But for the PM is pure joy

D is for DIALOGUE
That VP eschews
For he fears that it might break
His dream of voters in queues

E is for ELECTORATE
VP's poor dupes
They thought he was straight
And now find he's all hoops!

F is for FORWARD
Who is challenged to fight
For Paswan says caste determines
What is wrong and what is right



The more **V.P. Singh** nurses the illusion that Mandal will lead him to Valhalla, the sooner can we all hope to see him come a cropper. It is because he knows the end is nigh that he clutches at the one straw that no one else wants to own

G if for GOD
Who must save us now
As we shift into reverse
So that forward we go

H is for HOLISTIC:
The Kalelkar/Mandal approach
Which VP's thrown out of the cupboard
Only on jobs to encroach

I is for INDIA
The dream of our youth
Our casteless society
Wrecked by amibitious uncouth

J is for JINNAH
Who cut us in two parts
A trifling matter for VP
Who's splitting us in four castes!

K is for KINETIC
Which is what "potential" becomes
Unless quotas and restrictions
Mess up all the sums

L is for the LAW
As laid down by the Court:
"Don't mire us in caste, please,
Don't cut out future short!"

M is for MANDAL
He of noble aspirations
Alas, the Way to the Other Place
Is paved with good intentions

N is for NATION
Whose standard fluttered in the breeze
Until VP decreed caste and community
On which our nation must freeze

O is for OTHER
Backward Castes in the book
Never mind that it was "Classes"
At which the Commission was to look

P is for the POOR
Who VP says will "dilute"
The vociferous Backwards
With the deaf and the mute

Q is for QUOTAS
That are a matter of birth
For VP has little patience
With merit or with worth

R is for RESERVATIONS
That VP will impose
To cobble an Ajgar together
As to the hustings he goes

S is for the poor STUDENTS
Bludgeoned in the streets
Fodder for the casteists
Who want quotas not feats

T, of course, is the TAU
The cause of it all
Scared Humpty Dumpty silly
Till he had a great fall!

U if for UNITY
The Mahatma's great gift
Born in '32 in Yervada
Now buried in VP's party rift

V is for VICTORY
Which awaits us at the end
When VP is banished
And we're back on the mend!

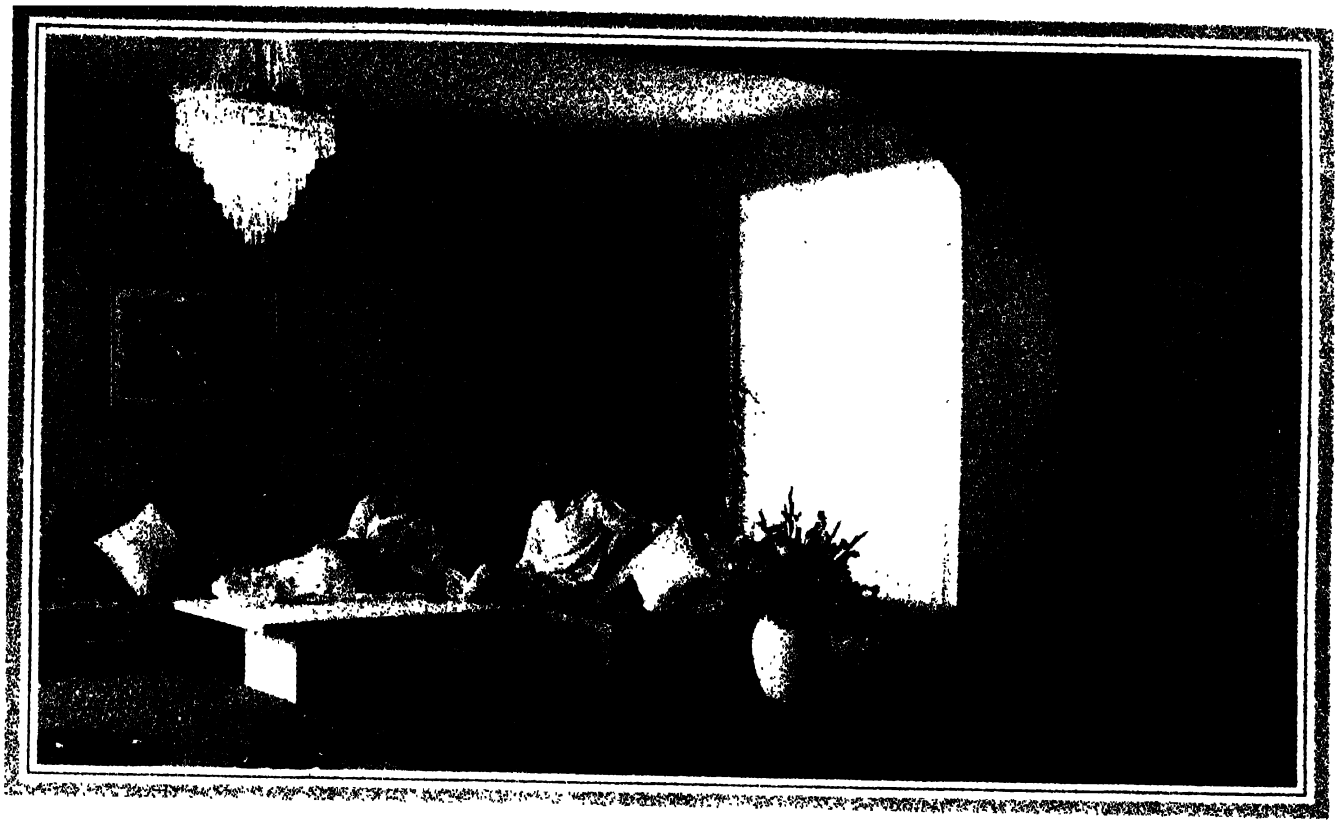
W is for the WARS
In which VP's plunged the country:
Caste Community and Language,
Dehati and *Shehri*

X marks the spot
Where a backward ceases to be,
Transmuted into forward
We must get there, mustn't we?

Y is for our YOUTH
Whose hopes have been marred
As VP chooses to play
His ace casteist card!

And Z is for ZERO
Our VP's preferred mark
For fear that anything higher Might
pull us out of the dark! ●

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position



The Silk People. He loves crystal chandeliers. She loves the candlelight. Their walls love Luxol Silk.

Silk sheen . . . silken feel



Drape your walls with Luxol Silk — the richest emulsion in the world.

BERGER Luxol Silk

BERGER PAINTS

LINTAS (CAL)/BP/LS/P1/2019

In the Gulf, we've to take a little pepper while having a lot of wire rods

Not only in the Gulf, in the USA and in Australia, in Japan and in New Zealand, in Bangladesh, in China and West Germany and in many other countries, Tata Steel, today, is exporting a wide range of products.

The objectives are evidently clear. To ensure foreign exchange earnings, which are a national priority, and to establish a long-term quality leadership for the Company and the country in the global market.

In just six years, Tata Steel (with a turnover of Rs 146 crore) has become one



persuaded people

of the country's largest exporters. Its range not only covers engineering goods and raw materials but also commodities such as black pepper, coffee and black tiger shrimps. In spite of its large imports of equipment and raw materials for the on-going modernisation drive, Tata Steel, today, is a nett exporter. For 1985-86, the Company won the prestigious National Award for Exports.

Today, Tata Steel is spreading all its pioneering expertise and experience across the seas to build a long term base for India—all over the world.

Tata Steel Exports:

Steel and Steel-based engineering products	- Wire rods, re-inforcing bars, structurals, tubes, wires, bars, cranes, rolls, bearings, etc.
Raw Materials	- Chrome ore & concentrates, manganese ore, ferro-manganese, ferro-chrome, charge chrome, refractories, etc.
Commodities	- Black pepper, coffee, black tiger shrimps.



Discussions that are opening up new markets in the Gulf

TATA STEEL
DECADE OF
EXPORTS
1990 2000

TATA STEEL
The first and still the foremost

WHO'S THAT CHAP IN A GANDHI CAP?

The wisdom of asking film star Vinod Khanna to lead an India Day parade down Lexington Avenue, New York, is somewhat questionable. But the paunchy Bappi Lahiri look-alike took his role seriously enough to turn up in the standard politician's ensemble: a white *kurta-pyjama*, complete with Gandhi cap and designer dark glasses.





Vinod Khanna and wife Kavita at the India Day parade; (above) receiving a citation: no, he doesn't look any better in Western clothes

Only, unfortunately, the extremely large actor ended up looking like a villainous politico, straight out of *Aaj Ka MLA*. The only slightly incongruous touch was attractive wife Kavita (nee Daftary), tripping daintily by his side.

Playing the Grand Marshall of the parade organised by the Federation of Indian Association—with such stalwarts as Indian ambassador to the US Abid Hussain, Indian ambassador to the UN C.N. Gharekhan, Indian consul-general Rajendra Rai and New York Mayor David Dinkins in attendance—Khanna made a rousing speech from the review stand, lauding the Indians settled in the States.

They were, he said, not just "acting as ambassadors of their culture but also taking the greatest pride in it and keeping it alive in spite of the geographical distance".

In the evening, however, it was back to the regulation polo-neck shirt and jacket for Khanna, at the dinner hosted by the FIA.

Apparently, he draws the line at fancy dress after eight pm.

COURTING TROUBLE

That's not quite how he would have expected the *Gandhi* saga to end. But director Sir Richard Attenborough may well end up facing criminal charges, levelled by the Government of India.

Apparently, the director had entered into an agreement to hand over a portion of his profits to the Cine Workers Association Welfare Fund. As per this arrangement, Attenborough was to pay Rs 3.8 crores—out of Rs 6.4 crores which constituted his earnings—into the fund.

Only the director reneged on this commitment.



Sir Richard Attenborough: money, money, money

As of now, the government is exercising the soft option of conducting negotiations to work out a compromise. But, disclosed information and broadcasting minister P. Upendra, in the face of Attenborough's continuing intransigence, it may well have to institute a criminal case against the director.

SARA JAHAN MERA

"I don't want this serial to end," wailed Moheena Singh as the last episode of *Sara Jahan Hamara* went on the air.

Her despondency was understandable. The serial, in which the attractive Singh made her debut as director, had been an unqualified hit with prime-time audiences, with Dr Kamat and his little family charming their ways into the hearts of the viewers.

While the cast has dispersed, to either go back to school or move on to other projects, the chirpy director confesses to being dreadfully depressed, now that the serial's over. She has written to Mandi House, asking for an 13-episode extension. "But knowing Doordarshan," she says, "I don't think it will come through. And if it does, the kids will have become moms and dads by then."



Moheena Singh on location: dream debut

But Singh is not wasting any time mourning the attitude of Mandi House. She has already begun work on her next serial, *Professor Vasan*, based on real-life murder mysteries culled from police files.

But even here, Moheena will have a few kids running in and out of the frames. "I can't do without children," she discloses ruefully.

BAREFOOT IN THE MUSEUM

For Maqbool Fida Husain, it's now barefoot at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Merging perfectly into the bearded Roman sculptures in the museum's gallery and sketching for all he's worth, Husain is currently engaged in raising funds for the Indian section, now nearing completion. (It is scheduled for a November opening.)

The rough sketches are only the preliminary work towards a major painting, of which the V&A will make a limited number of copies, each of them signed by the maestro. These will, then, be auctioned off, the money going towards the India Gallery.

Back in Bombay, there will be another auction of a Husain, on the occasion of the painter's 75th birthday, with editor of the *Weekly* and *The Independent*, Pritish Nandy, wielding the hammer.

But before that, the artist will be felicitated by his friends at his Mahalakshmi studio. At least, by those of them who can afford to shell out Rs 1,000 for dinner.

M.F. Husain: from one auction to another

ALOKE MITRA



TAMIL LOVER

His first halt in Madras was at the Hindi Prachar Sabha office. Nonetheless, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav valiantly maintained that he had no desire to impose Hindi on the country.

He was, he informed the bemused Tamilians on his recent visit to their state, only against the use of English. And what's more, he had a special love for the southern languages, especially Tamil.



Mulayam Singh Yadav: Hindi is best, but Tamil's not too bad

The hype notwithstanding, the first question shot at the UP chief minister at his press conference was in English.

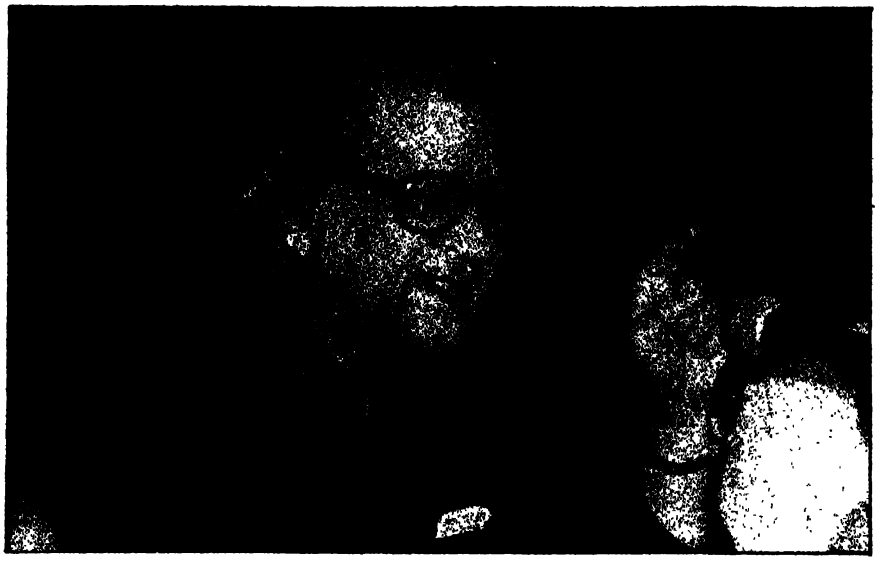
Please switch to Tamil, asked a piqued Mulayam Singh.

I'm sorry, retorted the newsman, my mother tongue is Malayalam. Can you find someone who can translate that into Hindi.

No, there wasn't anyone.

And Yadav answered the question in English.

But no, he hasn't learnt any lessons—neither in Hindi, nor in Tamil. ●



Abid Hussain

INTERVIEW

"India needs the US"

Abid Hussain on India's priorities

H.E. the ambassador of India to the US. This is quite a change for Abid Hussain, former industry and commerce secretary, and the country's most vocal planner. Hussain met SUNDAY's **Siddharth Dube** *in Washington, and the outcome is a frank discussion, where the ambassador's appreciation of US economics comes through clearly. And his dissatisfaction about where India is going wrong. Excerpts from the interview:*

SUNDAY: Is this your first extended stay in the United States?
Abid Hussain: Yes, the very first. And I've never been ambassador either.

Q: This is a major change for you, representing India instead of planning policy.
A: I would say it's a very different job from previous ones that I've held—especially those I've handled in India—whether as commerce secretary, industry secretary or member of the Planning Commission. Those were jobs that concerned planning and executing national policies.

Q: Have there been any challenges already in your tenure as ambassador to the US?
A: There have been a number of interesting challenges that I've encountered in America. When I came here, the first issue was of Super 301—that was the trade problem which we were having with the US. If the US was actually to take action under 301, then I think we would have been very badly hit, because for us, the US is a very important market. We are actually planning to have a higher level of trade.

Therefore, first of all to be c[illegible]d with Japan and Brazil was not [illegible] happy thing. Then, to remain a[illegible] that particular list when the other [illegible] were dropped became all the more obvious, and there was a nervousness in the market both here as well as in India. I'm very happy that the Bush administration was able to find a way out, and that it need not take action under 301.

Q: But the GATT (General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs) deadline...
A: Recently, I met ambassador (Warren) Lavorel, who is the chief negotiator of the US for GATT, and I was very happy that after the 14 June announcement by US trade representative Carla Hills, they have moved quickly to actually terminate Super 301 cases against India, while cases against Japan have not been terminated and simply remain suspended. Now, this is a sign of the US desire to bring a positive note into our relationship. We should capitalise on it and extend our areas of cooperation.

Q: But economic relations with the US are also dependant on India's political situation. Isn't that true?
A: Yes. The second challenge, which is a continuing challenge, relates to Kashmir. I must say that in the context of the changing international scene, we were able to be more effective than we were in the last few years. With the change in the geopolitical situation, with the Soviet Union and the US coming closer, and in the Afghan case a toning down of aggressive postures on both sides, has made things easier.

It is in the background of these geopolitical changes that we were able to convince the US administration, some important people on Capitol Hill and others that India has a good case when it says that secession cannot be tolerated, when it insists that the Kashmir issue should be within the framework of the Shimla agreement. We found that the US administration was responsive to our ideas. The Gates Mission did a marvellous piece of work; they told both the governments over there (Indian and Pakistani) that anybody who precipitated a war would be wrecking its relationship with the US. This was sound advice to some of the hotheads in Pakistan.

Also, we have made it very clear that India believes in freedom of speech and action, and that we have nothing to hide from anybody. But a state can't turn away from a situation where a small group of people are using rifles, bombs and evil equipment for enforcing their will. The state is getti[illegible]volved in a situation which is certainly costing human lives, and we are very unhappy about this, but it is

not a question of our being indifferent to human rights but it is a question of our trying to be effective against terrorism. I think the Government of India took certain bold measures, such as permitting more foreign journalists to go to Punjab and Kashmir, and many of their reports datelined Kashmir and Punjab have convinced people on Capitol Hill that India is not averse to the suggestion that people who want to look into human rights concerns be permitted to do so. Subsequently, the Government of India lifted the ban on Amnesty International.

Q: What is your long-term view of things?

A: There is another challenge that is much more long-term than these passing phases. That is the mutuality of interests between India and the US. I for one definitely believe that the growth and development of India needs the support of the US. This is because the US is a treasure house of knowledge, the treasure house—inspite of financial difficulties—of investment, and also there is no market like this country's.

India has got to think in terms of having access to the US market. India has got to welcome and seek investments and technology from the US. This we can do by assuring people over here that there are very few countries in the developing world where you have a democratic government, a growing capital market, and the infrastructure for private investment to grow and prosper. Many people know it already, but more need to.

Q: These are extraordinary times for the US, with the relaxation of the Cold War, the possibility of war in the Gulf and concerns about a severe recession. What is your assessment of these changes?

A: The first important change is with relation to the Soviet Union. It is in that context that you will find that the US has not paraded its success over the closed market or command market economy of the Soviet Union. They no longer use the vocabulary of defeating the "Satanic Empire" or the "Evil Empire". There is a more sympathetic vocabulary being used for the Soviets. The Bush administration, at least to my understanding, is going all out to accommodate the difficulties of the Soviet leadership and in trying to help them to re-establish themselves in the new context. This is something my predecessors would not have seen. The earlier arrogance is not there.

Even in the Middle East you will see that after taking a decision, the Bush administration did not try to go all alone. Everywhere, they are trying to involve many more countries.

Q: Is there anything for India to learn from the US?

A: One lesson that I have learnt and which I would stress, is we should understand that in order to enrich the poor we don't have to impoverish the rich. And in order to strengthen the weak we don't have to weaken the strong. This lesson must be clearly understood. Unless a country becomes rich in both resources and production, unless its rate of growth and productivity improves, you are not in a position to eradicate poverty. The idea that poverty can be eradicated first and then the growth process should be given an impetus is putting the (Indian) economy on its head. That lesson you can see from here.

The second lesson you get is that the problems of division of wealth will continue to haunt all economies whether they are at a low level or at a high level. It is in the very nature of development that certain disharmonies are created. That is where a state will continuously have to come in to see that private profit does not harm social benefit.

Q: But it would seem that the government here (US) does not intervene despite the enormous numbers of homeless and poor that you see in the country, and even a few streets away from the White House. Why is that?

A: That is because here they really believe that individuals must work out their destinies. They also believe that man is a selfish animal, that this selfishness creates problems, but also creates an incentive or motivation for work. They feel that to eradicate these defects, competition and more competition is needed. We feel, for instance, that the rich or the better off sections must be curbed by the state. In contrast, they (Americans) feel that only competition will pit one man against another in such a way that it will result in a good outcome.

Q: But.....

A: And they believe it. The best thing is that even if you ask the man who is without a job here, he will say "give me more opportunities". But those who are asking for dole are a load on society and they are not the people whose poverty can be eradicated. •

George Bush

"They (the US) have moved quickly to actually terminate Super 301 cases against India"



"In order to enrich the poor we don't have to impoverish the rich. And in order to strengthen the weak we don't have to weaken the strong"

V.P. Singh



What did Santa Claus of Iceland say to the Skypak Man?

"For an extra charge, could you also promise to wear a costume and a beard, when you deliver?"



We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

Avenues:SC:570:90

■ Taxi tipple

Ever since talk of privatisation became the norm of the day, and private air taxi services began springing up, the race to woo passengers is on. Vijay Mallya, who runs Bangalore-based UB Air, a division of his UB Group of companies, is offering his passengers free booze, in a bid to outdo competitors such as Air Asiatic and Indian Airlines. Mallya isn't too worried about spreading the goodies around, as the Bacchanalian blessings come from his own stable, or should one say barrel.

This is a change for the dry-flying airlines crowd in the country. While small operations such as neighbouring Nepal's airline offer a range of liquor—free, of course—to even



Vijay Mallya: cheers!

Economy Class passengers, Indian Airlines makes do with insipid canned juice, and Air India sniffs at the so-called Cattle Class. With UB Air showing the way to happy skies, others are sure to follow. Whoever said flying couldn't be fun?

■ Exit Zenith?

It's time for a bit of reorganisation, time for the streamlined look of the Nineties. That seems to be Zenith Ltd's conclusion. The flagship company of the Ashok Birla group, which is being managed by Yashovardhan Birla—after Ashok's tragic death in February—and his uncle Aditya, has a cash flow problem. To ease off, company officials are thinking of selling Zenith's steel division. Steel specialists Jindal, Mittal, Mukand Ltd and Mahindra Ungine Steel Co. are possible buyers, say industry insiders. The move follows an internal audit by Aditya Birla's finance team, which feels that Zenith has slowed down a bit, and as a group leader, needs to shake off its lethargy. So, the time-tested method of selling off units which are likely to fetch good prices to get some much needed cash. An acceptable move in the West, but one that is only now becoming fashionable in India. If only more companies realised that selling an unit is *not* a sign of weakness, but more a sign that things are likely to get better.



Aditya Birla: diet plan

STOCK QUOTE

"In India, being persecuted seems to be a good thing. Last year, Nusli Wadia made money hand over fist. This year, it's (Dhirubhai) Ambani's turn."

A senior—and surprised—finance ministry official

SHARE OF THE WEEK

Associated Cement Co.

ACC

● It's amazing. There may be ways to stop the stock market, but as things stand now, there doesn't seem to be any way at all to stop the skyward climb of ACC shares. The share has been climbing steadily for the last two months, and last week it crossed Rs 2,000 (on a par value of Rs 100) in kerb deals. The official rate was as impressive. On 7 September, the share opened at Rs 1,660 and zoomed to close at Rs 1,850. No amount of curbs have stalled ACC. While this makes for panicky stock exchange authorities, it makes for a very happy Nani Palkhivala. The ACC chairman has never seen his company's equity go so far so fast.

■ Something wrong, minister?

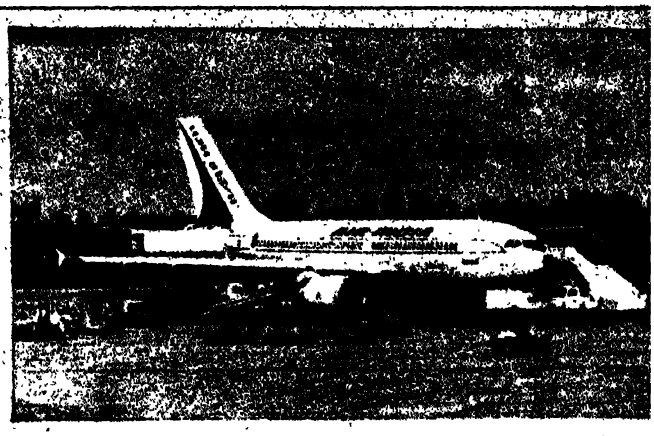
Last week in Calcutta, deputy finance minister Anil Shastri talked about radical tax structures and sweet nothings such as unless our outdated tax structures were not "totally overhauled" for the benefit of the common people, genuine tax payers would suffer. And fat cats will continue to get fatter. Oops, minister? Who is a genuine tax payer? And who exactly are *common* people? Do common people pay tax, people so common as our rich agricultural brethren, some of whom are ministers, even? Does this then mean that taxes go up? No, said Shastri, taxes will go *down* for individuals and industry. But tax revenue will go up, because the collection drive will get more efficient. Sorry minister, that won't happen



Anil Shastri: talking taxes

because we haven't the manpower, the government has made a mess of cutting back on expenditure. And the government needs money, badly. So, the fat cats will get taxed, as will some in the salaried class. There will be no change, except that taxes will only increase. Try again. Genuinely.





THE BELEAGUERED CARRIERS

AVIATION

Chaos in the skies

Firings, appointments, cancellations and losses—the dismal state of our airlines

It is an unwritten rule of Indian civil aviation that just as things seem to be getting better, they get worse than anyone ever thought possible. Earlier this year, the aviation industry seemed ready for take-off. Air India was generating impressive profits, Vayudoot was spreading its wings, a new, efficient minister had taken over, and Indian Airlines' capacity problems were finally ending with the induction of the Airbus A320s.

Eight months later, the sad truth is that Indian aviation is an even bigger mess than before.

- Last week, Harsh Vardhan, Vayudoot's 34-year-old, energetic managing director, resigned at the suggestion of the ministry. A civil servant was asked to take temporary charge of the airline but it was clear that Vayudoot was now in for a spell of instability.
- Indian Airlines' schedules were disrupted throughout the country as aircraft were withdrawn from service to help evacuate Indians from the Gulf. The sudden cancellations caused [illegible] at airports because, in many [illegible] such as the already fully packed [illegible] Calcutta sector) capacity was [illegible] at a stroke.
- [illegible] which made a profit of Rs [illegible] year now projected losses of between Rs 50 to 80 crores this year. The Gulf evacuation was once again the main reason because the airline had cancelled flights on such key sectors as Bombay-London to release aircraft for the evacuation.
- In any case, Air India continued to be headless following the departure of Rajan Jetley, the chairman and managing director who turned it around. Subhash Gupte, who held temporary charge of acting chairman, was the obvious successor, and the ministry was believed to have decided, in principal, to confirm him. But the decision had still to be ratified by the Public Sector Enterprises Board (PSEB) and the Cabinet.
- This was not necessarily a routine matter. A few months ago, the PSEB had blocked attempts by Prime Minister V.P. Singh to foist Capt. Shekhar Singh, who used to pilot the UP government's planes, on I A . Despite the best efforts of cabinet secretary Vinod Pande, the PSEB refused to even shortlist Singh for the post.

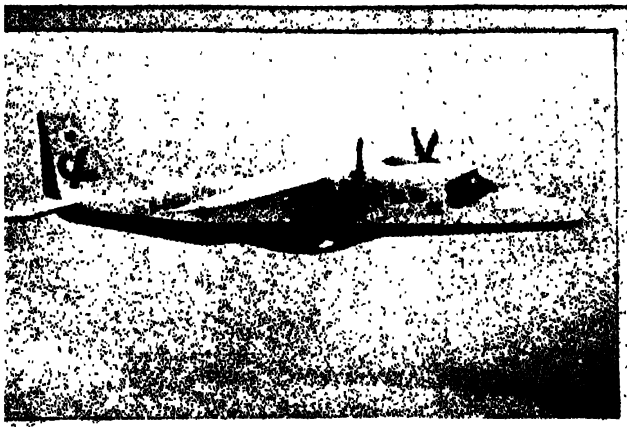
Eventually, the job went to Air Marshal S.S. Ramdas, a serving officer in the Indian Air Force who had drafted a report recommending the re-induction of the grounded A320s.

- The A320s continued to remain a source of controversy (*see Delhi Diary on page 90*). Though they were being used to ferry Indians out of the Gulf, the government still clung to the paradoxical position that they were too unsafe for domestic use.

The controversy had led civil aviation minister Arif Mohammad Khan to lose interest in the department (which is, in any case, an additional charge) because the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) seemed determined to cripple Indian Airlines by insisting on grounding the A320s in an effort to boost the credibility of one of its FIRs (first information reports). Arif had asked the Prime Minister to relieve him of charge of aviation on *four* different occasions according to sources in the PMO but the Raja has always refused.

Earlier, it was believed that V.P. Singh was waiting for his badminton-playing relative Sanjay Singh to get elected to the Rajya Sabha so he could make him the new aviation minister. But now, with Singh's political career in smithereens, that no longer fit the facts.

The only explanation that made any sense was this: Prime Minister V.P. Singh had no interest in seeing that aviation was well-run. In the process, he had even exasperated Arif Mohammad Khan, widely regarded as one of the most efficient ministers in his Cabinet.



Just as things seem to be getting better, they get much worse than anyone ever thought possible

The big news of the week was Vardhan's resignation. The deceptively mild-mannered Vayudoot chief first came to prominence in 1982 when he was widely credited with turning Air India—then crippled by spiralling oil prices—around. At the time, he was only 26 and was designated executive assistant to the airline's largely decorative chairman, R.K. Dhawan-appointee called Raghu Raj. In 1983, Rajiv Gandhi, who had been impressed by Vardhan's performance at Air India, picked him to head Vayudoot, the floundering third airline.

Then, Vayudoot's operations concentrated on the North East and it was run like a step-child of Indian Airlines. Vardhan changed all that by aggressively opening up new routes and transforming the character of the airline to the extent that international aviation industry journals began to refer to it as the "the world's fastest growing airline".

This strategy had two drawbacks. One: his success made him many enemies in New Delhi, a city were anybody under 40 is automatically regarded as an upstart. And two: he was stuck with the wrong aircraft for such a fast-paced expansion.

Part of his fleet consisted of turboprop aircraft that had been junked by Indian Airlines because they were uneconomical to run. Moreover, they were still maintained by Indian Airlines whose officials had no particular desire to ensure that Vayudoot succeeded. The rest of the fleet consisted of the Dornier DO 228, perhaps the single worst buy in the history of Indian aviation. (The Dornier purchase was linked to the controversial HDW submarine deal.) Not only did the interest payments (in rapidly revalued Deutsche Marks) cripple Vayudoot's bottomline, but the aircraft also proved to be difficult to maintain in the Indian climate.

Consequently, Vardhan's critics were able to allege that Vayudoot's undesirable success was not reflected in its balance sheet and for all its talk of expansion, frequent aircraft failure meant that it sometimes could not keep to its schedules.

Vardhan was able to live with this criticism, but this year he made what now seems like a major tactical error: he took on Indian Airlines head-on After the A320s were grounded, Vayudoot chartered aircraft and began to run immensely profitable trunk services between India's major cities. This disconcerted Indian Airlines so much that its employees actually went on strike to demand that Vayudoot withdraw from trunk routes.

In this instance, Arif tackled Vardhan but it is clear that relations between the two men—who were once the best of friends—had deteriorated over the last few months. Vardhan's camp alleged that Arif looked for pretexts to hassle Vayudoot's managing director (including digging up a six-year-old vigilance report from his Air India days) while Arif's friends insisted that the minister had nothing against Vardhan, but that he could not keep defending him against a barrage of media criticism and from attacks by the likes of R.K. Hegde.

Harsh Vardhan: fall guy?



Finally, when Vardhan resigned, it was ostensibly over his absence at a meeting of the parliamentary consultative committee attached to the aviation ministry, but everybody conceded that the real reasons went much deeper than that.

By the end of last week, it was beginning to seem as though the mess in the aviation industry would not be cleared up—at least during the lifetime of this government. The choice of Ramdas to run Indian Airlines was widely welcomed (after all, the most successful boss in the airline's history had also been drawn from the Air Force: Air Marshal P.C. Lal) but there were doubts about his capacity to change things.

The airline's problems are beyond the capability of any one man. Even if the capacity goes up with the reinduction of the A320s (which, despite the Raja's delays, is inevitable), the management failure is so overwhelming that no single person can hope to change it. Because of its monopolistic position, Indian Airlines is able to treat its passengers with contempt. Its staff are sullen, inefficient and frequently corrupt. Because of the strength of staff unions, few managing directors have been able to take on erring employees, not even in the key area of safety where report after report has demonstrated that the airline has many failings.

Much the same is true of Vayudoot. Despite the hectic pace of its expansion and its high media profile, the airline was essentially a one-man show kept going by the force of Harsh Vardhan's personality. No other chief executive could have coped with defective aircraft, the hostility of Indian Airlines, crippling interest payments and a total lack of support from two successive governments.

If the aviation industry is to live up to the hopes evoked earlier this year, then the answer does not lie in a shuffling of managing directors. It lies in a drastic rethink and a complete overhaul of the organisations.

But where is the political will to do that? ●

Subodhra Rangamani

An Indian plot

The transfer of Tin Bigha to Bangladesh could give rise to complicated border problems



BORDER

In the small village of Kuchlibari, 40,000 people get ready for battle. They have one voice and one demand: "Tin Bigha will not be transferred. We won't allow it."

The reason is a recent Supreme Court (SC) decision. On 3 May, the SC granted permanent lease of the 178m - long and 85m - broad plot, known as Tin Bigha, to Bangladesh. This small strip of land connects Kuchlibari with Mekhliganj—both in Cooch Behar—and so with the rest of India. Honouring the SC verdict would mean that the 40,000 residents of Kuchlibari would be completely cut-off from the country they belong to—India. And the area would become yet another Indian pocket lodged in Bangladesh.

The trouble started in 1974, after the Indira - Mujib pact was signed. The local parties sprung into action. The Kuchlibari Sangram Committee was formed. Led by enthusiastic agitators like Narendra Kishore Nandi, Sukumar Sengupta and Motilal Kar, the Samiti launched a violent movement, whipping up support with the slogan: *Rakto debo, tobu* Tin Bigha *debo na* (We will give our blood, but not Tin Bigha).

And now, the new Tin Bigha Sangram Committee has called for a statewide *bandh* on 12 November. Before that comes an all-India convention at Calcutta on 27 October, demanding that the Indira-Mujib pact be scrapped. The last convention the Samiti had organised, at Mekhliganj on 28 August, went off pretty well. Thousands pledged to resist the transfer of Tin Bigha. And the state agriculture minister, Kamal Guha of the Forward Bloc (one of the constituents of the ruling Left Front), announced that he was ready to quit the ministry in the interest of his motherland.

But this is not the first time that ministers have made grandiose promises on this issue. During the chief ministership of S.S.Ray, the then Opposition leader Jyoti Basu had assured the Samiti that the transfer would not be allowed. In 1977, the then external affairs minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had promised to oppose any such move. And the BJP has already filed a writ petition with the SC against the Union government's move to hand over the strategic plot to Bangladesh. It has even threatened to launch a mass movement in the state if necessary.

And chief minister Jyoti Basu has gone back on his word. His assurance to Bangladesh that Tin Bigha would be handed over has created problems for his party. Says Subhas Roy, the CPI(M) *upapradhan* of Kuchlibari *gram panchayat*: "We are with the Sangram Committee not as CPI(M) men, but as residents of Kuchlibari. We are trying to convince our leadership of the dangers of transferring Tin Bigha."

Like the CPI(M), the Congress(I) workers are in a tight spot too. "We can't oppose it since the agreement was signed by Mrs Indira Gandhi," says Motilal Kar, a *panchayat* Congressman. "But we have been fighting for the cause for the last 14 years, under the banner of the Sangram Committee, a non-political organisation. We have taken this up as the common man's movement against a gross injustice."

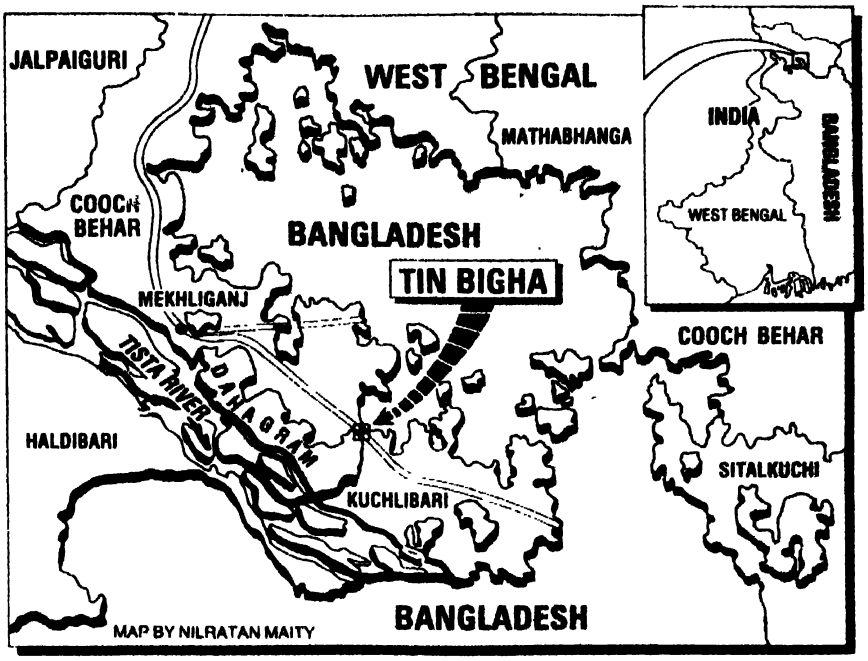
The government's response to all this is rather strange. "We are fully aware of the trouble we are inviting for the country in the event of the transfer of Tin Bigha," says a senior district official. "But we have recently issued orders to 22 plot-holders of Tin Bigha for the purpose of requisition of land for the proposed transfer at the instance of Writers' Buildings."

Undaunted, the people of the area, led by the powerful Forward Bloc, have now formed the Tin Bigha Transfer Resistance Committee. And its flag is wrapped around border pillar number 811, marking the end of Bangladesh and the beginning of India. Just three months ago, there was mild irritation over the hurried construction of a road by the Bangladesh authorities, which ended abruptly at border pillar 811. The Cooch Behar administration did not approve and after some official communications with Rangpur, Bangladesh, the subject was discreetly dropped.

The transfer of Tin Bigha would create problems in various spheres. It would be a security problem, for one.

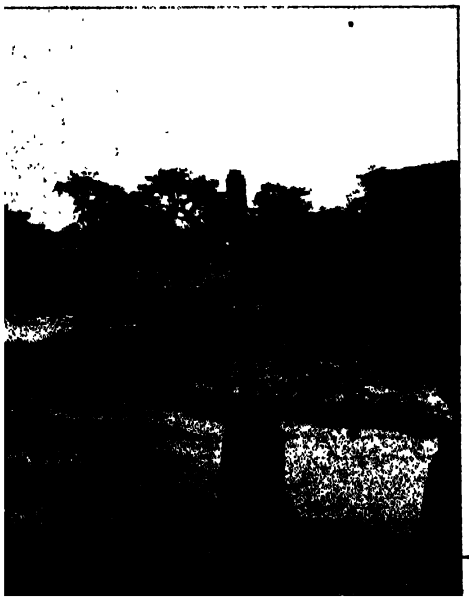
BSF forces at Tin Bigha: anticipating trouble





Map showing the location of Tin Bigha (shaded portion: Bangladesh)

Intelligence reports on India would be easily available to Bangladesh. Guarding the border would cost at least ten times as much. "We might not be able to keep track of the whole thing," says a senior Border Security Force (BSF) official. It might give rise to another Kashmir, he added. Senior district officials agree that it would open the floodgates of infiltration from Bangladesh. Besides jurisdictional hazards, it would give a fillip to border crime and smuggling. As it is, dacoities and other anti-social activities are a regular feature of border areas. Bangladeshi dacoits, apparently with the cooperation of Bangladesh Rifles, frequently attack border blocks with lethal weapons. And if Tin Bigha is transferred, then for any crime in Kuchlibari, the residents would have to move the Rangpur district headquarters in Bangladesh.



Instead of the plot of land, a flyover is to connect the little bit of India to the mainland. "Merged with Dahagram-Angarpota, Tin Bigha would belong to Bangladesh and the proposed flyover can spark off trouble at any time," says a top intelligence officer. Another district intelligence officer agrees: "The flyover might be blown off any moment to sabotage the understanding—if any—between the two countries. And Kuchlibari will be cut off for ever from the mainland, adding to the list of Indian *chhitmahals* (enclaves) in Bangladesh."

At present, there are about 135 Indian *chhitmahals* in Bangladesh and 95 Bangladeshi ones in India. Tin Bigha, if handed over, would connect Dahagram--Angarpota, one of the biggest Bangladeshi *chhitmahals* in India, with Bangladesh.

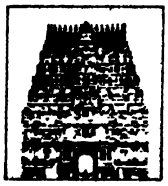
Terrified of being foreigners in their own land, the villagers have geared themselves for a blood-bath. "There is no compromise," they declare. And the BSF, accordingly, is preparing for battle.

And responding to the determined resistance of the 40,000 due to be displaced, chief minister Jyoti Basu has promised to visit the area in October. Till then, a lot hangs in the balance. ●

Utpal Banerjee/Kuchlibari

Of bigots and bullets

Communal clashes mar Ganesha chaturthi *festivities in Madras*



TAMIL NADU

It was just another religious procession. Chanting *mantras* to the tune of *nadaswarams*, the devotees marched along with their Ganesha idols, on 2 September, after Ganesha *chaturthi*. All of a sudden, everything went wrong. And it left two Muslims dead of police firing and more than 70 injured in the riot.

The trouble began when the 300-strong procession approched a mosque on the Triplicane High Road. This was the regular route of such immersion processions and there had been no warning of communal disharmony in this area ever. So, when the police asked the procession to stop the noise so as not to disturb the Muslims reading their *namaz*, the Hindus found it strange. "But we waited patiently and peacefully for about 20 minutes and resumed the procession only after the police gave us the green signal," said M. Balasubramaniam, secretary of the committee which organised the march. "We were rudely shocked when *chappals*, stones, soda and acid bottles came flying at us from inside the mosque."

Another eyewitness has a different story. "The Hindus came armed with deadly weapons and stones, which they hurled at the mosque as we were praying," says Mohammad Basha, a local businessman. "But they were clever. When they saw the police come down, they disappeared from the scene. Our Muslim boys did not realise the danger when they attacked the police and got shot in the bargain."

Abdul Kalam, 32, a city civil court watchman and Mohamad Arif, 23, a local butcher, were shot dead. And for three hours the violent Muslim mob fought the police. Ignoring the community elders' requests to calm down.

The whole of Madras came alive

with protests. The police got blamed enormously. "Their action was despicable and reprehensible," said the Indian Union Muslim League (Latheef faction) president, M.L. Latheef. "To say that *chappals* were thrown at the procession from inside the mosque, is a lie. It was the other way round. In fact, some policemen even removed clay from the Ganesha idol to fling it towards the mosque." Latheef believes that the police had no business in allowing the Hindu procession to pass the mosque, and if they did, they should have taken adequate precautions. He also alleges that one section of the police was inimical towards the DMK government and had thus allowed the tragic chain of events.

And the DMK government has been criticised by quite a few. Said P. Nedumaran, president of the Tamils National Movement, "Communal clashes which were till now confined only to a few districts, have finally spread to Madras as well." He blamed the DMK of being intimidated by the BJP and thus not checking the inflammatory speeches of certain Hindus.

And the BJP, for its part, has been viciously critical of Karunanidhi's "policy of appeasement of Muslims which has led to the present spate of communal violence". The BJP general secretary, Murali Manohar Joshi, voiced the need for a proper enquiry into the incident. Anti-national slogans were raised from within the mosque, he alleged, like "Pakistan zindabad". And AIADMK general secretary, Jayalalitha, has demanded that the chief minister own responsibility for the police action.

In an effort to soothe tense nerves, on 3 September, an 18-member peace committee met at the riot-affected area, with the police commissioner K.K. Rajasekaran Nair presiding. With members of the DMK and the Congress(I) and near equal representation of Hindus and Muslims, the committee members promised to go from door to door preaching communal harmony.

Significantly, there had never been the need for such an appeal in this Muslim dominated area dotted with temples and harbouring a large conservative Brahmin population. The 2 September clash was a bolt from the blue. And it might serve as a sharp warning, not only to the administration, but also to society at large. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Free within bounds

Parliament passes the Prasar Bharati Bill, but will AIR and Doordarshan change?

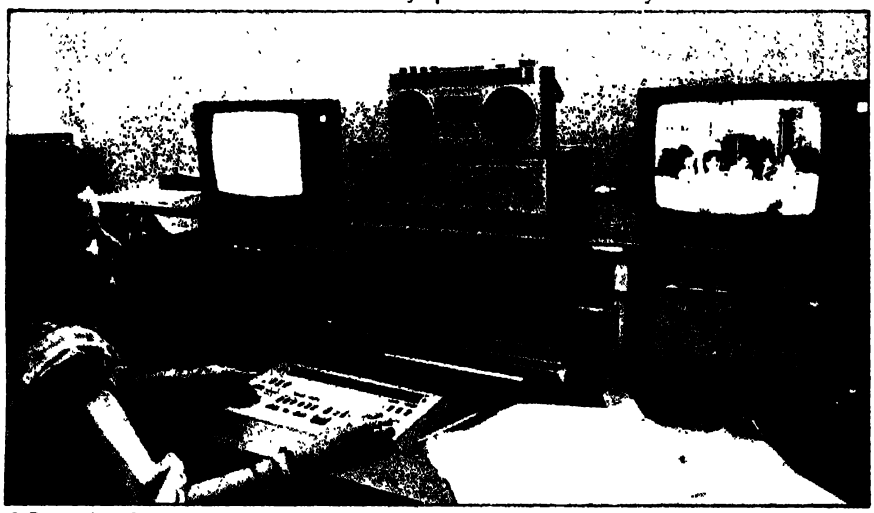


DELHI

At last, the National Front government has ticked off one of its long overdue promises. The Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill has been passed by both Houses of Parliament—but not before the government made its position clear on the exact nature of autonomy granted to Doordarshan and the All India Radio (AIR). During the three-day debate in Parliament, the information and broadcasting minister, P. Upendra, clarified: "What we promised was autonomy,not unbridled autonomy."

A crucial part of the debate was the Congress(I)'s reaction while the bill was being passed in Parliament. As many as 100 amendments had been circulated by different parties, many of which were withdrawn. These included one circulated by P. Chidambaram urging to allow the private sector into the zealously-guarded terrain of television programming. Rajiv Gandhi had favoured privatisation too. But the Congress(I) withdrew the Bill proposed by Chidambaram. The Bill that was finally passed was, therefore, a truncated and rather disappointing version of the much-awaited autonomy Bill.

Before the Bill was passed, the Congress(I) performed a complete volte face in the Rajya Sabha. Despite voting in favour of the Bill in the Lok Sabha, the party declared it would oppose the bill "lock, stock and barrel". Just two days before the session closed, former information and broadcasting minister, Vasant Sathe declared: "The Bill is ill-conceived, badly drafted and will perpetrate more controls over radio and television than in existence today."



A Doordarshan recording room: happy days ahead?

And the automony that is being granted is certainly not unbridled. The parliamentary committee which will oversee the functioning of the Broadcasting Corporation will consist of 15 members from the Lok Sabha and seven from the Rajya Sabha, making it a super-constitutional body. In addition, there is to be a Broadcasting Council with a president and a team of ten appointed by the President of India.

Whether the small screen will exhibit a will of its own or not remains to be seen. Because, despite the Prasar Bharati, the financial control of the Corporation will remain with the government. The present staff will not be displaced. Except for a change in the panel of people in control, everything else will remain the same. Consequently, when one switches on one's radio or TV sets, the changes, if any, might not be striking. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

Get set, go!

Patwa's sweeping transfers rattle the bureaucracy



MADHYA PRADESH

The BJP high command might have issued an 'okay' certificate to the Patwa government, but that hasn't stopped it from being concerned over the alarming transfer rate of government employees in the state. Recently, the party has set up a committee to work out the procedure and establish definite rules for such transfers.

Former MP and ex-president of the state Jan Sangh (now BJP), N.K. Shejvalkar,demanded the publication of a White Paper by the government, on transfers. Accusing the state administration of corruption and bringing about more than 50,000 transfers, Sushil Chandra Verma, retired IAS officer and ex-chief secretary of the state who is now a BJP MP, said that this process would only waste crores of rupees from the public exchequer. In the party meeting of BJP MLAs, the ministers were attacked on various fronts. Some MLAs even claimed that most ministers were inexperienced and immature, transferring off anybody at the recommendation of clerks. There were examples of people due to retire in six months being issued transfer orders. The MLAs charged the Patwa regime of violating the transfer policy worked out by the party earlier.

Not surprisingly, ex-chief minister Motilal Vora made much of the transfer issue in the Vidhan Sabha. He claimed that over one lakh transfers had taken place, squeezing about Rs 50 to 60 crores out of the public exchequer. The association of government employees alleged political motivation for these transfers. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the veteran BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member, also expressed his displeasure and finally announced to the press the decision of the BJP Executive Committee meeting at Madras: a new committee would look into the transfer issue in BJP-ruled states.

In defence, the state government claimed that they had transferred only those employees who had stuck to the same spot for years and had been minting money from the times of the Congress government. The other excuse was that several employees had sought transfer voluntarily. The employees concerned, however, denied this. A lot of forgery and fabrication were alleged in this matter.

Of special interest is the fact that, in this shuffling, for the first time class four employees were transferred. This also included police constables. Former CM Vora and several officials expressed concern over this. Also, transferring a large number of doctors had paralysed the entire medical services, since the vacant posts were not filled up. As a result, these were stayed to allow the public health department some time to fill in the vacancies.

Despite the CM announcing that no transfer would be cancelled, Laxmi



Patwa: criticised by big brothers

Narayan Gupta, the revenue minister, cancelled all transfers fearing a virtual collapse in the rural administrative set up. In spite of all this, the Patwa regime is definitely a step forward, keeping in mind the transfer industry that flourished in the state during the Congress rule. There were virtual transfer *melas*, where, reportedly, hotels and lodges made big business, with everybody from ministers to petty party workers getting a share. The BJP government has put a stop to this. And if this committee works out, then there might not be a repeat performance in the near future. ●

M.V. Kher/Raipur



Patel: the image crumbles

Dog days

Chimanbhai Patel finds the going tough, as inner-party squabbles surface within the Dal



GUJARAT

Within six months of becoming the chief minister Chimanbhai Patel is a worried man. The reason: his party, the Janata Dal, which bagged 70-seats in the 182-member Vidhan Sabha and formed a coalition government with the BJP, has earned a bad name for itself, thanks to intra-party bickerings.

Patel gave top priority to refurbishing his own image that had been tarnished during the 1974 *navnirman* movement, a violent student agitation that led to his ouster. And a friendly vernacular press made his task easier by creating an impression that the politican wanted to form a *naya* Gujarat (new Gujarat) and that he could talk on equal terms with central leaders.

But people's hopes were dashed as prices of essential commodities soared, unemployment grew and the bureaucracy blazed no new trail to end their woes. On 15 August, Independence Day, while a Janata Dal MP from Baroda, Prakash Brahmbhatt, launched a 'Nav Nirman Manch' to fight the corrupt bureucracy yet another party legislator from the same city, Yogesh Patel, a confidant of Maneka Gandhi, floated a Lok Sangarsh Manch on the same day to bring down the prices by launching an agitation against hoarders and black mar-

keteers. Both the Dal leaders received enthusiastic public response to their effort despite the fact that the state party chief, Narpatsinh Chavda, had warned them of strict disciplinary action. The two leaders now form a pressure group to keep Patel on tenterhooks.

Discontent within the Janata Dal, which was headed by Patel till he took over as CM, also surfaced when Ashok Punjabi, a controversial figure in the state's politics, was welcomed into the party last month soon after his expulsion from the CPI.

Earlier in July, differences in the Dal became evident when Patel tried for a unanimous election of the party president, but failed. The dissidents fielded, though vainly, a non-controversial, popular legislator, Babubhai Vasanwala to cross swords with the official nominee, Chavda, a devoted Gandhian but a political nonentity.

The chief minister also rubbed yet another party MLA, Liladhar Vaghela, on the wrong side, when he scrapped the six-year-old mid-day meal scheme from 1 August, even before Vaghela, who was asked to review its working, could submit his report. What's more, the employment minister, Pravinsingh Jadeja, a close friend of V.P. Singh, had opposed the idea on the ground that the abolition of the Congress-initiated scheme would render 75,000 people jobless. But Patel had his way.

A number of Dal leaders have also complained against Patel's trusted lieutenant, state home minister Narhari Amin. According to them, Amin was involved in anti-party activities. He is said to have helped a congressman win the election to the chairmanship of a co-operative bank and worked for the defeat of the Dal's candidate, Dasrath Patel.

The squabbles within the party were also reflected in the appointment of chairman for statutory boards and corporations. While the Dal's coalition partner, the BJP, wasted no time in naming the chiefs of 13 such bodies allotted to the party, the Janata Dal's infighting delayed the formation of such boards in its quota.

No wonder, the dissident minister Pravinsingh Jadeja, let off the steam before the interviewer of a Bombay-based Gujarat weekly and gave a bit of his mind about Patel's style of functioning, giving Patel sleepless nights.●

Mahesh Trivedi/Ahmedabad

Anticipatory jail

Mulayam Singh Yadav locks up agitating Congress leaders, apprehending breach of peace



UTTAR PRADESH

The Uttar Pradesh jails have been hosting VIPs, of late. For the last three weeks, former Union minister Sheila Dixit and veteran Congress(I) leader Balram Singh Yadav, MP, have been held captive. The state government has promised to let them out only on bail but Dixit and company have turned down the offer.

Instead, Dixit has moved a *habeas corpus* in the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court. The hearing, interestingly, has been postponed six times in ten days. The Congress high-profiles were first arrested as they demonstrated against the arrest of Congress leader Darshan Singh, on 16 August. They were released the same day. But, carrying out their threat of launching a jail *bharo andolan* if Singh was not released in 24 hours, Dixit, Balram Singh, former UP ministers Gauri Shankar and Behari Lal Dohare along with 500 Congress workers, courted arrest in Etawah, the home town of chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Janata Dal. But this time they were in for a tough time. Instead of being released in a couple of days, as is the custom in such cases, they are still locked up. For apprehension of breach of peace.

The state government had jailed Darshan Singh, the Congress(I) opponent of Mulayam Singh in the Assembly elections, on the charge of forcibly releasing an alleged criminal from police custody. And the CM refuses to be soft with , as he puts it, the protectors of criminals. What the Congress is highlighting, however, is the personal relationship between Mulayam Singh and Darshan Singh. The two had been close political partners for the past couple of decades, till, last year, Darshan Singh defected to the Congress(I).

It seems that this defection was behind the CM's great interest in arresting Darshan Singh.

Instead of being released in a couple of days as is the custom in such cases, Sheila Dixit is still behind bars



SHASHI SAHAI

People believe that the state was holding Balram Singh especially since he was a Rajya Sabha member, and, if let out, could create a furore in Parliament. Now that Parliament is not in session anymore, he might be released soon. Both Balram Singh and Sheila Dixit have called the arrest illegal and the CM dictatorial. On the other hand, the state insists that in demanding the release of Darshan Singh, the agitating leaders are supporting crime, since Singh himself has been involved in quite a few criminal cases.

But the logic doesn't seem to please the Congress. "I refuse to give in to pressure," says an adamant Dixit. "And I shall continue my fight against this barbaric regime—whether I am in jail, or out of it." ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Aliens at home

Militants serve quit notices to non-tribals



MEGHALAYA

Non-tribals have overstayed their welcome in Meghalaya. The dead-line to non-tribal employees for vacating their posts had been set by extremist organisations at 30 August. The targets are being threatened, intimidated and assaulted. Even non-Khasi tribals are struck with terror. And the silent majority gives respectability to the criminal acts by accepting these as expressions of ethnic assertion.

On the other hand, political organisations give empty assurance, while the authorities remain indifferent. Recently, a top businessman of Shillong, Mahabir Prasad Goenka, narrowly escaped an attempt on his life. The Meghalaya United Liberation Army (MULA) has emerged as the most powerful extremist organisation of the state.

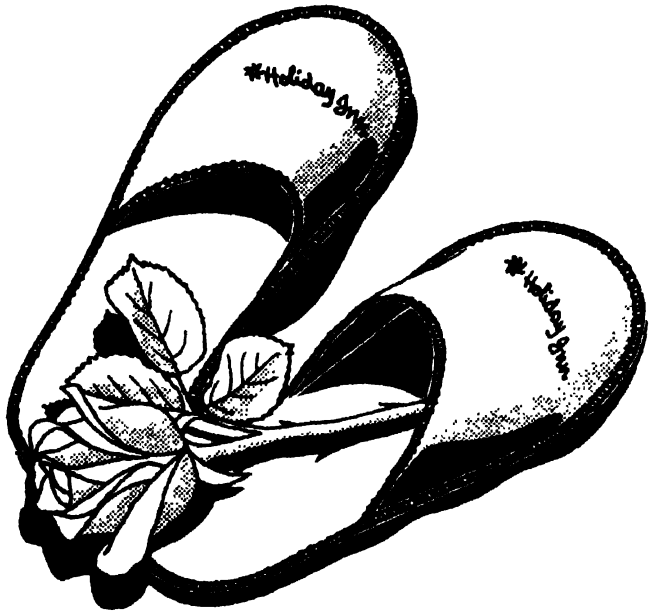
And the party seems to be very self-conscious. Declaring that they owed nothing to either chief minister B.B. Lyngdoh or the Khasi capitalists, they hold both the CM and the home minister, H.S. Lyngdoh, responsible for inefficiency. They blame the former for being too soft on the border issue and the latter for his failure to drive away the "foreigners". And "foreigners" means all non-tribals.

Of other parties involved in attacking non-tribals, the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP) seems to be the most organised.

Although just the non-tribals are the targets now, smaller tribal communities are worried that they are next in line. So, 44 representatives of the Hajong, Koch, Rava, Bodo, Kachari, Mann, Dalu, Banai and other minorities in Meghalaya have recently formed a common forum, the Meghalaya Minority Tribals' Union. That might make things easier for minority tribes. But for those unfortunate enough to be not born a tribal, Meghalaya promises to be pretty dangerous. ●

Rabijit Chowdhury/Shillong

If you think you're staying at the Holiday Inn, Hong Kong, you're thinking half a continent too far.



Holiday Inn, Bombay, offers you the same international facilities as any Holiday Inn worldwide.

You'll find the King Leisure rooms at the Holiday Inn, Bombay, fully as luxurious as Holiday Inn, Hong Kong.

We offer fine dining, superior accommodation, conference facilities, inimitable service, and of course, the value for money you've come to expect from any Holiday Inn worldwide...

All the more reasons to choose Holiday Inn first.

* Holiday Inn
Bombay
The World's First Choice

ARTG-467-90

For information and reservation, please contact: BOMBAY: Holiday Inn, Balraj Sahani Marg, Juhu Beach, Bombay 400 049. Tel: 6204444/6202398. Tlx: 011-78411 HOLI IN/ 011-78404 HINN IN. Fax: (0091-22) 6204452 • NEW DELHI: Holiday Inn, Connaught Plaza, Tel: 3320101. Tlx: 031-61186 HIND IN. Tel: 3010211. Tlx: 031-65526 CLAR IN • BANGALORE: Tel: 77676/77931. Tlx: 845-8668/2354 MACH IN • CALCUTTA: Tel: 412009. Tlx: 021-5421 • AHMEDABAD: Tel: 448602 • PUNE: Tel: 661752.



Apply, apply, no reply

Why is Upendra such a flop?

Ask yourself this question: even before he became information and broadcasting minister late last year, why had we heard of P. Upendra? After all, his sole claim to fame was that he had been sent to the Rajya Sabha by N.T. Rama Rao and was, essentially, a politician without a base.

So, why was this man *already* a national figure of sorts?

The answer is simple enough: public relations (PR).

While Upendra's political experience is limited, his PR skills have been honed over the years. Before he joined NTR's Telugu Desam bandwagon, he served as public relations manager for the railways in Calcutta. Journalists in that city still remember him as a cheerful, safari-suited figure with an easy manner who was always ready to exchange a coupe on an otherwise fully-booked train for five column inches culled from his latest press release.

Upendra later shifted track from railways to politics, but he never forgot his public relations experience. When the constituents of the National Front were in Opposition, he provided a dial-a-quote service for journalists desperate for comments on late-breaking stories and took care to remember the first name of every hack who ever phoned him.

It was a strategy that ensured that he still got his column inches—though this time, for himself and not the railways—even when he had no coupes to hand out. He became a national figure and his media skills were the envy of his colleagues.

IT MADE superficial sense therefore for V.P. Singh to appoint him minister for information and broadcasting. For one, the Telugu Desam had to be represented and Upendra was the only TDP MP whose accent the rest of India could decipher. And for another, the Raja (in his pre-Mr Caste phase) owed his success to the press and needed a media manager who knew the rules of the journalism game.

Where V.P Singh (and nearly everybody else) went wrong was in misunderstanding the *nature* of Upendra's public relations. The National Front government needed a Svengali who could shape press coverage of the regime: instead, it got the classic public sector PRO whose idea of media management was of the order of "please *sar*, kill this item and I will get you two tickets on tomorrow's Rajdhani".

It is this public sector approach which, more than anything else, explains why Upendra has been such a disaster as information and broadcasting minister. He has neither the Janata Dal intellectual's commitment to free and fair broadcasting (though judging by the mood at the India International Centre these days, the Janata Dal intellectual is a dying breed anyway) nor does he have V.P. Singh's shrewd grasp of how to manipulate the press. (In fact, the only minister whose media savvy can match V.P. Singh's is Arif Mohammad Khan.)

At a personal level, Upendra is still immensely likeable. He will talk to any journo whose paper has a circulation of more than 200 copies; he will attend any function—even perhaps, the opening of a telephone booth—if there are photographers present; and he is still good for a quote, no matter how late the hour—unless you ask him about *Khula Manch*.

But as a minister, he has been a complete flop. Because his conception of journalism involves plants, spikes and lollipops, he has simply not understood how to give the Doordarshan newsroom any kind of freedom.

THE LATEST in a long line of disasters that have dogged Upendra's ministry is the *Khula Manch* fiasco. The idea was laudable enough if borrowed from *Janvani*. But while Vinod Dua coated even the most offensive questions with a layer of politeness and Congress ministers—in turn—rarely lost their cool on camera, the combination of Kewal Varma, George Fernandes and Karan Thapar was certain to ignite.

Those who were present at the *Khula Manch* taping say that while Varma was splutteringly angry and Thapar was icily contemptuous, Fernandes gave as good as he got. The results made for compelling television and would have proved two things. One: that the Raja's ministers were not zombies who mouthed a single party line. And two: that TV was at last free of government control.

A shrewd media manager would have seen that the advantages of telecasting the programme far outweighed any disadvantages: after all, everybody already knew that Pepsi Cola is George's very own dragon. But a public sector PRO, trained to avoid controversy at all costs, whose idea of 'good publicity' is a turgid press release, could hardly be expected to realise this. Fernandes—who has assiduously cultivated a media image as a dedicated fighter—is brighter than Upendra and pushed to have the programme shown unedited.

But in the end, the PRO won out ("controversy very bad thing, *sar*"), Upendra had his way, the programme was hacked and the government embarrassed.

The *Khula Manch* controversy had one unexpected fall-out. Upendra was so upset by the fiasco that he broke with all precedent and shut himself off from the press that he had courted for so many years. Last week, all of SUNDAY's efforts to get him to comment on the issue proved unsuccessful.

In a sense, he was reverting to another public sector stereotype. As they would say in government offices: apply, apply, no reply. ●

V GANGADHAR

Bofors. Ho hum!

The scandal that won't go away

Remember the Hydra-headed monster, the killing of which was one of the labours of the mythical giant, Hercules? Everytime, he managed to cut off one of its head, another one sprang up in its place!

The Bofors investigation reminds me of this monster. One aspect is finished we presume, then suddenly something else sprouts up featuring a different personality. The latest, is of course, the alleged implication of Union minister for commerce and tourism, Arun Nehru

The Bombay-based *The Independent*, broke the story first. But it goes back a long, long time. Chitra Subramaniam, formerly of *The Hindu* then *Indian Express* and now of nowhere (there are sniggering remarks that very soon she will have to sell her Bofors exposes to the *Confidential* Advisor) had details to *Indian Express* of Arun Nehru's conversation with a Swedish official over the Bofors deal in June 1985 (nine months before the contract was signed), underlining that Arun Nehru may have played a crucial role in the negotiations.

The papers were made available to yet another votary of 'press freedom', *The Statesman*. Strangely enough, both papers did not publish the details. *The Independent* concluded that *Express* editor, Arun Shourie, found the new revelations damaging in view of the paper's new-found closeness to Nehru. It may be recalled that the *Express* and Nehru were cheer-leaders in the campaign to get rid of Devi Lal from the Cabinet and also share a common hostility to Prime Minister V.P. Singh, over his decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report.

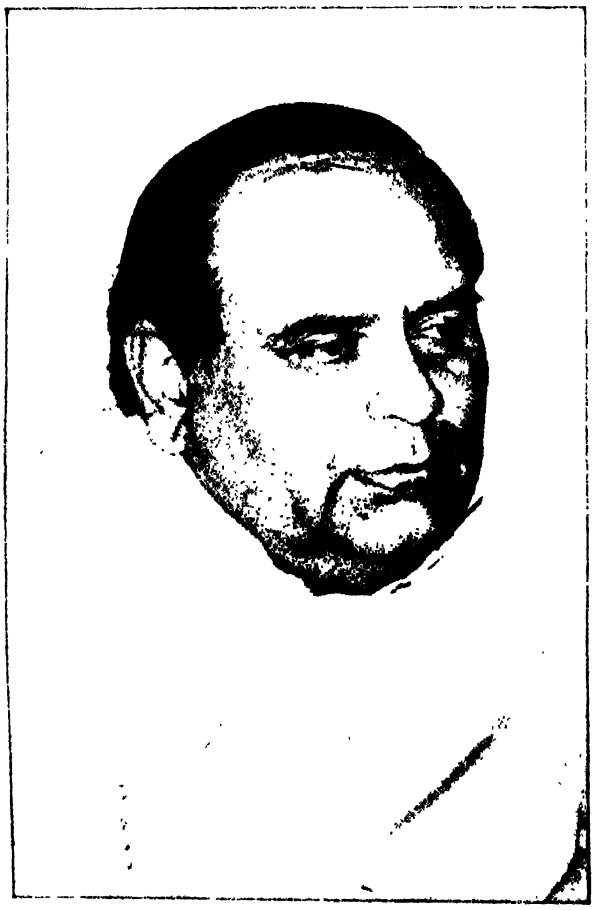
Actually, there was nothing very new about Subramaniam's report. Even in March 1988, Shourie himself had referred to these documents which mentioned Nehru's involvement in the negotiations, his informing the Swedish officials they might get the order for the howitzer guns but must maintain a low profile, never mentioning the Prime Minister or his family in any connection with the deal.

Nothing very damaging here. Yet, why did *Express* fail to publish these documents? A new dimension arose when one of *Express*' showpieces, Ram Jethmalani suddenly came out with a signed front-page statement in *The Independent* that V.P. Singh must sack Arun Nehru over the contents of these documents. At a subsequent press conference the lawyer-cum-politician, while asserting he had not fallen out with Arun Shourie, claimed that Nehru was still his friend and that he hoped and prayed that Nehru was innocent.

But the press is not so gullible. The journalists questioned Jethmalani on the possibility of *The Independent* articles having been written at the behest of the Hindujas, with whom its editor is reported to be close. The Hindujas, are of course, related to Jethmalani too.

Calcutta's *The Telegraph* quoted sources close to Arun Nehru as confirming the genuineness of the documents but not implicating him in the kickbacks. After all, the documents had been circulating in New Delhi for over three months, but now were suddenly front-paged in *The Independent*.

Why? *The Sunday Observer* hinted at definite indications of the Hindujas attempting to divert attention from a likely adverse judgement from a Swiss court. The judgement, regarding the lifting of the ban on revealing names of Bofors kickbacks recepients, is expected very soon. Ram Jethmalani, of course, would do everything to help out the Hindujas, the paper con-





Noted Rajiv-baiter, **N. Ram** (above), who had once assisted Chitra Subramaniam in the Bofors investigations, now rushed to **Arun Nehru's** (left) defence. Said Ram Jethmalani, "He has proved himself to be an absolute simpleton by giving a clean chit to Arun Nehru." The attack on Ram continued

cludes. And who can be a better fall guy than Arun Nehru, who is intensely disliked by the Hindujas?

Another leading figure in the Bofors investigations, N. Ram, however, gives a more or less clean chit to Arun Nehru by pointing out that there is no documented evidence against Nehru. But Jethmalani is not bothered with such niceties. "I can only say that I don't possess N.Ram's childlike innocence. He has proved himself to be an absolute simpleton with his latest article in *The Daily* (from Bombay) in which he has given a clean chit to Arun Nehru."

The revelations are becoming murkier and murkier with the journalists involved not interested in getting at the truth, but 'fixing' their 'enemies'. If Arun Shourie did not publish the documents because he wanted to protect Nehru, Nandy might be accused of highlighting them because of his grudge against Nehru over the Devi Lal affair.

There is also a feeling that Chitra Subramaniam could be something more than a journalist. *The Independent* protrays her as a martyr of editorial whims. She gives a long lecture on ethics in Indian journalism and is worried that her "sources in the West are beginning to raise valid questions about the ethics of Indian editors". These are the same sources, one presumes, who were leaking out judicially selected portions of the Bofors deal on a very selective basis, always on the eve of a major political happening in the country.

Joining the group of 'investigative' reporters, Karl Mehta of the *Blitz*, quotes Dr Pierre Schmid, federal officer of police matters, Berne and his assistant, Mr Gilloz. Both these gentlemen have often been quoted as 'authoritative and official' sources in the despatches by those keen to implicate Rajiv Gandhi and his family. Schmid even raises the question that Chitra Subramaniam could have been a direct contact for the Prime Minister. "At the beginning she was a very important person in the outcome of the elections in your country. She also came with the official CBI delegation to meet us, but was not part of it. Hence, we asked her to sit out." *The Daily* has already come to the conclusion that she is the mole of the Bachchans.

In a telephonic interview with *The Independent*, Subramaniam lambasts the ethics of Indian editors as "it stinks". Well, so might the role of some of our so-called 'investigative reporters'.

Giri told us so

Mr Girilal Jain, after reading all the anti-V.P. Singh stories even in the papers where he had been a hero till recently, may well smile and say 'I told you so!' Here is one political commentator who was never taken in by the Raja Saab, writing on the "Mandalising of India", Mr Jain observes, "Since the time, the Raja came to attract all-India attention as Rajiv Gandhi's finance minister, with his well-publicised raids on industrial houses and durbars in the grand Mughal style, I have never been able to shake off the first impression that he is not the kind of man one goes out shooting with, to quote the familiar English saying. In both his decisions to Mandalise India and bypass the allies and even senior Janata Dal colleagues, he has, in my view, acted true to form. It is not his fault that so many supposedly experienced politicians and commentators have not been able to see the face behind the mask. The mask for months had been pretty thin and the face all too visible."

Continues Mr Jain, "It is truly extraordinary that V P. Singh should have been compared with Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya, Jawaharlal Nehru and Ambedkar. If a comparison has to be made, it should be with the former Aga Khan who led the deputation to Lord Minto for separate electorate for Muslims in 1905 and Jinnah, who pressed for Partition of India. There can be little doubt that history will repeat itself both as a farce and tragedy. The Raja is only for V.P. Singh and V.P. Singh is only for the Raja."





Says **Girilal Jain** (above), "It is truly extraordinary that **V.P. Singh** (left) should have been compared with Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya, Jawaharlal Nehru and Ambedkar. The comparison should be with the former Aga Khan, who led the deputation for separate electorate for Muslims, and Jinnah, who pressed for the Partition of India"

Strange bedfellows

Journalism, like politics, also makes for strange bedfellows. The Ambani-owned Hindi *The Sunday Observer* has carried a full page report on the Mandal Commission authored by Arun Shourie with due acknowledgement to *Indian Express*. More such articles are likely to appear in the days to come. ●

MAHESH JETHMALANI

Time to come clean

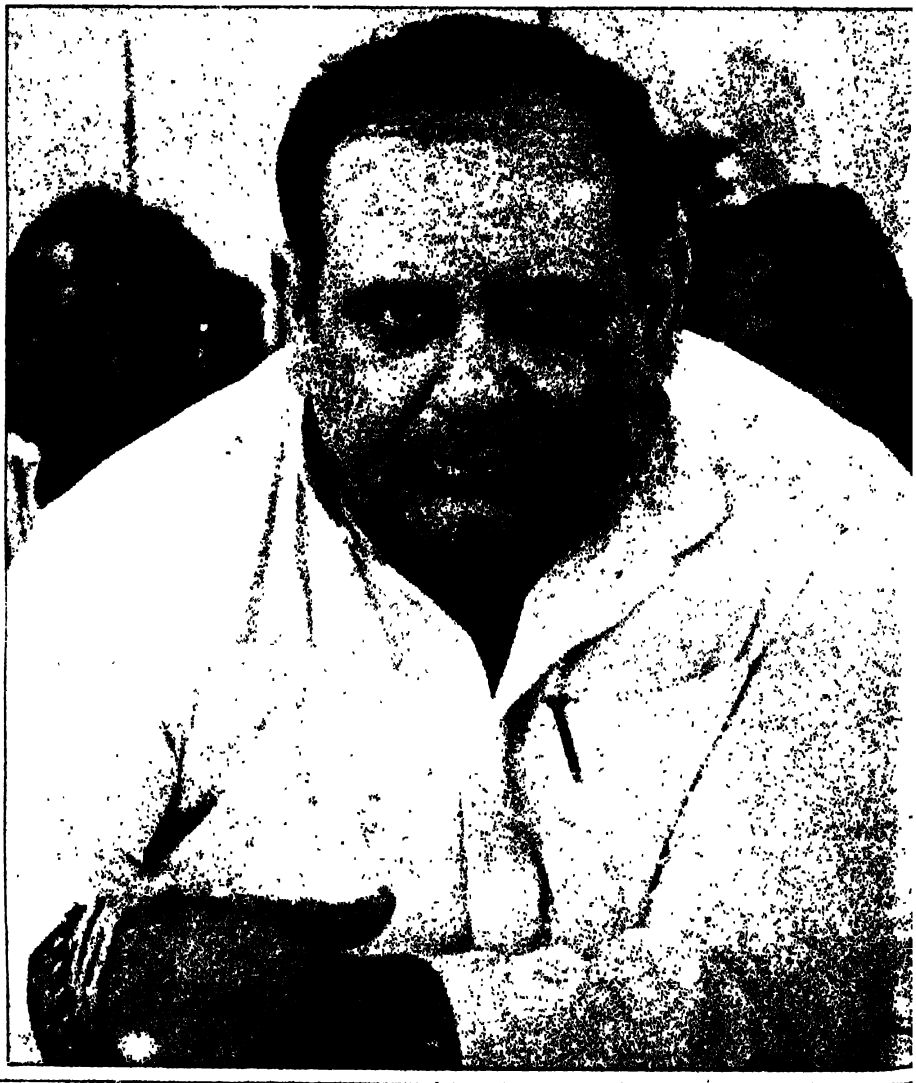
Arun Nehru must reveal all he knows about Bofors



At the outset, a brief explanation to the readers of this column is in order. This is not a regular column on the sordid Bofors affair, although, two out of two columns devoted to that subject should surely warrant such an inference. There are three compelling reasons for persisting with Bofors. Firstly, the emergence of new documents which substantiate what many had only suspected to be true. Secondly, the depressing—and undoubtedly belated—discovery that the higher echelons of our defence establishment have proved to be highly vulnerable to the overtures of international arms merchants, a matter which cannot but have sinister implications for national security and the defence of the realm. And finally, the need to reappraise the role of important dramatis personae in the Bofors drama, hitherto considered to be innocent by-standers and even shining examples of men of honour.

There can be no doubt that Mr Arun Nehru stands squarely indicted in the Bofors affair by the despatches of Mr Rolf Gauffin, Swedish ambassador to India in 1985-86, to the foreign department in Sweden which were recently published by *The Independent*.

The documents unmistakably disclose that Mr Nehru performed the role of negotiator in the arms contract with both the Swedish government and Bofors represented by Mr Martin Ardbo; that he had conveyed the impression that he was the *éminence grise* in the matter; that he performed his role although it was no part of his function as minister of power; that his negotiations pertained not to contractual terms, but what he himself referred to "a political understanding in the widest sense"; that this latter phrase was a semantic smoke-screen for a kickback in return for awarding the arms contract to Bofors; that Mr Nehru wanted Bofors to exclude all middlemen, obviously because, their presence would mean a smaller quantum of bribes to those whom he had in mind as recepients; that the only middlemen, he was willing to tolerate were local agents in India who could be retained by Bofors for a small sum; that Mr Nehru wanted both, his name and that of Mr Rajiv Gandhi to be kept totally secret by the Swedish government and by representatives of Bofors; that he was himself conscious that he had no business to be negotiating an arms deal as minister of power; that he met Mr Martin Ardbo on 3 July, 1985 in India; that Mr Ardbo had flown to India as part of stage-I of the Bofors negotiations outlined by Mr Nehru to Mr Gauffin on 24 June 1985; that stage-I of Mr Nehru's scheme consisted of Bofors' sending its "number one man" to New Delhi in the first week of July (Ardbo came on 3 July) which person, according to Mr Nehru, must have "total authority" to negotiate *all conditions*; that during stage-I, Mr Nehru insisted, no experts were needed, because, "technicalities should be brought up later"; that talks between Mr Martin Ardbo and Mr Arun Nehru on 3 July were positive and "they talked frankly"; that, however, no detailed discussions took place during this meeting, but Nehru



and Ardbo discussed the representative issue.

The despatches suggest that Mr Nehru was satisfied with his talks with Bofors. On 1st July, 1985, he informed Gauffin that he was no longer in the picture hereafter; he had done his part of the job. Thereafter, all discussions would take place with the ministry of defence. The irresistible inference is that Mr Martin Ardbo had satisfied all Mr Nehru's demands, during the talks on 3 July. These obviously pertained to the "political understanding in the widest sense" on which there were obviously "frank talks", and the issue of middlemen. Having been thus satisfied, Mr Nehru performed his part of the job between 3 July and the 11th, on which date, he informed Mr Gauffin that his role was over.

What role could Mr Nehru possibly play in ensuring that the howitzer contract was awarded to Bofors? The answer obviously is: influence the key players in the decision making process. The two most vital personae were the Prime Minister who also headed the defence ministry, and the top brass in the Indian Army.

To suggest that Mr Nehru's role consisted of informing the then Prime Minister assumes, of course, that Mr Nehru was on a frolic of his own when he discussed the arms contract with Mr Gauffin and Mr Ardbo. This, however, is a highly improbable scenario. It is hardly likely that Mr Nehru would discuss the Bofors deal with Gauffin and Ardbo without the then Prime Minister's authority. If Rajiv Gandhi entrusted Mr Nehru with the task of extracting a sizeable largesse in the form of a bribe from Bofors as a quid pro quo to awarding them the howitzer contract, then, the only task which the latter could possibly perform for Bofors was of skewing the decision of the top brass in the Indian army in favour of Bofors.

As a matter of fact, from July 1985, the top brass of the Indian army, contrary to six assessments by experts over the previous three years, ominously began to display a marked preference for the Bofors gun over the earlier choice, the French Sofma. General Sundarji testified before the joint committee of the Eighth Lok Sabha which enquired into the Bofors' contract, that it was in July 1985 that reservations about the French gun were first expressed, since it was found that the Sofma self-propelled gun could not be mounted on the Indian Vijayanta tank.

It should be a matter of little surprise that the decision of the top brass of the Indian army can be so easily influenced. We have General Sundarji's own testimony which suggests that almost every gun manufacturer has an active lobby working in its favour in the influential ranks of the Army. Indeed, General Sundarji's interview to *India Today* (15 September, 1989) is illuminating in the extreme. According to him, the express preference of the army, supported by the recommendation of the six expert committees for the Sofma gun, was not as objective as might appear. According to General Sundarji: "During 1983-84, somewhere along the line, the assessment got skewed to the extent of wanting to make the French gun the only gun...there was no fair competition. It was being tailored to become a one-horse race."

Similarly, General Sundarji would have us believe that the technical evaluation committee, headed by Lt Gen. Mayadas, which recommended the Austrian gun, was in fact "set up with the sole intention of pushing the Austrian gun". In such a set-up, surely, it was not difficult to procure the consent of army top brass, to award the howitzer contract to Bofors. We have General Sundarji's poignant cynicism to underline this fact: "Generally, many governments have been getting a percentage of money on these large deals, whether defence deals or otherwise, perhaps, for party funds...The fact is that irrespective of which weapon is chosen, if the intention is to cream a certain amount off the top for party purposes or whatever, it could be creamed off whichever weapon is chosen...

"As a matter of fact, if the French weapon had been finally chosen, perhaps, they would have got a similar percentage. Most politicians realise this and yet they act as if they are totally innocent. This being so, from my point of view, where is the compulsion to push one weapon or the other? This is exactly why as far as the army is concerned, we make sure that what goes into the shortlist is fundamentally acceptable. Thereafter, from our point of view, it is immaterial which one is chosen."

This sounds suspiciously like saying that in the matter of awarding Indian arms contracts, there are clearly demarcated areas of responsibility. The top brass of the Indian army—fortified by their various expert committees—has an exclusive right to decide the various arms manufacturers whose products find their way into the army's shortlist. The decision to select from among that shortlist, however, rests with the ruling political establishment. And, it no doubt depends on such wholly acceptable(!) considerations like the quantum of bribe bid by each contender.

Not surprisingly, General Sundarji is of the view that "in the JPC and subsequently, too much has been





General Sundarji's *(above left) question remains unanswered: who took the money in the Bofors arms contract? Do the despatches of Gauffin suggest the receipt of kickbacks by* **Arun Nehru***?*





Morality, particularly in the public realm, admits of no exceptions. Rajiv Gandhi failed to realise this when he strove to protect the agent, the Hindujas

made of the nuance-change in judging the qualities of the guns. This has led to an over-emphasis on the rationale, propriety and possible motives behind the nuance-change, rather than on the major issue, which is—who has made the money. The real question is: who took the money?"

In the light of General Sundarji's own professed cynicism about the awarding of Indian arms contract by the Indian political-military establishment, certain pertinent questions may well be posed to General Sundarji himself.

- Was General Sundarji's appointment as Chief of Army Staff in February 1986 (which was in fact announced as early as November 1985) a quid pro quo for his and the army's express support for the Bofors gun in preference to all other competing guns?
- Why did he so easily recommend the Bofors gun in February 1986 after assuming office as chief of the Indian army, when in his own earlier assessment, he had revealed a marked preference for the French Sofma gun?
- Does he really believe in his own proclaimed reasons for his volte-face—the failure of the Fench self-propelled gun and the shoot-and-scoot theory?
- In the light of his own revelations about the workings of the political-military establishment, particularly in the matter of awarding of arms contracts, would he consider it reasonable for anyone to suggest that General Sundarji performed his volte-face on the best gun for the Indian Army at the instance of a political boss who was merely exercising his right to choose among the army's shortlist, and not because of his professed reasons. Such as the failure of the French self-propelled gun and the shoot-and-scoot theory?
- In his interview to *India Today*, General Sundarji made a reference to a French lobby being active in the Indian Army in connection with the Sofma gun. As regards the souce of his belief, General Sundarji's unhelpful comment is: "I was *told*, there was a file and a French gun was being pushed. It was quite blatant." General Sundarji also suggests that this unholy lobby exerting itself for the French Sofma gun, was one factor which instilled a reaction in him in favour of the Bofors gun. Who *told* General Sundarji about the French lobby, so that, he reacted in favour of the Swedish gun?

General Sundarji's central question, however, remains unanswered: who took the money in the Bofors arms contract? It is for certain that the Hindujas are in the thick of it and the Bachchans not yet out of the woods. Do the despatches of Mr Gauffin suggest the receipt of kickbacks by Mr Arun Nehru?

I neither hold brief for, nor bear animus against Mr Arun Nehru. I have broken bread with him, and perhaps presumptuously, considered him a friend. I have prepared a suit for defamation against this very magazine, under instructions from Mr Nehru. But morality—particularly in the public realm—admits of no exceptions. Mr Rajiv Gandhi failed to realise this when he strove to protect the Bachchans and the Satish Sharmas of this world, at his own peril. I parted ways for the first time in my life with my father when he failed to recognise the logic of his moral crusade in Bofors when it came to his distant relatives, the Hindujas. I feel anguish at the selective morality that some of my friends and mentors in the press have displayed, in connection with Mr Arun Nehru, but, I cannot be a party to the same.

Mr Nehru must forthwith make a full and complete disclosure of what he knows about the Bofors transaction to the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). If he fails to do so, he can hardly blame his erstwhile friends and colleagues for concluding that perhaps, the Hindujas were right when they suggested that behind the veil of secrecy that surrounds AE Services, lurks the towering fire of Mr Arun Nehru.

Campus greens

At Madras Christian College they agitate for plants, not jobs

While the anti-reservation stir had the rest of the country in thrall, Madras Christian College was witness to an agitation of an entirely different sort. The students of the college—whose campus stretches over 375 acres of verdant green—went on strike to protest the management's decision to clear the scrub jungle around the main building. At a time when the entire student fraternity was preoccupied with protecting its rights from an increasingly casteist government, this overriding concern for the environment came as a pleasant surprise.

Recently, the management of the college cleared two patches of scrub near the St Thomas Hall and Heber Hall for use as parking lots for motorcycles and bicycles. The students objected to this. There was no justification for destroying valuable flora, they said, when there were two vacant plots closer to the halls.

The administration, however, refused to revise its decision. The argument went, that the plots suggested as alternative parking sites were too near the residential quarters of the students, and would cause unnecessary noise pollution. H. Francis Soundararaj, the principal of the college, insisted on going ahead with the scrub clearance.

As the attitude of the principal hardened, the students took to organising protest meetings at the gates. Soundararaj refused to budge from his stand, maintaining that their demands were "mostly irrelevant to students and hostel functioning and instigated by anti-social elements". The students refused to be cowed down, and the college was closed down as the two sides engaged in the now inevitable showdown.

Before ordering the closure of the college, however, Soundararaj dissolved the student council, holding it guilty of attempts to disrupt normal campus life, and sent off telegrams to the students' parents which read, "hunger strike risks health and police arrest. Take away your ward immediately".

Members of the student council, for their part, accuse the principal of being vindictive, in that he dissolved the council with impunity, once the agitation got going. When the students raised the issue of misuse of UGC (University Grants Commission) funds by the authorities, Soundararaj asked: "Who among the staff are instigating you?" Later, say the students, "he talked of our having the support of anti-social elements. Did he mean that there are anti-socials among the faculty?"

The row was settled after the intervention of a few alumni members. But the truce proved to be a temporary one. When the college reopened, the principal put up a signed note on the college notice-board, which informed the students that their council had been "reinstated" now that the strike was off. He invited members of the council to his house for tea "to demonstrate that we maintain cordial relations personally whatever be our differences on issues".

The council members, however, chose to boycott the tea party. The principal, they said, had no right to dissolve the student council in the first place, so how could he possibly reinstate it? "He cannot wash away the main issues with his tea. We are yet to get any assurance from him regarding the preservation of the scrub jungle and we have not got any clarification regarding the UGC funds," said a council member.



Madras Christian College: trees are more important than parking lots

Topping the list of the students' demands is an assurance that no more of the invaluable scrub jungle around the college would be cleared for any development/construction purposes. In fact, the students had boycotted classes on the same issue last September, when the management cleared about 11 acres of scrub jungle for a National Fair for Water Management in Agriculture, which was to be organised by the noted agricultural scientist Dr M.S. Swaminathan.

But the students strike persuaded Dr Swaminathan to move his show elsewhere. The scientist reportedly admitted that he had overlooked the ecological considerations involved in

PHOTOGRAPHS: MUTHUKUMARAN

holding the affair on the Madras Christian College grounds, and also offered to reimburse the cost of replanting the cleared scrub. The college administration, for its part, promised that it would never again attempt to clear the flora in and around the campus.

Now, principal Soundararaj complains: "The ecology issue was settled a year ago and yet they are raking it up again only to gain public attention."

But the fact remains that the authorities have now gone back on their assurance about the fate of the scrub. With reason, maintains the administration. The college has already initiated the process for the UGC to accord it 'deemed university' status, whereby it could award its own diplomas and degrees, rather than continue to function under the Madras University. "We are not a sanctuary over here." says Soundararaj. "We are trying for a 'deemed university' status and buildings must necessarily come up."

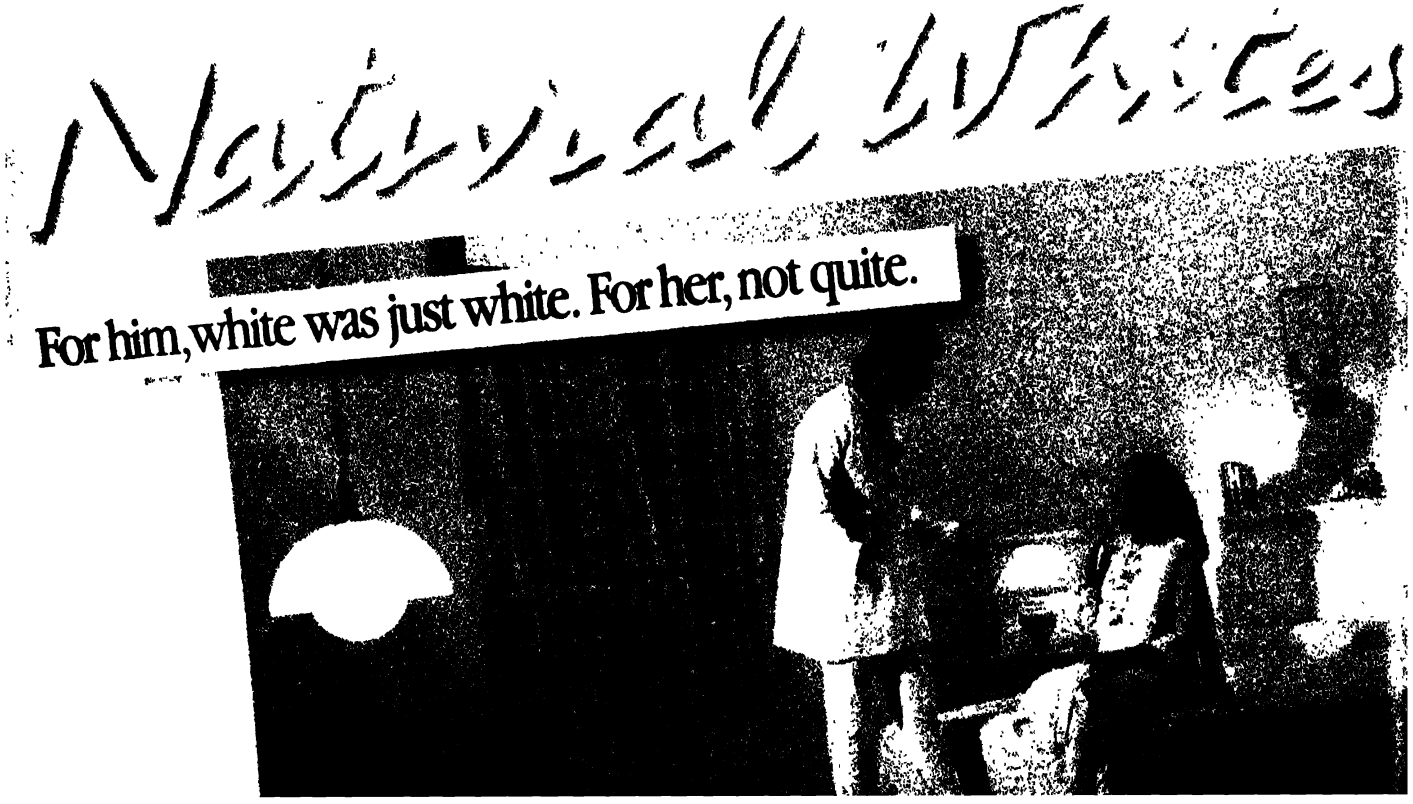
"We are not a sanctuary over here," says Soundararaj, the principal. "We are trying for a 'deemed university' status and buildings must come up"



The student representatives don't buy this. There are a number of barren patches on the campus area where construction can take place, they say, without disturbing the flora. "If this rate of denudation of the campus flora continues," adds one of the faculty members, "we will end up being a 'doomed university' not a 'deemed university'."

Most of the faculty members, in fact, support the students in their current agitation. Professor M. Gladstone, head of the department of zoology, says: "I was the curator in charge of the campus greenery for 11 years and I was forced to quit from that post after I protested against the clearance of the scrub jungle." According to the professor, about 70 acres of the 375-acre campus was precious scrub, quite unique in the east coast area and that this was now threatened because of the "lack of environmental awareness in the minds of the erring management".

Instead of concentrating on solving the problems in hand, complain students, the management is content to





"If this rate of denudation of the campus flora continues," says a faculty member, "we will end up being a 'doomed university'"

issue such directives as the one banning the use of motorcycles inside the campus area. Principal Soundararaj declared recently: "On principle, no resident is entitled to keep a motorised vehicle. This will be implemented in a phased manner with all the first year and M. Phil students not being allowed to bring in their vehicles this year."

The decision, apparently, came because some students—and a number of outsiders as well—whizzed past the gates of the college, with their girlfriends on the pillion and rode into the woods for a 'bit of romance'. "Last year, I booked about five cases when they brought in outside women," says the principal. "I cannot allow this to become a promiscuous campus."

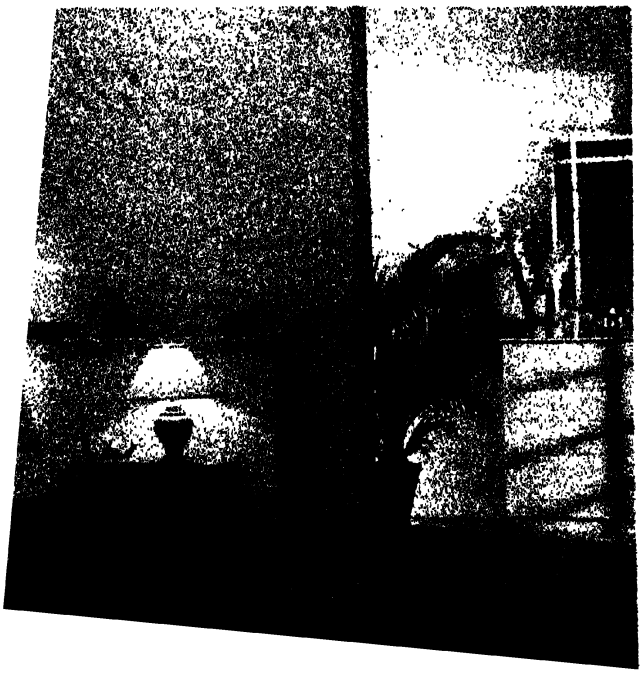
The students object to the ban, on the grounds that theirs is a coeducational institution and many bonafide female students come pillion-riding on their friends' bikes. "He could have our bikes checked at the gates rather than impose a total ban," wailed students.

But, to the great glee of the students, the ban was not implemented with any degree of seriousness, because of the lack of a proper security system within the campus. For the present, one of the college professors has been assigned guard duty and the students have a ball dodging the academician, trying valiantly to police the woods. Quipped one of the students: "Is the UGC paying these professors to teach us or to act as security guards, estate officers and so on?"

As the row rages, one thing is clear. Madras Christian College, once known for its high educational standards and its celebrity alumni (including such stalwarts as former President Dr S. Radhakrishnan, former foreign secretary A.P. Venkateswaran and former chief of army staff General K. Sundarji), will now be recognised as India's first green college.

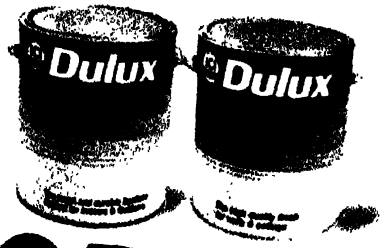
And despite the strikes and closures, that isn't such an unwelcome development. ●

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras



She was tired of plain white.
He didn't want anything bright.
She had an idea. Shades of white!
He was puzzled. Does white have shades?
Yes. The new Dulux Natural Whites Collection.
Bluebell for coolness. Barley for warmth.
Lily adds a glow. Softness of Rose.
Apple to refresh. Orchid for elegance.

The whiter shades of pale.
Fresh from Dulux.



ICI Dulux



What's with Dimple Kapadia? Even after having amassed a vast fortune the actress continues to be her stingy worst.

Recently, Dimple was spotted at the Ensemble, Bombay's most expensive designer boutique. The auburn-haired actress kept cribbing about the exorbitant prices and, finally, settled for an outfit from the 50 per cent discount rack.

At least, if Dimple showed some consistency in this regard, her miserly behaviour would be easier to take. But her attitude is quite different when sister Simple puts the price tags on her star sibling's clothes. Of course, then it is the hapless producer's turn to go blue in the face protesting against the prices, while the star exercises her prerogative of turning a blind eye.

After all, even little sister Simple deserves to rake it in on occasions.



Deepti Naval: switching professions



Salman Khan: the brattish star

Deepti Naval need not worry too much about being turned out of the Bombay film industry. Because the 'intense' actress can always go in for an alternative career in interior decoration.

Deepti's house itself is ample proof of her good taste. Not for her, the regular *filmi, nouveau riche* horrors that are all too common in Bombay.

And the appreciation her house has received from all quarters has made Naval quite ambitious. Ambitious enough, at least, to want to design a farmhouse for someone.

Any takers?

Success sure seems to have gone to Salman Khan's head. Recently on the sets of producer Nitin Manmohan's *Baaghi* the other Heartbreak Khan had a minor quarrel with Asha Sachdev which got him into a bad mood. So, the brattish Salman yelled "pack up" and walked off from the sets with the entire unit looking on in horror.

Of course, producer Manmohan diplomatically adds that Salman is not a bad kid. He just needs to be tackled properly.

Maybe Sangeeta could teach Salman's producers a lesson or two. ●

The beautiful way to get rid of your dandruff



Most people think that dandruff is just an irritation on the scalp. But it can also affect the way your hair looks. Dandruff makes it dull and lustreless. **New Clinic Special gets rid of your dandruff gently. Gives you great looking hair.** Its new international formulation loosens and lifts out dandruff from the scalp, where it really begins. **And it has a rich, creamy conditioner which leaves your hair soft and shiny.** So you can use it regularly even after your dandruff's gone. Use New Clinic Special to prevent your dandruff from coming back. And to keep your hair looking good.



NEW Clinic Special

ANTI-DANDRUFF SHAMPOO

Selling Anjali

GV Films' marketing strategy initiates a trend

Hard-sell has always been part of show-biz. But rarely has it gone as far as in the south Indian film industry. Producer-distributor G. Venkateswaran (42) and his younger brother Maniratnam (37), the whiz-kid director of *Nayakan*, have succeeded in revolutionising the concept of movie making and marketing in the south.

Consider the facts: last year G. Venkateswaran (popularly known as GV in Madras) and his distribution company GV Films went public. The first time such a thing had happened in the 75-year old history of Indian cinema. What's more, its issue was oversubscribed three times over with a Rs 10 share going for Rs 30.

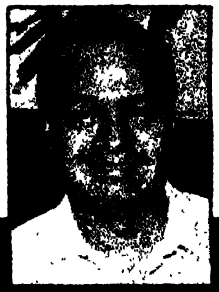
The decision to go public made sense, then, vindicating GV's credentials as a chartered accountant and financial wizard. But more impressive was the manner in which Maniratnam's latest film *Anjali* was marketed by his distributor brother.

The *modus operandi* adopted by GV would have done any advertising agency proud. And it certainly succeeded in whipping up an *Anjali* 'fever', even though the subject of the film wasn't one that spelt box-office success. The story revolved around a mentally retarded three-year-old and how her upper middle class family deals with her condition.

Instead Maniratnam, a great Steven Spielberg fan, adapted the special effects from *Poltergeist* and *ET* (children on a flying bicycle, etc); roped in Illaiyaraaja for the soundtrack (nearly two lakh copies of its audio cassettes have already been sold); and managed to churn out a super success.

Made at a cost of Rs 1.25 crore, *Anjali* is poised to make a profit of over Rs 3 crores. A confident GV predicts: "The share value of the film is around Rs 30. I expect it to go up to Rs 45 when the film completes 100 days."

Anjali was, without doubt, the biggest commercial success of the year. Says GV: "For the first time we marketed a film in India the way consumer products like soaps are sold. We followed the same techniques mastered by Hollywood studios to market their films." 'Nearly three months before the film's release GV held a big bash where chief minister Karunanidhi released the film's audio cassette. It was advertised as Illaiyaraaja's 500th film, though serious doubts were raised about that one. But whatever the truth of the matter, the public function held to felicitate Illaiyaraaja set GV back by Rs 3 lakhs. Later the songs of the film were popularised by radio spots. After this initial publicity hype, GV followed up with the release of an *Anjali* logo—a drawing of the profile of the mentally retarded *Anjali* with her hair down and her hands raised. Unlike most distributors, who depend on larger than life, hideous cut-outs of the stars of their films to draw in the crowds, GV put up 80 commercial hoardings all over Madras of the *Anjali* logo.





A scene from *Anjali*; (inset) G. Venkateswaran: hard-sell pays

A month before *Anjali* was scheduled for release, however, GV found out that his female lead Shyamalee had acted in a Malayalam film, *Maloot*, which may well be screened before his movie. Realising that his film would lose out if that happened, GV bought the dubbing and distribution rights of *Maloot* and delayed the film. Says the distributor: "Now I will release the film, which will do good business on the strength of Shyamalee and the succes of *Anjali*."

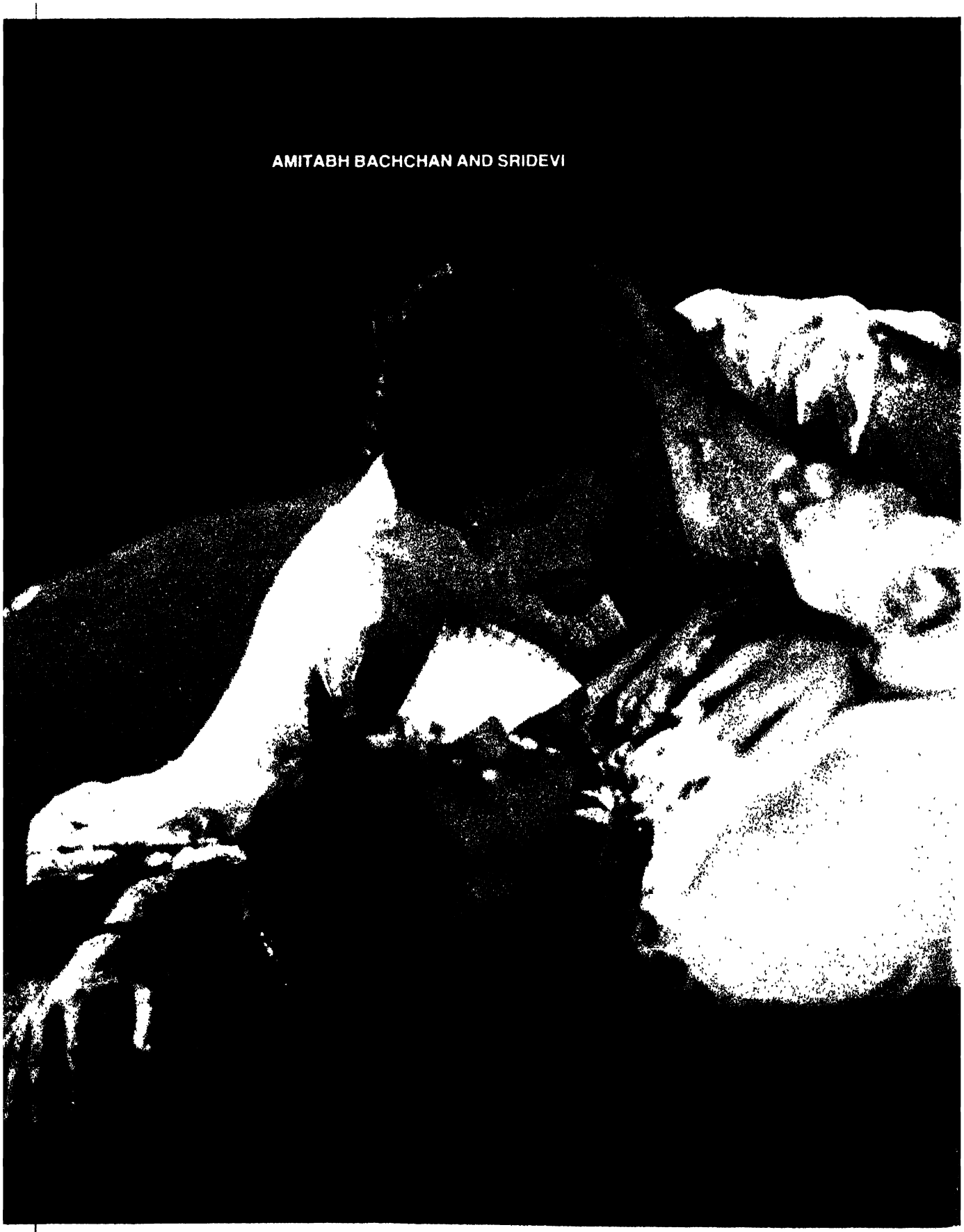
But GV achieved the biggest breakthrough when he convinced Liptons to launch a new biscuit called Anjali Milk Anna. Lipton proposes to use the *Anjali* logo to popularise the biscuit in south India. Pace Luggages has also decided to market its new range of canvas school bags with the *Anjali* logo.

Predictably, the success story of GV Film has captured the imagination of a host of other producers in Madras And the imitators have gone further than GV. For instance, Sajan Verghese is planning to launch a public limited company, Saj Vision, where stars will work for a fixed salary and a percentage of the profits—yet another Hollywood concept.

So, in the end, *Anjali* may prove to be more than just another hit film.

Sreedhar Pillay/Madras

AMITABH BACHCHAN AND SRIDEVI





GAUTAM PATOLE

Girls on film

Elisabeth Bumiller on Bombay's actresses

Outside, the summer monsoon was turning Bombay into an impassable swamp, but inside, on the set of the Hindi film *Dance Dance*, they were busy making dreams. I had watched all day as one of India's top actors, a slim-hipped, blow-dried heartthrob, gyrated to a disco beat in a kind of subcontinental *Saturday Night Fever*. His co-star was Mandakini, a 17-year-old newcomer, who had made her movie debut the year before in a wet sari scene that male audiences and outraged feminists had still not forgotten. But the actress I found more interesting was the "dramatic" female lead, Smita Patil, at that moment stretched out in her dressing room, bored and exhausted. She was 30 years old, one of India's biggest stars, sensuous and striking, and a favourite of the highbrow art cinema. Yet there she was, at ten on a Sunday night, working on schlock so she could make a living. What was worse, lately her personal life had become more interesting to her fans than her films. The big news was that she was five months pregnant with the child of Raj Babbar, a well-known actor whom she called her husband. But Babbar, as anybody who read the movie magazines knew, was married to someone else.

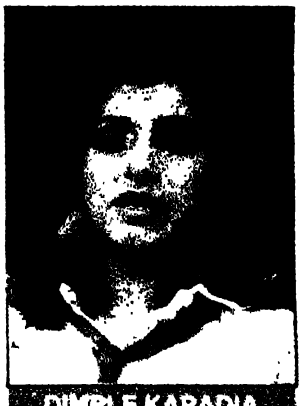
"When we got involved, he never promised to leave his wife," Patil told me. "However difficult it was for me to accept certain facts, I still had to."



REKHA



SRIDEVI



DIMPLE KAPADIA

I was talking to her in 20-minute segments between shots. Despite the seeming contradictions in her personal life, Patil was one of the more intelligent actresses in Bombay, college-educated, with a feminist conscience and an awareness of the world beyond the studio gates.

For the day's scenes, Patil's costume designer had managed to create a dress that hid her growing stomach, but the strain of standing in front of the camera for hours in high heeled pumps was evident in her face. "My back," she said, grimacing. She was sitting on her bed, feet propped up on a pillow, with a front section of her hair in an electric roller. She nibbled at a piece of toast covered with an unappetizing mound of melted cheese and tried to fend off a director's assistant who came in to tell her they needed close-ups. "Close-ups?" she said, horrified. "When I'm looking like a dead cat?" The room, a mess of costumes and make-up, smelled stale. From this vantage point, her life did not appear to be a glamorous one, although it had led to the kinds of entanglements for which Patil was now famous. "Women who work in this industry have no time for any kind of normal life," she said. "You're working ten or twelve hours a day with different men all the time. You're constantly demanded to emote, and it tends to become a very high-strung existence emotionally, which leads into your personal involvements. The line is very thin."



ANCHOR®

SOCKS

WILLIAM INDUSTRIES
Anchor House, Nirnay Sagar Building,
T.J. Road, Sewri (W), Bombay-400 015.
Phone: 4137235, 4137321, 4130369.
Fax: (022) 4126556

In between her comments, the director's assistant walked in with Patil's lines for an upcoming scene. They had just been written on the set, which was standard procedure for Indian films. Patil had only a vague idea of the story line, but this was not a matter for concern. She knew that *Dance Dance* was essentially about a brother-and-sister song-and-dance act and that she played the sister, who got raped. It was not the sort of plot that would have impressed her feminist friends, but Patil had already done a half dozen rape scenes in her career—a modest number in an industry that regularly spiced up its films with battered women for the heroes to rescue. "Because, you see, the man has to be the saviour," Patil said sarcastically. "It's all for the sake of the man. The women have to continue being beaten." The rest of *Dance Dance* was a mystery to her. "If you ask me, I honestly don't know what happens," she said, shrugging. "It's a normal Hindi film."



MANDAKINI with Mithun

A slim-hipped, blow-dried heartthrob gyrated to a disco beat in a kind of subcontinental *Saturday Night Fever* with his 17-year-old heroine

Smita Patil worked in what was without question the largest and nuttiest film industry in the world. Every year, the Indian "dream factory" churned out close to 900 feature films, almost all of them frothy romances and bloody shoot-'em-ups, in Hindi and other regional languages, for an annual paying audience of no fewer than five billion. That was five times the number of people who saw the 230 feature films produced in 1988 in the United States. And even though Bombay, like Hollywood, had been hurt by video piracy and television, the dream factory remained in full production. This was one of the great ironies of an industry that always appeared on the edge of collapse. India's literate upper classes had for years avoided the low-brow entertainment of Hindi films in the country's run-down cinema halls, and by the late 1980s, more movies were failing than ever before. And yet more movies were being made than ever before. This of course made no sense.

A theory in the industry, virtually impossible to prove, was that accountants altered the books so that the films seemed to lose money, enabling producers to avoid the high Indian taxes on profits. Certainly the stars were notorious for receiving "black money", or cash fees paid under the table. Whatever the case, real-estate speculators, diamond merchants and expatriate Indians continued to finance new films with enormous sums of money from outside the industry. Like the tycoon in America who buys the local baseball team for the prestige and the chance to make friends with the players, the investor in Indian films was not completely rational. The glamour of Bombay was hard for many investors to resist, and they seemed willing to gamble that lush, big-screen movies would survive by offering escape in a country where most people struggled through impoverished lives on the edge of survival.

The three leading commercial Indian actresses throughout the mid and late 1980s were indisputably Rekha, Dimple Kapadia and Sridevi. Although their positions as numbers one, two and three shifted according to their most recent box-office hits and failures, no other commercial actress came close to touching their star quality. When I was in Bombay in the summer of 1986, Rekha, the longtime queen of the Hindi screen, who had been number one for years, had recently been surpassed by her younger rival, Sridevi (pronounced Shree-day-vee). Dimple, as everyone called her, had recently re-entered the film world after a disastrous marriage and was not yet in the running. Two years later, after Sridevi had suffered a few box-office flops, Rekha was back on top as number one and elder stateswoman. Dimple had come roaring back as well and had at times threatened to take the number-one spot for herself. This was all sometimes very hard to follow, even for those who made a career of it. "We find it difficult to keep up as far as the girls are concerned," admitted Nari Hira, the publisher of *Stardust* the leading film magazine.

The first actress I met was Dimple, who was shooting one afternoon at a bungalow in a high-rent section of Bombay. This was in the summer of 1986, when she was still down on the lower rungs of the film industry. Even so, most men, even intelligent, professional men who never went to the Hindi films, used to go into raptures over Dimple. When I first saw her on



DIMPLE with Mithun



NDRAJEET AURANGABADKAR

Another marriage was not in her future since she, too, was involved with an actor who, she said, would never leave his wife

the set, I could see why. She was beautiful—tall, shapely, with enormous eyes, swollen lips and a dramatic cleft in her chin. She was wearing a curly long-haired red wig and a green-and-cream silk sari. The film was called *Insaaf*, or "Justice," and Dimple played twin sisters, one a nightclub singer, the other a doctor. Naturally the singer was raped, then jumped off a building out of shame. When I arrived on the set, Dimple was in the middle of a scene, shot in a bedroom, in which the nightclub singer was telling her lover, a former college professor, that she had just aborted his child. When the lover asked why, she replied that it was because they were not husband and wife. The lover, by now extremely agitated, declared his love and asked for her hand in marriage, at which point the singer admitted that she had made up the abortion story and that she was still carrying his child. At the melodramatic conclusion of the scene, Dimple burst into real tears.

"It just happens sometimes," she said afterward in her dressing room, still sniffling. "That scene was from within. Until yesterday, I didn't know where this character was at. But now I'm getting it. She wanted to be an actress and she couldn't make it, so she got into this nightclub scene." I asked her about her attempt to make a comeback after her failed marriage. "The comeback has been no comeback," she said flatly. "I don't know what people were expecting from me." Dimple had the straightforward, no-excuses manner of someone who had been through too much to put up a front. At least her life had provided abundant material for the scene she had just played.

At the age of fourteen she had starred in *Bobby*, a love story that became one of the industry's all-time hits. The film made Dimple into a sensation, but instead of using it to launch her career, she married, at the age of fifteen, the country's most popular leading man at the time, Rajesh Khanna. He promptly told his new wife that her acting days were over. "My husband believed that my place was at home," Dimple said. "It was not a husband-wife relationship—it was father-daughter." After two children and ten years of marriage, she finally walked out. "It's a big stigma to leave a man," she said. "I didn't expect to be accepted. But after I left him, it made a tremendous difference to me. The best part was that I was earning my own bread." I could see by now that Dimple was clearly pleased with her outburst of tears in the previous scene. "That one shot gave me a lot of pleasure," she said. "That kind of high I've never been able to experience with anything else in my life. And if I can get that high twice or thrice a year—I just love it." Another marriage was not in her future since she, too, was involved with an actor who she said would "never" leave his wife. I asked her why she stayed in the relationship. "I don't owe anything to anyone," she said. "If I'm happy, I'm going to do it."

Some days later I met Rekha, a stunning 32-year-old beauty, who that summer had seen her career eclipsed by her young friend Sridevi, in a widely discussed Indian version of *All About Eve* . Even worse, the dreaded Sridevi had the effrontery to be linked romantically with the leading man, who was said to have been Rekha's lover of many years. I decided it would be best to bring up a less incendiary topic first, so in Rekha's dressing room one muggy evening I began by asking her about one of her favourite subjects—Rekha, a mythic being she had come to see as larger than herself. "Nobody can take my position, not even myself," she announced to me as she draped her forehead with jewels for an upcoming scene. "Not even the human being

that I am can ever take Rekha's position. No. That is only for her. She has taken that position for life." Although she viewed herself as a deity, Rekha was warm, friendly and so talkative that it was difficult to guide the conversation to a new topic. Listening to her voice, however, was lovely. She had learned to speak English with a smooth, almost musical upper-class Indian accent that veered toward the British.



SMITA PATIL

"If you ask," said Patil of *Dance Dance*, "I honestly don't know what happens. It's a normal Hindi film"

The goddess had arrived in Bombay from south India more than a decade before as "a round ball of flesh", as Rekha herself said. But she had ambition, she had street smarts and, most important, she had the quality called *oomph* in Bombay, which was the powerful sex appeal necessary for success. So her movies did well. As years passed, Rekha slowly transformed herself, changing her make-up, learning how to dress and slimming down with the help of Jane Fonda's workout videos. Soon she was starring in movies with Amitabh Bachchan, the male megastar. Even upper-class housewives went to their beauty salons and said they wanted to look like Rekha—full lips, dark, dramatic eyes, lustrous black hair. At the same time, the gossip magazines were chronicling Rekha's depressions, tantrums and periods of Garbo-like reclusiveness, which merely added to her appeal. When she did speak, she had the unfortunate habit of saying whatever came into her head, revealing on several occasions that all she read was *Cosmopolitan* magazine and *Archie* comic books. But then Rekha hit 30 and was immediately branded as "aging" by male audiences, who preferred, she said, "a child-woman, impish, bubbly, voluptuous". Rekha insisted to me that she still had that kind of appeal, but the talk in the industry was that she had in fact become, after all her workouts, much too sleek for the tastes of the masses. This set the stage for Sridevi, the more recent arrival out of south India, who was every bit as plump, popular and savvy as Rekha had been a decade before. Suddenly it was Sridevi's face that appeared on movie posters across India. Only 21-one years old that summer, Sridevi had already signed up for more movies than Rekha, which had earned her the title of Miss Number One in Bombay. "She's *one* of the number ones," Rekha corrected, with a tiny frown. "There are a lot of number ones." Both she and Sridevi continued to insist that they were friends, and they made a big fuss of greeting each other in public. A year before, when I had been on a plane from Madras to Delhi, I had watched as Sridevi and Rekha unexpectedly [illegible] to each other on the same flight. They squealed with delight across the cabin, throwing the rest of the passengers into an uproar. Such behavior was great entertainment for their fellow actresses in Bombay, who believed that the two were obsessed with each other and actually imitated each other in their films. The friendship, these other actresses told me, was more like *detente*—Sridevi was so afraid of Rekha's venom and Rekha was so fearful of Sridevi's success that the two refrained from clawing at each other in public. Rekha, though, had her moments.



"She's a cute kid," Rekha said when I finally got around to raising the issue of Sridevi's success. "She came into the industry at a time when I was thinking of stepping out. People missed me so much, and she almost had perfect timing in filling that gap. She is very intelligent. Of course, she's much more immature than me, but in no time she'll learn."

I found Miss Number One at another studio in Bombay, impatiently waiting for her next scene on the set of *Mr India*, a big-budget special-effects film with a bizarre plot twist in which she played a reporter for a newspaper called *The Crimes of India* who falls in



REKHA

When she came to Bombay, she said, she was "a round ball of flesh". But she slowly transformed herself, changing her make-up and slimming down



love with an invisible man. The set, a futuristic grotto of aluminium foil that looked like *Star Wars* run amok, appeared to be the headquarters of a diabolical villain. The producers had hopes for a blockbuster, and when *Mr India* was released a year later, it quickly became a big summertime hit. I dragged an Indian friend, Bim Bissell, to see it with me. Bim worked at the World Bank in Delhi, had a son in an American university and was one of the many Indians who had stopped going to the cinema halls years before. I think she looked upon our excursion as a minor adventure. "I haven't been in this theater since I was in college," she told me as we took our seats. The theater was hot, gritty and smelly, but the movie, which had received something better than the usual disdainful reviews, turned out to be absurd fun. Much of its success was due to Sridevi, who was charismatic on-screen, especially in one memorable song-and-dance number when she was costumed Bombay-style in a clinging gold lame gown with a matching gold headdress.

Back on the set in Bombay, however, the *Mr India* star had been in a bad mood, annoyed with her director for keeping her until eight at night when she had been up since dawn. But when I asked Sridevi about her rival Rekha, the irritation gave way to a little-girl innocence. "We don't have any problems between us," she told me with a wide-eyed look. She was collapsed on the bed in her dressing room, a dusty refuge filled with costumes and half-eaten sandwiches, and up close had none of the seductive magic she projected on-screen. She was merely a young girl, pretty and plump, who had become an object of fantasy for her fans in the south who liked her that way. "I hate being a fatty," she sighed. "But if I were skinny, my fans in the south would kick me out." Most Indian actresses were equally fleshy, and even those viewed as slender were 20 pounds overweight by Hollywood standards. Only Rekha worked out at a health club. The others spent lots of time telling film magazines about the exercise programs they followed at home, but I had my doubts. The desired look for an actress in the film industry was soft and luscious, which implied leisure and wealth, and separated her from the lower classes in the villages, where the women were muscular and thin.

Sridevi began acting when she was five and had appeared in more than 100 films. She routinely worked 15 hours a day, seven days a week, and insisted she never tired of it. "I love this profession," she told me sweetly. "It's such a beautiful thing. Sometimes I feel I should take a day off, but by the afternoon, I get restless." It was only in recent years that she had learned English and gained some independence. "Now I talk to the press without my mummy," she informed me. Clearly she had picked up a few tricks since then, because when I asked her again about Rekha, Sridevi was as evasive as a Congress party politician. "She's very interested in her work," she said of Rekha. "She has a very lovely face."

In order to find out what was really going on between the two women, I made an appointment back in Delhi to see Amitabh Bachchan, the star who was at that time also a member of Parliament. At 44, he remained the single biggest phenomenon in the history of Indian film. I found him in his subtly decorated beige-and-cream office, all six feet of him folded into an expensively upholstered chair

He had bedroom eyes and a gentle manner and in person turned out to be nothing like the Rambo he played on-screen. He had grown up in cultivated surroundings as the son of a well-known poet and scholar in Allahabad and was a close childhood friend of Rajiv Gandhi. Despite his privileged background, he had risen to stardom as the quintessential cinematic "angry young man", whose swaggering manner and contempt for social niceties made him a symbol for an alienated generation of movie-goers who had left the villages and struggled to find work in the cities. "My fan is the man on the street who's looking to make it in life," Bachchan said. "I've always played the underdog who has single-handedly risen above all obstacles."



SHABANA with Javed

"I went through hell," said Azmi, "but it was only in the final analysis that I felt that nothing was worth giving up my man for"



At the height of his success, Bachchan was making so many movies at the same time that he had had to "die" three times in one day—shot twice and stabbed once. ("It was deadly," he said.) Several years before, when he really almost died performing a stunt on a set, the nation went into mourning. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi paid her respects at the hospital, and All India Radio broadcast bulletins on Bachchan's vital signs as people fasted and prayed nationwide. "It's something I can never forget," he said. When he recovered, he found he was a bigger star than ever. In 1984, his friend Rajiv asked him to run for a Parliament seat against a particularly powerful and entrenched incumbent. Bachchan won easily, but after the election he never had the political impact that people expected, and by 1988 he had resigned amid allegations, never proven, that he was evading taxes by using his brother, a resident of Switzerland, to funnel his fortune out of the country. His health had also suffered, and he was undergoing treatment for myasthenia gravis, a muscular disease. But throughout it all, he had continued his acting career, for fees that were estimated as high as $1 million per film (Sridevi, the highest-paid actress, made only about $150,000 per film.)

I talked with Bachchan in his office for an hour, and he seemed happy to hold forth on the subject of films, Rekha and Sridevi, rather than discuss his political headaches. For years, Rekha and Bachchan were the unbeatable couple of Indian films, and the gossip magazines continued to write that the on-screen electricity between them was crackling off-screen as well. Bachchan was said to have exerted a sophisticating influence on Rekha, helping to polish her to her present sheen. Bachchan, who was married, casually denied any relationship with her. "Why only Rekha?" he asked me. "Why not the rest of them?"

Rekha had rather unconvincingly denied the relationship too, although she did say, "I wish I were" involved with Bachchan. She had never married. She also spoke very passionately about the married man who had been in her life for years, but whom she never named. "It's a lot of pain, no matter how independent you are," she said. "It's all very nice to live in a dream sequence and say, 'Oh, you are the mistress and you're having the best, you're more enticing and desirable to your man'. No, no no. You're giving up a lot."

One actress who kept some distance from the glamour scene was Shabana Azmi, the winner of more acting awards than any other



SRIDEVI with Vinod Khanna



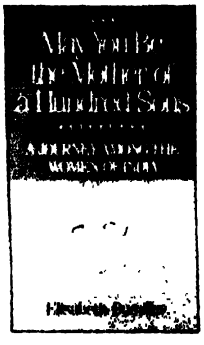
DURGAPRASAD

In recent years Sridevi had learned English and gained some independence. "Now I talk to the press without mummy," she informed me

female star and, in my mind, the reigning feminist conscience of Hindi films. More than most others , she had the ability to look at the curious world of the Indian actress with a degree of perspective and irony. Azmi was a serious artist who began her career in India's highbrow art films, then crossed over into the commercial cinema because, she said, "I saw it as something that would get me stardom." That it did, and her fees increased, although Azmi could never command the prices of Sridevi. Instead she shuttled between the serious cinema and shlock and argued that the name she made for herself in her popular movies brought more attention to the small-budget films in which she played strong women who fought back.

I first met Azmi at her beach cottage, a small house of dark wood that was decorated not in the usual Bombay style of gilt and chrome but with Indian textiles and other folk crafts. Azmi was 34 and had an intelligent face, striking but not classically beautiful. She was in many ways India's version of Meryl Streep, and Meryl Streep was in fact her favorite actress. Her status as an "artist", however, had not made her insufferable, and she turned out to be lively, gossipy and no more narcissistic than anyone else.

Azmi, like so many others, had fallen in love with a married man. But because she was a "serious" actress who espoused feminism, the gossip press made more of the affair than usual. Some fans even called her a hypocrite. "Here is a woman," Azmi said of herself, "who believes in liberation and women's rights, and then she just goes and snatches a man away from his wife?" Her case was more convoluted than most. The man, one of the industry's top screenwriters, was a lifelong Muslim who ended his first marriage by making the simple unilateral declaration prescribed by Muslim law. As a feminist, Azmi said, she found it difficult to accept his divorce because she felt Muslim religious law was unfair to women. But love triumphed and she married him anyway. "I went through hell," she said. "It was only in the final analysis that I felt that nothing was worth giving up my man for." Azmi had been able to ignore social conventions because of the unique culture in which she lived. "Actresses come into power, and then they have the ability to make choices, which most women in India don't," she said. This was the real advantage of being an actress in India, I thought, and Azmi was one of the few with a star's status who had the intelligence to articulate it. "An actress is treated like a real person," she went on. "She's handling her finances, she's employing people. In a sense, she's totally equal to a man. And you realize you have this in you, despite your sheltered existence and your cultural heritage. And you say, 'All right, if men have the freedom why can't we?'"



May You Be The Mother Of A Hundred Sons A Journey Among The Women Of India
by Elisabeth Bumiller
Published by Random House, New York, USA.
Distributed by India Book House Distributors.
Price: Rs 360

The melodramas in the actresses' private lives didn't stop anyone from buying tickets to see them, of course. In a country as poor as India, the stars were so fantastically out of reach that they really were idols, allowed to behave in ways that would not be accepted among ordinary mortals. The movies may have been moral guides, but the lives of the stars proved that people in India liked to have it both ways. The fans delighted in the scandals of the actresses in the same way that Indians had always loved the legends of their promiscuous deities. In that sense, the stars were simply continuing a tradition as old as the Hindu myths. "Clandestine relationships have existed from time immemorial," Amitabh Bachchan said. "Most of our gods have had two wives." ●

Buddhism is best

Channel Four telecasts yet another controversial film on India

The Western media remain obsessed with Indian stereotypes. Poverty, dowry deaths, floods and untouchability remain favourite themes. British television audiences, for instance, know almost all there is to know about untouchability in India. A few months back Channel Four television screened Mira Hammermesh's film *Caste At Birth*. Well-researched and slickly directed the film made a powerful impact on viewers.

But no sooner had the rave reviews about the Hammermesh film petered out than Channel Four came up with another movie on the same subject. But, to be fair, this film, *In The Footsteps Of Ambedkar*, was fairly unique. Instead of concentrating on bedevilling India's caste system, it dealt with those untouchables who had converted to Buddhism. The choice of Dennis Lingwood—a former British army private who became a devoted follower of Ambedkar and is now one of Britain's leading senior Buddhists—as narrator, made perfect sense.

Lingwood, born in England in 1926, was posted to India where he proceeded to desert the army in 1947. For the next 20 years he travelled in India completely bereft of any material possessions, initially, even without a passport.

Gradually he was drawn into the Indian way of life. He was ordained a Buddhist monk (his name became Sangharakshita, protector of the order) and he founded a monastry in which he lived and taught. Here he met Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the creator of the Indian Constitution, who later inspired him to return to England, with the express purpose of setting up a Buddhist order.

Not only did Lingwood succeed in setting up such an order, he also established a supporting charitable organisation, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order.

In The Footsteps Of Ambedkar deals with Sangharakshita's return to India in 1988 to pay homage to Ambedkar. It is an emotional homecoming. Ambedkar had died within six weeks of becoming a Buddhist in 1956 and it had been left to Sangharakshita to organise the conversion of the untouchables. He had worked with them for eleven years before returning to England.

Sangharakshita's bold remarks on Hinduism and Islam ("Hinduism has no heart. It does not think in terms of upliftment of those who live at the bottom of the social system." And "Islam has appeal because it is given to fanaticism.") led the Indian government, Congress (I) at that time, to refuse permission to the Western crew to shoot in the country. Producer-director Bob Mullan and his crew were initially refused a permit and although his crew managed to walk through customs with the camera and recorder, their film-stock batteries and other accessories were confiscated for a week. The determined unit, however, managed to obtain film stock locally and started shooting with the help of a 12-volt rickshaw battery. And eventually, it didn't just make *Ambedkar*. It also managed to shoot a second film on Bhagwan Rajneesh during this trip.

While the film itself lacks the power and sentiment of Hammermesh's *Caste At Birth* and the dialogue is for the most part quite muffled, Mullan achieves a certain poignancy in such scenes as when Sangharakshita is turned away from a Hindu temple in Elephanta. The scene concludes with the monk saying "Holy men were never excluded from entering a holy place. ."

The monk then stands outside the Bibi Ka Maqbara in Aurangabad and proceeds to denounce Islam for its fanaticism. He has a harsh word for Christianity, too, because it believes in one supreme God. Buddhism is the only forward looking religion in the world because it does not believe in one God, he says.



A scene from *In The Footsteps Of Ambedkar*: Sangharakshita returns to India

Sangharakshita continues his diatribe. Gandhi and Ambedkar are compared and predictably Ambedkar comes off better. The monk concedes that both men shared a concern for humanity but Gandhi wanted to preserve the caste system whereas Ambedkar wanted to demolish it. Ultimately Ambedkar had to seek refuge in Buddhism when he could not fight the Hindu caste system. The monk concludes by calling untouchability worse than apartheid because it has the sanction of age-old Hindu scriptures.

Not the sort of film you would like to see on a Saturday evening. But it does succeed in projecting a few unpleasant home truths—without causing too many people too much offence. •

Shrabani Basu/London

GO FOR GOLD

The Indian squad gears up for the Beijing Asian Games



For once, the names of the Indian squad were announced on time. And no, there wasn't any politicking and lobbying for a berth in the Beijing-bound team either. Not surprisingly then, this raised hopes that the Indians would come up with a far better performance in the forthcoming Asian Games than they had on the last couple of occasions. Morale in the training camp at Bangalore was high as the various sportspersons declared that their timings were better than ever before and that the country's tally of medals was sure to go up. This confidence wasn't just shared by their coaches: even the deputy minister for sports declared (*see box interview*) that India would win as many as 40-50 medals.

At the Seoul Games, star athlete P.T. Usha had picked up five gold medals. And even this time round, the country's hopes were pinned on her. The general assessment of experts was that Usha had a fair chance of clocking the best timing in the 400 and 200 metres sprint, but would face a tough fight in the 100 metres. Usha, for her part, was confident that she would be able to shake off her bad patch and go for gold. Her toughest challenge, she said, came from the Chinese, but she could deal with them, "I will just be running in the 100 metres for a chance at a medal," she admitted bravely. But, in this race, Zenia Ayrton, the up-and-coming sprinter, is expected to perform well.

Since three Indian atheletes, Usha, Ashwini Nachappa and Zenia Ayrton now run the 100 metres in under 12 seconds, the Indian squad stands a good chance of grabbing the gold in the 4×400 metres relay. Also, P.T. Usha will be participating in the 4×100 metres relay with her Kerala companions and their chances look bright in that event.

The 25-member athletic squad, then, was the best bet as far as medals went. Said Uday Prabhu, the coach for the male sprinters: "The squad will come back with at least 16 medals. Some of them will surely be gold." Among the medal prospects is Bahadur Prasad, the policemen-turned-athlete from Uttar Pradesh, who hopes to prune his timing to 3 minutes and 35 seconds in the 1,500 metres in Beijing.

In June, this year, the Indian hockey team had beaten the Pakistanis in the final of the BMW tournament in Holland, with the score reading 4-2. The psychological advantage thus gained should stand them in good stead at the Asiad, where they will be up against Korea, Malaysia, China, Japan and, of course, Pakistan, on the dreaded astro-turf. Said coach Jaman Lal Sharma: "If the players think that they can be slack even in the first five minutes while playing on astro-turf they are mistaken. There may be two goals in the interim and they would be out of the game."

What will work to the team's advantage, according to Sharma, is the fact that the substitute players this time round are as talented as the original 11. Said the coach: "When the game is on, the trainer will have no hesitation in calling in any of the substitutes. And that is a great feeling."

The authorities also expect their sportpersons to be among the medals in such events as archery, kayaking, canoeing, rowing, tennis, and at a crunch, boxing. Despite the fact that

"We should get 40-50 medals"

Deputy minister for sports, Bhakta Charan Das, on India's prospects at the Asiad

SUNDAY: How do you rate India's chances in the forthcoming Asian Games?

Bhakta Charan Das: I think our chances will be much better than in the last Asiad. In terms of medals, I think we should be able to get between 40-50. The government has given a lot of attention towards the preparations and I myself have been monitoring the progress at the camps every week.

Q: But some top athletes like Reeth Abraham, Zenia Ayrton and Ashwani Nachappa could not qualify for their individual events.

A: Many of them had personal problems. Some of the girls have got married and had some personal physical problems. But the new athletes are doing better than them. There is talent everywhere in the country, only it has to be identified. I think the time has come when we should start talent-spotting from the junior and sub-junior levels.

Q: Why do female athletes dominate these days? How come we don't have a top male athlete?



NITIN RAI



At the training camp: going through their paces

the lawn tennis squad hasn't had much success in the four previous Asiads, there are high expectations of it, especially since the recent performances of Leander Paes and Zeeshan Ali have been very heartening.

Two disciplines—women's weightlifting and kabbadi—are being introduced at the Beijing Games and in both India has medal hopes. Kabaddi is, of course, a traditional Indian sport, and only six countries have sent in their entries for the event. But even the country's strong women, Kunjrani Devi (44 kilo category) and Jotsana Dutta (82 kilo category) prominent among them, are expected to add at least 10 medals to the final tally

Despite the upbeat mood in the training camp, the arrangements are far from perfect. In fact, even a month before the date of departure for Beijing, most of the athletes had not received their sprinting spikes. Of course, deputy minister for sports Bhakta Charan Das was assured on his visit to the Bangalore camp that the spikes "were on their way" But as is usual with assurances handed out to ministers, this one turned out to be false as well.

Asked Uday Prabhu, the coach of the male athletic team: "A pair of good imported spikes hardly costs Rs 1,000 each. And according to the arrangement agreed upon, each athlete is supposed to get a pair every six months. Tell me, why should they have to wait for such a small thing."

The hockey team had much the same complaint. Team doctor S.A. Cruze disclosed that the boys were yet to get standard astro-turf hockey balls and shoes. "For a pre-Asiad camp like ours, the government should have made arrangements for a bucketful of astro-turf hockey balls," he said "But all we have is two or three balls the players arranged for themselves."

Even P.T Usha and coach Nambiar, who are by all accounts accorded five-star treatment, have their share of grouses. According to Nambiar, the Indian team always looks shabby during the opening ceremony because uniforms are never ready on time. During the Asian Track and Field Meet, he reveals, the van with the uniforms drove up just as the team was ready for the marchpast. And then, it turned out that all the uniforms were of the same size. "It is always the Indian athletes who have buttons missing from their jackets or are wearing oversized trousers," Nambiar agonises. Usha discloses, amidst much laughter, that the uniform she wore actually belonged to an official.

But, then, as the Indian authorities would undoubtedly argue, good clothes do not an athlete make. Fair enough, but how far can our sprinters go without proper spikes?

We'll get the answer to that one when the Games commence. ●

Ritu Sarin / Bangalore and New Delhi

A: There is no doubt that the girls have been beating the boys. But the authorities are not choosing the right boys. For example, in the tribal pockets, boys are used to walking 40-50 kilometres a day. Those are the sort of boys who should be picked up. That is why boys do so well in athletics in Kenya. So just as prospective champions are picked up for archery in India, they should be picked up for athletics too.

Q: How do you propose to end the IOA (Indian Olympic Association) imbroglio?

A: It all depends on what the Supreme Court decides. In the interest of the nation we are hoping that the final verdict would be expedited.

Q: Are you happy with the annual budgetary allocations for your department?

A: It has yet to be cleared by the Planning Commission. But you know that the country's economic condition is at its worst and that inflation is very high, so I cannot have unrealistic demands.

Testing positive

Is Indian sport free of the drug menace?

There couldn't have been a worse moment for Indian sport. Weightlifter Subrata Pal won the gold medal at the 1989 Auckland Commonwealth Games, only to have his urine sample test positive for steroids. Pal returned to his country in disgrace.

But, if recent events in Bangalore are anything to go by, Pal's was not an isolated case. Urine samples of the various sportspersons at the Asian Games training camp were sent to a laboratory in South Korea and three of the women weightlifters tested positive.

While the officials at Bangalore are intent on hushing up the positive tests, athletes and coaches are far more forthcoming about the use of steroids and anabolic drugs. "I know some Chinese girls took drugs during the 800 metres race in the Asian Track and Field Meet," said P.T. Usha.

O.P. Nambiar, Usha's coach, agrees that performance-enhancing drugs are taken by most athletes. But that doesn't worry him: "I have myself seen coaches inject drugs in athletes in Prague and other places. But you see, if today Usha is running 11.39 seconds (100 metres) and the others are clocking 12 seconds and taking drugs, she cannot be defeated.

Nambiar may be quite sanguine, but the authorities are taking the yet unsystematic use of drugs by the country's sportsmen with the right degree of seriousness. The first drug-testing laboratory of international standards is to be set up at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi. And, it is hoped, that once it becomes operational, it will be easier to prevent drug intake.

It's not cricket

The Bedi-Azhar row sparks off yet another controversy

Mohammad Azharuddin executed majestic drives right through the season in England. And his century at Lord's was one of the best ever. But he played his master stroke after coming back to India. In his typically cool manner, Azhar told newsmen that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) should abolish the post of a cricket manager.

This was the first time that anybody had dared criticise Bishen Singh Bedi, the manager of the Indian cricket team—even indirectly. That the Indian captain, who is generally regarded as a "good boy" should have been so provoked, has made the BCCI sit up.

"This is strictly a personal point of view," Board president B.N. Dutt hastily clarified, distancing the organisation from Azhar's devastating remarks. But it came as no surprise to the media, who had followed the recent India-England series. Apparently, Bedi did not bother to take "some of the load off" Azhar's shoulders as he had promised.

Instead, Bedi—ever impulsive and foul-tempered—only made matters worse for Azhar, who was captaining a series for the second time. The first Test match had already begun when Bedi told newsmen that he had nothing to do with Azhar's decision to send England in to bat, after India had won the toss at the Lord's in London. Local journalists were thrilled. It gave them a good story, but it triggered off shock waves in the Indian camp. It seemed inconceivable that the cricket manager would publicly run down his own captain.

Intikhab Alam, the manager of Pakistan's cricket team, was shocked at Bedi's behaviour. "A manager is there to support his captain," said Alam. "In the dressing room, he has every right to make his dissent clear. *Never* publicly. And if it occurs, it not only shows a lack of confidence, but sends all the wrong signals. He added: "I wouldn't have done a Bedi."

There was, however, more to follow. Even before stumps were drawn on the last day of the Lord's match, Bedi sparked off yet another controversy. This time, by lambasting Sunil Gavaskar for turning down Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC) offer of a life membership. Bedi wrote an open letter to Gavaskar, where he mentioned that the entire Indian community in England had been shamed by his action. Moreover, added Bedi, he had also let down the Indian team.

This was far from the truth. In fact, Indian players only learnt the next morning that they had been "let down" by the Little Master. Said Azhar: "Gavaskar's refusal wasn't discussed. The team has absolutely no comment on the matter...We're here to play cricket. Our brief doesn't cover acceptance and refusal of MCC memberships."

The British tabloids went to town on this, and the story doing the rounds was that Bedi was being paid by the tabloids.

Then came the second Test, at Manchester. And another controversy erupted. This time, however, it was Bedi's off-the-record comments which were published in *The Sunday Times*. Apparently, the cricket manager had criticised some of Azhar's field placements in the presence of a few scribes.

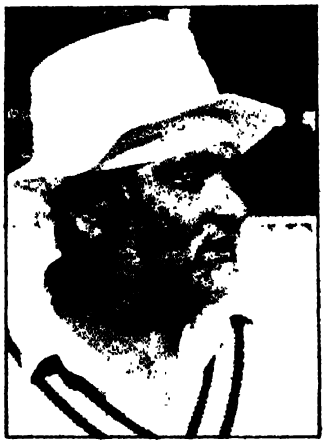
Bedi swore that he would sue the journalist—but this did not move Azhar, who maintained—rightly—that the appropriate place to "flay field placements was in a team meeting. Besides, say insiders, Bedi contributed little to strategy.

Obviously, Azhar's suggestion that the cricket manager's post be abolished stems from his disenchantment with Bedi's style of functioning.

However, it makes good cricketing sense to have a manager. One who looks after the team, chalks out strategy. But it is imperative that both the captain and the manager of the team are on the same wavelength. "If they are not," as former England skipper Mike Brearley noted, "it will mean disaster..." In retrospect, it appears that it did.

Perhaps, the BCCI gave the job to the wrong man. Even if one ignores Bedi's indiscretions such as scrapping with Gavaskar, his team's performance has hardly been something to write home about. One of his first statements on taking charge was: "Nine months is long enough to produce a baby. And so it should be long enough to prove myself. I have to produce the results and I guess my performance will be judged, football manager style, by the results I produce."

Azharuddin's suggestion that the cricket manager's post be abolished stems from his disenchantment with Bedi's style of functioning





The cricket manager's post will not be abolished, but Azhar's outburst ensured that Bedi will not get an extension. Bishen Singh Bedi was an extraordinary cricketer, and is regarded as one of the all-time greats.

Unfortunately, however, good cricketers do not necessarily make good managers.●

Lokendra Pratap Sahi/London

ANURAG MATHUR

Thou shalt...

The Indian bureaucrat's ten commandments

It isn't as easy being a bureaucrat as outsiders seem to imagine. The general impression is that a successful bureaucrat is one who has mastered the art of ignoring files. There is, however, much more to it than that, particularly at the senior levels.

The first rule is: "Thou shalt go by precedent." What happened earlier is good enough to be followed blindly thereafter. That is, of course, unless the minister desires the opposite course to be followed, in which case a new precedent or rule to be followed will have to be uncovered.The question of why the opposite course should be adopted, is one where the skills of liaison men come into play and is a story in itself.

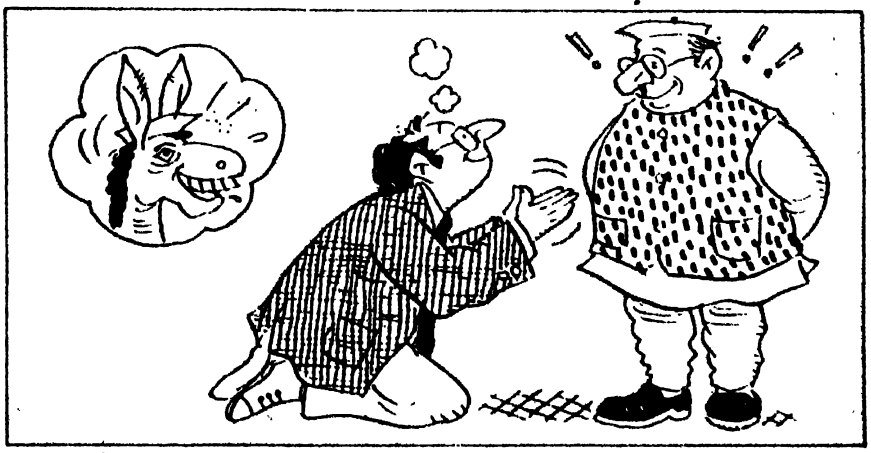
"Thou shalt know more than the minister." This is critical to the running of the ministry since most ministers arrive absolutely innocent about their portfolio. In any event, the ability to give advice and list options requires at least the ability to fake knowldege effectively, even if there isn't that degree of expertise. So a corollary to the above is: "Thou shalt be able to fake it."

"Thou shalt, however, NOT *appear* to know more than thy minister." This too is important since ministers have sensitive, if overblown, egos and they dislike being made aware of their ignorance. They may well be aware of the actual state of affairs, but it is one thing to know and another to have it thrust upon you.

"Thou shalt never contradict the minister in public." This should be so obvious that it does not merit being said. But it is surprising how many bureaucrats commit the crime without being aware that the message is all too often being carried back to the minister. Of course, you can never contradict the minister in the press. The penalty for this is extreme, unless you happen to be Sam Pitroda. A contradiction in the press is seen as being the final sign of an internal disagreement and is usually seen as being a declaration of war.

"Thou shalt not appear more often in the press than thy minister." This holds true in general, but in these days of obscure ministers, or at a time when reshuffles are frequent, it becomes difficult to stick to this rule. In general, however, it can only be flouted if a bureaucrat has solid support in the Prime Minister's office, which will back him in the event of a conflict with the minister.

"Thou shalt cringe before the minister." Usually this comes naturally to any reasonable bureaucrat, but it bears repetition. It is not always easy to bow and scrape before a person, a bureaucrat may well consider an unmitigated ass, but it has to be done. Some bureaucrats have greatly endeared themselves to their minister merely by the humility with which they present files to him. So important is this function that, it would not be a bad idea for the Academy of Mussoorie to offer courses on the subject. What is the right way to enter a minister's room? The current technique in vogue is bowing as you offer a file. How to wait respectfully as the minister pretends to understand the notings on the file? These are all important subjects which cannot be left to a probationer's intuition.



"Thou shalt cringe before the minister," even if he is considered an unmitigated ass

"Thou shalt be nice to the minister's friends." Since ministers become essentially cut off from the world, they depend excessively on their friends for feedback, part of which is whether there are rumours that the minister has become too dependent on his bureaucrats and is being led by the nose by them. All ministers are sensitive about this. An angry friend may very easily suggest to a minister that a particular bureaucrat is gaining too much importance. Another fear that ministers have is that their bureaucrats are fraternising with the minister's enemies. This is another area that disgruntled friends can exploit.

"Thou shalt be wary of the minister's relatives." The role of relatives is a curious one for a minister. While many are certainly very close to him, this very closeness is a liability since any favours done for one is likely to boomerang if news leaks out, as it has a nasty tendency of doing. It is best not to take an independent line on this, but to be guided by the minister on the degree to which he wants his relatives to be helped.

"Thou shalt do small favours for the press." All ministers have their favourite press people and it is understood that they should be kept in reasonable good humour, within reason. This does not extend, of course, to the extent sought by one ambitious pressman who arrived with a foreigner in tow urging that the aircraft India was thinking of buying should be obtained from the company his foreign friend was representing. •

ODDS AND TRENDS

Nobody's children

■ For the 3,000 children living in the 82 brothels of Delhi's red-light area, G B. Road, home is a living hell. In an attempt to rehabilitate these unfortunate children, the government recently initiated a project. Already 85 kids have been taken away from the squalor and misery of the *kothas* and placed in village welfare homes and juvenile welfare homes, where they have been provided with food and clothing, and have surrogate mothers to take care of them.

Under this project, which is aimed at protecting the children of prostitutes from the unhealthy atmosphere of the *kothas* and the clutches of pimps, the mothers are allowed to visit their children on the first Monday of every month. The children are also permitted to spend important festivals with their mothers. However, they are not allowed to spend the night out as this creates too many adjustment problems.

Their troubles are far from over though. It has been observed in the past that the children rehabilitated in village homes (which are patterned on the SOS village homes) are brought up by a mother who treats them like her own But those confined to city homes are often handled insensitively, because of their backgrounds, by their surrogate mothers. Hopefully, the remaining 24,000 will be provided with a real home, a place where they feel they belong.

A unique achievement

■ Vitner, on the banks of river Tapi on the Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh border, is just another Indian village. It might be backward as far as civic amenities go, but its way of life is certainly progressive. In the summer of 1989, this tiny, nondescript, hamlet elected an all-woman *gram panchayat*- -one of the seven villages in Maharashtra to do so. And what's more, the *sarpanch* and the *upsarpanch*—also women—apart from achieving phenomenal success in improving the civic conditions of the village have managed to get some, if not all, of the women in the village their rightful share of land.

Concerted efforts by the nine-member *panchayat* team are finally paying off. Over the past ten months, men of 127 families in Vitner have recognised the right of women to own a part of the family land. This is a tremendous achievement in a society where women often get beaten up or even killed for demanding their share of property.

And Vitner's remarkable feat has not gone unnoticed— the village was recently awarded the honorary title of 'Jyotiba Phule village' by Prime Minister V.P. Singh. For the proud villagers of Vitner, the award is a recognition of their silent revolution. The *upsarpanch*, Indibai Patil, sums it up by saying, "The award is not merely a tribute to Vitner, but to all womenkind."

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Pran

Vinod Pande

THIS INDIA

PATIALA: The Government High School at Channo village in Sangrur district has earned the dubious distinction of recording no passes in the recent Matric examination conducted by the Punjab School Education Board. All the 42 students who appeared in the examination failed. The *panchayat* staged a *dharna* in protest against the teaching staff—*The Statesman*, R.K. Krishnaswami, New Delhi



NEW DELHI: A railway commuter forced by penury to travel ticketless during the post-Partition years, has paid back the fares—interest and inflation well covered. The man, who calls himself Deep and is a resident of South Delhi, sent in Rs 300 and a letter to the railway minister, George Fernandes. The letter read, "Sending you Rs 300 towards the fare of local trains from Kandivilito Grant Road where I travelled after Partition for a few months without ticket. I was unable to pay at that time, but now I am sending three times the cost of that travel"— *Indian Express*, B.G. Manjunatha Rao, Hassan (Karnataka)

MADRAS: Justice K.S. Bakthavatsalam was in a dilemma as to whether he should speak in English or in Tamil at a function in the city. The dilemma followed a (bitter?) experience he had at the inaugural function of the integrated court buildings at Vriddhachalam, where he delivered his presidential address in English (as it was an official function) expecting all dignitaries to follow suit. But to his disappointment all preferred to speak in Tamil. (Electricity minister Durai Murugan went to the extent of criticising him for having spoken in English.) Speaking at the inauguration of the fifth anniversary of the Youth Association for Classical Music, he said that he was speaking in Tamil expecting the others to do so. But this time all the others spoke in English—*Indian Express* C.S. Loganathan, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)

BEGINNING 16 SEPTEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



A fairly good week for you. Those in service will win the praise of their superiors. You can go on a shopping spree. But avoid extravagance. Keep an eye on your health. The time is ripe for matrimony.

Good dates: 16, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: South

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



A favourable week lies ahead of you. Friends and relatives will contribute to your happiness. The financial front is not very bright. A letter will bring good news. Romance is in the offing.

Good dates: 17, 19 and 21
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



An excellent week for you. The time is favourable for romance. Avoid unnecessary risks. For those in service, dramatic changes are forecast. However, be careful on the financial front.

Good dates: 18, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: East

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Businessmen can strike new deals. Be cautious and discreet with your elders. Avoid any controversy or dispute. Keep an eye on your health. You might receive gifts from unexpected quarters.

Good dates: 16, 18 and 20
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: North

LEO (21 July—20 August)



A fairly pleasant week is forecast. You are likely to inherit property but do not get carried away. A secret association or friendship may prove beneficial. Romance is on the cards.

Good dates: 17, 20 and 21
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: South-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



Good fortune awaits you this week. You will be in a position to pay your debts. Lawsuits will be settled in your favour. Friends will be very helpful to you, especially in matters relating to your work.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 20
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: South

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This week will be an excellent one for you. You can forge ahead with your plans. Professionally, progress will be slow and steady. Be cautious and discreet with your colleagues and superiors.

Good dates: 19, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: West

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



This is not a good week for you. Businessmen should not enter into new contracts. Those in service should avoid arguments with their superiors. Romance is not on the cards. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 19
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: North

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



An excellent week for most of you. A favourable time for romance. However, do not take anything for granted. You can clear off your debts. The financial prospects are very bright for you.

Good dates: 17, 18 and 20
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: South

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



Be confident and courageous in your dealings with those in authority. A letter you've been waiting for quite long will bring in good news. Socially, this is going to be a fruitful week for you can renew your old contacts.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 22
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: East

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



This is going to be a successful week for you. By sheer hard work, you will be able to overcome your earlier setbacks and achieve outstanding results. Be tactful in dealing with your elders.

Good dates: 16, 19 and 21
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



Make the best use of the opportunities that come your way. Professional, social and even domestic activities will prove successful. Those of you who have children should be careful with your expenses.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 21
Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—CAPRICORN

The Capricorn man is absorbed in his career, where the Scorpio woman is more passionate than career conscious. Their union needs compromise from both partners if the pair is to be happy together. ●

IDBI

Investment Deposit Account Scheme



- Companies, Firms, Individuals & HUF, save tax on income assessable under the head **'Profits and Gains from Business or Profession'** as covered under Section 32 AB of the Income Tax Act 1961.
- **Deposits under the Scheme are deductible up to 20% of taxable income.**
- **The scheme is available for previous years ending upto March 31, 1990.** Deposits should be made **within 6 months of closure of assessee's accounting year or before filing of tax returns** whichever is earlier
- **Deposits can be made by post.**
- **Interest @ 10% p.a. will be credited to the assessee's designated bank account on 1st April every year without tax deduction at source and can be freely withdrawn for any use.**
- **Principal** amounts of deposits **can be withdrawn after one year** for purchase of plant and machinery, computers etc. for the business or profession of the assessee.
- Outstation cheques are accepted and collection charges will be borne by IDBI. Date of deposit will be the date of receipt of cheque by IDBI.
- Demand drafts received by IDBI within 10 days of issue, will get credit from the date of the draft.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA
'IDBI Tower' Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay 400 005.

Sobhagya-90

Reservations for sleazeballs too

The Congress(I) is extremely embarrassed by the attitude of Sitaram Kesri, its treasurer. When the Raja announced that his government had accepted the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, the Congress(I) reacted in one of two ways: half the MPs were worried whether this would swing the election for the Janata Dal and the other half were appalled by the Raja's opportunism.

Not Kesri. As his party colleagues watched horrified, he welcomed the decision and stood up for the principle of caste-based reservation.

Now, they are saying that he should at least have



Kesri: name a figure

been discreet and avoided praising V.P. Singh so openly. But then teamwork has never been the veteran fund-collector's forte.

Clark and dagger

The Congress(I) has abandoned its old practice of blaming the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for everything. Now its MPs have decided that there is no need to be content with the monkey when they can get the organ-grinder. RN

So, the attack is on the US ambassador himself. Last week, such Congress luminaries as Vasant Sathe and Dinesh Singh (along with the predictable Marxist rabble) grilled minister of state for external affairs, Har Kishore Singh, over the ambassador's visit to the Punjab.

Whose permission had he taken? Had he met any terrorists? What report did he send Washington? Which official of the Government of India accompanied him? And so on.

The short answer to this volley was: India is a free country and Clark can go where he likes. But Singh fought shy of giving a straight answer and finally his Cabinet minister Inder 'I'm no wimp' Gujral had to come to his assistance. When even this didn't work, Gujral personally went to the seats of the angry MPs and asked them to go easy on Singh.

HEARD AT DELHI UNIVERSITY

V.P. Singh, Charan Singh. One and the same thing.

SLOGAN USED BY UPPER-CASTES TO COMPLAIN ABOUT BACKWARD POLITICIANS



Inder Gujral: wimp? Not me

TELESCOPE

Bombay's hotels: who goes where

■ **The Taj Mahal Hotel:** Without a doubt, the finest hotel in India. Food and service standards have improved dramatically over the last two years. The smart crowd still sticks to the Taj. The Golden Dragon has recovered its old clientele and the Zodiac Grill flourishes.

■ **The Oberoi:** Small, exclusive and extremely well-run, it represents a discreet alternative for all those who fear the railway station-like atmosphere of the Taj's lobby. It has two excellent restaurants (the Brasserie and the Rotesserie) but has lost out because of its high-priced image: in fact, the old Taj is more expensive.

■ **The Leela:** It's now a Kempinski but its small unattractive rooms have more in common with the more downmarket Penta chain. Service and food standards vary but it has become the preferred hotel of the Bombay film industry.

■ **The Centaurs:** Rarely can a five-star hotel have deteriorated as dramatically as the Santa Cruz Centaur. The only people who stay there are passengers on layovers who have no choice in the matter. Oddly enough, the Juhu Centaur is not a bad hotel and gets a better class of person.

■ **The Sea Rock Sheraton:** For some reason, Welcomgroup's Bombay property has never quite made it. Even the film industry appears to be deserting it for the Leela. Perhaps, things will change now that it has opened what is probably Bombay's best restaurant: the Dum Pukht.

The raid Pandit

Every Prime Minister, it is said, falls in love with the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). But now it is also obvious that every finance minister falls in love with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). RN

Either that or Anil Shastri, the deputy minister at the finance ministry, is trying his hardest to emulate V.P. Singh. How else does one explain his behaviour during his last trip to Baroda? Shastri addressed tax officials and told them that total collections were not as high as they should be.

The officials wasted no time in promptly raiding all of Baroda's builders and blaming it on Shastri's directions.

Now, the Baroda unit of the Janata Dal is complaining that funds have dried up. With an election expected this winter, this could be serious. ●

Complex aeroplanes require complex responses

How safe is the A320? According to most people, it is a perfectly safe aircraft and the Bangalore crash was largely



V.P. Singh: double standards

a consequence of pilot error. Not according to the Raja, though. V.P. Singh's view is that it is a flying coffin, that it was bought because the previous regime took kickbacks, that it should be grounded, that an FIR has been filed, etc., etc.

Fair enough? No, not quite.

Because the Raja is simultaneously passing himself off as this great crisis-manager who has had Indians evacuated from the Gulf and has not allowed anyone to harm one hair on their heads, etc.

There is only one problem: he has used the A320s for the evacuation operation.

Now, several Congress(I) and Janata Dal MPs have lodged an official protest with the government asking the obvious question. If the A320 is not safe enough for domestic travellers, then why have the lives of Gulf evacuees been risked?

Another contradiction to be managed?

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL

Now that V.P. Singh and the *Express* lobby are divorcing, perhaps, they will fight for custody of Bhure Lal.

A CONGRESS(I) MP

Off with his head

Maneka Gandhi has won a round in her on-going battle with Nilamani Routray. The controversy over the youthful minister of state's alleged arrogance has been stoked by the publication of documents (see SUNDAY's *passim*) relating to the use of aircraft, etc.

Maneka's response had been to blame Mahesh Prasad, the environment secretary, who she accused of playing Narad Muni between Routray and her. Even the documents that had found their way to SUNDAY, she suggested, had been leaked by Prasad.

Maneka: wins a round





Routray: losing an ally

Now, cabinet secretary Vinod Pande seems to have bought Maneka's line that it is all Prasad's fault. The cabinet secretariat has instituted an enquiry against the secretary and Maneka's friends seem certain that he will be indicted.

PERISCOPE

Who does what in the PMO

■ **B.G. Deshmukh:** Only a few months left to go. Has never quite recovered his old clout after Vinod Pande, the Raja's favourite poet-cum-soothsayer, moved into the cabinet secretariat.

■ **Montek Singh Ahluwalia:** Made an astonishing comeback when the Cabinet adopted his industrial policy. But now that policy has been junked and poor Ahluwalia finds that his only calculations have to do with Yadav quota and Kurmi proportion.

■ **Bhure Lal:** They call him joint secretary (probe) so often that many people think this is his real designation. In fact, Lal has not been as closely identified with the investigations as he would like. (See Heard in Central Hall above.)

■ **Ronen Sen:** During the Rajiv Gandhi era, Sen was the single most important member of the foreign service. The Raja has kept him on because of his undoubted capability but Muchkund Dubey is too strong a foreign secretary for Sen to retain his old eminence.

■ **Prem Shankar Jha:** The Raja likes to give interviews to cronies, *chamchas* and cow-belt hangers-on, so there is little for the urbane Jha to do in the PMO. Nevertheless, he does prepare the daily press summary for the PM. And to his credit, has too much intellectual integrity to support his master's more opportunistic schemes, i.e., reservation for potential Janata Dal voters.

Lights, camera, padayatra!

Why has so little been heard about the Prime Minister's *padayatra* for peace in recent weeks? Remember the brief flurry of excitement when the Raja announced that the only hope for peace in the Punjab lay in his decision to wander aimlessly through its villages. ("If I am killed, bury my body there," he declared to the sound of imaginary violins.)

Well, there's a slight problem. The last time V.P. Singh addressed a public meeting in the Punjab, only a few hundred people turned up (and many of them were plain-clothes policemen anyway). So, how on earth does he hope to arrange mass participation for his march?

Now, a few MPs from the Nav Nirman Manch, a forum of Raja cronies, have been despatched to Bombay to try and persuade some film actors to join the *padayatra*. This is expected to draw the crowds.

So far, nobody has said "yes" but feelers have been sent to Shabana Azmi and Shatrughan Sinha.

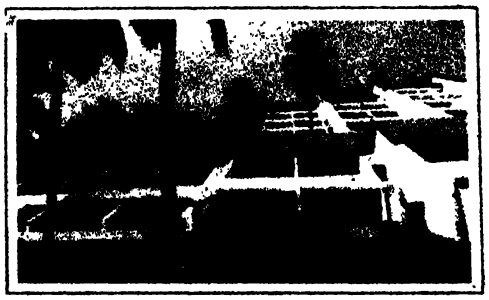


Ashok and Radisson offer you new standards of world class hospitality at Kovalam

Radisson Hotels Corporation, with its dynamism, its philosophy 'Yes I can' is the fastest growing hospitality group in the world, with hotels at 240 locations

Ashok now joins hands with Radisson to bring you the finest international hospitality at Kovalam and three other places in the country. With a new work culture, a new ethos to ensure even greater consumer satisfaction

Other Ashok Radisson Hotels : Ashok Hotel, New Delhi, an affiliate of Radisson Hotels Corporation; Ashok Radisson Hotel, Bangalore; Ashok Radisson Lalitha Palace Hotel, Mysore



VISIT INDIA
TOURISM YEAR 1991

BF

Ashok Radisson Beach Resort, Kovalam

Trivandrum 695522 Tel 68010 65323
Cables TOURISM VIZHINJAM Telex 0435 216 KBHN
Fax 62522

AKSHARA/1171-216

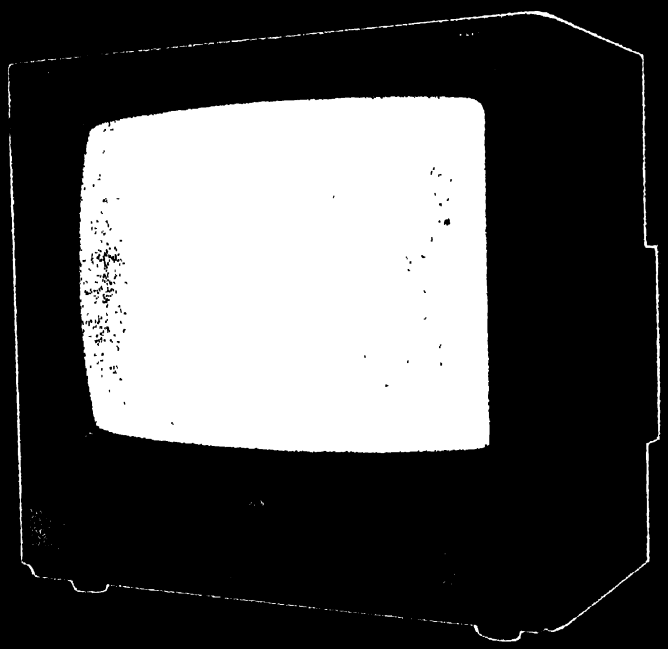
INDIA'S HOST TO THE WORLD

The name that spells

is the name your home can trust. KONARK.

It's festival time again. A time for rejoicing. A time for fun. The ideal time to give your near and dear ones something they've always wanted for years. A really super-class, trouble-free TV set.

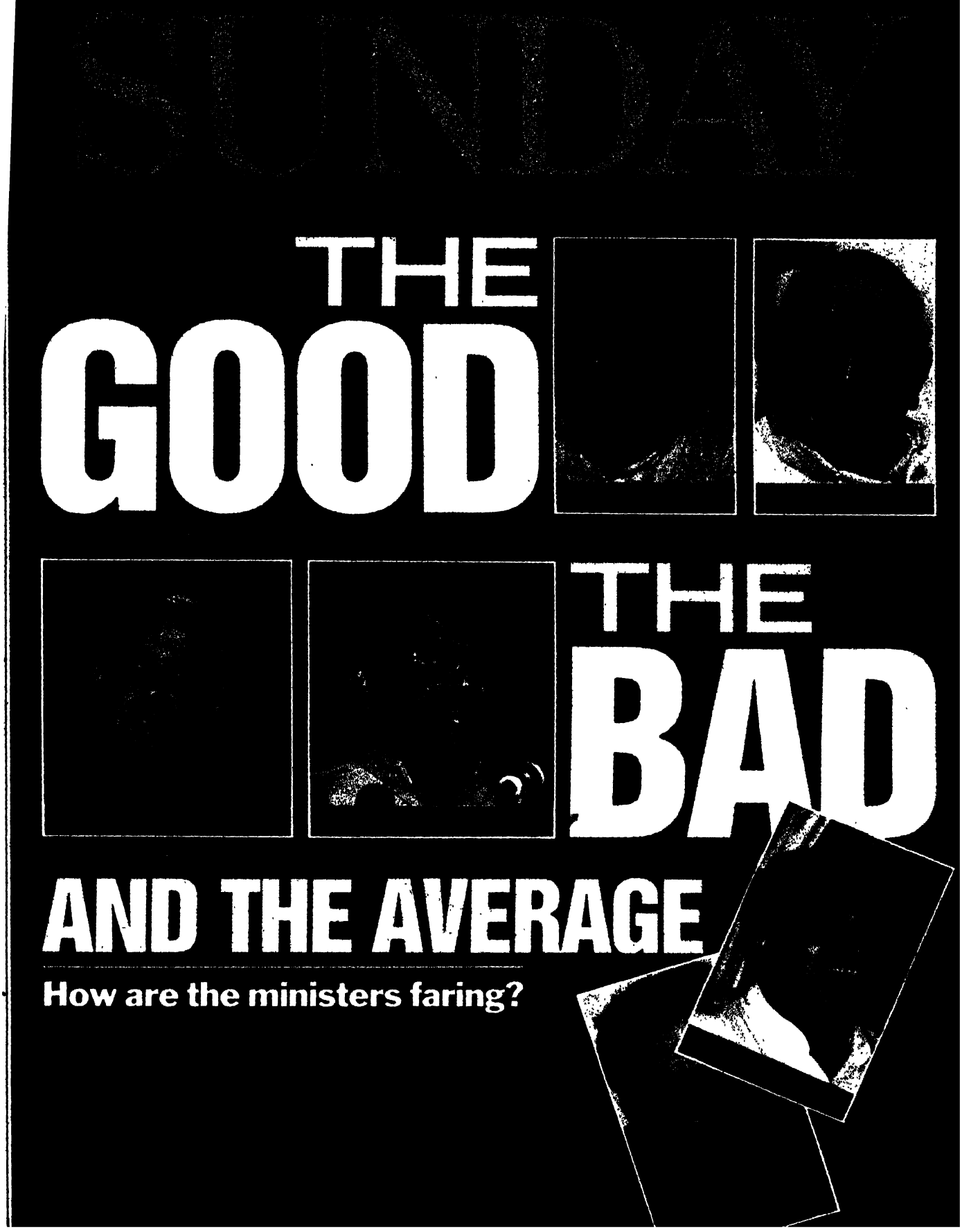
Konark is your solution to a highly difficult choice. Hi-tech features and perfect performance. Something for the family to share. Over years and years of happy viewing pleasure.



KONARK TV

The image of hi-tech quality

KONARK TELEVISION LIMITED : A Govt. of Orissa Enterprise
ELECTRONICS BHAWAN, Kasaikgarh, Bhubaneswar-751010



THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE AVERAGE

How are the ministers faring?

discovered then about the physiological and psychological effects of colour on human beings is today borne out by scientific experiments.



Colour and India - A Research & Design Vimla Desai

Navrasas
express their emotional colours

Navrasas
the nine moods or essences or flavours.
They cover the entire emotive response
of human beings
These Rasas are born out of the thirty-six states
of the human mind
Rasa in art is a sojourn into the inner world.

Seers envisaged that the psychological effect of certain colours enhanced the identification of the Rasas in artistic expression.

For example, each of the Rasas were assigned a specified colour

Adbhuta – Surprise – is yellow ochre
Sringara – Love – is deep purple
Roudra – Anger – is red
Veera – Valour – is yellow
Beebhatsa – Disgust – is deep blue
Hasya – Humour – is white
Shanta – Contentment – is moon white
Bhayanaka – Fear – is black
Karuna – Sympathy – is mud brown.

The ultimate enjoyment of any artistic expression is the identification of the Rasas.

Three decades of dedication have given us at Colour-Chem an indepth knowledge and understanding of colours and chemistry. Enabling us to serve you with the best. Dyes for textiles; pigments for paints, printing inks, plastics and rubber; organic chemical intermediates; leather chemicals.

However, our quest continues... to seek more colourful horizons in the chemistry of colour.

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 38 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
23—29 SEPTEMBER 1990



27
COVER STORY
The good, the bad and the average
How are the National Front ministers faring?

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
SIGHT AND SOUND 9
COUNTERVIEW 10
SOUTH BLOCK 13
CONTROVERSY 19
The language game
NEWSWATCH 22
The first warning
PROFILE 42
The marathon man
SPOTLIGHT 44
BUSINESS DIARY 56
NEWS 57
MANI-TALK 64
PHOTO FEATURE 70
Family homes
KHAAS BAAT 74
THEATRE 75
Not all Greek
FOCUS 80
Behind bars
CRIME 82
A campus death
MEDIA MUSINGS 83
MILESTONES 86
SUNDAYWEEK 87
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

14
NEWSBEAT
The aliens
Over 30,000 "stateless" subjects have been given citizenship in Sikkim. Who are these people?



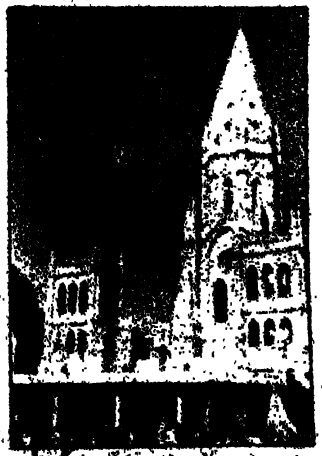
34
SPECIAL REPORT
The siege of Jaffna
Fierce fighting continues between the Sri Lankan Army and the Tamil Tigers. An on-the-spot report.



48
BUSINESS
"Everything is for the moment"
An exclusive interview with Britannia chairman Rajan Pillai.

68
CINEMA
Southern offensive
Telugu stars Nagarjuna and Chiranjeevi, now try to make it big in Hindi films.

76
RELIGION
Crossing over
An exodus begins from the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church—to various breakaway groups.



84
SPORTS
Over to Beijing
But all is not well with the Asiad Games movement.

Cover transparencies
Arun Nehru: Rajesh Kumar
Madhu Dandavate: Nitin Ra
P. Upendra: Shooter **Mufti Mohammad Sayeed:** Durgaprasad **Arif Mohammad Khan:** Rajesh Kumar

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Biet Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North eastern states 30 paise



The oil scare

The Gulf crisis (*The oil crunch*, 2–8 September) has severely affected the developing countries like India on the economic front. Though the government has taken precautionary measures by cutting down oil imports, the crisis has added fuel to the fire by the trade embargo being enforced by the UNO against Iraq and Kuwait.

As far as the Middle East is concerned, I see no prospects of Iraq attacking Saudi Arabia nor the forces of the US and its allies. Therefore, if the present situation continues in the Gulf, the economy of the developing countries is bound to suffer and might be in the doldrums in the not too distant future.

G. Vikram Goud, Warangal (Andhra Pradesh)

■ The cover story on the Gulf crisis has thrown light on Iraq and its total disregard for international rules and regulations. This act of Saddam Hussein has been condemned worldwide. The USA has sent troops to Saudi Arabia for safeguarding its interests in the Gulf. The UN Security Council has imposed economic sanctions as well as military sanctions against Iraq.

But the most unfortunate thing is that India, one of the largest democracies in the world, has failed to condemn this act of high-handedness. India might have reasons not to criticise Iraq's actions because of its long-standing friendship with the latter, and also because Iraq happens to be the main supplier of crude to India.

Whatever be the considerations behind India's stand, it is pathetic to learn that thousands of Indians have been uprooted overnight, thereby creating additional problems for India. At least in this context, India ought to have taken a firm stand against Iraq, especially on behalf of the Indians living there.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Merit, not caste

The students in India have no other option than to protest against the Mandal Commission Report (*Look back in anger*, 2—8 September). The government's sudden decision to implement the commission's recommendations has put the careers of thousands of young men and women in jeopardy. If V P. Singh doesn't withdraw his decision then he might have to regret it for the rest of his life.

The Mandal report is biased, unjust, unconstitutional and is riddled with factual inaccuracies. The Prime Minister does not realise that he is going to lose much more than he stands to gain.

Merit has given way to class considerations. This does not augur well for the future of the country. The students should continue with the agitation until and unless some sense dawns on the V.P. Singh regime.

Amit Mathur, Sindri (Bihar)



Students protesting against reservations

Dark days ahead

The dismissal of Benazir's government (*Fired!*, 19—25 August) by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan has dealt a severe blow to Pakistan's democracy. Despite her faults, Bhutto represented the forces of modernism in an otherwise obscurantist society. She is a woman in a male chauvinist society, a Sindhi in a country where Punjabis rule the roost, and a liberal in a state where Islamic fundamentalists want to enforce the supremacy of the Shariat. It seems that military dictatorship is back in Pakistan. But given her resilience tempered by her long saga of suffering under Zia's rule, she might be able to stage a comeback. And this ouster, one hopes, will be a blessing in disguise.

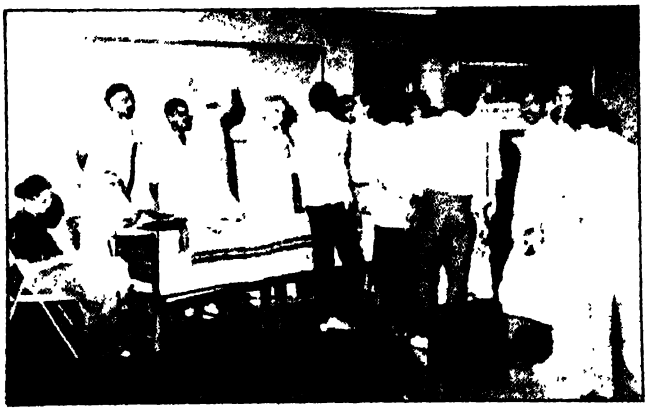
Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

■ Benazir's ouster marks the beginning of another dark period of dictatorship in Pakistan. The new regime will not only bring instability but also try to create war hysteria in the country and foment trouble in the border states of India. Though Benazir is not a supporter of India's stand on Kashmir, the chances were better for New Delhi to enter into a dialogue with her. But now, with Jatoi as the Prime Minister, who is backed by the fundamentalists and the military, the talks will be

Benazir Bhutto: repenting



Indians returning from Iraq and Kuwait: uncertain fate



meaningless. The silent coup in Pakistan will spell problems for regional peace and stability.

Vijaya Moorthy, Pune (Maharashtra)

The other side of Mamata

The profile of Mamata Banerjee (*Joan of Arc*, 2--8 September) seemed absolutely one-sided. She has been heaped with



Mamata Banerjee: Joan of Arc?

adulations but her negative aspects have been cleverly shielded. And that amounts to deliberate misinformation. This, however, is not to condone the physical assault on her which should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Mamata had no hesitation in deceiving the electorate as the recipient of a fake doctorate degree from a university in the United States, which does not exist. During the Emergency, she led a violent mob of Congress activists to assault Jaya Prakash Narayan and to disrupt his meeting. Recently, she led another mob of unruly party supporters to forcibly occupy a police station in Calcutta.

Finally, it is wrong to say that she lost the last general election because the Muslims did not vote for her, for this is not true. She lost the election despite a normal trend in voting.

Mrinal Guha, Calcutta (West Bengal)

The wily politician

Chandra Shekhar's interview (*"Devi Lal would make a better Prime Minister"*, 26 August--1 September) makes very bland and banal reading, which is very unbecoming of a man who claims to be a national leader. His style of speaking and his logic is so poor that it shows his lack of constructive approach.

He does not seem to praise Devi Lal for the latter's ability but only with the intention of putting V.P. Singh in trouble.

Niladri Das, Berhampur (Orissa)

Cadre raj

The article (*A dangerous place*, 2--8 September) was both informative and thought provoking. The pictures will serve as a mirror to Jyoti Basu, who is proud of his hoodlums. The misdeeds of his party cadres have thoroughly exposed him. The merciless assault on Mamata Banerjee, on the day of the Congress called *bandh*, points to the fact that Basu's government is in the hands of trained anti-socials.

The attack on Mamata following the Bantala and Birati incidents show that

Jyoti Basu: losing grip



the dignity of women in the state is at stake. It is high time the Marxists realised their mistakes and did something to redeem their tainted image.

Pranab Hazra, Bankura (West Bengal)

Setting the record straight

Syed Shahabuddin had sent a copy of this letter to Rajiv Gandhi, who did not acknowledge it.

In his interview to SUNDAY (*Time to be frank*, 12—18 August) Rajiv Gandhi stated that one of the reasons for the Congress(I)'s defeat was its inability to counter the propaganda that *shilanyas* had taken place within the Babri Masjid and to project that *shilanyas* had been done outside the disputed land. But I think he was quite off the mark. For the basic reason for Muslim alienation was the government's decision to permit the *shilanyas* and to effect it under the protective umbrella of the government. *Shilanyas*—irrespective of whether its site was disputed or not—was an unlawful act for it meant the commencement of the construction of the proposed temple whose site plan covered the disputed premises. Thus the decision was not only contrary to the law of the land but a betrayal of the Muslim community which expected the government to adopt an impartial attitude.



Babri Masjid

I had cautioned Buta Singh orally and in writing against permitting *shilanyas*. I had begun to suspect that he was hand-in-glove with the VHP, perhaps without your approval. So I cautioned you through Mani Shankar Aiyar, but since the decision had already been taken in principle, the government continued to move forward.

Moreover, on 7 November, 1989, the Special Bench of the Lucknow High Court had declared that the *status quo* order applied to disputed plot no. 586. If on 8 November, the executive had come to the conclusion by comparing the rough sketch map before the court and the actual ground position that while the *shilanyas* site lay on plot 586, it was outside the boundaries of the plot as depicted in the sketch map, the executive should have sought clarification from the Bench and not adopted a unilateral interpretation and acted thereupon.

Every Muslim knew that the VHP was not going to demolish the Masjid on 9 November, because the VHP had made repeated declarations to that effect. In any case, that is how the Muslims and the secular forces saw it, to their dismay and anger.

Syed Shahabuddin, former Member of Parliament, New Delhi

Khushwant Singh is on leave. His column, Gossip Sweet And Sour, *will not appear for the next two weeks.*

We've covered cricket matches
When the pundits forecast rain





We've paid out bills of hospitals
And helped to ease the strain

Gompa in the Himalayas
Can now protect his yak



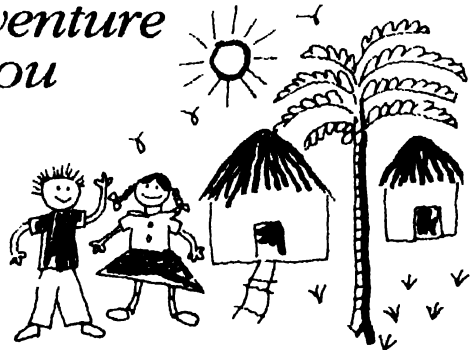


If Kondiah loses his boat
He could get his money back

Offshore wells and crop failures
Rocket launchings too



And now a great new venture
That's tailormade for you



GIC GRIH VITTA LTD

Together we shall make your dream come true

General Insurance Corporation of India
Bombay-400 020

National Insurance Company Limited

The New India Assurance Company Limited

The Oriental Insurance Company Limited

United India Insurance Company Limited
Madras - 600 014

GGVL Service Centres :

Bangalore GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at United India Insurance Co Ltd Regional Office, Shankaranarayana Bldg., 25, M G Road, Bangalore - 560 001 Tel - 57361/573583 **Bombay** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at The New India Assurance Co Ltd., New India Bhawan, 2nd flr, 31-38 Bank Street, Fort, Bombay - 400 023 Tel 2861621 **Calcutta** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at National Insurance Co Ltd Everest House 4th floor, 46C Jawaharlal Nehru Road Calcutta - 700 071 Tel 44-2651 54 Dir 44-0107 **Hyderabad** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at United India Insurance Co. Ltd., Regional Office, P B No 1020, 3 5-817 & 818 Basheer Bagh, Hyderabad - 500 029 Tel 241996, 251894 **Lucknow** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at The Oriental Insurance Co Ltd., Lucknow Regional Office, 43, Hazratganj, Lucknow 226 001 Tel 24886 **Madras** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at United India Insurance Co Ltd., Head Office, 24, Whites Road, Madras - 600 014 Tel. 473993/47300 **New Delhi** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at The Oriental Insurance Co Ltd, Regional Office, 86-88, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001 Tel- 3329233. **Panaji** GIC Grih Vitta Limited, Service Centre at: The New India Assurance Co Ltd Panaji Divisional Office, Velho Bldg., 3rd floor, Rua Conda - De Torres Nouas, Panaji - 403 001 Tel - 3770, 4297.

Multimedia Aquarius/GGVL/2/90

KHUSHWANT SINGH

With love from Pakistan



Amongst the earliest propagators of the two-nation theory and a separate Muslim state, Pakistan, was Z.A. Suleri of Meerut. He joined Jinnah's bandwagon in the 1940s, proclaimed him the *Qaid* (leader), published articles and edited papers extolling the Muslim League's point of view against that of the Indian National Congress. When Partition came, he migrated from India to Pakistan.

Suleri was a handsome man with leonine mane of hair in his head. He had a Muslim wife and a daughter. He went to England to win over British support for Pakistan. In London he ran into an attractive Welsh girl, pronounced *talaq* on his first wife and took on a second spouse. It proved to be a happy union producing a clutch of boys and girls. Suleri edited a succession of newspapers in Pakistan. He was in and out of jails in Karachi, Rawalpindi and Lahore on charges of sedition. His wife took on a job as a teacher of English in the Punjab University and kept the home fires burning till she died. Suleri now leads a retired life in Islamabad writing books on Pakistani politics and an occasional column for the newspapers. Sara is one of his daughters. She helped her father reading proofs of the articles he wrote. Mercifully, she did not pick up his turgid *Whither Pakistan* style of writing but what her mother had taught her: a sensitive Welsh ear for the music of words, the importance of an understatement to drive a point home, self-abnegation and a facility to turn out bejewelled phrases. Sara Suleri is currently associate professor of English at Yale University. Her first novel, *Meatless Days*, (Flamingo-Collins) is an absolute treat. It is a family saga of the Suleris set in the background of Pakistan under different rulers.

It is impossible to summarise a novel, like *Meatless Days* because it goes forwards and backwards in time, scenes shift from Karachi to Lahore, from Islamabad to London and the United States. At times the narrative sounds laboured to create an impression of profundity very much like the Urdu essays of Ahmed Shah Bukhari's *Pitras Kay Mazaameen*. The best I can do is to give some samples to show the skill with which Sara uses her words. She writes when she discovers that what she had been relishing all the years were in fact the testes of goats. She and her sister Tillat discuss it in some detail:

"Sara", said Tillat, her voice deep with the promise of surprise, "do you know what *kapura* are?" I was cooking and a little cross. "Of course, I do," I answered with some affront. "They're sweetbreads, they're cooked with kidneys, and they're very good." Natives should always be natives, exactly what they are, and I felt irked to be so probed around the issue of my own nativity. But Tillat's face was kindly with superior knowledge. "Not sweetbread," she gently said. "They're testicles, that's what *kapura* really are."

The topic is resumed when the sisters meet again in New York with other Pakistani friends.

"So, the next time I was in the taut companionship of Pakistanis in New York, I made a point of enquiring into the exact status of *kapura* and the physiological location of its secret, first in the animal and then in the meal. Expatriates are adamant, entirely passionate about such matters as the eating habits of the motherland. Accordingly, even though I was made to feel that it was to strip a food of its sauce and put it back into its bodily belonging, I certainly received an unequivocal response. *Kapura*, as naked meat, equals a testicle. Better, it is tantamount to a testicle neatly sliced into halves, just as we make no bones about asking the butcher to split chicken breasts in two. "But", and here I rummaged for the sweet realm of nomenclature, "couldn't *kapura* on a lazy occasion also accommodate something like sweetbreads, which is just a nice way of saying that pancreas is not a pleasant word to eat?" No one, however, was interested in this finesse.

Sara Suleri's first novel, *Meatless Days*, is an absolute treat. It is a family saga of the Suleris set in the background of Pakistan under different rulers

After *kapura* came kidneys. This time while she is busy eating them, the other sister Ifat intervened:

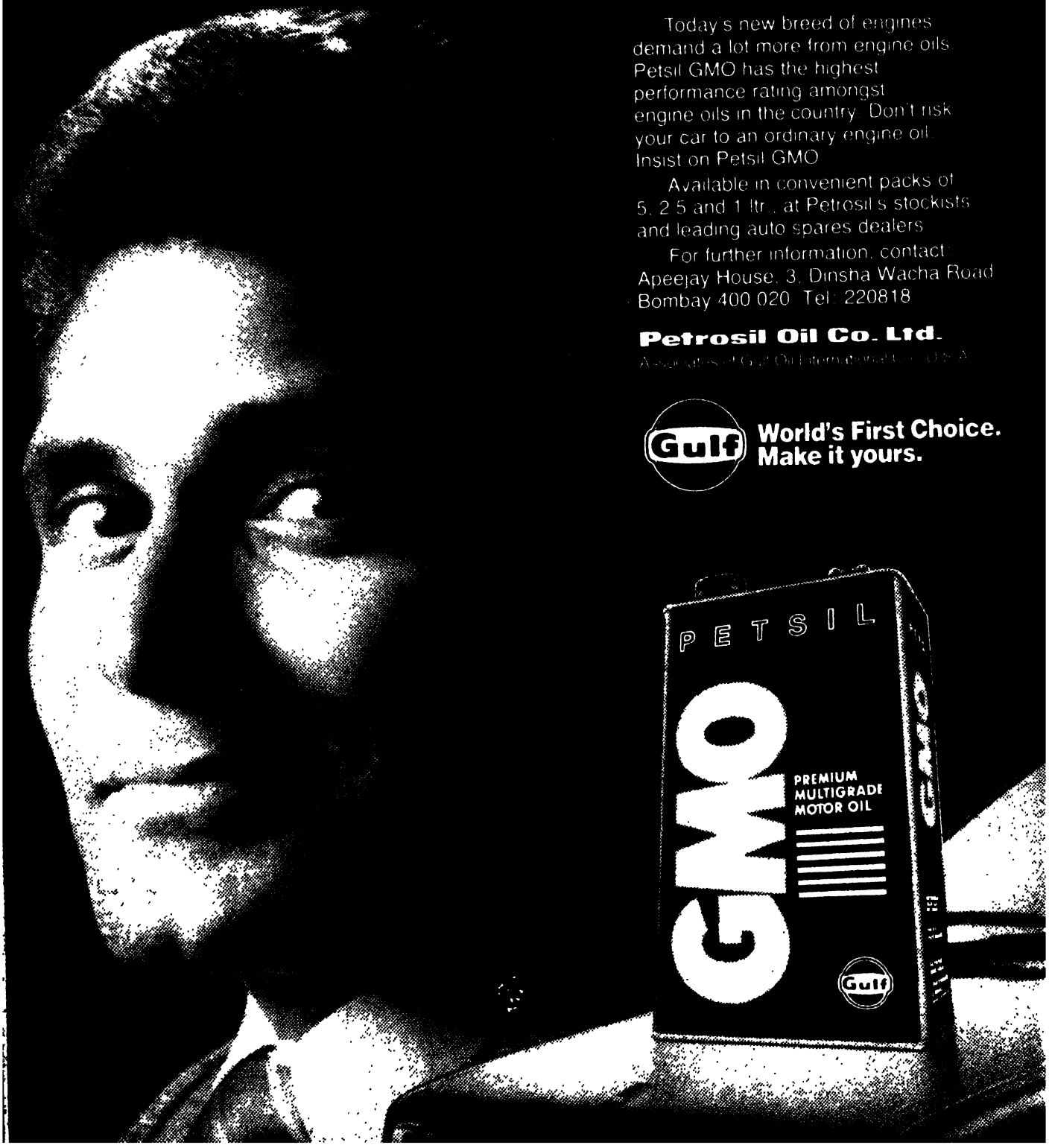
"Sara," said Ifat, her eyes brimming over with wonderful malice, "do you know what kidneys do." I aged, and my meal regressed, back to its vital belonging in the world of function. "Kidneys make pee, Sara," Ifat told me, "That's what they do, they make pee." And she looked so pleased to be able to tell me that; it made her feel so full of information. Betrayed by food, I let her go, and wept some watery tears into the kidney juice, which was designed anyway to evade cohesion, being thin and in its nature inexact. Then I ran out to the farthermost corner of the garden, where I could later go to hide my shame of milking time in a retch that refused to materialise."

Then there are *golguppas*, known to most Indians as *paani poori*:

"Golguppas are a strange food: I have never located an equivalent to them or their culinary situation. They are an outdoor food, a passing whim, and no one would dream of recreating their frivolity inside her own kitchen. A golguppa is a small hollow oval of the lightest pastry that is dipped into a fiery liquid sauce made of tamarind and cayenne and lemon and cold water."

While savouring *kapuras*, kidneys and *golguppas*, the same in Pakistan keeps changing constantly. "After General Ayub came Yahya; after Bhutto years came General Zulu (for Zia-ul) Haq." The litany pretty well sums up what the Suleri's thought of the last dictator is. •

"My car moves on petrol. My engine runs on GMO."



Today's new breed of engines demand a lot more from engine oils. Petsil GMO has the highest performance rating amongst engine oils in the country. Don't risk your car to an ordinary engine oil. Insist on Petsil GMO.

Available in convenient packs of 5, 2.5 and 1 ltr., at Petrosil's stockists and leading auto spares dealers.

For further information, contact: Apeejay House, 3, Dinsha Wacha Road, Bombay 400 020. Tel: 220818.

Petrosil Oil Co. Ltd.

A [illegible] of Gulf Oil International Inc., U.S.A.

Gulf **World's First Choice. Make it yours.**



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ If today conditions deteriorated to the same level (as in 1975), V.P. Singh will also be justified in declaring an Emergency.

GIANI ZAIL SINGH, *former President*

■ The British divided us and ruled us for long. Now we have a 'raja' trying to do the same.

RAJIV GANDHI, *Congress(I) president*

■ We can fight politically, intellectually, but must we hold the country to ransom?

ARUN NEHRU, *Union commerce minister, on the infighting among political leaders*

■ What merit is there in the case when a father makes his daughter the Prime Minister and then the mother makes her son the Prime Minister?

RAM VILAS PASWAN, *Union labour and welfare minister, defending the government's reservation policy*

■ If we fail to recognise the aspirations of the people, there will be a bloody revolution in the country.

S.R. BOMMAI, *Janata Dal president*

■ Appeasement (of minorities) is no way to promote national integration or communal harmony.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president*

■ V.P. Singh is a good man, a truthful man. He has kept all his promises since he has come to power.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN, *Insaf Party president*

■ The way V.P. Singh is conducting himself, the collapse of his government looks imminent, which would mean there is bound to be a mid-term poll.

BAL THACKERAY, *Shiv Sena leader*

■ They say ladies' fashions may change but their designs remain the same.

MADHU DANDAVATE, *Union finance minister*

■ To steady a boat which has been rocked too violently, and to restore professionalism.

D.N. GHOSH, *Larsen & Toubro chairman, on his role*

■ I like guys who are reckless, dangerous...I don't like normal people.

POOJA BHATT, *actress*



VINOD MEHTA

What comes first?

Elections to the Punjab Assembly or a crackdown on the terrorists?



Zipping around old Delhi, Sanjay Gandhi found his car tyre had burst. From a nearby garage a rough-looking mechanic emerged and quickly did the necessary repairs. He then offered to look under the bonnet. In a matter of minutes he reported back to the owner of the vehicle a number of minor faults. Sanjay was mightily impressed with the mechanic and expressed a desire to see his garage. The mechanic and Indira Gandhi's youngest son shared a common passion—tinkering with broken down cars—and soon a friendship developed. It was not long before the mechanic was invited to Sanjay's home for lunch. Quickly, he became a regular visitor. He called Indira 'mummy', while Indira announced she had found a third son. The mechanic's name was Sajjan Kumar.

It was this Sajjan Kumar who, two weeks ago, locked up an entire CBI team in his living room for seven hours as he hustled the Delhi High Court to grant him anticipatory bail. Reading reports of the imprisoned CBI team with several hundred Congress 'supporters' on the rampage outside vandalising public transport, blocking traffic and destroying vehicles belonging to the raiding party, brought back memories of Sanjay Gandhi in his heyday. The daredevil pilot would definitely have applauded the manner in which his friend foiled imminent arrest. If he had been alive, Sanjay would have hosted a stag party for his brigade (a bizarre group of school chums and old Delhi thugs) so that the success of *goonda* politics could be celebrated.

What does Sanjay's elder brother think of *goonda* politics? One cannot be certain of his opposition to the genre. Seventy-two hours have elapsed since Sajjan Kumar took the law into his own hands and not one word has been uttered by any Congress leader denouncing it. Indeed, I suspect, when words are uttered they will endorse the retaliatory action taken by the former mechanic/MP who will doubtless be presented to the nation as one more victim of vendetta politics. The Congress has heroically tried to protect its MPs and party members involved in the massacre of Sikhs after Indira Gandhi's assassination in November '84. But for how long can this contempt for the laws of the land continue, and what message does it send to the Sikhs of the country? These are questions Rajiv Gandhi must answer even as he is engrossed in his letter war with the Prime Minister over Congress participation in talks on Punjab.

Mr Gandhi has thus far steadfastly refused to join any discussions on the specious plea that the government has not revealed its proposals for solving the crisis. What Mr Gandhi asks can he discuss when there is no agenda for discussion? This is a juvenile ploy characteristic of the republic's juvenile opposition. The Congress is simply being obstructionist, opposing for the sake of opposing. Of course, there is an agenda: to announce elections or to extend President's rule? The difficulty is that the Congress, the principal culprit for the Punjab mess, is reluctant to commit itself to either course. Does it recommend an alternate strategy? Rajiv Gandhi hasn't enlightened us, all he does is parrot: when we were in power we had a definite plan to bring normalcy to the state, this government does not.

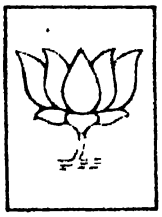
There is some substance to the charge that the National Front squandered away through lethargy the enormous goodwill created in the state by V.P. Singh's visit to Amritsar. The unfortunate and clumsy muddle over a new Governor didn't help either. However, the record is not totally black. Pensions for the 1984 Sikh widows have been enhanced, charges against army deserters have been dropped, there is a fresh urgency to bring to book those who perpetrated the November carnage in the capital—and there are V.P. Singh's highly charged pleas to the people of Punjab to forget the bitterness of the past and begin a new future. The hurt Sikh psyche must surely be a little less hurt





One can be sure that the Congress will ridicule **V.P. Singh's** (left) forthcoming *padayatra* as a gimmick. But, we must remember that **Rajiv Gandhi**, during his entire tenure as PM, went to Punjab on less than six occasions, and mingled with people from behind a bullet-proof box





The **BJP** is convinced that a popular government in Punjab would undermine the morale of the law and order agencies and uplift the morale of the terrorists

now.

Yesterday I got a call asking me if I was interested in joining a delegation from Bombay to accompany the Prime Minister on his forthcoming *padayatra* through the troubled districts of Punjab. The dates for the walkabout have not been announced, but we know its duration (seven days) and its purpose (to get at first hand the grievances of ordinary Sikhs). One can be sure that the Congress will ridicule the gesture as a gimmick—which to a certain extent it is—but we must remember that the current leader of the Opposition during his entire tenure as Prime Minister went to Punjab on less than six occasions and mingled with the people from behind a bullet-proof box. *Padayatra* and the rest must be seen as confidence-building measures and they suggest that the government is about to take a major initiative in the state.

I am probably guilty of over-simplification, but the single issue in Punjab for some time has been whether to revive the political process or deal with terrorism. Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? It is an agonising dilemma, a dilemma on whose resolution we have spent over three years (the Barnala government was dismissed in May '87). The years in a sense have been wasted because even today we are no nearer an answer to the riddle. How can you have genuine elections when terrorists rule the roost in the state? On the other hand, how do you contain terrorism without resuming popular democratic activity and accountability? The message from different parts of the world is loud and clear: terrorism is not a police or army problem, it is a political problem. Suspend political activity and you create the perfect breeding ground for armed insurrection by a miniscule minority. Alas, the experience of the recent Lok Sabha poll in the state clearly indicates that those with the gun do influence the result of the ballot-box and make a mockery of elections. The success of Simranjeet Singh Mann's Akali party was to a large extent based on sheer terror. So, where do we go from here?

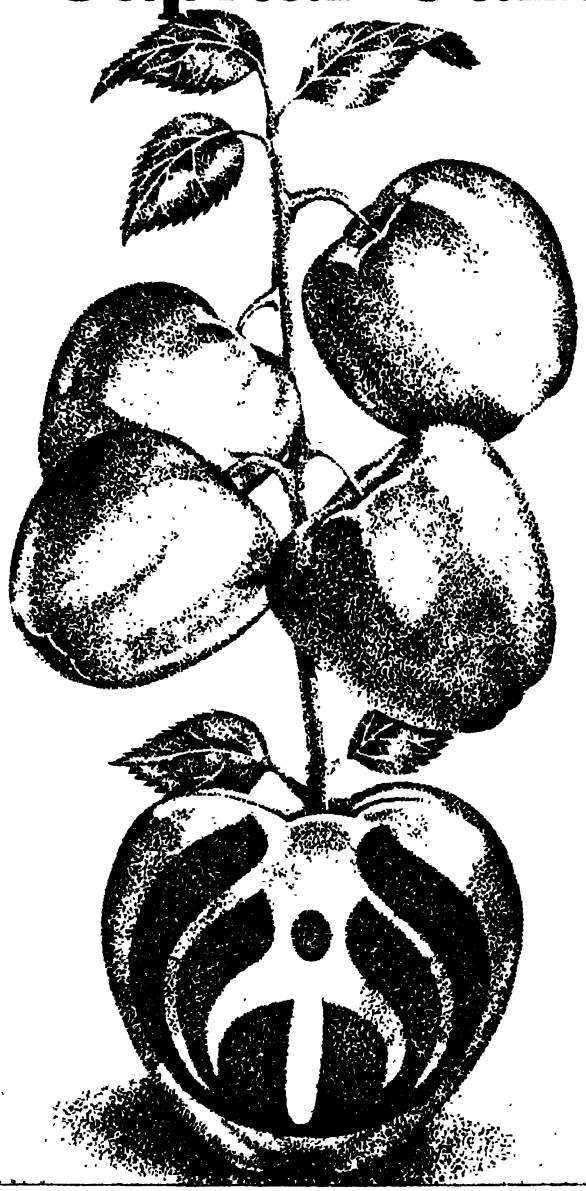
To elections, I hope. The BJP and (to a lesser degree) the communists are implacably opposed to reviving the Assembly. Their stand is honourable and goes beyond short-term gain. L.K. Advani and his party favour an extension of President's rule accompanied by an intensification of the campaign against militants coupled with stricter vigilance on the Indo-Pak border. The BJP is convinced that a popular government would undermine the morale of the law and order agencies and uplift the morale of the terrorists, since any government installed in Chandigarh would be hostage to them.

It is not easy to dispute such reasoning. Unfortunately, simply maintaining the *status quo* isn't going to get us very far. The reality of the situation in Punjab is that a handful of terrorists are holding the state to ransom. One directive from Dr Sohan Singh of the Panthic Committee, and the sword-wielding S S. Mann capitulates. He resigns his seat in Parliament, relinquishes leadership of his party and demands a plebiscite in Punjab under the auspices of the United Nations. Not surpisingly, the Panthic Committee has issued a straight threat: politicians in the state should shun elections or pay with their life. Such terror tactics cannot be allowed to succeed. We must call the terrorists' bluff and confront them, if necessary, with the might of the Indian Union and also with our most potent, but hitherto underused, weapon: the will of the people of Punjab.

It is going to be bloody and ugly. Elections will be held in conditions far from normal. Candidates will be shot, grenades will be dropped on innocents, election meetings will be bombed, votes will be cast under heavy police *bandobust*. But in the end, we will get a representative government, one which, hopefully, will have the support and sympathy of the Centre. Mr Barnala fell, not so much because of external factors and his own incompetence but, due to the machinations of the Rajiv government.

Happily, almost all the Akalis, excluding S.S. Mann, are for once united. They are pressing New Delhi not to take the easy (President's rule), but the hard option. Elections are no panacea for Punjab, but if the troubled state is to re-enter mainstream India, the people of that state must find a way to combat their most dreaded disease. Naturally, in this endeavour they must receive all assistance. But finally, only the Sikh *panth* can destroy the Panthic Committee. •

IDBI Capital Bonds
An attractive instrument for exemption from Capital Gains Tax.



- Available at par throughout the year.
- Exemption from Capital Gains tax under Section 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Exemption from Wealth tax under Section 5(1) (xvie) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957
- Income tax benefit under Section 80L.
- Interest at 9% p.a. payable half yearly.
- At the investor's option, interest for the full period of 3 years can be paid in advance on discounted basis.
- No deduction of tax at source.
- Outstation cheques accepted and cost of collection will be borne by IDBI.

For further details contact the nearest IDBI office or write to Manager

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA

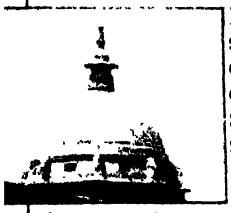
IDBI TOWER, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay 400 005.

Sobhagya-B/IDBI/89

INDER MALHOTRA

The widening Gulf

India seems least bothered to resolve the crisis



Even before the Helsinki summit, this country's Gulf policy, such as it was and is, was fraying at the seams. Sorry for the mixed metaphors, it has since then blown into our faces.

After the seven-hour encounter between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev, it is crystal clear that any lingering differences between the two sides are one of nuance, not of substance. The US and the Soviet Union remain united in their resolve to terminate Iraq's indefensible annexation of Kuwait. And they are determined to do so by persuasion and sanctions, if possible, and through 'other means', if necessary. Since Saddam Hussein is hardly the person to be amenable to persuasion and would resist sanctions as best he can, too much imagination is not needed to guess how the Gulf crisis would end.

Most significantly, the two superpowers, in their joint statement at Helsinki, have also called for quick establishment of "regional security structures" to maintain peace and stability in the Gulf area. This is the key issue. But, surprisingly and sadly, New Delhi has not devoted any thought to it. Till the moment of writing, no Indian minister or official has even commented on an idea that would not only determine the future dispensation in West Asia but also affect Indian security.

Let us not fool ourselves. We must take note of rude realities of life. Assumptions about Indian security, valid uptil 2 August, now call for an agonising reappraisal. For instance, until the other day, it would have been entirely realistic to assume that there would soon be a political settlement of the vexed Afghan issue and this would be followed by a slow but steady diminution of American military supplies and support to Pakistan. Now, this belief has been knocked on the head. Pakistan, by its lightning decision to rush troops to Saudi Arabia, has now US gratitude and can be sure of American quid for Pakistani quo. Pakistan would be an integral part of any regional security arrangement the Americans may devise for the Gulf and West Asia. The US-Pakistan military relationship, renewed a decade ago when Russian tanks and troops rolled into Kabul, has come to stay. This is by no means all. The sudden slump in the Gulf remittances, the rising energy prices and fears of a global economic recession cannot but aggravate the resource crunch Indian defence planners face to their chagrin.



Presidents Gorbachev (left) and Bush: sharing the same perception

Why has the Indian government not paid any attention to this critical aspect of the Gulf upheaval? It bears repetition that New Delhi has got almost completely overwhelmed by its legitimate concern for the safety and safe evacuation of the 200,000 Indians stranded in Kuwait and Iraq amidst great misery. No one can be so heartless as to suggest that this problem should not be given top priority.

The crowning irony of the situation is that even the policy of somehow getting our people out of Iraq and Kuwait, at times by humouring Saddam, has backfired. The Iraqi dictator, behaving true to type, has gone back on his promise to Inder Gujral. The foreign minister had returned from Baghdad reassured that the Indians in Saddam's clutches would be allowed to come away unconditionally. But the wily Iraqi leader has demanded that ships and planes to evacuate them can go to Baghdad, Basra and Kuwait only if they carry food and medical supplies for the Indian population.

Although there is absolutely no guarantee that any food that India might take to Iraq and Kuwait (as distinct from Jordan, which is not under sanctions anyhow) would be given to starving Indians, the Indian government is quite keen to ship and fly cereals and drugs to Iraqi and Iraqi-controlled destinations. But here it has run into American opposition. The US insists that no food can be taken to Saddam's domain without the permission of the sanctions committee of the UN Security Council.

There is a lot in common in Indian and Russian positions on the question of humanitarian aid to the people of Iraq and Kuwait. But at Helsinki the two superpowers agreed that food and medicines can be sent there only with the UN's approval,not otherwise.

This is the state of the play as these lines are written and Inder Gujral is busy conferring at Belgrade with his Yugoslav and Algerian counterparts. But anyone expecting a worthwhile initiative from these confabulations would be the greatest optimist of the last decade of the century. •

The aliens

Are foreign nationals being given Indian citizenship in Sikkim?

• Pawan Kumar Sharma, a 17-year-old student, has been living in Gangtok since his birth. His father, a teacher of a local primary school, is an Indian citizen by virtue of his name featuring in the Chogyal's – the former King of Sikkim – Register of Subjects, the document on the basis of which the Indian government conferred citizenship rights on the Sikkimese after Sikkim's merger with India in 1975. Logically, his son too, is an Indian citizen by birth. But last year, for some strange and inexplicable reason, Pawan Kumar was asked to fill up the Green Sheet – the citizenship form distributed among the so-called "stateless" people of the state by the Nar Bahadur Bhandari government. "Filling up the form meant that I was not an Indian citizen and would like to become one. But even though I saw no reason why I should do so, I had to give in to the pressures of the MLA from my area," Pawan Sharma says.

• Khara Nanda Bhandari (60) is a marginal farmer who makes a living by tilling the small piece of land he owns at Rumtek, a sleepy hamlet on the outskirts of Gangtok. Bhandari has been living in Sikkim for the last 50 years and had automatically become an Indian citizen after the Himalayan kingdom became a part of India 15 years back. But to his dismay, he too was declared "stateless" by the state government and asked to apply for citizenship. "Otherwise, they threatened to throw me out of the country," Bhandari complains.

• Poverty and unemployment forced Kiran Thapa, in his mid-twenties, to leave the land of his birth, Nepal, and settle down in Gangtok four years back. Today, he makes a living by doing odd jobs for the wealthy traders of the town. Last year, however, Thapa was faced with the prospect of being deported to Nepal after chief minister Bhandari threatened to throw out all "foreigners" working in Sikkim. A worried Kiran rushed to his friend, who "managed" a Green Sheet for him. He promptly filled it up and sent it back to the authorities. On Independence Day this year, Thapa was relieved to learn that he would be a citizen of India, without actually giving up his Nepalese citizenship. "But that doesn't worry me. After all, I am going to work and live here," Kiran Thapa proudly proclaims.

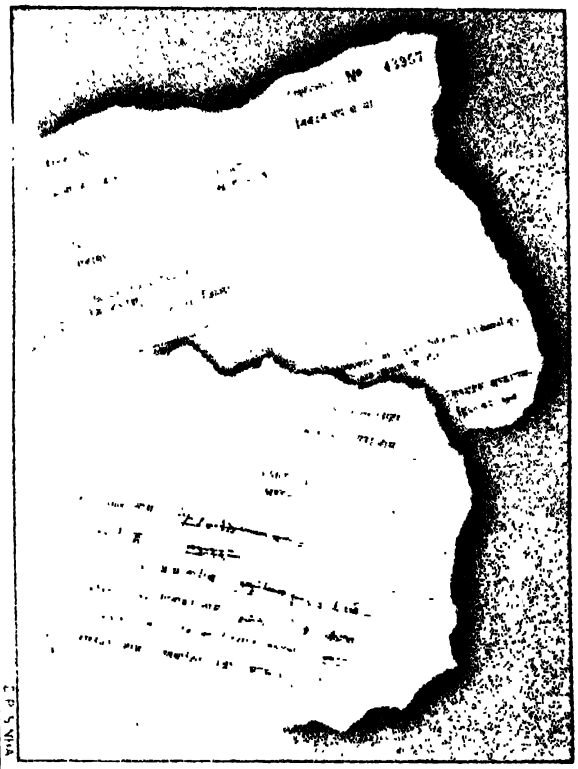


The list could go on. Men, women and children, who suddenly find themselves aliens—or "stateless" as the Sikkim government prefers to call them—in their own land. Some, like Kiran Thapa, are genuinely outsiders. But by a curious turn of events, Thapa, Sharma and Bhandari have been placed in the vague "stateless" category and some 80,000-odd people of Sikkim have been asked to prove that they are citizens of India all over again. The citizenship problem has been hanging fire for the last 11 years and has been the one issue that has kept Nar Bahadur Bhandari in power in Sikkim for over a decade. The fact that the wily chief minister has deftly exploited a bogus but emotive issue for political gains is another story. What is important is how Bhandari duped successive central governments to concede a ridiculous demand. On 15 August this year, chief minister Bhandari proclaimed proudly that the Centre has at last conceded one of his long-standing demands: some 40,000 nowhere people would be given Indian citizenship at last. The rest—another 45,000 people—too would be given the status soon, he thundered.

For 11 years, CM Bhandari spent most of his time and energy in trying to convince the Centre that the "stateless" people in Sikkim should be given Indian citizenship

It was indeed a personal triumph for Nar Bahadur Bhandari. For over 11 years now, the chief minister had spent most of his time and energy trying to convince the Centre that during Sikkim's merger with India way back in 1975, many people who were "unfairly" denied Indian citizen status should be given their due now. In fact, Bhandari had staked his credibility and political career on this one important issue. But every time the chief minister went to Delhi to discuss the matter, he had to return to Gangtok empty handed. The central government just wouldn't believe that so many "stateless" people lived in Sikkim. Before committing itself, the Centre wanted to verify the antecedents of those who claimed to be Sikkimese and wished to become Indian citizens. Especially, since influx from the neighbouring countries of Nepal and Bhutan into Sikkim was an accepted fact.





Last year, the Nar Bahadur Bhandari (left) government distributed around 1.5 lakh citizenship forms (above) among the so-called "stateless" people

Much of the problem, however, has to do with the circumstances under which Sikkim became a part of India. On the day the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom ruled by the Chogyals—the country was an Indian protectorate since 1950—merged with the Indian Union in 1975, the Government of India passed the Sikkim (Citizenship) Order, 1975, which detailed the persons eligible to become Indian citizens. It said:

- Every person who immediately before the 26th day of April, 1975, was a Sikkim subject under the Chogyal's Sikkim Subjects Regulation, 1961, shall be deemed to have become a citizen of India on that day

In the absence of any other document, the Indian government decided to give utmost importance to the Sikkim Subjects Register. All those whose names were in the list and possessed the Sikkim Subjects cerificate automatically became Indian citizens.

Such an arrangement did not satisfy a large chunk of the population, who complained that despite being Sikkimese, their names were deliberately left out from the King's register due to political and other reasons. In a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, a number of legislators including chief minister Kazi Lhendhup Dorji demanded a revision of the Sikkim (Citizenship) Order to include the names of those who were left out from the Chogyal's register. By conservative estimates, the number of such "stateless" people was around 7,500.

But before Dorji could pursue the matter any further, he was thrown out of office and Nar Bahadur Bhandari, who had vehemently opposed Sikkim's merger with India, came to power under the banner of the Janata Parishad in 1979. Initially, Bhandari showed little or no interest in the problem. There was a compelling reason for this. Most of his party MLAs at that time were from the minority Bhutias, Lepchas and Limbus and the chief minister just could not afford to annoy them by pushing for the citizenship rights of people, a majority of whom were Nepalese. But once the minorities began moving away from Bhandari's fold—a number of Bhutia/Lepcha MLAs had actually expressed no confidence in the chief minister—he began looking around for other support areas to consolidate his position. Bhandari encouraged defections from the Opposition and a majority of those who switched allegiance were Nepalese—the people who were clamouring for Indian citizenship rights.

In 1981, the Bhandari government set up a seven-member Citizenship Committee under the leadership of the deputy speaker of the Assembly, L.B. Basnet. The committee examined the question of granting citizenship to those whose names were not included in the Sikkim Subjects Register and who presumably did not belong to any other state. Basnet and company submitted their report to the state government within three months. It also made a startling revelation: that over 30,000 "stateless" people—most of them Nepalese and were residing in Sikkim. Chief minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari promptly took up the matter with the Centre and demanded that all of them be given Indian citizenship status. Very few at that time could gauge that beneath Bhandari's sudden interest in



ASHOK MITRA

After the merger: people burn the effigy of the Chogyal in Gangtok

the issue was his desire to build up a solid support base.

Not that no one saw through Bhandari's gameplan. It was around this time that the three ethnic groups of the state—the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Limbus—began to raise their voice against the chief minister's move. They feared that if the 30,000-odd Nepalese were made citizens and absorbed into the Sikkimese society, their distinct identity would be threatened. The minorities got together and petitioned the Centre against Bhandari. Most of the so-called "stateless" people, they argued, were "foreign" nationals, who had come to Sikkim from Nepal and Bhutan.

The accusation was not altogether unfounded. Even before the merger, Sikkim has had to live with the problem of people crossing over from the two neighbouring countries. This has been even acknowledged by the National Commission of Population in its report submitted to the Centre in 1984: "The deteriorating economy of Nepal has forced an increasing number of Nepalese to emigrate outside the country. Their influx into the small state of Sikkim was more overwhelming..." Moreover, it was precisely due to this factor that the Election Commission treated Sikkim as "sensitive area" in 1983.

There were other reasons for New Delhi to be suspicious of Bhandari's motive. In 1981, he had said that there were around 30,000 "stateless" people in the state. But as the years went by, their numbers, according to the chief minister, swelled defying any logic of population growth. Thus in 1985, Bhandari made yet another trip to Delhi and demanded that the Centre should now confer citizenship rights on over 60,000 "stateless" people. And today, he says that their number has risen to well over 80,000 out of the state's total population of around 4.5 lakhs.

Most political observers feel that Bhandari has been able to bulldoze his way through as—after the 1989 Assembly elections in Sikkim in particular—he has met with very little opposition. In the state elections last year, the Opposition was completely routed with Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad winning all the 32 seats in the Assembly perhaps the first House in the country without any Opposition.

Before the 1989 Assembly polls, however, the minorities did try and focus public attention on this issue. The Denzong Peoples' Chogpa, a religious-political outfit which represents the tribals and the Other Backward Castes (OBC) of the state campaigned against Bhandari and even decided to boycott the elections. The party argued that since a sizeable chunk of the state's population as claimed by the chief minister were not citizens of India, they were not entitled to vote in the elections.

Soon after Bhandari's party swept the Assembly polls in 1989, he took up the citizenship issue with renewed vigour. And towards the end of last year, the state government distributed around 1.5 lakh citizenship forms—called the Green Sheet—among the "stateless" people. And at all public meetings the chief minister claimed that the central government had at last agreed to grant them citizenship status. Expectedly, there was a mad rush for the forms but not all who laid their hands on them were genuine "stateless" people. Many of them were migrants from Nepal and Bhutan. What is more, a large section of those who filled up the citizenship forms were Indian citizens already. But in the absence of any organised Opposition, nobody dared question the chief minister's move. Moreover, since the Centre had all along soft-pedalled the issue, there was a feeling that this time too, New Delhi would sit on the files.

They were mistaken. The National Front government proved to be more responsive than the previous Congress regime. The Union home

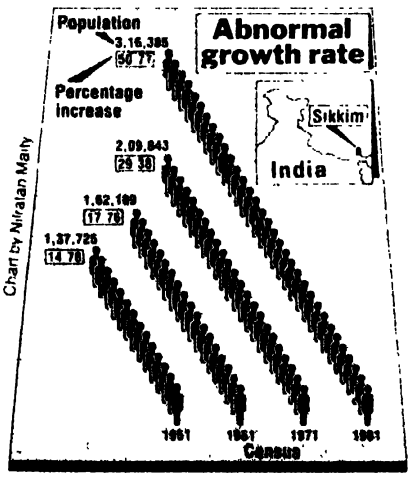


The ethnic Sikkimese: identity crisis

ministry went ahead with Bhandari's proposal, and in the last session of Parliament, Subodh Kant Sahay, the Union minister of state for home, declared that the NF government had decided to grant Indian citizenship to 40,000 "stateless" people in Sikkim. An elated Nar Bahadur Bhandari celebrated this announcement in Gangtok with great fanfare. "The application of the rest were being processed. All of them will be made citizens of this country soon," he promised.

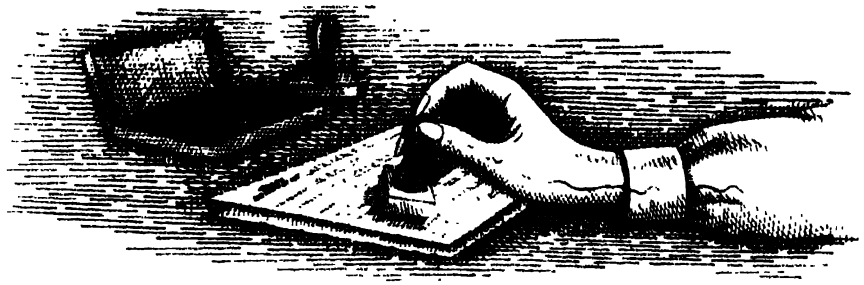
"I wonder how the central government could make such an announcement without even verifying the antecedents of the people," said Y.N. Bhandari, president of the Jan Mukti Morcha, a platform for all those opposing the chief minister on the citizenship issue. The Morcha was formed in March this year and most of its office-bearers are from the Rising Sun, a powerful Opposition grouping. Y.N. Bhandari is certain that the chief minister has perpetrated a fraud on the people of the state. But why did Nar Bahadur insist on handing our citizenship rights to those who were already Indians? Bhandari has the answer. He feels that this is just a gimmick to project himself as the saviour and only leader of the Nepalese. "Just look at how he is pressing for the inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. After all, Nar Bahadur has lost the support of the ethnic Sikkimese and it is but natural that he would like to build up another base of his own," the Morcha president added.

And since most of the mainstream Opposition political parties like the Congress(I) are silent on the issue, the Morcha seems to be the last resort of the anti-Bhandari brigade. There are others too who are putting up individual show of defiance. Bharat Basnet is one of them. The energetic member of the All Sikkim Youth and Contractors Association went on a hunger strike on the day Nar Bahadur Bhandari announced in Gangtok that 35,000 "left out" people would be given Indian citizenship. In a strongly-worded letter to the state chief secretary, Basnet had said that the decision of the Centre would go against the interests of the Sikkimese as there were enough evidence to prove that many of the "stateless" people were actually Nepalese citizens. But true to his style, the chief minister promptly had Basnet arrested. The Jan Mukti Morcha, too, has other plans. According to a spokesman of the party, the Morcha is now patiently waiting for the state government to publish a list of all those who have been given citizenship status. "We will then expose the chief minister and his men," he said.



Nar Bahadur Bhandari, of course, dismisses such allegations with disdain. "They are baseless.. my critics are behind all this," he said. And the chief minister seemed least bothered by the fact that a large portion of the state's population are against the government's move. The elections are still far away. And public memory is indeed short. Moreover, Nar Bahadur Bhandari has perfected the art of buying peace into a fine art. Has anyone heard of a state Assembly without any Opposition members? ●

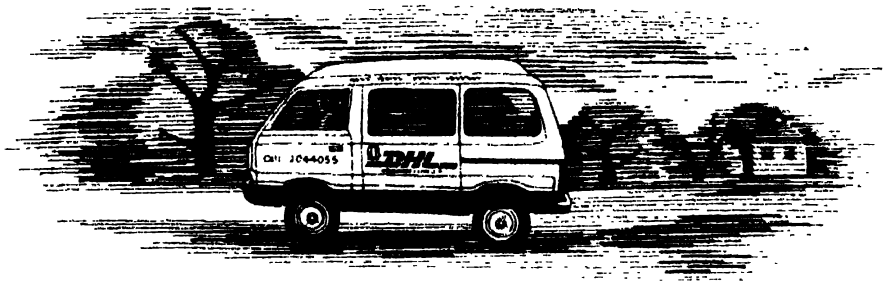
Rajiv Bagchi/Gangtok



FROM EASY CUSTOMS CLEARANCE,



TO PROMPT DESPATCH,



TO RAPID TRANSIT AND DELIVERY.



WE TAKE IT DOOR-TO-DOOR EVERYTIME.

STILL THINK WE'RE JUST A COURIER COMPANY?

RAKA:3150 C:90

21 years ago, we pioneered the air express industry. Since then, through a network spanning over 180 countries, we've become the fastest, most reliable way of delivering packages and documents worldwide. We offer you one door-to-door service, one all-inclusive invoice, and one truly global network. You can depend on the dedication of over 20,000 professionals, supported by over 7,000 vehicles and aircraft. So if you have any packages and documents that need to be in safe hands from beginning to end, call us for an immediate pick-up.

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS®

We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories

DHL. THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

The language game

The tug-of-war between English and the vernaculars continues

The fight is on. While certain Janata Dal and BJP leaders of the northern half of India, like Mulayam Singh Yadav and Sunderlal Patwa, continue their *angrezi hatao* movement, 72 Congress MLAs in Karnataka have launched an *angrezi bachao* campaign. The middle ground seems to be BJP chief L.K. Advani's stand that fighting English, as long as there is an English bias at the Centre, would merely put those opposed to English at a disadvantage.

First, the Anglophiles. In a memorandum submitted to Karnataka chief minister Veerendra Patil last month, 72 MLAs of the Congress(I) appealed for more English medium schools in rural areas. Not knowing English, they said, makes villagers more susceptible to discrimination. Their demand has rekindled the language issue in the state. In 1982, Karnataka had witnessed language chauvinism for the first time. The Gokak report, recommending the implementation of Kannada as the state administrative language, had found massive support. When the Gundu Rao government did not implement this, the state erupted with riots and demonstrations. This finally led to the downfall of the Congress government and the Janata Party, supporting the cause of Kannada, came to power.

But the Hegde government had not lived up to expectations, either. Slow in implementing the vernacular, it was already drawing flak from Kannada chauvinists, so when Hegde sanctioned the opening of 49 English medium schools there was a big din. And the memorandum of the MLAs has sparked off an acrimonious debate once again.

In the memorandum, the MLAs have not opposed the use of Kannada as the administrative language, stating instead, that it was the constitutional right of every citizen to study in an English medium school. "Since there are a number of languages in the country and considering the importance of English at international fora, it is best that the medium of instruction in schools be English," the statement said.

The demand has put Patil and his education minister K.H. Ranganath in a fix. The CM, who cannot deny the validity of the point raised, has not taken any step, positive or negative: "It is difficult to take a stand on this as it is such an emotional issue."

But true Anglophobes would not accept this. For example, the *Angrezi Hatao Sammelan* held at Indore sometime back, called for a crusade against English to successfully banish the language from the country. Organised by Lohiaite Socialists of the Janata Dal, mostly belonging to the Lok Dal, this meeting was star-studded. Former president Zail Singh, railway minister George Fernandez, chief ministers Mulayam Singh Yadav and Sunderlal Patwa were united in their fight against English. Urging the people to sweep away every remnant of English, veteran BJP leader and Speaker of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, Brijmohan Mishra, reminded the mass of Ram Monahar Lohia's dream.

All this is in tune with the Madhya Pradesh government's firm clamp on English. Chief minister Patwa has practically banned English from government offices. Top bureaucrats have been repeatedly pulled up for speaking in English at official public functions. And so, when BJP chief L.K. Advani declared in a Bhopal press conference that CMs should not try to remove English from their states, a lot of faces must have turned red.

In 1966 and 1967, explained Advani, his party—then the Jan Sangh—was opposed to the two-language formula, then accepted at the Centre. For the sake of national unity, the party had accepted the formula although remaining critical of it. Since then, the Centre had issued several directives to encourage Hindi, but even so English dominated the central government. The veteran leader reminded people of the three-language formula that the BJP state governments had been directed to implement. Because, not knowing English would only make the going that much tougher for the people of Hindi-dominated states.

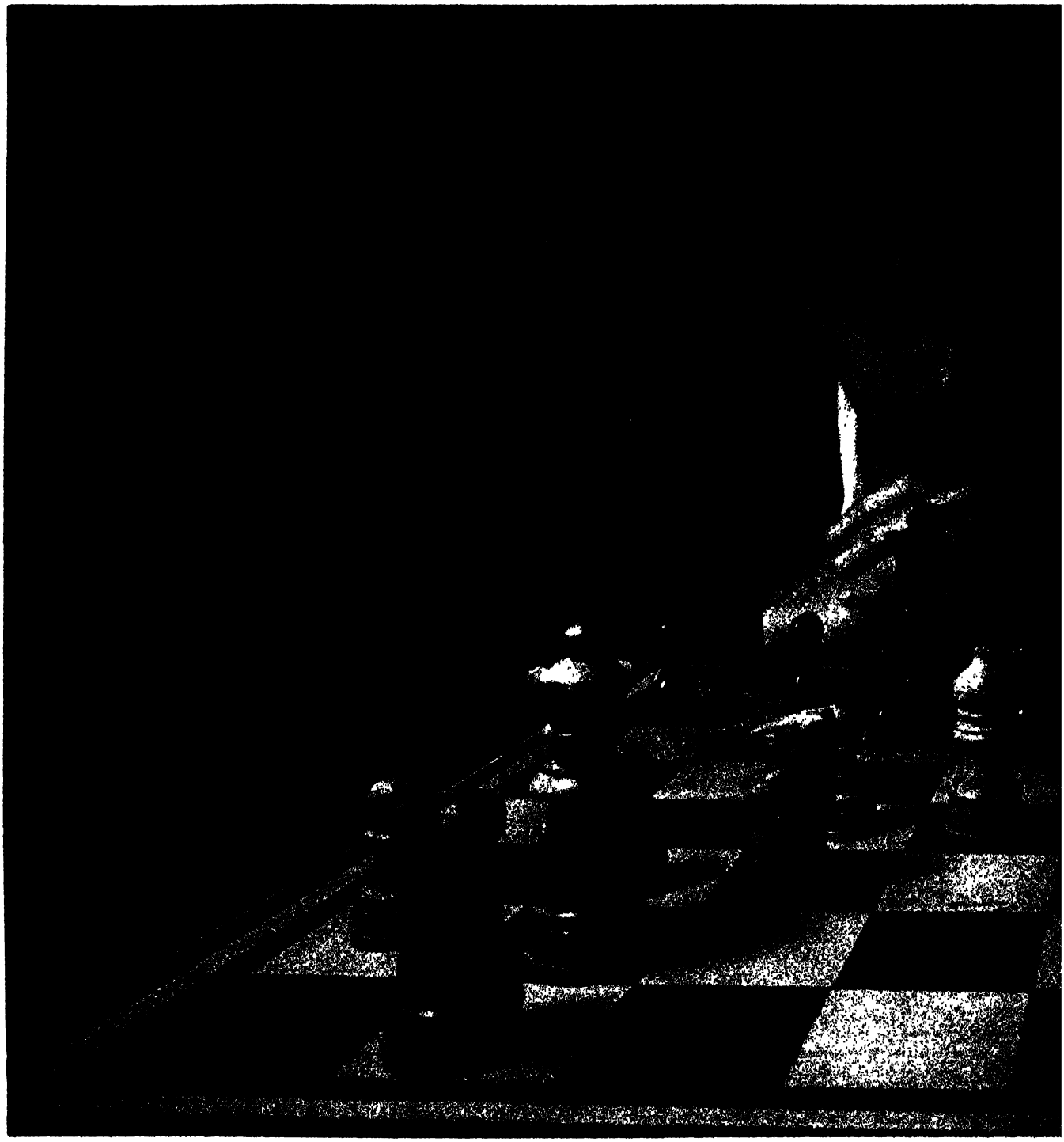


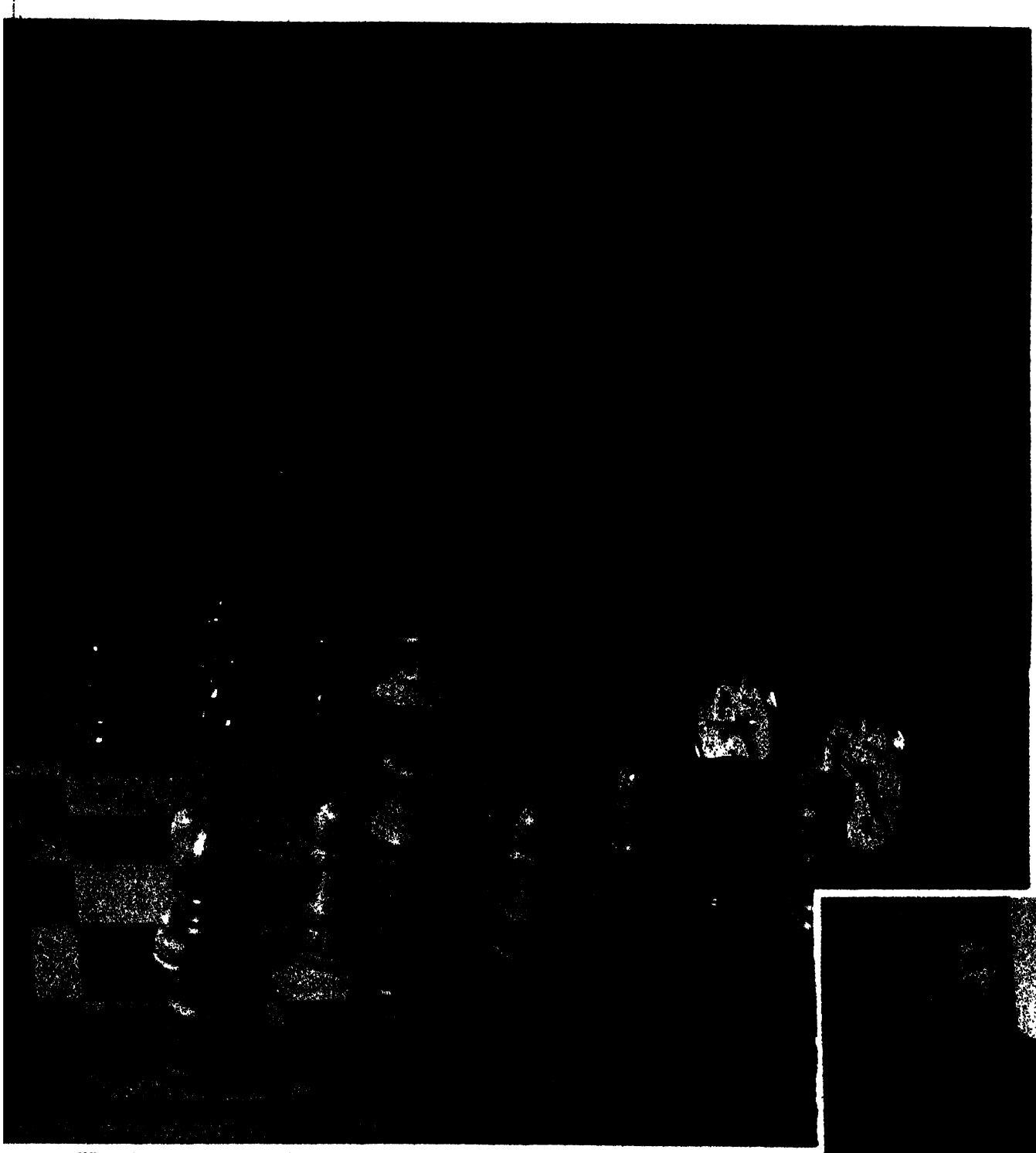
(From left) Zail Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sunderlal Patwa and Shanta Kumar at an English-*hatao* convention in Bhopal: the Anglophobes

Whatever the Anglophobes might believe, the abolition of English would be neither easy nor practical, at the moment. As the Kannada poet Ramakrishna Sharma says, "Abolition of English might mean Hindi imperialism. And imposition of Hindi south of the Vindhyas will have grave consequences. It might even divide the country." •

Gayatri Laxman/Bangalore and M.V. Kher/Raipur.

You don't have to be the world's youngest grandmaster to be a Raymond's man.





When, in 1987 at the age of 18, Viswanathan Anand became India's first grandmaster, he was also the world's youngest, launched on a brilliant career which would see him in 1989 beat former world champion Boris Spassky at the 4th International Games Festival in Cannes, France.

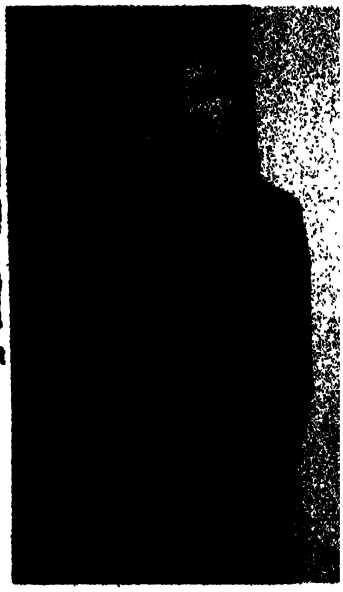
Too young to be checked by his own mates, still, he is not beyond making a few dashing moves when fittingly attired — e.g., in this blue/grey Jodhpuri made from a polyester-wool combination aptly called "Sapphire".

You don't have to be a jewel in India's chess crown to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

... but it helps.

Raymond's

Never say no to life.



The first warning

The West Bengal Police Association speaks out against political interference

There is a limit to which a policeman can be made to bend; beyond that he tends to recoil viciously. And recent events in West Bengal suggest that the state's police force is fast approaching that limit.

The night of 3 September, a Tuesday, was charged with tension. At Tollygunge, in south Calcutta, a group of policemen surprised the local residents and the police administration by putting up road blocks to protest against the suspension of some of their colleagues.

The drama began earlier that day when *Anandabazar Patrika* front-paged a photograph that showed an injured SUCI (Socialist Unity Centre of India) activist lying chained to his bed in a city hospital. The man had been hurt the day before, when the police lathicharged a group of SUCI demonstrators during a *bandh* called by the party and 11 Naxalite groups. The strike was in protest against the killing of an SUCI worker in Calcutta, who died in police firing on 31 August.

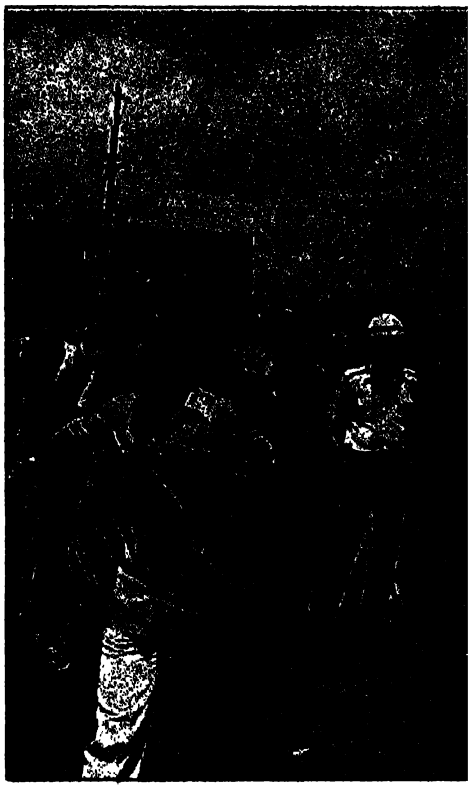
Chief minister Jyoti Basu reacted angrily to the police measure in the hospital, said it affronted civilised sensibilities and ordered the suspension of the policemen concerned. And that very evening, policemen of Tollygunge police lines under which Bangur Hospital is located, took to the street, set up road blockades, and disrupted traffic in a rare and portentous show of defiance.

The following day, 4 September, the agitation snowballed into a mini 'rebellion'. Agitated policemen belonging to the West Bengal Police Association(WBPA) and the CPI(M)-affiliated Non-Gazetted Police Karmachari Samiti *gheraoed* the superintendent of police, South 24 Paraganas, demanding the revocation of the suspension orders. A crisis was, however, averted when the leaders of the two unions intervened and promised to hold talks with the government. The policemen said that they had acted according to norms, as there were no instructions from the authorities against keeping hospitalised persons under police custody chained. In their defence they cited two earlier incidents where four policemen were suspended after ailing undertrials had managed to escape from the same hospital.

The demonstration by the policemen was not totally out of the blue. On 25 August the WBPA had cautioned the ruling Left Front of police discontent stemming from a lack of guidelines. The WBPA, at a meeting held at Bhawani Bhavan, the state police headquarters, had stated that its members were no longer willing to put up with political interference and the arbitrariness prevailing within the police administration.

And this came close on the heels of the Calcutta *bandh* (16 August), called by the Congress(I) to protest against the rise in transport fares and deteriorating civic conditions. To counter the general strike, the CPI(M) decided to let its cadres help the police maintain peace. But they caused serious embarrassment to the government by attacking peaceful Congress processionists and assaulting press photographers with impunity while

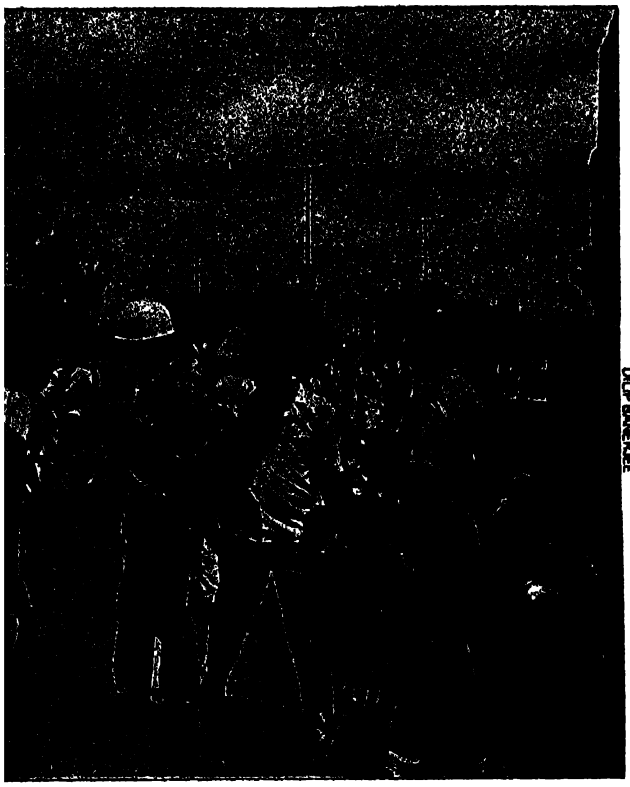
The allegations made by the WBPA appear to have been corroborated by the state's chief secretary. He has censured police officers for failing to keep the machinery in good shape



the police looked on.

The WBPA argues that the police failed to take action because they had no clear instructions from their superiors about how to deal with party cadres. In an editorial in its journal, the association says that if policemen were to act according to law, a large number of CPI(M) activists would have been arrested. And, if that happened, the policemen concerned may have had to face punitive action later. "It is time the government chose between the police and the party cadre. If cadres are to be mobilised again, the government must define our role in writing," fumed Biswanath Chakravarty, the association's general secretary.

The WBPA meeting and the subsequent show of defiance by a section of the constabulary underscored the fact that the police were tired of being made the scapegoat for situations arising out of political interference and administrative shortcomings. The association cites the example of what happened in Howrah, Calcutta's twin city across the Hooghly, to explain its point. In early August, when the police fought a pitched battle with a crowd of Congress(I) demonstrators protesting against the rise in bus fares, a group of photographers were beaten up by *lathi*-weilding men who mingled with the police. When the media





DILIP BANERJEE

DILIP BANERJEE

Policemen restoring peace in Howrah on a day of violence: hard-pressed; (above) at a Republic Day parade in Calcutta: will the discipline last?

raised an outcry against the incident, accusing the CPI(M) of trying to gag the press with the help of its musclemen, the party bosses tried to wriggle out of the situation by saying that the lensmen were assaulted by plainclothes policemen. "This sort of opportunism is breaking the policeman's morale and making the cadres reckless. The politicians know, as much as we do, that they were not policemen in civil dress. They were party workers," said a WBPA leader.

Regarding the shackling of patients in hospitals, policemen say that the step was in keeping with the norms laid down in the Police Regulations of Bengal. While the newly-appointed director general of police, Arun Prasad Chatterjee, and the state home secretary have declared the measure unlawful, WBPA leaders wonder why the practice was allowed for decades and no circular issued to end it.

Indeed, the police seems to have no alternative to putting up with political interference. "There is little we can do to prevent this," confesses a WBPA district secretary. "We are issued with vindictive transfer orders, if we fail to comply with the whims of the politically influential." The WBPA admits that the local police stations are even wary of executing court warrants. Things have come to such a pass that an officer-in-charge (OC) holds back the warrants against those who have even the remotest link with the ruling parties. The obvious reason is that he wants to avoid agitations, *gheraos* and, above all, humiliation.

One reason why the authority of the police has eroded is that senior officials have failed to hold their ground against political pressure. The WBPA accuses them of being pliant and forging a nexus with politicians for personal gains. The police administration, it complains, has, therefore, become topheavy with superfluous posts being created every three years, while the force at the lower level stagnates for decades. "I know of at least one IG and one DIG who have written to the government saying that they have no work. We need more men at the lower levels to cope with a growing population and fast-changing crime pattern," says Chakravarty, explaining why the police fail to perform satisfactorily.

The allegations made by the WBPA appear to have been corroborated by chief secretary T.C. Dutt himself. In a circular to the police department, he said that if anti-social elements and those involved in acts of violence have the slightest links with the ruling party, the police refuses to arrest them. In the note he has also censured the police officers for flouting rules meant to keep the police machinery in good shape.

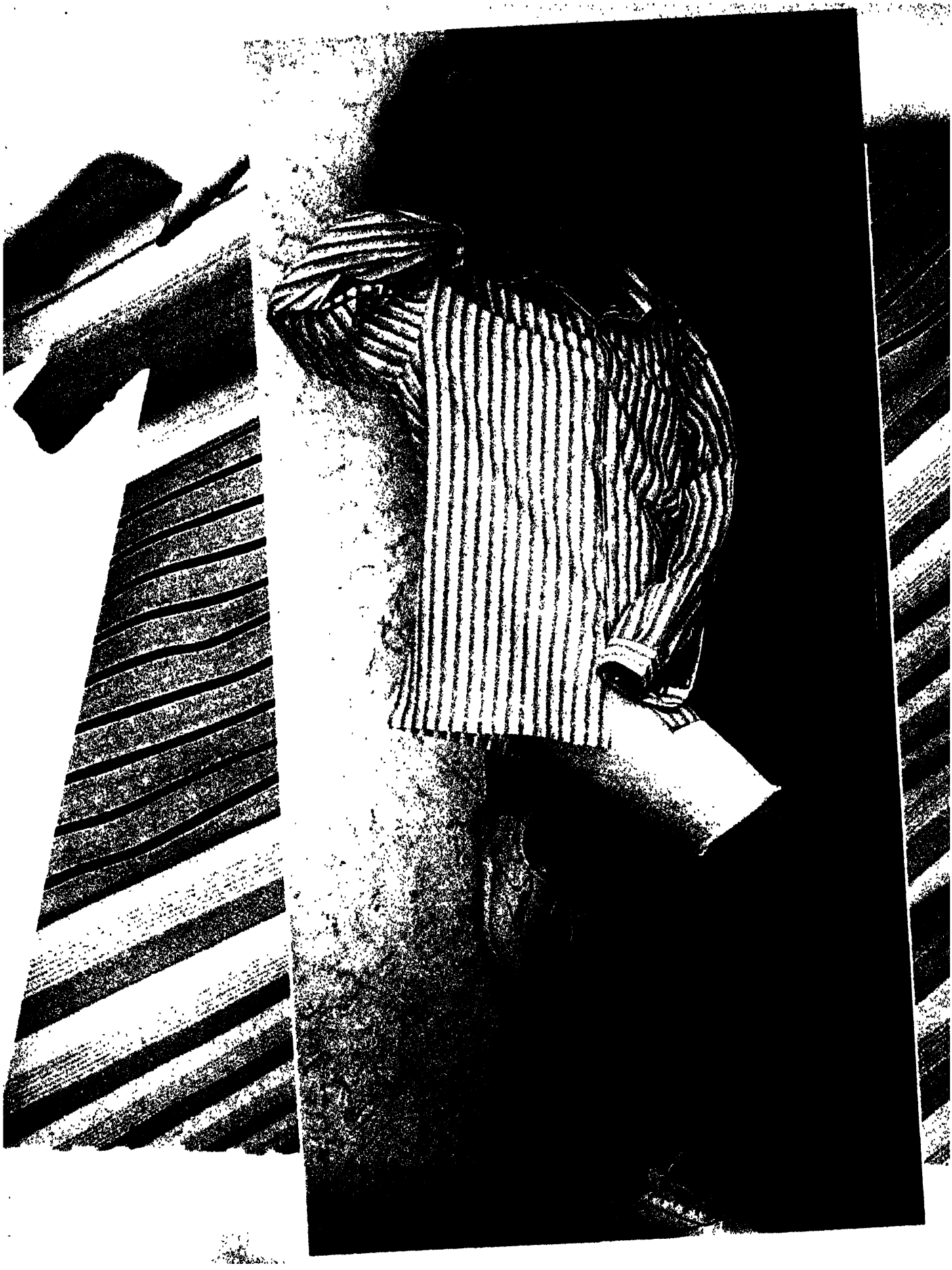
The WBPA, however, does not believe that the circular will make things any better. The police force is demoralised, it says, because the government has kept all promotional avenues sealed for the last ten years and has systematically downgraded the policeman's position in the state's administration vis-a-vis its army of clerks. "There is no motivation and no sense of security. If a railway passenger dies in an accident his family gets a compensation of Rs two lakhs. If a constable is killed while on duty, his family gets Rs 25,000," laments Chakravarty.

Privately, some senior IPS officers have also reacted sharply to the circular. "It has been foolish on the part of the chief secretary to issue a note like this," said one of the government's most trusted police officers. "He, more than anyone else, should know what prevents the police from acting in the way it should," says the officer from Calcutta Police. Says an inspector general of the West Bengal Police: "In most criminal cases, party activists are found to be siding with the accused. And if investigations are carried too far against politically connected people, the investigating officers are transferred."

The vernacular press characterised the stirrings in the police as a virtual "rebellion". The WBPA leaders themselves are, however, more circumspect. "There is no question of a rebellion as has been suggested by some newspaper reports," says Chakravarty. "But let me add that the way things are going there might be a revolt in spite of us."

Maybe it is time the government took heed. •

Anish Gupta/Calcutta



GREAT FABRICS / GREAT PRICES

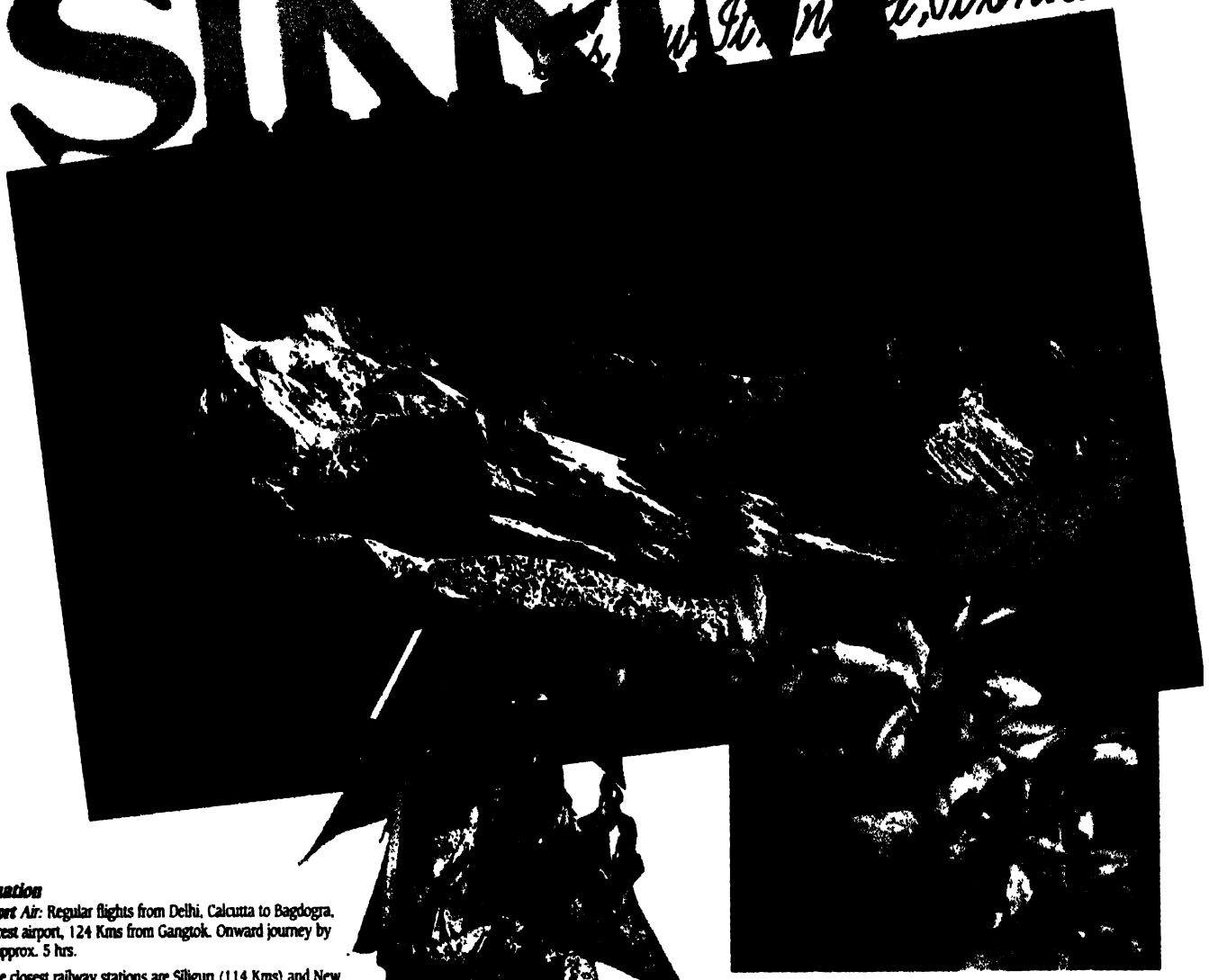
S H I R T I N G S



DRESS MATERIALS / SUITINGS / SAREES / FURNISHINGS / TOWELS / BEDSHEETS / INDUSTRIAL FABRICS / NON-WOVEN FABRICS

SIKKIM

...w It's n...l, It's nice



Information

Transport Air: Regular flights from Delhi, Calcutta to Bagdogra, the nearest airport, 124 Kms from Gangtok. Onward journey by road – approx. 5 hrs.

Rail: The closest railway stations are Siliguri (114 Kms) and New Jalpaiguri (125 Kms) connecting Calcutta, Delhi and other important Indian Cities.

Road: Gangtok has road links with Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Siliguri and other centres. The Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, operates a fleet of cars, jeeps & luxury coaches. Private buses and taxis are also available

Accommodation: The starred hotels at Gangtok are Mayur, Norkhill, Tashi Delek and Tibet. Also several moderately priced comfortable hotels and lodges are available

Package Tours: Many package tours are also available.

Best Seasons: Mid-February to May and October to December.

Come to Sikkim and discover a heritage that's ever alive and new. A tradition that's so novel and unique. And a culture that makes you feel nice and warm all over.

Sikkim

the ultimate destination

For further information, Contact:

Gangtok
Tourist Information Centre.
M.G. Marg,
Gangtok-737101, Sikkim
Ph: 2064.

Siliguri
Tourist Information Centre,
SNT Complex, Pradhan Nagar,
Siliguri, West Bengal
Ph.: 24602

Calcutta
Tourist Information Centre,
4C, Poonam, 5/2, Russel Street,
Calcutta - 700017.
Ph.: 297516, 296717, 298983.

Delhi
Sikkim House Annexe,
14, Panchsheel Marg, Chanakyapuri,
New Delhi-110021
Ph : 3015346.

Foreigners welcome to Sikkim, Permission available almost immediately at Indian Embassies abroad, Foreign Registration Offices in India and Sikkim Tourism offices at Delhi, Siliguri and Calcutta.

BAST/G3('90)

CHECKLIST

How the ministers are faring

It has become something of a cliche to say that the Raja heads a non-government. And like most cliches, it is true only in part. Yes, the V.P. Singh regime hasn't established the most impressive track record in the nine months or so since it took over. The law and order situation in the country is perhaps at its worst ever, with the anti-Mandal Commission stir escalating into a full-scale caste war. The Kashmir problem has worsened, with militants having the run of the Valley. Despite the enormous goodwill earned by the Prime Minister's visit to the Golden Temple soon after being sworn in, the Dal frittered away the advantage by failing to take decisive action. Result: the terrorists still call the shots, and the government is ill-put to decide whether Assembly elections in Punjab would be a good move at this juncture. In the north-east, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) is creating its own distinctive brand of havoc, while the Bodoland issue is still far from settled. On the economic front, prices are rising at an ever-increasing rate, and the much talked about oil crunch will only make matters worse. All in all, a pretty depressing scenario.

But, which gives us only half the picture.

For, unbelievable as this may sound, the Raja's durbar has its share of bright sparks. And yes, some work *does* get done at the highest level of government, even if in only a few departments Contrary to the conventional wisdom on the subject, not every member of the Dal Cabinet is either a cretin or a crook. And some of those who, without a doubt, come into the latter category, are skilled in the art of administration as well.

The V.P. Singh government then, like any other, comprises the good, the bad and the average. (Ratings are made on the basis of administrative efficiency alone; corruption or allegations of corruption have not been taken into account.)

THE GOOD

Somewhat predictably, membership of this group is rather restricted, with no more than four ministers managing to make the grade. All of them have widely varying styles of functioning, but the end result is much the same. Files are cleared in record time, projects aren't held up needlessly and red-tapism is kept at the minimum. And only because the ministers won't have it otherwise.



RAJA'S COURT

Though the V.P. Singh regime hasn't established the most impressive track record in the nine months since it took over, the Raja's durbar has its share of bright sparks

Arun Nehru



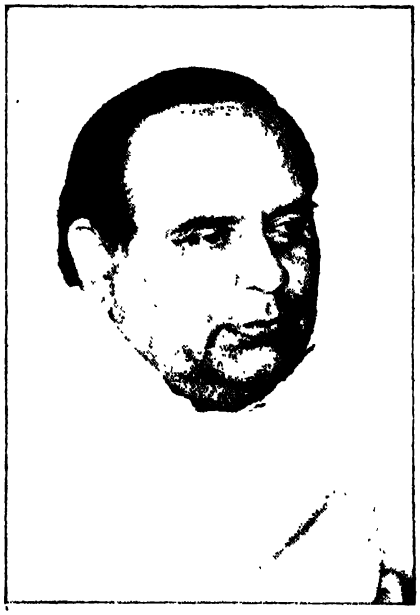
The quintessential backroom boss, Nehru is one of the few ministers who has not mixed vendetta with work. As commerce minister, he could have struck terror into the hearts of those who had had occasion to displease him when he was out of power. But Nehru steered clear of such petty politics, and instead, got on with his job. Thus, despite Reliance, paraxylene stayed out of the OGL (open general licence) list, being included in the restricted list.

But Nehru's greatest achievement was in the import-export sector. The commerce minister liberalised procedure sufficiently for prospective exporters to find the going easy. The import of consumer goods was restricted to give indigenous industry a head start. The measures had the desired result: the export-import balance began looking healthy at long last.

Nehru has also clamped down hard on instances of corruption or wrong doing. The minister wound up the directorate of general supplies and disposal only towards this end. With a view to making management more effective and cost-efficient, Nehru created a holding company, Bharat Business International Ltd (BBI), amalgamating MMTC and STC, with the Vegetable Oil Corporation also scheduled to be merged into the group. Earlier, MMTC and STC would export much the same items, but run separate campaigns. Now with their merger, costs on publicity have been halved.

The minister's personal style also counted for much. On taking office, Nehru made it clear that hierarchy didn't count for much where he was concerned. Even a joint secretary could approach him directly if he wanted some things cleared. And no files should be kept pending at his office.

Not that Nehru found the going easy. The Raja never really trusted him and planted his own men in strategic places to keep an eye on the commerce minister. S.P. Shukla was, therefore, appointed secretary, commerce, and S.V.S. Raghavan was made chairman of BBI. But Nehru remained unruffled, and as efficient as ever.



Ajit Singh



He doesn't restrict himself to the industry ministry alone, but functions as *de facto* adjudicator of disputes—especially those relating to western Uttar Pradesh. Every morning before leaving for office, Ajit Singh meets hundreds of people from that area, all of whom relate their problems—ranging from cow theft to police brutality—to their messiah. And Singh, much the benevolent Jat, takes necessary action. Despite this early morning schedule, and his involvement in the Janata Dal squabbles (sabotaging Devi Lal's rally, dislodging Hukum Singh, etc.) the minister does justice to his work at Udyog Bhavan as well.

The most significant of Ajit Singh's achievements was the adoption of the new industrial policy. Whatever his actual contribution to what was essentially Montek Singh Ahluwalia's brainchild may have been, it goes to Ajit Singh's credit that he stuck to his guns despite the high-powered (Chandra Shekhar etc.) opposition to the scheme.

The industry minister's move to introduce the open tender bid system in awarding Maruti dealerships makes sense as well. Not only will it put an end to rampant corruption, but will also ensure that no one manages to manipulate matters enough to wangle a dealership.



Ajit Singh has used his position as industry minister to make one of Chaudhary Charan Singh's dreams come true, and benefit the sugarcane growers of Uttar Pradesh in the bargain. The minister is now granting licences for the opening of new sugar mills outside a 10-km radius from established mills (the earlier limit was 25 kms). This means that farmers will now be selling their produce in a seller's market and will, therefore, get remunerative prices.

In all this, Ajit Singh manages to play the strongman as well, refusing to allow the Raja to appoint Montek Singh Ahluwalia as secretary, industry.

Madhu Dandavate



The finance minister has his fair share of critics. And the recent row in Parliament over his decision to pay back excise enrichment to the industrialists has had its effect on his image. But there's no denying that Dandavate has brought a sea change in the working of the finance ministry. Among the minister's initiatives is the new system of announcing the budget deficit every four months, instead of springing a surprise on his countrymen every March-April. Dandavate has also altered the tax laws to make them



(From left) Arun Nehru, Ajit Singh and finance minister Madhu Dandavate going through the budget papers: impressive performance

both more effective and more paying. While personal taxation has been simplified, the tax exemption on investment allowance has been discontinued.

The finance ministry has come down hard on wasteful expenses, cutting non-plan expenditure and curtailing foreign trips of both ministers and officers. Dandavate has also thought up inventive schemes to get people to put their black money into such worthy projects as slum housing.

While balance of payments is receiving due attention, Dandavate has also subtly changed the role of financial institutions as far as corporate takeovers are concerned.

Not bad going for a nine-month-old minister.

Dinesh Goswami



Despite the emotional resignation at the ULFA's antics, Goswami, who holds the dual portfolios of steel and mines and law, is a cool customer. When S.K. Ahluwalia, the marketing director of the Steel Authority of India (SAIL), managed to wangle an extension, his minister cancelled it the moment he got wind of the scheme.

But Goswami doesn't spend all his time watching over lesser mortals, preferring to concentrate on increasing the steel production of the country. Hence the decision to allow the private sector to produce upto one million tonnes of steel. The biggest blast furnace in India has been commissioned at the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and the modernisation of the Rourkela plant has been decided upon. With a view to encourage export, steel has been decanalised, and pig iron placed on OGL in the face of its acute shortage in the country.

The licensing policy for the iron and steel sector has been rationalised. For the first time there is no conflict between the steel ministry and SAIL, with Goswami taking a pragmatic approach to coordinate better with its chairman. The minister has taken his share of tough decisions. Among them, the cancelling of the contract awarded to a Japanese company to modernise the Indian Iron and Steel Corporation. Instead, Goswami awarded the contract to different companies in different areas, reducing government expenditure by about 10-12 per cent.

As law minister, one of Goswami's first tasks was to fill the long-pending vacancies of judges in the various high courts and the Supreme Court. Government counsels were also appointed, with the Chief Justice being consulted at every step.

THE BAD

It is impossible—for reasons of space alone—to document all the acts of commission and ommission of those who qualify to this category. For, nearly every second minister of the Dal government could make it to this grade with a little bit of effort—or even a lack of it. But to mention only some prominent offenders.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed



Political gossip has it that he owes his appointment as home minister to mentor Arun Nehru, who was offered the portfolio and declined, recommending the Mufti's name instead. The Raja, who needed the presence of a Muslim in his Cabinet—especially since he had taken the support of the BJP—was only too willing to oblige.

You can make an old buffer the home minister of India, but you can't necessarily make him perform. And that's exactly what happened with Sayeed. Now popularly known as the





Despite the emotional resignation over the ULFA (right) problem, Union minister of steel and mines and law Dinesh Goswami is a cool customer

invisible man of the Cabinet, the Mufti attracted more criticism from both allies and the Opposition than the entire ministry put together.

The trouble began with the kidnapping of his daughter, Rubaiya Sayeed, and her release, obtained by letting some prominent militants off the hook. The Dal government was roundly criticised for what was regarded as the politics of capitulation and, predictably, the distraught father came off worst in this episode.

The Prime Minister hoping to minimise the damage, took Sayeed off Kashmir affairs, assigning it to George Fernandes instead. Fernandes, too, was removed from the post after his rows with Governor Jagmohan, and Kashmir was handed back to the Mufti. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) now looks after the troubled state, and negotiations have been opened with former chief minister Farooq Abdullah much against Sayeed's wishes.

That's not the only problem the home minister is being kept out of. Punjab and Ayodhya have been handed over to his minister of state, Subodh Kant Sahay, while Ram Vilas Paswan is handling the Bodoland agitation. The north-eastern states have been assigned to Sahay as well, and he reports directly to V.P. Singh. Doordarshan projects Subodh Kant as the *de facto* home minister and this has, not surprisingly, created problems between the *de jure* home minister and his deputy.



The Mufti with V.P. Singh in Punjab: the invisible home minister

P. Upendra



His performance as information and broadcasting minister has been a bit of a disaster. What is not so well-known, however, is his abysmal record as minister for parliamentary affairs. But more of that later.

The much-touted programme *Khula Manch* was perhaps, the biggest nail in Upendra's coffin. Problems began from the very beginning, with one of the 'farmers' in the programme turning out to be a professional actor. A privilege motion was brought against the minister on this issue.

Barely had the dust settled down on that, when controversy erupted afresh. The programme featuring railways minister George Fernandes was censored—edited according to Upendra—and everyone, including the redoubtable George cried foul.

The Prasar Bharati Bill presented a glorious opportunity for the I & B minister to redeem himself somewhat, by granting the much-awaited autonomy to the electronic media. But Upendra threw away this chance as well. The Bill was crafted so clumsily that as many as 67 amendments of the 422 that were moved were initiated by the government itself, on the suggestion of the Opposition. And the Bill changed almost beyond recognition, by the time it got through the Rajya Sabha.

The quality of the fare Doordarshan offers has also led to a fair amount of flak. Serials are becoming more and more unwatchable, while Upendra telecasts films with his Telugu Desam boss N.T. Rama Rao in the lead, and projects such buddies as Ram Vilas Paswan, I.K. Gujral and Prime Minister V.P. Singh on the national network. Those bureaucrats who refuse to fall in line—both in Doordarshan and All India Radio—have been shifted out before you can say 'idiot box'.

As minister for parliamentary affairs, Upendra's first failure was his inability to muster enough support for the Constitutional Amendment Bill which would extend Presidnet's Rule in Punjab. And only because Upendra failed to inform his party MPs and ministers well in advance. When the Bill came up for voting as many as 12 Dal ministers were absent from the House. The Bill eventually went through because the Congress(I) chose to act magnanimous.

Much the same scenario was repeated in the case of another Amendment Bill on the extension of reservations for scheduled castes and tribes. In this instance, however, the embarrassment of the government was much worse when the Bill was presented, it led to heated exchanges between Ram Dhan and Ram Vilas Paswan. Upendra, it was felt, should have been able to anticipate this and take preventive measures.

Upendra also managed to annoy the BJP while he was at it. The Delhi Statehood Bill, which the BJP had set its heart on, was introduced in the House towards the fag end of the budget session, thus ensuring that it could never be passed. Advani was not amused.

Even the everyday business of the House is carried out less than smoothly. Members complain that printed material is not made available to them on time and that Upendra doesn't bother to maintain cordial relations with the Opposition.

His much-publicised skill at public relations, notwithstanding.

M.S. Gurupadaswami



His performance as a Rajya Sabha member over the last six years had led people to expect that he would prove to be a competent minister. That promise was however, belied. And the Raja was forced to appoint Bhajamana Behara as minister of state, to ensure that things didn't deteriorate beyond repair in the petroleum ministry.

Gurupada sami's incompetence was fully exposed during the recent oil

crisis following the Gulf war. The minister failed to get the finance ministry to release foreign exchange in time to buy oil in the open market, or even organise additional supplies from such countries as Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. His worst moment came when the Raja despatched Arif Mohammad Khan to the Middle East to negotiate for additional supplies of oil, over his head. I.K. Gujral was despatched to Moscow on much the same errand. Both ministers had conspicuous success at their tasks, much to Gurupadaswami's chagrin.

Not content with mere mismanagement, the minister also managed to create a minor crisis by informing the press that the country's oil reserves would last only for another four weeks. Panic set in as people began hoarding petrol, and premiums were paid on oil. In the end, the Prime Minister had to intervene and make clear that the situation was well within control,

The minister then concentrated on thinking up schemes to cut down the country's petrol consumption. Among his proposals was the one which had petrol pumps closing down on Sunday and ministers refraining from using government cars on holidays. Needless to add, the proposals never achieve the object they were meant to.

Gurupadaswami proved to be a dismal negotiator as well. Not only did he fail at getting the Assam oil blockade called off, despite the fact that the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was one of the National Front partners. Because of the minister's bad public relations the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) had to be called into effect in the dealings with the oil sector.

In his incarnation as chemicals minister, too, Gurupadaswami didn't do any better. Prices of essential drugs have increased by 20 to 25 per cent, while the policy has been changed to allow multinationals to import drugs which can easily be manufactured in India, causing heavy loss to such Indian manufacturers as IDPL.

Not surprisingly then, the country's drug manufacturers have turned against the minister, and are even threatening to go on strike if things don't improve dramatically. And fast.

Nathu Ram Mirdha



Basically a player of state-level politics, he is clearly out of depth in his role as Cabinet minister of the Government of India. His naivete often lands him in big trouble, and V.P. Singh is taking no chances with him, assigning all the major work to the minister of state, food and civil supplies, Ram Pujan Patel.



The rush for petrol: Gurupadaswami's schemes backfired



Maneka : her boss spent more time quarrelling with her

Nilamani Routray



Not only did the environment minister fail to make much impact in the green movement, he spent all his time fighting his doughty minister or state, Maneka Gandhi, with some help from secretary Mahesh Prasad.

Today, while the state of environment remains much the same, Routray rows with Maneka over who gets to use the ministry aircraft. Documents are leaked to the press as the two antagonists gear up to fight a battle, which gets more embittered with every passing day (*see SUNDAY, issue dated 26 August—1 September 1990*).

Leaving Routray with little energy to address himself to the task of administration.

Mirdha's ministry has the responsibility of keeping the prices of essential commodities down. And it is no secret that it has failed dismally in this regard. Over the last six months the consumer price index has gone up from 860 to 912, with such items as edible oils and grains showing a hike. Rice is no longer available in ration shops, with the ministry failing to arrange transport from Haryana.

The minister's ineffectiveness was brought to the fore by his inability to get the new sugar policy, initiated by Ajit Singh, discontinued, despite his strong opposition to it. To make matters worse, the price of cement didn't come down despite Mirdha's new cement policy.

THE AVERAGE

This category doesn't comprise plodders alone. Some of the ministers dubbed as average have done some good work in their departments, displaying both initiative and flair, but

have failed to turn in impressive performances, either because of certain constraints that operate on them, or because of their unwillingness to change their style of functioning.

Arif Mohammad Khan



As energy minister, he has several good schemes to his credit, among them the plan to induct the private sector in the task of power generation, thus saving public sector money to the tune of Rs 20,000 crores, which would otherwise be invested in new power plants. Unfortunately, the scheme has failed at the operational stage, with no private sector firm offering to put up money for the task in hand.

It is his additional charge—civil aviation—which is creating problems for Arif. During his tenure, all three carriers—Air India, Indian Airlines and Vayudoot—are in bad shape. Rajan Jetley, who had turned Air India around, has left for more lucrative pastures and what with the sorties to evacuate those trapped in the Gulf, the airline's bottom line is no longer quite so impressive. Harsh Vardhan, the Vayudoot MD, too, has quit.

The strange saga of the A320s, now doing service in the Gulf, hasn't done much good to Khan's image either. Afer announcing with due fanfare that the aircraft would be reinducted and taking a press party for a joy ride, the minister was forced to retract. There is some talk of the planes being reintroduced soon but Arif's credibility has already taken a knocking. So, despite his success in energy, Arif Mohammad Khan, in the final reckoning, comes across as a middling performer.

George Fernandes



The Konkan Railway project is, perhaps, George's greatest achievement in the railways ministry. A revolutionary concept, it has various state governments pooling in their resources, with some help from the banks, to fund a new rail line from Bombay to Kerala. Two other projects on the same lines are envisaged. Once dependence on central government funds is reduced, work will progress much faster, and it is hoped that the schemes will reach completion in record time.

Nevertheless, Fernandes' track record doesn't look too good when compared to that of his predecessor, Madhavrao Scindia. The charitable explanation, of course, is that George never wanted to be saddled with railways, preferring some other substantial portfolio such as industry. And, therefore, he doesn't always concentrate on ministry work.

And going by his pronouncements on Pepsi, reservations and the Kashmir situation—and not just on *Khuda Manch*—there could be some truth in that version.



Pro-reservation rally in Delhi: Paswan jumped on to the Mandal bandwagon

K.P. Unnikrishnan



As communications minister, he had kept himself in the news, thanks to his long and often bitter rows with the C-DoT chief, Sam Pitroda. But now that Unnikrishnan is just entrusted with surface transport (despite the fancy tag of Cabinet minister), he's fading from public memory.

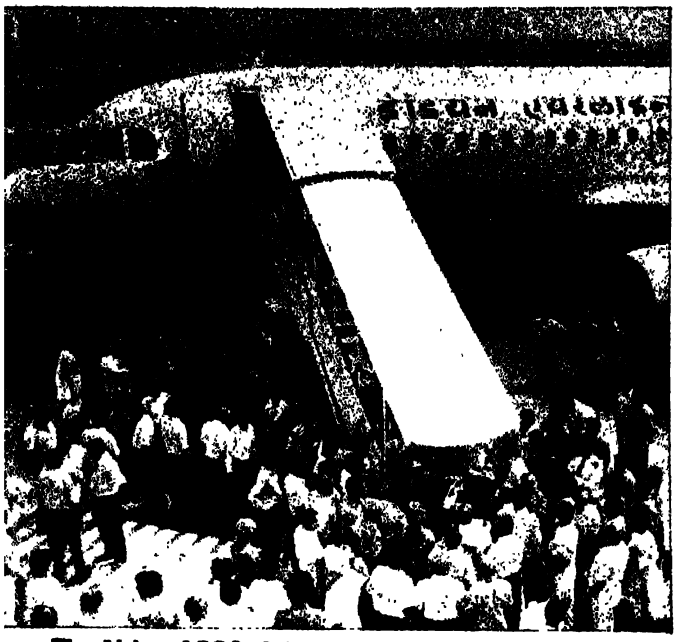
But to be fair, he does his job to the best of his ability. And while that may not lead to excellent results, it doesn't make for disaster either.

Sharad Yadav



He began his innings as minister by rooting for the nutritional qualities of *panjiri*, the health food favoured by rural women during pregnancy. But Yadav's performance as textile minister has been far





During Arif Khan's tenure, all three carriers—Air India, Indian Airlines and Vayudoot—are in bad shape. Rajan Jetley has left Air India and Harsh Vardhan, Vayudoot chief, too, has quit

The Airbus A320: Arif's concern

from satisfactory.

His operational style is brilliant in its simplicity. He instructs his officials not to do anything against the "common man", and then steers clear of his ministry. The bureaucrats, of course, love him for his "non-interference", but it doesn't make for efficient functioning of the department.

But Yadav has his reasons for what appears as his indifference. Basically a political animal, he would much rather spend time trying to sort out the various squabbles of the Dal. And now that he has established himself as the unofficial adviser of V.P. Singh, his interest in textiles has flagged even further.

Indians returning from Iraq and Kuwait: Gujral's trip to the Gulf didn't help



To become totally non-existent with the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations, Yadav now restricts himself to defending the Raja's quota raj and addresses pro-reservation rallies in his spare time.

Ram Vilas Paswan



He may be a lowly labour and welfare minister, but you'd never guess that, going by the number of appearances he makes on television. At heart, however, Ram Vilas Paswan remains a populist politician. And, therefore, spends more time implementing welfare measures, rather than getting the country's labour problem in hand. (Though he admits, under pressure, that there are quite a few votes to be had here as well.)

Paswan's big chance came with the Mandal Commission report. The Prime Minister implemented its recommendations, hoping to garner the backward votes the next time he went to the polls. And Paswan jumped on to the Mandal bandwagon, addressing his fellow-backwards at a rally to exhort them not to give in to the upper castes. It was only when party higher-ups intervened that the labour minister toned down his rhetoric.

Nonetheless, there's no doubting his skills at demagoguery. Though, his performance as minister can only be rated as average.

I.K. Gujral



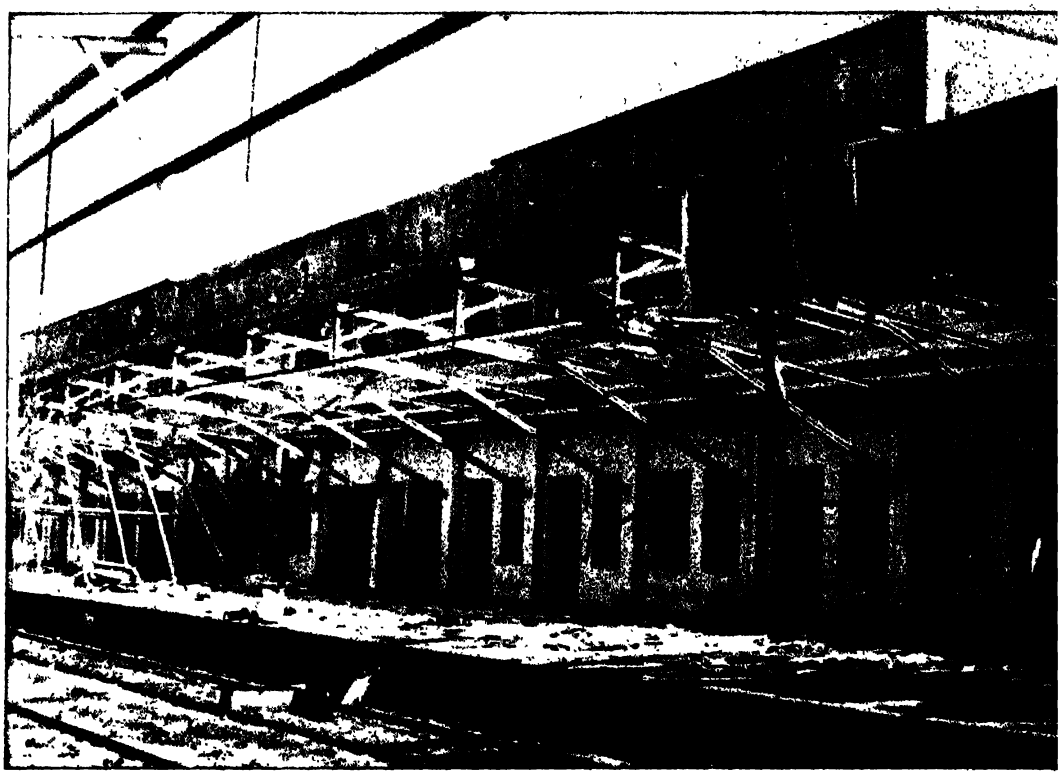
He started off as a high-profile, all-purpose man, who advised the Prime Minister on every issue, ranging from Punjab, Kashmir and Ram Janmabhoomi. But over the months, the Raja seems to have lost use for him and Gujral now restricts himself strictly to external affairs.

He is conservative enough to toe the foreign ministry's line on most issues. But nevertheless manages to get involved in the odd controversy. His trip to the Gulf, for instance, didn't go too well, with allegations making the rounds that Gujral was busy evacuating the prosperous Punjabi community, while the poor Keralites underwent great hardships in the refugee camps.

That's how they rate then: the good, the bad and the average. The assessment is, of course, true only at a point in time. For just as Gujral's personal rating has come down and Arun Nehru's gone up after the Dal government's first nine months in office, others may well move up and down the scale as well. Critics of the Raja's regime, of course, have it, that given the atmosphere that prevails in the corridors of power these days, the performance of the ministers can only deteriorate. And with talk of a mid-term poll doing the rounds, and the Prime Minister going in for populist gestures, the ministers are bound to lose interest in governance, to concentrate instead on nursing their constituencies.

For, as every politico worth his khadi *kurta* knows, ministerial competence counts for nothing if you lose your seat in the bargain. ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi



THE DESTRUCTION: Jaffna railway station was heavily bombed a while ago. Among the other public buildings destroyed are the general hospital and the power substation at Chunnakam

The siege of Jaffna

The push for the peninsula—an on-the-spot report

With the battle between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) having intensified in the north, Jaffna peninsula is virtually cut off from the rest of the island. Journalists are no longer allowed to officially visit the north—the Sri Lankan government only issues passes "at your own risk" up to Vavuniya, which lies some 100 kilometres south of Jaffna town.

SUNDAY's ***Mukund Padmanabhan*** *however made it to Jaffna—a journey which meant taking a circuitous forest route through dirt track (the main road into the peninsula being heavily mined by the Tigers) and, finally, a midnight boat ride. His report:*

■ Nageswari Rasappa sobs uncontrollably in a corner of her garden. Her spacious house in Jaffna's Annachathira Road is a sorry mangle of concrete, steel and glass. When Nageswari heard the bomber the previous night, she had 'hidden' in the bathroom, clasping her scared 21-year-old daughter Chitra close to her.

But the bomb—300 kilos of it—ripped her house and five of her neighbours' to shreds. The shrapnel killed Chitra—who recently graduated from a college in Tamil Nadu—even as Nageswari was hugging and comforting her. Dead also was Nageswari's husband, a rice mill owner.

By a stroke of providence, Nageswari escaped with minor injuries to her head and foot. "You call me lucky?" she wails, "What is the use of life without my family?"

■ Nearby, a bomb has just landed bang in the middle of Arasadi Road. The residents on the street have been fortunate, escaping with minor or middling injuries. But two passers-by—a man and his daughter—on a bicycle have been blown beyond recognition.

As the residents take what is left of them for cremation, some collect pieces of flesh that are scattered around the area. These are then burnt with coconut fronds on the road.

■ A few kilometres away, in Manipay Hospital, the wards are full of victims of aerial attacks. The lucky have gotten away with broken bones and bullet wounds; the not so lucky have had their limbs amputated.

K. Jayaraman, a young worker at a cement factory in Kankesanthurai, acquired his injury in a different manner. He was at Kayts island when the Sri Lankan Army overran it. Jayaraman, who was captured by the soldiers, was asked to show them the way around the island. "They kept me in detention for a while along with some others. But before they let me go, one of the soldiers was asked to slash my neck with a large knife."

Jayaraman thinks he has a lot to be thankful for. "I saw them kick one man to death," he says. "At least, I survived."

■ South of the Jaffna peninsula, a couple board a privately operated bus



THE LTTE: The Tigers are visible everywhere in Jaffna peninsula. Even though many of them are barely 12, they are as capable as any professional soldier.

in Vavuniya. They are headed for their home in Madhu, a two-and-a-half-hour journey on dirt track.

Along with them is their young daughter, who is 'sleeping' on their laps. On the face of it, this may not appear unusual—except that the girl is dead. She had been bitten by a dog and succumbed to rabies after treatment at the Vavuniya hospital failed.

There is no other way the couple can take the body of their daughter home. Taxis are unavailable—the cost of fuel is exorbitant and nobody wants to risk the journey as the main arteries out of the town are heavily mined. Fortunately, the bus driver is moved by their plight and allows them on.

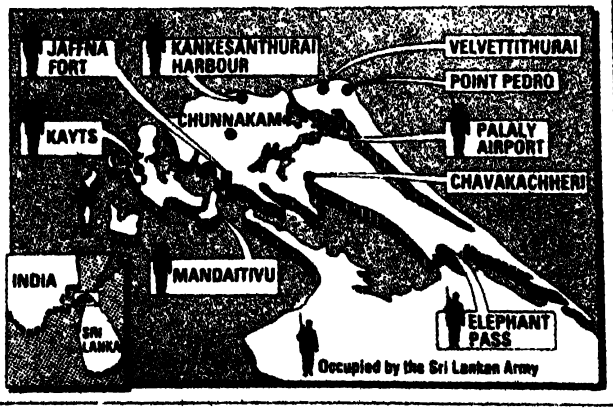
What can you say about a place where the primary concern is where the next bomb will land? Where funeral processions duck for cover at the approach of helicopter gunships? Where the people have stripped the railway tracks bare in order to build bunkers? Where neither electricity nor water has been supplied for over three months? Where nothing works: whether telephones, banks, post offices or hotels? Where petty shopkeepers bicycle 70 miles or more to stock their stores with basic foodstuffs? Where virtually everything—when available—is at least twice as expensive as it should be? Where there is nothing by way of public transport and petrol and diesel cost ten times more than they should?

How do you describe the situation in Jaffna today? Clearly, none of the conventional descriptions fits. 'Ethnic crisis' is laughably inappropriate and even 'civil war' appears woefully weak. Perhaps, retired government official P.S. Sivaraja, whose son was injured by a bomb blast, sums it up best. "It is a living hell," he says. Adding, "That is, for those of us who are alive."

As the war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE enters its fourth month, the focus of attention is understandably the Jaffna peninsula, the traditional stronghold of the Tigers. With Colombo's armed forces having wrested control of almost every major town in the island's Tamil-dominated north and east, the outcome of the battle of Jaffna is likely to be crucial in determining the fate of the war. While the LTTE holds total sway over most of the peninsula, the armed forces are in occupation of a

The Jaffna Peninsula

■ The Sri Lankan Army is in control of a few crucial points in the peninsula. But the LTTE has the run of most of it. Now that the army has broken the siege of Jaffna Fort, the attempt to flush the LTTE out may begin in right earnest.



Map by Niranjan Maity

few crucial points: the airfield at Palaly, the harbour at Kankesanthurai and the islands of Mandaitivu and Kayts (both close to the coastline). The military also controls Jaffna Fort, the siege of which was broken late last week.

The LTTE, which has entrenched itself deeply in the peninsula, is determined not to give it up. Says Anton Balasingham, the organisation's theoretician and official spokesman: "The loss of Jaffna will—admittedly—be a psychological blow. And we will do everything we can to keep it." Adds the LTTE's high-ranking Yogaratnam Yogi: "The Sri Lankan Army will lose a great deal of men if they attempt to occupy the peninsula. If they try to, they will understand why a military solution will not succeed." With Colombo just as keen on 'ridding the Tigers of their lair', Jaffna may have yet to see the worst.

For the ordinary civilian, this is an unimaginable prospect. Already, Jaffna reverberates to the dull drone of planes, the booming of bombs and artillery and the busy chatter of helicopter gunships. For the most part, this is a war that is being fought from the air and from afar. With the risk of engaging the formidable Tiger army in close combat being too great, the Sri Lankan armed forces have resorted to fighting what is largely a long-distance war.

The use of the air force—which comprises a motley collection of antiquated planes—to lead the offensive is a decision that the people have paid for dearly. Day and night, the aircrafts, which take off for sorties from Palaly airfield, pound Tiger bunkers and hideouts around Jaffna Fort—an area which has been completely vacated by the people.

The extent of the destruction is sizeable. Among the buildings bombed are:

- Scores of shops, offices and houses around the Jaffna Fort area where the Tigers have dug themselves in.
- The Jaffna Memorial Hospital, which has now moved to occupy a ward at the Manipay Hospital.
- The Jaffna railway station, which was hit by a number of bombs.
- The Tirunveli market.
- The power substation—an attack which plunged the whole peninsula into darkness.
- Sundry houses—like Nageswari Rasappa's—which are a couple of kilometres away from the fort area.

Most of the damage has been caused by the Chinese-made Y-8s and Y-12s, large transport planes that are usually used to move men and equipment. If these slow lumbering aircrafts are the most dangerous, it is because they carry the largest explosives—250-300 kilo barrel bombs (known as *pipas* locally) which are rolled out of the hatch. The air force also uses Avros and Italian-made Sia Marchettis, which are fitted with rocket mortars and machine guns.

About one month ago, the people were also subjected for a week to what they call 'shit-bomb-attack'. Barrels containing what was suspected to be human faeces were rolled off aircrafts and made Jaffna, in the words of a resident, "smell like one huge lavatory". Although the bombs didn't cause any damage, they managed to create a panic in a town that is already gripped by fear.

Recalls the LTTE's Balasingham, "I cannot say for certain what the bombs contained but the substance, which caused a terrible smell, began to develop a fungus-like growth on it. Many people feared that they were being subject to some kind of biological warfare. The 'shit' was sent for testing but all that was discovered was that it contained cholera germs."

But from day to day, the people have most cause to worry about the helicopters. The choppers—fitted with Browning machine guns—are a common sight over the peninsula. The approach of one is invariably met with cries of "heli!" as everyone out in the open runs for cover

If the 'helis' are so dangerous it is because anyone out on the street is a legitimate target. For the most part of this three-month long war, Jaffna has been under curfew. "This means people are expected to stay at home," says a Colombo-based brigadier. "We act from the presumption that all those outside—particularly people in vehicles—are members of the LTTE." The curfew, apparently, even extends to the marketplace. On 28 August, a chopper attacked the market at Nelliady, which is miles away from Jaffna Fort, with rocket mortars and machine gun fire. Recalls R. Sarvanangam, a farmer from the Vadamarachchi area



CIVILIAN CASUALTIES: The bomb that ripped Nageswari Rasappa's Jaffna house apart, killed her husband and her 21-year-old daughter even as Nageswari was hugging and comforting her.



GRAVE CHARGES: According to the LTTE's deputy leader Mahatayya, the armed forces are intentionally killing civilians. "What you're seeing here is simply genocide," he says.

who is being treated for an ugly leg wound at Manipay Hospital: "I was shopping for vegetables when I heard the sound of the heli. Suddenly, there was firing and commotion all around." Sarvanangam counts himself lucky. His estimate of the toll in that incident: nine dead and about 30—many badly—injured.

If this kind of incident continues to happen, the Tigers will be able to win—at least—the propaganda war. Says Mahatayya, the LTTE supremo V. Prabhakaran's deputy, who oversees the military operations: "What is happening here is a genocide of the Tamil people. At least 4,000 innocent people have been killed since the hostilities broke out on 11 June." It is a view that is shared by many ordinary people in Jaffna. Says retired government official S.P. Sivaraja: "They are bombing us at random. Their main purpose is to destroy the Tamil race."

The Sri Lankan government does not deny that there have been civilian casualties. But claims—although no estimates have been provided—that these have been minimal. In defence of the sloppy and haphazard bombing, Colombo says that its air force is not sophisticated enough to be always accurate. Says a Colombo-based brigadier: "Even the Americans—despite having all the electronic gadgetry—often missed their targets in Vietnam. How do you expect us to fare with bombs that are simply dropped off planes?" Speaking to SUNDAY, Sri Lanka's minister of state for defence Ranjan Wijeratne echoed a similar sentiment: "We can't always be accurate because we don't have guided missiles. So, you can't blame the pilots." *(See interview)*

The problem with these explanations is that locations far away from Tiger camps have been destroyed, that Jaffna is being bombed at night (when accuracy is an even bigger problem) and that helicopters are used to hit just about any moving target. To be fair, Jaffna may not be the unrecognisable rubble the LTTE says it has been reduced to. But, at the same time, Wijeratne's account of the destruction of civilian property—"Occasionally, there is a bomb falling here and there"—is, to say the least, an understatement.

In the island's south, the bombing has met with considerable support. By and large, educated middle-class Sinhalese believe that if the 'Tiger menace' is to be wiped out, then there must be nothing that is allowed to come in the way of the military operations. This is quite unlike 1987, when opinion was divided on the measures the Sri Lankan armed forces took when fighting the Tamil militants. Says a Colombo-based housewife: "It's now or never. This problem has plagued the country long enough."

Even Sinhalese politicians appear to have taken note of this sentiment. Last fortnight, when Opposition leader and former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike expressed concern over the suffering the bombing had caused to the Tamils, she was met with howls of protest. The newspapers simply tore her to shreds: accusing her of hypocrisy, politicking and interfering with the operations of the armed forces. A chastised Bandaranaike is supposed to have privately assured President Premadasa that she will refrain from making the bombing an issue.

One consequence of the war is the refugee problem, which has already reached unprecedented dimensions. It is estimated that two lakh people have left the Jaffna peninsula for Tamil Nadu. This is only a small percentage of the total number who have fled their homes—to refugee camps in the south—from the island's north and east. In the Jaffna peninsula, the LTTE—although it does not admit it—appears to be against the refugee traffic. Residents say that every family that wishes to leave the peninsula is levied a charge of two gold sovereigns by the Tigers. The disincentive is probably meant at preventing a mass exodus. For if this happens, then the LTTE will be easily identifiable and no longer have civilians as a buffer against army operations.

The virtual isolation of the Jaffna peninsula had led to an incredible spurt in prices. Basic foodstuffs are available (the reports of starvation being a great exaggeration) but supplies are limited and depend on how much petty shopkeepers can procure from the southern regions. A journey which involves a trip by boat (arranged by the LTTE) and then on bicycle—sometimes for 70 miles

As for petrol and diesel, which the LTTE sorely need, they sell for about



REFUGEE TRAFFIC: Thousands of people flee the island's north and east every day. Some take boats for Tamil Nadu; others choose to go to refugee camps in Sri Lanka's south.



TORTURE ALLEGATION: Cement factory worker K. Jayaraman, who was captured by the army, says the soldiers slit his throat before letting him go. He thinks he's lucky to be alive.

"We want more autonomy"

The LTTE's Anton Balasingham says that the Tigers are still willing to negotiate

The LTTE's ideologue and theoretician Anton Balasingham is regarded as the intellectual face of the LTTE. The former student of London's Goldsmith College is an old associate of Tiger supremo V. Prabhakaran and one of the top four leaders of the organisation.

SUNDAY met him at an undisclosed location in the Vadamarachchi region of the Jaffna peninsula. Excerpts from an interview.

SUNDAY: Is the LTTE prepared to negotiate once again with the Sri Lankan government?
Anton Balasingham: This is up to the Sri Lankan government. But, as you know, it has been making repeated statements that there should be no talks until the Tigers are wiped out.

Q: But what is your position? Would you be willing to negotiate if the government was prepared for unconditional talks?
A: If they offer unconditional talks, then we are prepared.

Q: Then the LTTE is still prepared to work within a unified Sri Lanka?
A: If Sri Lanka is prepared to offer substantial regional autonomy to our people, then we are prepared to accept it. The unitary features of the Sri Lankan Constitution, however, should go. If the government is not willing to concede this, then we have no option but to fight for an independent state.

Q: But what does substantial autonomy really mean? Would the degree of federalism that exists, say, in India be acceptable?
A: Well, there is some amount of federalism in India. But in India many people, as you know, are demanding more autonomy. As for us, we haven't yet worked out the details, but we would like more autonomy than what is provided for in the Indian Constitution.

Q: Why are you dissatisfied with New Delhi's response to the present situation?
A: We are disappointed with the Government of India on the grounds that it is keeping quiet when there is large-scale killing of civilians, apart from expressing its concern. It has not criticised or condemned these killings which are a genocide of the Tamil people.

The LTTE is opposed to Indian military intervention. But as a regional superpower, India can intervene diplomatically and stop the killing of innocent civilians.

We are also disappointed at the suggestion that permanent refugee camps should be set up in Sri Lanka. We think that the Indian government should persuade the Sri Lankan government to create conditions so that the people can go back and live in their villages and towns. Permanent camps will not solve the problem. Our people are opposed to camps which are under the administrative control of the Sri Lankan Army.



"If Sri Lanka is willing to offer substantial regional autonomy, we are prepared to accept it"

Rs 250 and Rs 180 a litre (one Indian rupee equals two Sri Lankan)—about ten times the price in Colombo. Kerosene goes for Rs 160 a bottle (everyone uses firewood for cooking), candles for Rs ten and a box of matches for Rs 3.50. All of these are in even greater demand given the lack of electricity.

The shortage of food and other essentials has generated controversy. Colombo says that the LTTE is preventing supplies from reaching the peninsula. The Tigers deny this ("Who would want to starve their own people?" asks Balasingham) and accuse the Sri Lankan government of trying to starve the people out. Says the LTTE's Yogi: "What we are witnessing is a calculated economic blockade of the peninsula."

One happy result of the blockade according to Yogi is the realisation that the north need not be dependent on the south. "The people now know that we can get along on our own—never mind the lack of electricity, food or communications," he says.

A noticeable attempt in the quest for self-sufficiency is the ban on the sale of cigarettes—which are manufactured only in the south. The Tigers levy a fine of Rs 5,000 on any shopkeeper who is caught selling them. Those caught smoking have to cough up Rs 500. "The taxes on cigarette sales go to Colombo. Why should we pay them to enjoy what is clearly a luxury at this time," asks Balasingham.

As one Jaffna resident points out sarcastically, there is at least one more reason for giving up the habit: "Who wants to light up when all of Jaffna is going up in smoke?" ●

PHOTOGRAPHS: MUKUND PADMANABHAN

"I will never trust the LTTE"

Sri Lanka's defence minister **RANJAN WIJERATNE** on the battle with the Tigers

INTERVIEWED BY MUKUND PADMANABHAN

To his detractors, Sri Lanka's minister of state for defence, Ranjan Wijeratne, is a rude, abrasive man, ill-suited for the delicacies of politics. "He seems to think that running a country is like running a tea estate," says a United National Party (UNP) colleague of the former planter's blunt and managerial approach to the nation's problems.

Those who know him, however, claim that while often direct and outspoken, Wijeratne makes a refreshing change from the average politician. "He lacks the guile and hypocrisy that is shared by people in this profession," says a Cabinet colleague. "He is essentially honest and trustworthy."

Whatever the truth, Wijeratne's rise in the island's politics has been extraordinary since former President J.R. Jayewardene persuaded him to leave the plantations a few years ago. His ruthless campaign which crushed the extremist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) last year has won him many admirers in the country's south. It is difficult to say whether he will be as successful against the LTTE. But today, Wijeratne is arguably the most important member in the government after President R. Premadasa. And many believe that the former planter may even become President in the future.

SUNDAY met Wijeratne a few days before the Sri Lankan Army broke the siege around Jaffna fort Excerpts from the interview:

SUNDAY: How far has the army advanced since hostilities broke out on 11 June?
Ranjan Wijeratne: Well, we have taken over the three districts of the Eastern Province. We have parked ourselves in Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Paranthan, Elephant Pass, Jaffna Fort, Palaly Airport, Kankesanthurai Harbour and the Kayts and Mandaitivu islands. So, we have done a great deal of work in two and a half months.

Q: A lot of media attention has been focussed on the siege of Jaffna Fort. Why has it taken the army so long to break it?
A: The fort is ours. We have 200 men there. It is the surrounding areas that are with the LTTE. At the moment, we have other priorities.

Q: The current operations in Mullaitivu?
A: In the whole Eastern Province. But the area surrounding the fort will be taken now that we are in Mandaitivu (island).

Q: One gets the impression that you are conducting only a holding and softening operation. Are there any plans to take over the peninsula soon?
A: It is not a question of taking over. The whole island belongs to Sri Lanka. It is a question of getting rid of the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula.

Q: That means occupying the peninsula doesn't it?
A: You can assume so. But I can't reveal my strategies. I can't tell you how I am going to do it.

Q: But are you strong enough to wipe the Tigers out? After all 70,000 Indian soldiers with modern weapons failed to do so.
A: I don't think the Indian soldiers were allowed to capture the LTTE terrorists. The Indian Army is the fourth largest in the world and had 1,00,000 soldiers in Sri Lanka. We can't believe that they could not vanquish the LTTE. (Even) the Indian press was critical of interference.



Q: That is, the army was not really serious. They were asked not to go all out?
A: There was interference. As I said in Parliament, the Indian Army captured (LTTE leader) Prabhakaran four times and RAW got him released.

Q: You had said that an IPKF general told you this. Will you say who he was?
A: A general without four fingers on one hand. Maybe, he wasn't a general...perhaps, a brigadier or some other senior-ranking officer.

Q: Do you attribute the failure of the IPKF to "interference"? After all, it was in Sri Lanka a long time, lost a lot of men...
A: One Sri Lankan soldier is equal to ten Indian soldiers. There is dedication on our part. (The) Indians didn't come here to fight Tamils.

Q: There was another objective?
A: That you must ask the Indian government. I should not speculate. We must have good relations with India. I must not jeopardise them by making statements that are prejudicial to our interests.

Q: Why did the truce between the government and the LTTE break down?
A: We were absolutely sincere. After all, we were talking to our countrymen. And when you talk to a person, you talk with mutual trust and confidence. We showed such sincerity that our own people became critical of us. They said we were naive. But we weren't. We wanted to solve a problem that had been festering for 30-odd years.

We were in the process of dissolving the provincial council of the north and east which had become defunct with Mr Perumal's UDI (unilateral declaration of independence) and later his vanishing. The LTTE had urged us to do so to allow them to enter the democratic process. When we were in the process of enacting laws to dissolve the council, the LTTE stabbed us in the back.

Q: Why?
A: Perhaps, they were not ready for elections. When things were beginning to happen during the discussions, they got cold feet. And then, they may have thought that we were not that sincere—that we did not mean what we said. But we really did.

Q: So they were never serious about joining the democratic process?
A: Well, they proved that by unilaterally attacking the Sri Lankan armed forces.

Q: Isn't it rather odd that while you are now describing the Tigers as fascists, you were defending them three months ago? You were willing to let them retain their arms. You allowed them to levy taxes. And you turned a blind eye to a number of other activities.
A: When we asked them about the arms, they said they needed them because the illegal TNA (Tamil National Army) had weapons. That although they promised to lay down arms when the IPKF withdrew, it had left after settling an illegal Tamil army in its place. That

MUKUND PADMANABHAN



they needed weapons to face up to the onslaught of the TNA. And the TNA was there. The LTTE proved that by killing 140 TNA cadres and collecting two trailer loads of arms. They proved it was an illegal army planted by Perumal and the IPKF.

As for the question of extorting money from the Tamil people, they said we are only taking voluntary contributions from our friends.

Q: And you believed that?
A: We had to. Because they were discussing with us, we couldn't say, "You are lying." The moment we did that we would have had to break negotiations. We accepted their arguments even though there were some doubts. We were prepared to go along, thinking they would fall in line. But now we know that they had been preparing for war.

Q: But isn't the government embarrassed at all for having landed up fighting the organisation it absolved of so much?
A: It is not a question of having landed up. It is a question of talking to your countrymen who had been fighting for a cause.

As far as I am concerned, I defended the LTTE because—at that point—they were talking to us. I defended them in Parliament and in the press because I didn't want any remarks made that would jeopardise our talks. I am frank about this.

But the moment they stabbed us in the back, I couldn't keep quiet. I had to attack them.

Q: What about the indiscriminate bombing in and around Jaffna?
A: There's no indiscriminate bombing. We go by



MUKUND PADMANABHAN



"There is no indiscriminate bombing in Jaffna. We are going for the leaders... Occasionally, there is a bomb falling here and there. We can't always be accurate"

intelligence reports. We are going for the leaders and they hide in the buildings and so we go for them. Ocassionally, there is a bomb falling here and there. We can't always be accurate because we don't have guided missiles. So you can't blame the pilots.

Q: Do you have an estimate of the number of civilians killed?
A: I don't.

Q: A lot?
A: No. My reports are that civilians go into bunkers when they hear a plane or helicopter coming. And then, most of them have vacated the Jaffna town area.

Q: Would you accept Indian mediation in resolving this dispute?
A: It is a question of India having been involved in this earlier. Mediation has to be international—that is what our President has been saying. It should not be left to India alone.

We would like India's advice, but as for the question of Indian mediation, I cannot speak for the President. I don't know whether he will accept it or not. But my thinking is that if there is Indian mediation, there should be no refugees allowed to come to India from Sri Lanka. There should be no arms allowed to come to Sri Lanka from India. And the LTTE should be asked to get out of India. Not otherwise.

Q: Is the LTTE smuggling arms from India? Does Sri Lankan intelligence have concrete evidence of this?
A: Yes, they are. We have captured them, we have shot them in the high seas while bringing in mortars, automatics and so on.

Q: As you know, there has been a lot of criticism in India over the government's hands-off attitude to the situation in Sri Lanka. Do you think India may be forced to intervene?
A: *(Angrily)* How about what's happening in Kashmir? What is this double talk? You're killing Kashmiris and there is genocide there. And you're talking about genocide in Sri Lanka.

Have one standard. Daily, 50 to 60 Kashmiris are being killed by Indian soldiers. And you're talking about genocide in Sri Lanka?

Q: So you think any concern expressed for the plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka amounts to hypocrisy?
A: Of course. Double standards. All over the world this is happening. All over the world, they're trying to dictate terms to little Sri Lanka because we are vulnerable economically as well as strategically The Sri Lankan nation is not going to put up with this. We've had enough.

Q: Of arm-twisting by India?
A: We won't accept it. If we have to die fighting, we will die fighting.

Q: Do you think the India-Sri Lanka accord was a mistake?
A: Well, square one minus.

Q: In other words, it took you back?
A: Yes, far back.

Q: How do you assess Karunanidhi's a role in the present situation?
A: I don't want to talk about Karunanidhi's politics. When I met him, he asked me, "How can you stop these refugees from coming to Tamil Nadu?" I said, 'Your Excellency, don't make this (Tamil Nadu) a heaven for refugees. You tell them, "If you fight in Sri Lanka, stick in Sri Lanka'." I think he took my advice and made a statement at one stage that he would not allow any Sri Lankan Tamils to come to Tamil Nadu. But he has gone back on that statement and has allowed the LTTE to park themselves there.

The other militant groups are frightened to come to Tamil Nadu because of the partisanship shown to the LTTE, who will kill them. The police don't take any notice I hear.

Q: Would you agree to hold unconditional talks with the LTTE?
A: No.

Q: Why not? After all, the basis on which it agreed to talk the last time round was your offer for unconditional negotiations.
A: Yes, but they have stabbed us in the back. And one stabbing is enough. I don't go in for second stabbings. I don't trust them one bit.

Q: Does this mean you will never trust them?
A: Never. I never trust terrorists—whether Sinhala, Muslim or Tamil. ●

The marathon man

It is time Farooq Abdullah stopped running—away

You have got to hand it to Farooq Abdullah. He is as comfortable in a pin-striped suit as in a *sherwani*, complete with the regulation fur cap. As ecstatic when digging into a succulent *raan* as he is when he spies that bowl of strawberries topped with fresh cream. As comfortable on a bandstand reviewing a parade as he is turning some fancy steps in his 'Disco Farooq' incarnation. As comfortable in a Range Rover as he is on a motorcycle, showing Bollywood belles the wonder that *was* Kashmir.

Unfortunately, Farooq *is* uncomfortable about certain things. About coming to terms with Kashmir, for starters. Or understanding the current Kashmiri psyche. Or, about accepting the fact that he is finished in the Valley, the fault all his. Because Farooq has this incredible knack of slipping up when he can do the maximum good, when he can mend twisted, angry aspirations. And especially, when he is perhaps the *only* person around who could have done something to make Kashmiris feel that they are Indians.

Instead, Farooq made mistakes. And ran away. He is still running away.

A pity. The doctor had, for all practical purposes, inherited Kashmir and the love and support of the Kashmiri people from his father, Sheikh Abdullah. (Today, Farooq has had to face the insult of having his father's grave desecrated by militants.) That was the Farooq of old, imitating the Sher-e-Kashmir's firebrand politics to the hilt, soothing the multitudes with pro-India rhetoric—and reason.

Indira Gandhi personally supervised Farooq's installation as heir and chief minister in 1983—a change from the time she believed that a good Sheikh was a jailed Sheikh. It worked. Mrs Gandhi, more than anyone else, understood the power and practicality—however much one may dispute the assertion—of dynastic rule. As one, the Kashmiris backed Farooq. And peace returned to Kashmir.

Farooq, then a political novice, moved on to discussing national issues with politicians of every hue, jetting down to New Delhi, West Bengal, Bihar and the southern states to talk politics and priorities with leaders. And the people. The politicos and the masses loved him; here was a man who *believed* in what he was saying and someone who appeared to care about the country. Besides, he seemed intensely patriotic, convincing both Kashmiris and non-Kashmiris that being a part of India was the only way out.

THEN, EVERYTHING started falling apart. Rapidly Farooq's frank dalliance with the Opposition—intellectually motivated—was interpreted as a threat by the increasingly paranoid Mrs Gandhi. She moved in swiftly, did a characteristic about-turn, dubbed Farooq anti-national and pro-Pakistan, and threw him out after shuffling MLA support. Indira installed G.M. Shah, Farooq's brother-in-law—and currently, a prominent Pakistan-is-heaven man—as chief minister. Even as Farooq was away, cavorting in Pahalgam. He came back, witnessed the *fait accompli* and ran away. This was the first instance.

And Shah, a worse administrator than Farooq, let corruption run rampant, played with religion and the inevitable happened: militancy resurfaced. Meanwhile, Farooq roamed hurt and humiliated, snubbed by Indira and later, Rajiv, another dynastic heir. Things changed when Rajiv realised that Farooq was still true and struck a deal to return Kashmir's mantle to him. Only, it was done in a reprehensible manner. The National Conference (NC) and the Congress(I) emerged as coalition partners and rigged elections for a win.

And totally ignored the by-then powerful Muslim fundamentalist element which had made inroads in Kashmir, promising a *jihad* instead of an Indian-style democracy. Disillusioned youths deserted NC ranks and linked up with the relatively pro-India Muslim United Front and joined the militants in droves. That was 1987.

For the next two years, Farooq did nothing to control militancy, cocksure that his charisma would keep "the boys" in check. It did not work and Farooq ran away again in end-1989, this time to the US, pleading ill health. Leaving his people to fend for themselves with a casual, callous "I am useless anyway. I play golf". When he should have stayed, he parried with a hurt sarcasm nobody understood, and frankly, nobody cared.

HIS HOLIDAY was cut short when Rubaiya Sayeed, home minister Mufti Mohammad's daughter, was kidnapped by militants last December, less than a week after the National Front government took over. She was released on 13 December, no thanks to Farooq, and the playboy resigned after unsuccessfully trying to convince that he was, in fact, a do-gooder. The Centre was firmly divided into pro and anti-Farooq factions, with George Fernandes backing him, and the Mufti, Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan gunning for him. The troika won hands down.

Farooq ran away yet again. To London's nightlife, his mother's country home in Essex and to a fat farm in Bangalore, perhaps as much to shed his conscience as to get rid off those fresh-cream kilos. Meanwhile, Kashmir burned.

Fortunately for Farooq, there is now a change. The Mufti is a nonentity, Governor Jagmohan is through terrorising Kashmir and the Centre—different from the Rajiv era one, but similar in its total misunderstanding of the Kashmir problem—wants him back in the state. And if he can pull it off, at its helm, Farooq is *still* Kashmir's only hope.

Only if he would stop running away. ●



RAKESH SAHAI

LEAVE THE KIDS ALONE!

Guess who's the latest convert to the Mary Whitehouse view of the world? None other than celebrated dancer-actress Mallika Sarabhai.

According to the talented daughter of Mrinalini and Vikram Sarabhai, the increasing popularity of television and video and the sex-violence-and-death formula they beam into drawing rooms all over the country will lead the nation's youth down the primrose path to perdition. And ruin India's future in the bargain.

But Ms Sarabhai has no intentions of sitting back and watching the imminent destruction of the moral fibre of the country's under-18s. And to wean them away from the idiot box, she has started a theatre group Darpana, in order to keep them occupied with some "constructive" work. Mallika, a doctorate in psychology, had scripted a gripping drama, which will feature her neighbourhood kids. And keep them busy with rehearsals in the evenings, when the tube is best placed to do the greatest damage.

And this, the lady assures us, is only the beginning.



Mallika Sarabhai: move over, Mary Whitehouse

POET PRINCESS

When you have the legendary Carnatic music composer Swati Tirunal for your ancestor, it's no big deal to have one of your poems published in the prestigious Delhi-London *Poetry Quarterly*.

Nonetheless, Princess Gouri Lakshmi Bayi, a member of the Travancore royal family confesses: "I was thrilled when they published my poem, especially as it was dedicated to our family deity Sree Padmanabha Swamy, none other than Lord Vishnu, lying on Anantha, the serpent of infinity."

Princess Gouri Lakshmi Bayi: poetry is better, but religion is best



But, despite the allegations doing the rounds, the Princess is no sympathiser of the burgeoning Hindu movement in Marxist Kerala. Clarifies Gouri Lakshmi: "The most precious legacy of my prior karma is that I was born a Hindu. To me, my religion is very sacred and dear and that shows in my poems. But there is nothing political about my way of life at all. I am not another member of the royalty waitings in the wings to enter politics."

Instead, the Princess is all set to publish a book of her poems. And soon.

OFF THE HOOK?

Ever since Salman Rushdie went into hiding to escape the wrath of Iranian hit-squads, the media have regularly carried stories to the effect that the death sentence on the beleaguered author of *The Satanic Verses* was soon to be lifted. But even before Rushdie could begin celebrating at his secret hideout, the reports were denied by Iranian higher-ups.

This time, however, there may be some substance to the talk of the author being handed a reprieve. Apparently, the 12-nation European Community is negotiating a settlement with Iran, which will include the commuting of Rushdie's sentence. According to the Italian foreign minister Gianni de Michelis: "We are close to an agreement on an exchange of letters and we are at the stage of wording which should solve the Rushdie problem."

Salman lives in hope.



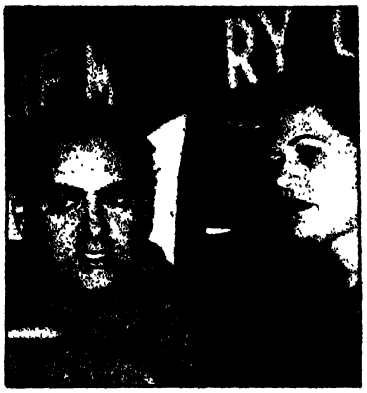
Salman Rushdie: is it for real this time?

TEA, SANDWICHES AND SALMAN KHAN

It wasn't quite what you'd expect a presidential tea party to be. For, along with the regulation tea and sandwiches, President R. Venkataraman treated his visitors to a private screening of the Rajshree blockbuster *Maine Pyar Kiya*.

By all accounts, the guests, including the wife of vice-president Shankar Dayal Sharma, Chief Justice Sabyasachi Mukherji and the loving duo of Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi, enjoyed watching the trials and tribulations of Salman Khan and Bhagyashree. And, in the manner of most film buffs, tapped their feet in tune with Anand-Milind's musical score.





(Above) President R. Venkataraman: entertaining (from left) Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi (among others) with *Maine Pyar Kiya*



At any rate, it beats discussing the wisdom of implementing the Mandal Commission's recommendations over coffee and *pakoras*.

PARTY TIME!

All in all, it was a party to remember. *Debonair*, the magazine best known for its centrespreads, was 18 years old and the Taj Mahal Hotel's ballroom was converted into a Monte Carlo-like casino to mark the occasion. And as Bombay's elite crowded over roulette tables, bent over games of flush and blackjack, co-hosts Vineet Jain and Sheena Singh circulated madly to get a word in with every celebrity.

But, despite the tall, brooding presence of Amitabh Bachchan, the star of the evening was sultry Sonika Gill (of *Ram Lakhan* fame), who emerged out of a huge cake, to hand a champagne bottle to Vineet Jain.

At the *Debonair* bash: a party to remember



DANCE, LITTLE LADY, DANCE

She may have starred in both Bengali and Hindi movies and even made a name for herself as an actress of note. But there's never been any doubt that dancing is, and always will be, Mamata Shankar's first love.

And now, the dusky damsel will be taking the Mamata Shankar Ballet Troupe for a tour of the United Kingdom and Europe, where it will perform at 19 key cultural centres.

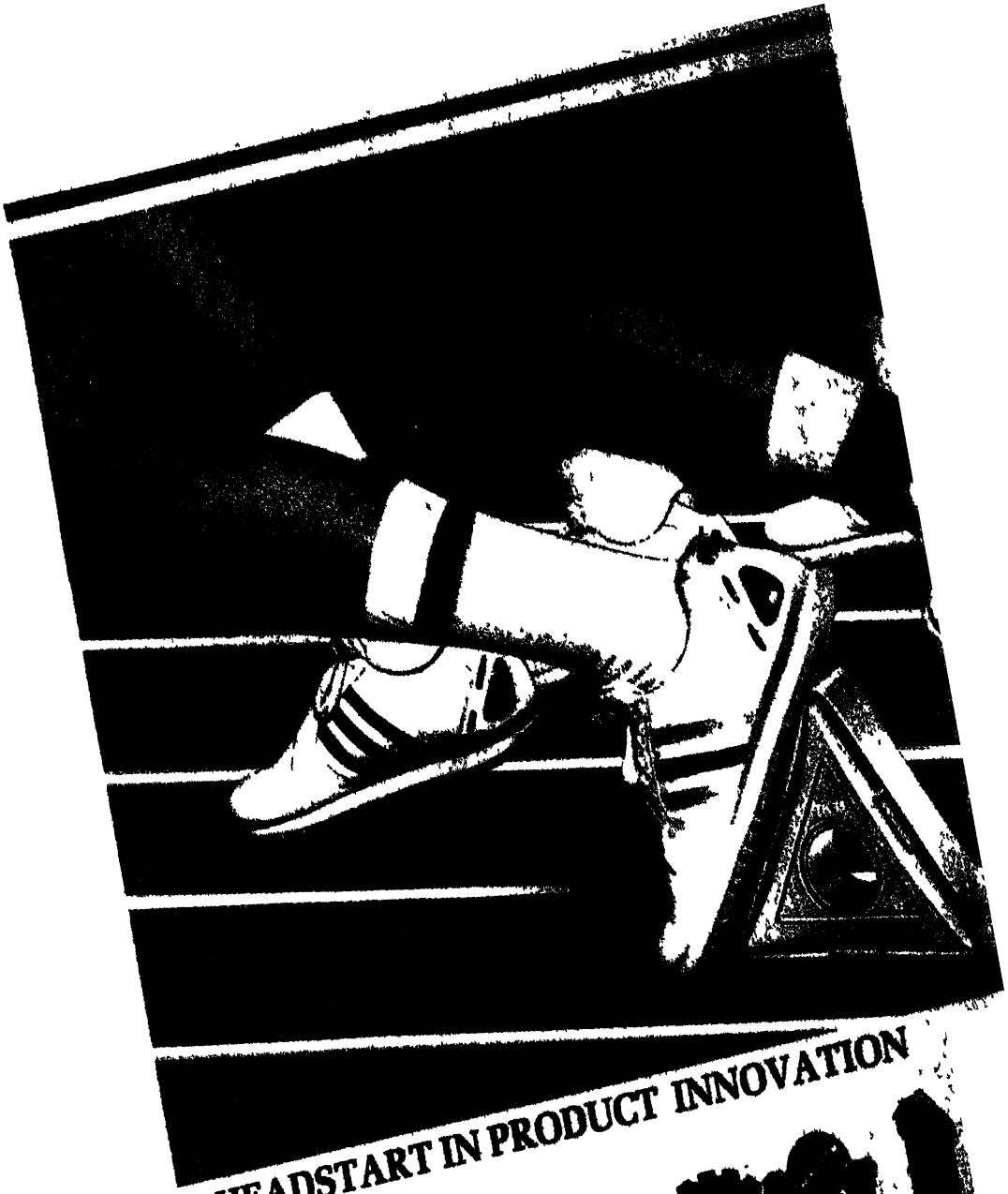
The *première* will, however, be staged at Birmingham, with the Indian high commissioner to London, Kuldip Nayar, inaugurating the show. Then, Mamata



Mamata Shankar

will take her dancers across UK, the tour being sponsored by Birmingham's Natyam Arts Promotions, Visiting Arts (UK), the Scottish Arts Council and West Midlands Arts.

With luck, she'll get the same response her father Uday Shankar did, decades ago. ●

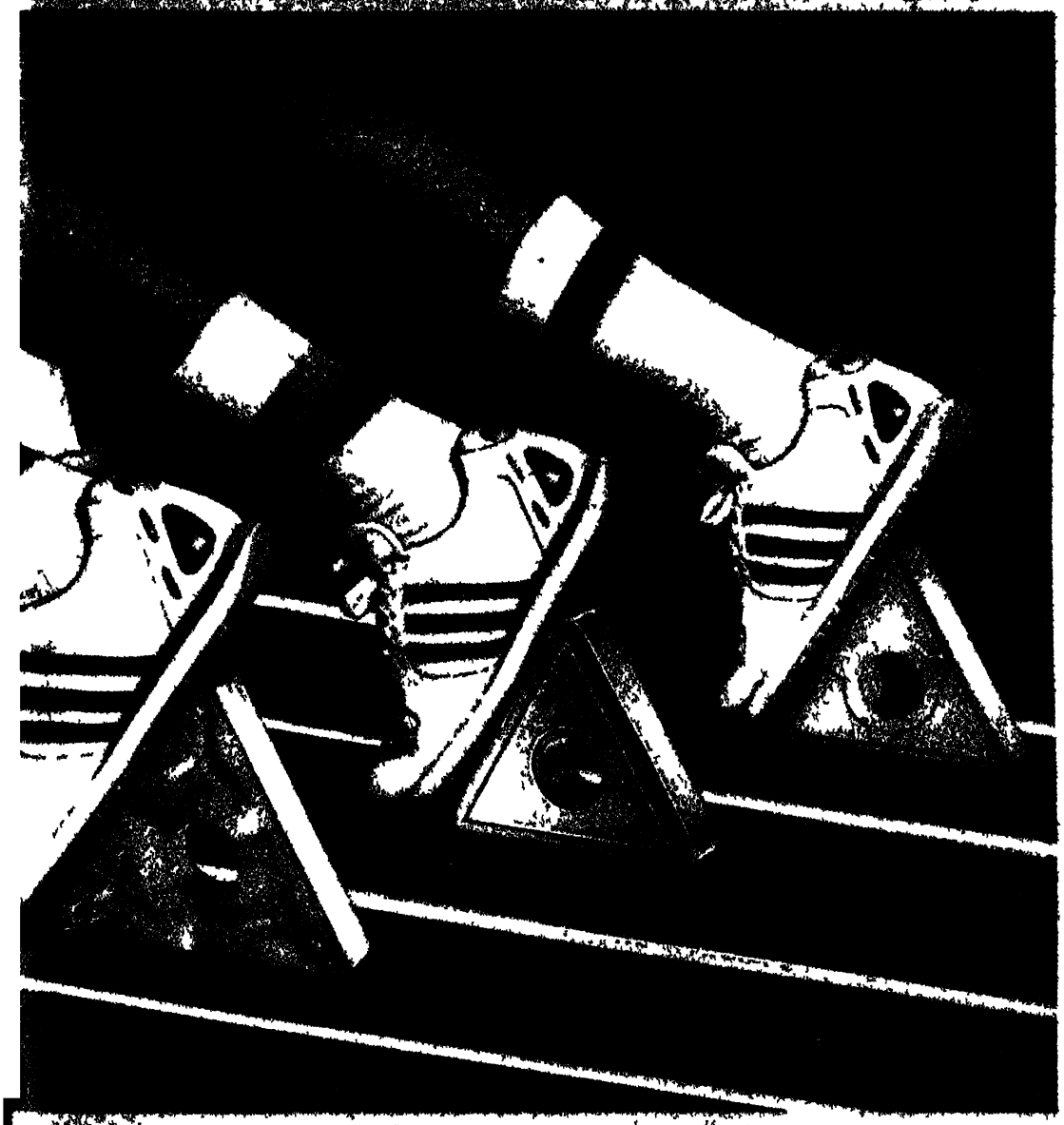


A HEADSTART IN PRODUCT INNOVATION

WIDIA

Your productivity – Our concern

WIDIA



THAT'S WIDIA'S TRACK RECORD

Widia — pioneer and leader. Constantly innovating, anticipating changes. Continuously meeting newer customer needs.

Quality engineered. That's Widia's track record. [illegible] its R&D. Fully synchronized with [illegible] producing technologically [illegible] computer-aided design [illegible] manufacturing. Making breakthrough contributions. Infusing superior quality in all Widia products: a comprehensive range of sophisticated toolings, flexible automation systems, special purpose machines...

Making Widia a true leader.

With its unrelenting spirit of innovation, Widia is ready for the challenges of the '90s.

RK SWAMY/WB/4065



TAPAN DAS

INTERVIEW

"Everything is for the moment"

Britannia chairman Rajan Pillai on his plans in India, and his global operations

When Janardhana Mohandas Rajan Pillai burst into the Indian corporate horizon in mid-1989 as the new owner of Britannia Industries Ltd, not many people had heard of him. That changed quickly: 42 year old Pillai is at the top of a US $400 million (Rs 720 crore) empire straddling Pakistan and New Zealand. This makes the NRI businessman too big to be ignored. His self-effacing style and unobstrusive business mannerisms make it very difficult for the media to track him—or get him to talk.

But when he does —as he did to SUNDAY *last fortnight—he comes off as sure-footed, unhurried and practical. Which probably explains why he was able to pull off a corporate coup, buying Britannia operations from RJR-Nabisco, changing almost overnight from an executive to an entrepreneur. Excerpts from an exclusive interview:*

SUNDAY: Unlike other NRIs or businessmen one knows very little about you. People only seem to find out about what you've done after it happens.

Rajan Pillai: Isn't that the way business is done?

Q: Not always. Quite a lot of people make a lot of noise.

A: Probably because I am not an Indian I don't believe there is any point in talking until things actually take place, there is no point in speculating.

Q: There is a lot of scope for information leaks—that also doesn't seem to happen in your case. How do you manage that?

A: There is no management in that.

Q: So you hold your cards very close to the chest?

A: No. I am open with everybody. Whoever asks me a question always gets a straight reply. Speak to my colleagues. Sunil (Alagh, BIL managing director) and people in Singapore at every point knew exactly where I was going.

Q: What is your game plan? Where do you see yourself five years from now?

A: I think we will consolidate the consumer packaged foods business in the Asia-Pacific region. These are two strong companies—one in India and one in New Zealand. There is a region (in) between that one can expand into, where the food industry is still in its infancy.

Q: Could you be more specific?

A: Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan. There is a great scope for expanding the Western type of consumer packaged foods.

Q: Are you looking at any other areas?

A: No.

Q: Does that mean diversification is out for the moment?

A: Everything is for the moment. At this particular point of time, I think we would like to stick to the business that we understand.

Q: So far, what you have achieved is through the acquisition route. Will there be any greenfield projects?

A: The Singapore business was started by me, sold to (RJR) Nabisco and brought back to me. So it is not new. And in fact, in all these countries that we talked about, including India, it has to be greenfield (projects). Because in our type of business I don't think there will be any large companies that will be available for sale.

Q: In India there is already a base. Britannia is into bread and biscuits...

A: But it will be greenfield if we go into product diversification; in biscuits and bread it will be consolidation.

Q: The company has diversified into soya products and computer software...

A: Computer software is basically an export-oriented effort. In fact, exports are a major thrust area for us, not because it is part of our business but it is what the country needs, and being international we find it much easier to handle than other (Indian software) companies.

But when we talk of diversification it means in the food business, and we will be drawing on (Groupe) BSN's

strengths—today, they are in pasta, in dairy products, champagne.

Q: Does this mean there will be collaborations to manufacture these in India?
A: Could be. We have commissioned market studies to find out what products are suitable at the present time.

Q: What sort of time frame have you in mind for these product launches?
A: In the food industry it takes a long time before a product is launched, because you cannot afford to make a mistake. There are so many food products launched all over the world, their failure rate is very high. So, we have to be very careful to do our market survey right, to identify the right product. And it is also a question of taste. So, unless we are absolutely sure we won't go ahead. Don't expect anything overnight.

Q: You're supposed to be Asia's largest biscuit manufacturer.
A: Yes, in volume.

Q: Who's second?
A: Second will be a Japanese company called Meiji and there will be an Australian company called Arnotts.

Q: To repeat my question, where do you see yourself five years down the road?
A: We do business plans on a three year basis. My former company, Nabisco, never believed in formulating any plans beyond three years.

Q: What happens later?
A: It is pretty boring. Well, on a positive note, we have talked about aviation—my wife is looking after that. But basically, we are talking about that because there is a specific need for that activity in the country. We are not talking of air taxis, what we are talking about is executive and business class travel and tour charters. Tourism is obviously one of the important sectors of growth...I think there is a niche for that kind of service.

Q: Only domestic?
A: Domestically or in the region. For instance, we can fly upto Singapore...we are looking at (the) Falcon-20 or Falcon-50s, the French executive aircraft.

Q: Where does your group stand in the global context?
A: Basically, we are a Singapore-based company which has bought the former Nabisco companies in Pakistan, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, New Zealand—these were the companies Nabisco had in the Asia-Pacific. Even in the Nabisco days we were looking at companies in Taiwan, Korea and Indonesia in the same business, so we continued to expand in that direction.

Q: What is the future for Britannia in India?
A: Diversification for Britannia is essential, but it is a distraction. The essential growth will come from its own core business which is consumer packaged foods. In India, as you know, in business you have to do things which you may not want to do.

For instance, Britannia went into (fishing) trawlers a few years ago—so did ITC and Hindustan Lever, because the government wanted business houses to go into these areas. We recognise the reasons for doing it, and we do it. But that's not because that is the business we know best. We are good at exploiting exports, but it is an opportunistic business which is good for the country.

But growth will come from our core businesses. In other words, the nature of the company will not change. Exports and other businesses will be opportunistic, rather than strategic. Our main strategy is to develop the foods business. If you ask me will I buy Dunlop tomorrow, the answer is no.

Q: What happened with ITC? We heard rumours that you were buying ITC shares overseas?
A: I don't know. It was your paper (the Ananda Bazar Group daily *Business standard)* which said these things.

Q: You must have expressed some interest...
A: No. It was a whole lot of others (bidders).

Q: Where does Rajan Jetley (former Air India chairman and managing director who left the airline to work for Pillai in Singapore) fit into your organisation?
A: My company in Singapore is called Britannia Industries Private Ltd (BIPL) which has a joint venture with BSN, called Britannia Brands Pvt. Ltd. BIPL holds 50 per cent of the Britannia Brands and Britannia Brands holds 100 per cent of Singapore, Malaysia (and) Hong Kong (operations). Rajan Jetley is the president and chief operating officer of BIPL and I am the chairman and chief executive of both the companies. So, he is representing BIPL in Britannia Brands and in diversification.

Q: Has your NRI status created any problems? Many NRIs have burnt their fingers in India and Indian industry.
A: On the contrary, I think we are a privileged lot. In fact, in my opinion Indian businessmen should be given the same opportunities as NRIs. If Goenkas or Tatas can find a pool of investors abroad and raise resources, or convince foreign banks to lend them money on the basis of their names, why should they be stopped from buying companies?

Q: Will you ever come back to live in India?
A: Recently, I read that there is a provision of the Income Tax Act that allows non-resident Indians to live in India for five months of the year without losing his NRI status.

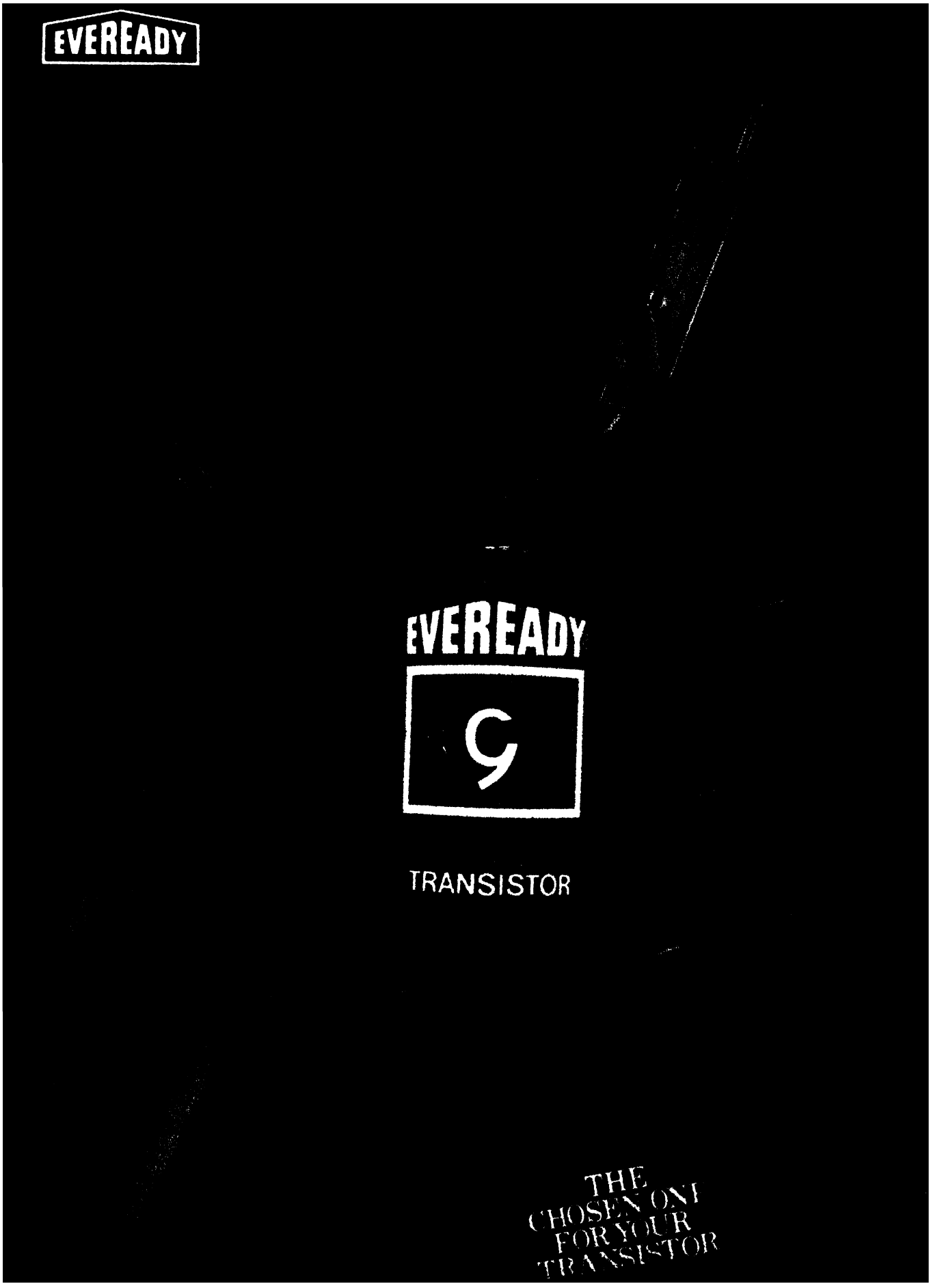
Q: So you are keeping your options open?
A: No, not the option to go back. But it is a question of subjecting yourself to FERA (Foreign Exchange Regulation Act) regulations. I have been away for 16 years now and have NRI status. Why should one give that up unless you have something to look forward to? If the provision is seriously implemented, a number of NRIs would avail of this opportunity.

Interviewed by Debjani Sinha/Calcutta


TAPAN DAS

"If you ask me will I buy Dunlop tomorrow, the answer is no"

EVEREADY



GOVERNMENT POLICY

Unjust enrichment?

The Raja's government is in a jam over a strange case of excise refunds

Can good times be bad news? Yes, if the government's detractors are to be believed. The stock markets are booming, industrial growth is creeping up, raids have almost become a thing of the past and even the government's supposedly implacable foe, Dhirubhai Ambani finds he can stay in business.

Yes, not everbody is terribly happy. The finance ministry's success with business is being interpreted as a sell out. Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the government's critics insinuate, has struck an underhand deal with big business. And to drive home their point, these critics claim that the finance ministry had planned to refund a straggering Rs 10,000 crore in excise and customs collections to businessmen and that the ministry is soft-pedalling tax evasion investigations against major industrial houses.

The issue first blew up at a Janata Dal parliamentary party meeting held in late August this year. Furious Dal MPs cornered finance minister Madhu Dandavate, claiming that the government had been hijacked by big business and demanded an explanation into the Rs 10,000 crore refund case, which had first been highlighted by the Janata Dal leader Chandra Shekhar. An ashen faced Dandavate, reportedly, could not immediately answer to the charges but promised to look into the matter. That was only the beginning.

The sniggers were growing louder in the lobbies of Parliament and finally, On 4 September, members of both the Rajya and the Lok Sabha openly confronted the government with the issue. The principal charge was that the government had surreptitiously issued a circular ordering tax officials to refund excise and customs duties amounting to Rs 10,000 crores. Dandavate's denials appeared particularly weak and even Bharatiya Janata Party leader Atal Behari Vajpayee and Dipen Ghosh, a prominent Communist Party of India MP, joined in the attack. The Congress(I) was, of course, the loudest and demanded that the entire matter be investigated by a joint parliamentary committee.

The government hedged. Finance minister Dandavate admited that he had stayed the controversial circular as soon as it had come to his notice, but insisted that it was a very routine matter and that it had not even attracted the attention of the revenue secretary. On the other hand, the finance ministry's panic and acknowledgement of the ciruclar's existence seemed to suggest there might be *something* behind the smokescreen.

On the face of it, the entire refunds issue appears innocuous. For, it is centered around a very simple question of equity: are manufacturers entitled to a refund if government collects more taxes than it is legally entitled to? Yes, if one assumes that if the tax authorities have deliberately or erroneously levied extra taxes on someone, they should return the excess amount. But the answer is not as obvious as that. In the past, the government has argued that manufacturers pass on the burden of customs and excise duties to consumers, and any duties refunded to them would result

THE REFUND BOGEY

Refunds are actually declining. So, why is the finance minister embarrassed about the Opposition's charge that Rs 10,000 crores have been returned to big business?

Year	Customs and Excise refund (In Rs Crores)	Total customs and excise revenue (In Rs Crores)	Refunds as percentage of total revenue
1979-80	146.9	8,935	1.64
80-81	180 8	9.909	1.82
81-82	179 15	11,721	1.53
82-83	198.32	13,178	1.50
83-84	1551 06	15,805	0.96
84-85	168 15	18,192	0.92
85-86	166 10	22,482	0.74
86-87	174 03	25,945	0.67
87-88	233.32	30,128	0 77
88-89	278.45	34,646	0 80
89-90	339.32	40,208	0.83
1990 (APRIL)	39.32	2,853	1.38
(MAY)	26 98	3,408	0.79
(JUNE)	22.13	3,522	0.63



Madhu Dandavate

Soft? who, us?

The government gets tough with ITC Ltd's excise dues

Who's forgotten the old cases? Certainly not deputy finance minister Anil Shastri. Just before Parliament's Monsoon session ended, Shastri told the Lok Sabha that the government was determined to recover Rs 80.3 crores from the Saharanpur unit of ITC Ltd. He was referring to a case that relates to excise demands of the 1975-83 period. But the speech was significant, nevertheless. For, apart from Reliance Industries Ltd, the National Front government had not taken on or talked tough against any corporate giant. Moreover, this was the first time that the finance ministry insinuated that the previous regime was guilty of surreptitiously burying evasion cases.

The Rs 80.3 crore case is really a legal dispute between ITC and the revenue department. Following a court judgement in 1973, most companies had been deducting a whole set of costs termed 'post manufacturing expenses' (PME) from their from their product cost for determining the amount of excise payable to the government. The tax authorities contested this view and the Supreme Court in May 1983 ruled that advertising, marketing and other expenses could not be deducted as PME, and laid down the items (such as frieght costs) that could be deducted from the cost of a product for excise purposes. After the 1983 judgement, numerous companies, ITC included, had to re-work how much extra they now owed the excise department since they had excluded PME from their product cost from 1975 to 1983.

"It was a question of ambiguity and interpretation," says the new chief of ITC's tobacco division, K.L. Chugh. And in 1986, collectors from all the regions where ITC cigarette factories were located met to thrash out the matter. An agreement was framed and ITC paid Rs 54 crores. Then in 1988, the excise collector at Allahabad wrote to ITC, saying that he did not agree with the method of determining the excise duty on the company's cigarettes for that period and demanded that ITC pay a total of Rs 80.3 crores for its Saharanpur operations. ITC was appalled and appealed against the decision.

Now, Anil Shastri reveals that after filing the Rs 80.3 crore demand, the concerned collector and the revenue department seemed to have forgotten all about the case. Astonishingly, the collectorate did not process the case even though the Allahabad Court had *not* granted a stay order. According to sources in the revenue department, the moment the collectorate was instructed to follow up the case, ITC got a stay. ITC's petition was dismissed even by the Supreme Court but the company has a month to file an appeal. Shastri said that his ministry was "seeking legal opinion whether coercive action can be taken for the recoveries even before the expiry of the one-month period allowed by the Supreme Court."

The intended message was clear: the finance ministry has *not* been seduced by big business, which should help combat charges that the government is taking a soft stand on excise refunds. Revenue department insiders reveal that a special officer has been appointed exclusively for the Rs 800-odd crore total excise demand raised against ITC a few years ago. Apparently, the previous regime, by regularly transferring the officers investigating the Rs 800 crore case, had ensured that ITC is not hauled up. Now, the finance ministry seems determined to subtract that inertia.

ITC, on the other hand, feels that all this publicity is unfortunate. "We have not been evading taxes," says ITC's Chugh. "In the past five years we have paid Rs 4,174 crores as excise duties and Rs 72 crores as income tax." He argues that earlier methods of computing excise duty on cigarettes was complicated and full of grey areas. This, he says, caused innumerable disputes with the tax authorities and led to unending litigation. "Today," adds Chugh, "the excise tax is levied on the basis of cigarette length and there is no controversy, no problem." While ITC might have a point, what is not in doubt is the finance ministry's determination to win back its tough, no-nonsense taxman image.



ITC chairman J.N. Sapru



Tobacco division chief K.L. Chugh

Endless litigation on excise dues

in 'unjust enrichment' of those manufacturers. Industry, as is only to be expected, has always contested this view by pointing out that competitive conditions do not always allow them to pass on tax burdens to consumers.

This tussle between the industry and tax auhorities has been continuing for decades in the country's courts. The courts themselves have generally not been very clear and had tended to judge individual case on their merits. For instance, in a 1978 judgement on a Kesoram Cements case, a court ruled that "Even if the assessee passed onto his customers the duty illegally recovered from him, it is a matter between him and his consumers and the High Court cannot deny refund of the illegally levied and collected duty to the assessee, even if it results in injust enrichment of the assessee." A large section of revenue officials and government legal experts felt that since no tax can be levied or collected without the authority of law, the government had a duty to refund any money collected without authority. That was until the famous Roplas (India) Limted case where the Bombay High Court in July 1988 rejected the company's plea for excise refund on the ground that this would result in 'unjust enrichment'.

At that time, the revenue department immediately ordered its tax collectors to reject any claim they felt would result in unjust enrichment. According to Madhu Dandavate, "These instructions were issued without consideration of the Full Board (the Central Board of Excise and Customs) and without consulting the law ministry. Compalints were received by the ministry and the Board that the discretion allowed by these instructions to field officers had become a source of corruption and harrassment, and that some refund claims were being arbitrarily rejected."

The granting of discretionary powers to tax officials was disturbing and the whole question was sent to the Central Excise, Customs and Gold (Control) Appellate Tribunal for consideration. The Tribunal expressed the view that departmental officers did not enjoy the discretion to reject claims of refunds authorised by law on grounds which do not find specific mention in the law itself. Such discretion, according to the Tribunal, is a prerogative only of the higher courts which have inherent powers to decide on issues relating to equity.

Meanwhile, a full bench of the Bombay High Court again reviewed the Roplas case and this time held: "When tax has been collected without the authority of law the state is bound to refund the same." The Court declared it could not accept "extreme submissions" made by the tax authorities that in all tax refund cases which may involve unjust enrichment, the State ought to be allowed to retain the amount which is refundable. "Having collected tax without the authority of law, the State cannot have any preferential claim to decide how the amount of tax which is refundable shall be spent," the judgement added. The 'unjust enrichment' thesis, however, was not entirely abandoned. In fact, the judgement went on to say it was upto the writ courts to evaluate the facts and circumstances of each case and then decide who should benefit from the tax refund.

All this would suggest that invidivual refund cases require to be sent to the courts for arbitration. However, when the Central Board of Excise and Customs, met on 11 January this year, it took the view that departmental officers had no legal authority to reject refunds which were authorised by law. The law ministry subsequently upheld this view and on 21 March, a telex was accordingly issued to all collectors. The telex was followed up by a more detailed circular on the subject a week later.

The finance minister claims that he was not kept informed of all these developments. He told the Rajya Sabha that the secretaries of the finance ministry and the finance minister take up matters related only to changes in laws and policies. "Since this was only a matter of informing Collectors of the correct legal interpretation of the existing laws," concluded Dandavate, "the Board issued the instructions after taking necessary legal opinion. I am fully satisfied that the action of the Board was legally and administratively correct and the clarifications issued by it were fully within its competence."

Just before Parliament's Monsoon session ended, Shastri told the Lok Sabha that the government was determined to recover Rs 80.3 crores from ITC Ltd



Deputy finance minister Anil Shastri

The finance minister could not, however, adequately explain why the decision was rescinded if it was completely above board and legally justified. He told Parliament that the circular was stayed because the Government now wanted to "review the whole matter in all its aspects." He seemed more concerned about killing the controversy. The quantum of refunds, he stressed, was nowhere near the level of Rs 10,000 crores as had been alleged. He produced figures to show that refunds were a regular feature (see chart) and in the first 3 months of the current financial year refunds added up to just Rs 88.43 crores. "It is indeed unfortunate that all kinds of baseless allegations have been hurled in this regard without ascertaining full facts," he said.

Dandavate, while giving the impression that his ministry had been wronged completely sidestepped the allegation that specific individuals and firms had benefitted from the refund circular. Similarly, he did not admit that the courts had not ruled that the refund amounts should in every case be returned to the claimant. As of now, tax officials once again have discretionary powers regarding refunds and the revenue department is thinking of working out means to channel the refunds to a consumers' fund instead of returning them to business.

The finance ministry appears more keen at the moment to live down its pro-big business image. For, the Raja's government is being accused of being the business world's best friend. A host of major tax evasion cases involving some of the country's corporate giants seem to have been buried; despite routine brave statements, no action has been taken against the trading community for the constant rise in prices, and V.P. Singh today does not even remotely resemble the crusading finance minister he was during the early years of the Rajiv Gandhi regime. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that deputy finance minister Anil Shastri stood up in Parliament to declare that the government would force ITC Ltd. to pay up its excise dues (*see box*). Shastri took pains to give the impression that the government was prepared to come down hard on any erring business house. ITC made a good target. And undoubtedly, there will be many more acts of similar bravado. Equity, after all, is not really the issue. The image is *the* message.

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi

SHIPPING

In the dock

Cochin's shipyard is sinking deeper into the red, and could face closure

The Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) is fast becoming the biggest public sector mess in Kerala. And the way it is going, it could soon earn a place in the national honour roll of corporate disasters.

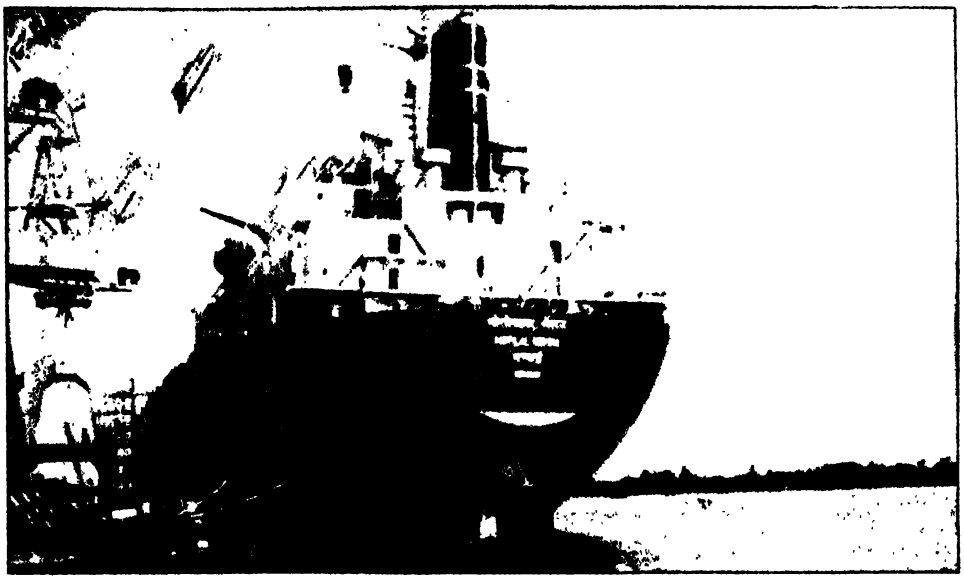
CSL's losses up to March 1990 is a massive Rs 147 crores, on a capital investment of Rs 130 crores. Added to this is a further Rs 50 crore loss on the construction of India's first oil tanker, *Motilal Nehru*, for the Shipping Corp. of India (SCI). With this new deadweight, CSL is set to surpass losses at another once-prestigious unit, Vishakhapatnam's Hindustan Shipyard Ltd, which has piled up losses of Rs 195 crores. Says a top CSL official, who declines to be identified: "In a couple of months we may have to declare a lockout". He adds: "Our losses are accumulating with every ship we build."

The crisis is mainly due to an incredible pricing policy, combined with the incredible inefficiency that most sector units in India practise as a matter of course. Ships manufactured domestically are the only industrial products sold at international prices, no matter what the domestic economy dictates. This is not a bad thing, one might say. As the domestic cost of production tends to be higher, at least the buyer will benefit from more reasonable international rates. But, with this practice, subsidies come in. And technical problems on Indian-built ships are legend. So, on one count, the tax-payer is pressured, and on another, the buyer may be paying international rates, but he is paying up for a product that does not match worldwide standards.

Take the case of *Motilal Nehru*, the first of three oil tankers to be built for SCI by CSL. The order was placed in March 1986, and the cost of production was estimated at Rs 73 crores. But SCI had to pay just Rs 40 crores under the contract, matching interna-

The Cochin shipyard: inefficient, under-utilised and in a mess





"It is impossible to break even," says Joseph, "under the present cost-price gap in the pricing of ships"

tional rates. CSL was to receive a subsidy of Rs 8 crores, but that would still mean an in-house loss of Rs 25 crores. Since the shipyard took 36 months to do the job, double the initial estimate, losses piled up to Rs 50 crores. "Nothing works in CSL", says K.P. Joseph, former chief manager (management service) with the shipyard. "And it is impossible to break even under the present cost-price gap in the pricing of ships".

Perhaps, it is as impossible to break even if CSL's inefficiency is not cleaned up. The yard's installed capacity is 1.5 lakh DWT a year, but CSL has never worked itself to reach that figure, thanks to appalling unproductivity. For instance, in Japan, the world's premier ship-building nation, it takes 40 man-hours to process one tonne of steel for ship construction work. At CSL, the norm is 240 man-hours for a tonne. "The work style in CSL is the same as seen in the state secretariat in Trivandrum," says Joseph. There is no commitment to improve productivity."



When former chairman Rear Admiral G.T. Wadhwani—one of three company top brass who have quit in the past 18 months—put forward a proposal to link productivity with wages, the trade unions dug in their heels. Consequently, the yard's 2,500-strong workforce usually lays about earning full pay. (If the SCI order had not materialised, they would have been completely idle.) Besides a string of chairmen, numerous other senior managers—such as Joseph—quit in disgust.

Alongside worker-related delays, CSL—like most other shipyards in the country—has to cope with erratic supplies. And if supplies are delayed, the yard is not permitted to import components to meet deadlines. The resultant crunch has affected the day-to-day work at the yards. At CSL, for example only 30 per cent of the work on SCI's second oil tanker is completed, and it is almost certain, say CSL officials, that work on the third will have to be abandoned. CSL has not placed specialised equipment orders for the tankers. It has not even placed fresh orders for steel plates—imported, and fast running out—as it is severely strapped for cash.

And while other yards, the one at Vishakhapatnam, for instance, are diversifying operations—fabricating drilling structures for the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, steel girders for railway bridgers and patrol ships for the navy—in an attempt to cut losses, CSL is simply limping along.

A way out for CSL could be to expand its ship repairing facility, which has the potential to turn a profit. "Ship repair is more profitable than ship building," says a CSL spokesman. "If CSL makes more facilities for ship repair, the yard can look up to better times".

Nothing would please G. Krishnan more. Krishnan, chairman of the Cochin Port Trust and acting CSL chairman, has made representations to New Delhi for junking the government's pricing policy: while this would increase purchase prices, it would reduce subsidy. Price restructuring would slash CSL's borrowings from the Centre. Yard insiders maintain that Krishnan has also submitted a confidential report suggesting that CSL be merged with SCI. Other CSl demands include liberal import of technical equipment, writing off outstanding interest, and conversion of loans into equity.

Krishnan's moves may just work out. Both surface transport minister K.P. Unnikrishnan and ministry secretary P.M. Abraham are from Kerala. "I am wearing a crown of thorns," says Krishnan. "Still, we are hoping that things would improve at the shipyard". *If* ministers ever help managers.

Shreedhar Pillay/Cochin

■ In creditum veritas?

Upset by industry accusations, Mudra Communications Ltd, one of the country's fastest growing advertising agencies (billings: Rs 65 crores) has dashed off a hurt letter to the Advertising Agencies Association of India. The charge: Mudra apparently gives unlimited credit facilities to its clients, which could suggest a no-holds-barred attempt to get to the top; currently, Mudra is at the number three slot. "Pure, base gossip," counter Mudra executives, and in a letter to the 3As of I, as the agency is known in colourful ad-world lingo, have requested that association appoint reputed accounting firms, either A.F. Ferguson or Arthur Anderson to look into "terms of payment in contracts with clients' credit period allowed and actual collection record, additional agency discount offered, if any, to clients". Mudra has even offered to pick up the tab for such an exercise. The ball, as they say, is now in 3As of I's court. But the association is hardly likely to do much more than just soothe Mudra's nerves.

■ Fence friends

For once, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and Bombay Dyeing appear to be on the same side of the fence. Both companies have raised prices for their competing products—PTA for Reliance and DMT in Bombay Dyeing's case—*without* accusing each other of trying to fleece consumers. Bombay Dyeing is selling DMT at Rs 28,000 per tonne, a Rs 4,000 hike. And RIL, for its part, is charging Rs 29,700 per tonne for PTA—derived from its captive paraxylene production facility—up from Rs 24,550.

STOCK QUOTE

"Another election would be disastrous. Two lots of donations in the space of a year will wipe out my profits.

A cynical New Delhi businessman, commenting on the possibility of a mid-term poll.





Nusli Wadia (left) and Dhirubhai Ambani: sans accusations

The rumour mill has it that RIL has less reason than Bombay Dyeing to put up its prices because, till now, it has been crying about the surplus paraxylene it has, and about how the government should force Bombay Dyeing to buy its paraxylene (DMT is a paraxylene derivative, too) instead of importing it. The ostensible reason—courtesy the petrochem grapevine—for the RIL hike is that thanks to a cut in the naptha quota (naptha, bless the chain reaction, is a raw material for paraxylene), RIL is looking abroad too, and can blame increased costs on the Gulf crisis. Either way—by intent or instance—prices are up. And even if there was no Iraq, prices may have gone up anyway: price tags have never needed much reason to go up.

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

Jyoti Basu

West Bengal chief minister



• Jyoti Basu is at his power games—again—even while the state reels under its worst ever electricity crisis. First, Basu ran blood donation camps in a bizarre attempt to raise funds and public opinion for clearing the 630 MW Bakreshwar thermal power project, barely saving face with a hurried protocol with the USSR. Now, he is pushing for the long-delayed 2,050 MW super the thermal power plant at Sagardighi in Murshidabad district. The point Basu has consistently evaded is the fact that West Bengal has enough power potential already. Only, it's in a mess, thanks mainly to his Marxist government. Rhetoric, Basu doesn't realise, is a poor substitute for electricity. The answer doesn't lie in new plants, but in fixing the state's work culture. God help Haldia.

■ Gross National Shame

Or GNS, if one leans towards acronyms. Nothing, however, can quite abbreviate the fact that India is among the poorest per capita Gross National Product (GNP) shows in Asia. India, says a World Bank report, has a GNP of US $ 340 (Rs 6,018 at current exchange rates), barely above China's Rs 5,841. Still more signs of supremacy: India lords over Laos, Nepal and Bhutan, which all recorded a GNP of Rs 3,186, and Bangladesh, with a depressing Rs 3,009. Aid, obviously, is not the *only* way out. China, to an extent, and all the other countries survive on huge aid diets, with practically no industry to back them up, and still fall terribly short of a respectable GNP. On the other hand, India has a booming industry—despite strange laws and stranger political intent—the government claims that it has managed to get a handle on inflation, and incomes are going up. Unfortunately, so is the population. So are subsidies. And aid and interest payments, whether the government likes it or not—negating just about every gain. At a time when our prudent neighbours in South East Asia are raking it in. Perhaps, India *should* hang its head in GNS.

The Yadavs are coming

The community strikes terror in Etawah



UTTAR PRADESH

The word *atank* (terror) has become synonymous with Yadavs in Etawah, says a journalist based in the UP district town. "I don't mean our chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, but members of the Yadav caste, each one of whom thinks he is a CM in his own right." And it is Mulayam Singh Yadav, he says, who has perfected the state's casteist politics.

Ever since Mulayam Singh became the chief minister, Yadav shopkeepers and businessmen are displaying their caste identity on the signboards of their establishments. Other castes had been doing the same thing but now it is the turn of the Yadavs. So it is not surprising to find tractors with inscriptions like "Yadav Mail" on them. And anyone who dares to overtake these vehicular behemoths or refuses to give them the right of way, does so at the risk of his life. Smaller automobiles showing such defiance can be edged off the roads into wayside ditches, say local residents.

Outrageous though it may sound, this tendency to hog the highways pales when compared with the high-handedness with which the influential Yadavs have been treating the Harijans in recent months. The village heads and their relatives have virtually come to control the police and the bureaucracy. "Eight months ago, the Khatris and the Jains were the only communities who had very few criminal cases against them. Now, even the Yadavs are sharing this honour," says Shyam Dutt Tewari, a leading criminal lawyer of Etawah. "It is not that they have reformed overnight, but the police refuse to register any cases against the Yadavs."

As in other parts of the country, it is the Harijans who have to bear the brunt of the *atank* being spread by the Yadavs in Etawah. According to Satyadev Tripathi, a former UP Congress(I) minister, there are two reasons for this. First, the Harijans voted for the Congress(I) in the last Assembly elections as they had always done. Secondly, criminalisation of politics has cut across caste barriers under the present regime, feels Tripathi, with anti-socials from the other castes—such as the Thakurs, Brahmins and Lodhis—joining Mulayam Singh's camp to harass the Harijans.



KISHAN SAITH

Durga Prasad with his wife and son: grief-stricken family

Even before Mulayam Singh became the chief minister, the Yadavs of Kabuligaon attacked the Harijans, simply because the lower-caste farm labourers demanded a minimum wage of rupees eight per day. Incidentally, the minimum rate prescribed by the government is Rs 25.

Recounts 70-year-old Bhajan Lal: "It was about 5 am when I was rudely awakened by the Yadavs and beaten up. Even women and children were not spared. One woman suffered serious leg injuries." But the nearest police station at Chaubia refused to record the Harijans' complaints.

Four months later, in April, Bhajan Lal was attacked again. This time the Yadavs used firearms, and Bhajan's son, who rushed to his father's rescue, suffered bullet injuries. "But when we went to lodge a complaint with the Chaubia police station, we found to our surprise that an FIR had been filed against us by the Yadavs. The assailants had gone to the police station with Shivpal Yadav, a brother of Mulayam Singh Yadav. So, my son and nine other Harijans were arrested. They were released on bail

after 18 days."

In May, the Yadav's of Banalpur village, 20 km from Etawah, who are believed to be Janata Dal activists, lynched a half-blind Harijan, Vidya Ram, simply because he was a Congress supporter. His wife and children are now on the verge of starvation.

The most heinous incident in recent times, however, occurred at Kheda village, where a 13-year-old girl was gangraped and murdered. The girl's father, Durga Prasad, says: "Kallen Yadav, a notorious *goonda*, accompanied by two others, took away my daughter at gunpoint. For three days she was gangraped by the miscreants. During this time I approached the Jaswant Nagar police station, but they refused to take any action."

After the incident, Kallen's two accomplices, who happened to be when Durga Prasad refused to comply, the police quietly implicated the village headman.

The series of atrocities gave the Congress(I) reason enough to whip up an anti-Mulayam campaign. And leading the onslaught was none other than Darshan Singh Yadav, a one-time buddy of the chief minister

Criminals have always played a key role in the politics of Etawah, but observers say that it is only from the early Eighties that they have come out in the open. This, incidentally, coincides with the rise of the Yadavs as a powerful class and the emergence of Mulayam Singh and Darshan Singh as important leaders of the community Both leaders helped the Yadavs, who are otherwise in the minority in the district, to consolidate their economic base. Moreover, it is said that arms licenses are being liberally issued to the Yadavs.



Shivpal Singh (left): at his daily *darbar*

Harijans, were arrested and severely beaten up in police custody. But Kallen himself was given VIP treatment at the *thana* because he came with Shivpal. It was only after the local press raised an outcry and the Congress(I) began an agitation protesting against the atrocity, that Mulayam Singh came down to Kheda.

To put the Harijans' fear at rest, Mulayam Singh promised to issue 20 gun licences to them. But only two have been actually given. He also gave the bereaved family a compensation of Rs 25 thousand. "That's generous compensation indeed for the loss of *izzat* we Harijans have to suffer," says Durga Prasad. In fact, it is even said that the chief minister had gone to the extent of trying to doctor the FIR: he wanted Durga Prasad to name a local Congress leader as the culprit. But

The high-handedness of the Yadavs has demoralised the district administration also. "Earlier at least people knew there was Rajiv Gandhi or Buta Singh over the heads of these local political chiefs. Today, only the writ of such people as Shivpal Singh runs in the region " says a Congressman.

In fact, the Yadavs of Etawah have become so notorious that about 120 lower-ranking police personnel, who have been transferred from Kanpur to Etawah, have refused to take up their new posts. As one sub-inspector puts it:"We are forced to do the dirty work for these politicians and then incur the wrath of the public. If this state of affairs continues, there will be a revolt in our ranks." •

Radhika Ramaseshan/Etawa

Festival of violence

A religious ceremony sparks off communal clashes in Baroda



GUJARAT

Festivals bring gloom to Gujarat. Everytime there is a religious celebration, Hindus and Muslims brace themselves for a show-down. So, during the Ganesh festival earlier this month, rioting broke out in five towns of the state, leaving 15 people dead and at least 150 injured in a single day.

Ever since the worst communal carnage in the state during April, 1985, the two communities have been clashing now and then over the flimsiest excuses. But the Hindu-Muslim chasm has widened during the past three years, thanks to the growing popularity of the pro-Hindu BJP, which now shares power with the Janata Dal in the coalition government headed by Chimanbhai Patel.

This time, the spark was provided by the pompous Ganesh festival. Everywhere, the trouble was triggered either by provocative slogans of the processionists or by heavy stone-throwing on the marchers. Soon, shops in Baroda, Anand, Ankleshwar, Surat and Bardoli were looted and set ablaze, passers-by assaulted or stabbed, vehicles destroyed, and even religious shrines damaged.

The police, caught napping, belatedly opened fire, killing five in Baroda and two in the nearby dairy town of Anand. Eight others died of stab wounds

Apart from the heavy damage caused to life and property, the riots have soured relations between the two coalition partners—the Janata Dal and the BJP. Nalini Bhatt, a BJP minister, was actively involved in organising the festivities, and the Janata Dal chief Narpatsinh Chavda, accused him of engineering the riots.

But the BJP's Keshubhai Patel has said that it is high time a committee was formed to iron out the differences between the coalition partners. •

Mahesh Trivedi/Ahmedabad

Flinging the gauntlet

A tribal organisation challenges the ULFA



ASSAM

The inexorable march of the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), which has extended its sway over much of upper Assam, seems to have been halted in the tribal-dominated areas of North Lakhimpur. The United Reservation Movement Council of Assam (URMCA), an umbrella organisation of tribal and backward communities, has challenged the ULFA's sway and forced it to beat a tactical retreat, in North Lakhimpur district.

The URMCA, which maintains close links with the Naxalite faction led by Bhaskar Nandi and has the All Assam Tribal Students Union (AATSU) and the All Mishing Students Union (AMSU) under its fold, aims at protecting the tribals against forays by the ULFA.

Whether the formation of the URMCA was a spontaneous reaction of a harassed people or was inspired by external agencies is not yet clear. But it goes to the ULFA's credit to have retreated in the face of the URMCA challenge in order to avoid bloody clashes. It held two meetings recently with the AATSU—one at Guwahati and another at Dergaon—in the wake of sporadic skirmishes between the activists of the two organisations.

Though no unanimity of views between the two groups was reported, they have agreed to maintain peace by not encroaching upon each others areas of influence.

The AATSU has raised the Tribal Volunteer Force (TVF) to resist the ULFA. The formation of the TVF had become necessary because of the inaction of the state police and the administration in containing the terrorist activities attributed to ULFA. "With the rise of the ULFA in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts, the entire AASU (All Assam Students Union) and the AGP (Assam Gana Parishad) have joined the extremists and their anti-tribal policies are now being reflected in the ULFA's activities," says the URMCA chief, Ranoj Pegu.

The TVF squads are, therefore, deployed as resistance groups to stave off the ULFA militants. "The TVF would not hesitate to take up arms to counter any attack on the tribal villages," warns AATSU president Paramananda Chhaengiya, a doctor from the Mishing community.

The URMCA, AATSU and AMSU exercises are seen by political observers as an attempt by the tribal communities to assert their identity. These organisations, known for their tough anti-AGP stand, have been demanding the reorganisation of Assam along ethnic lines while maintaining good relations with the Muslims, the Naxalites and even the Congress(I).

The tribal activists feel that the ULFA, despite professing to respect the cultures and traditions of all ethnic groups in the state, has actually been transformed into an organisation of Assamese chauvinists. Though the ULFA has prohibited criticisms of any language, culture or religion, the AATSU complains of calculated harassment of the tribals by some ULFA activists.



MANJIT MAHANTA

ULFA guerillas: tactical truce



TVF activists: taking on the ULFA

Thus, with the URMCA organising the tribals against the ULFA and the latter determined to forge ahead, the ethnic conflict in upper Assam may sharpen in the future. The present truce may well be a lull before a storm.●

Rabijit Chowdhury/Guwahati

Filthy lucre

Veerappan Moily is accused of misappropriating money



KARNATAKA

Karnataka minister Veerappa Moily is in the news once again. Only, this time around, it is not the Machiavellian Ramakrishna Hegde and a hidden tape-recorder that have put Moily in a spot, but an incriminating letter and a designer house.

Leading an unsuspecting Moily to the court is a Cabinet colleague, B. Basavalingappa. Although oneupmanship is common among politicians, this is the first time that the acrimony between two ministers has come out into the open and threatens to turn into a smear campaign.

For some years now, forest minister Basavalingappa has borne a grudge against the law and parliamentary affairs minister Moily, for not returning the Rs two lakh the former claims Moily owes him.According to Basavalingappa, Moily had borrowed Rs two lakh as the leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly for electioneering against Ramakrishna Hegde in the Kanakapura bye-elections in 1983. He never returned the money.

After persistent reminders, Basavalingappa received a photostat copy of a letter written by Moily to the then treasurer of the All India Congress Committee, Seetaram Kesri. In the letter, Moily had requested Kesri to square the outstanding loan. "I authorise him to collect the money I had borrowed as hand loan for immediate payment." wrote Moily.

Kesri did not oblige. An adamant Basavalingappa got back to Moily who still refused to shell out. Another letter followed asking for the money plus interest. Not getting a response, a furious Basavalingappa sent a legal notice in 1984 asking for a total sum of Rs 2,39,000. This drew a response from Moily. He had not borrowed the money, he said, and the demand was an "untenable contention".

"I was utterly shocked when he denied taking the money," says Basavalingappa. When mutual friends failed to settle the issue between the two, Basavalingappa filed a case with the



Veerappan Moily: dirty hands?

Bangalore City Civil Court demanding Rs 2,81,000 with interest at the rate of 18 per cent.

Moily's reply stated: "The suit is false, frivolous, vexatious and instigated with the ulterior motive of defaming me. The plaintiff is evidently taking advantage of the letter to Kesri. It was issued in good faith to recommend payment of Rs two lakh to the plaintiff on the representation that he had spent that much for electioneering and propaganda in Kanakapura elections." In reply to Basavalingappa's contention that the letter to Kesri clearly incriminated Moily, he retorted: "It is a forgery. I have not written any such letter as I have not borrowed any money from him. If he spent Rs two lakh, it is his lookout. I cannot meet everyone's expenses from my pocket."

And Moily is ready to take on his opponent: "If Basavalingappa is so convinced that he has a case against me, let him pursue it. It has been four years since he filed the case. Why is it moving so slowly?"

While the two ministers fight it out in court, Moily has also become the centre of a controversy over the house rent allowance he has been collecting from the government. The issue came to light last week when a lawyer filed a High Court petition against him for collecting Rs 9,000 as rent for the house owned by his wife, where the Moily household lives. It was not right of the minister to collect such a huge amount from the already depleted state treasury, the petition claimed, to pay his wife as rent.

Apparently, Moily's rival was involved in this too. Basavalingappa got in touch with another Congressman, A.K. Subbaiah who had one of his friends file the case before the High Court. And during the debate it was

Where have the girls gone?

A police effort to save 41 women from prostitution falls through

The police did a good job, but in the end their efforts came to naught.

It happened last month, in Munshigunge, Calcutta's portside redlight district. Acting on a tip-off, the deputy commissioner (DC) of police (port) and the officer-in-charge of the Watgunj *thana*, stationed their forces in plain clothes in the redlight zone. The DC had information that 41 girls were to be brought to the Munshigunge brothels that day.

The operation lasted two and a half hours. One by one, the police picked up 41 girls, of whom 36 were from Nepal. To the trained police eye they all looked underage, so they were booked under the Juvenile Justice Act. "This was the biggest such operation in Calcutta," claims the DC.

As most of the girls were from



alleged that the site had ben allotted to Moily through the MLA's housing cooperative society in the first place, and he had it illegally transferred in his wife's name.

"Nothing about it was illegal," said Mrs Malati Moily. "Since he was just an MLA and an advocate then, and we could not get much loans for building the house, we had it transferred in my name. I am an income tax assessee and have two industries. On this we raised loans and built the house." And Veerappa Moily agrees. "Everything was above board," he says. "Transferring the site was also done within the Bangalore Development Authority's rules. There has been no fraud perpetuated in this case."

As for the rent he had been collecting, Moily said the state government had processed his application and granted the amount. Though the Moilys had asked for Rs 9,000 the government fixed the rent at Rs 8,000. But generally ministers living in their own houses are granted only Rs 1,000 a month. "What he is doing is illegal and anyone with any conscience would not be doing such a thing," says Subbaiah.

The Opposition soon latched on to the controversy. J.H. Patel, president of the state Janata Dal, called for Moily's ouster from the Cabinet and also demanded chief minister Veerendra Patil's resignation. "The matter has gone to the court," said the CM, "Let the court decide." •

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

High pressure

Dal leaders from the hilly and backward districts unite against Biju Patnaik



ORISSA

The hiatus between Bhubaneswar and western Orissa is increasing, so much so that it is creating a clear rift within the ruling Janata Dal. And the beleaguered man is chief minister Biju Patnaik, whose hands are already full with a plethora of problems.

While the anti-reservation stir in the coastal districts of the state took the government by surprise and forced Biju to spurn the Mandal Commission's recommendations on the grounds that they were full of "incongruities", the Dal's legislators from the state's western districts feel that the quota policies were not entirely irrelevant.



Hota: demanding his share

What has made matters worse for Biju is that leaders from the districts of Sambalpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Phulbani and Sundargarh, which have a predominantly tribal population, have formed themselves into a pressure group to extract their share of development funds from the state budget. And leading this anti-Biju cabal is Bhabani Shankar Hota, the Janata Dal MP from Sambalpur.

On 10 September, the Dal leaders of Sambalpur met to chalk out their plan of action, and the party's stalwarts from the other four districts, which form Orissa's most backward regions, are expected to join hands.

In fact, the Union deputy minister for sports and youth affairs, Bhakta Charan Das, who has been persistently demanding the economic uplift of Kalahandi, has openly charged the state government of being oblivious to the woes of this tribal region. Yet, before the elections, the Janata Dal had extracted considerable political mileage by highlighting the acute poverty of this district. Das told SUNDAY that he had decided to tour this district for at least four days every month, even if it meant quitting his job at the Centre. Das regrets that welfare assistance to Kalahandi has shrunk during the last six months of Janata Dal rule compared to what it used to be during the Congress(I) regime.

Balagopal Mishra, a Dal MP from Bolangir, is equally disillusioned. He is sore over the lack of development activities in his constituency and is toying with the idea of launching a stir under the banner of Western Orissa Liberation Front on the lines of the Gorkha National Liberation Front in Darjeeling, West Bengal.

Surely, the tug-of-war between Biju and his partymen from western Orissa is going to intensify in the coming months. •

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

Nepal, the kingdom's consulate in Calcutta was contacted. But the officer who arrived, couldn't be of much help. The only information that he could coax out of the bewildered girls was that they had been promised jobs in Calcutta.

The girls were produced before the magistrate at the Metropolitan Juvenile Court, in Salt Lake, on 11 August. The judge looked at the girls and concluded that 31 of them were adults. Birth certificates were not called for, nor did he feel it necessary to order ossification tests to determine their age.

The judge relied on his eyes only. "I observed the physical growth and appearances," he writes in his verdict, and felt that "most of the girls were overaged and well above the age of 18 years". He found only 10 of them to be minors and directed that they be sent to the Liluah home for destitute women. Regarding the rest, the judge ordered that "they be set at liberty at once".

So the girls were set free. And the police do not know whether they have fallen into the clutches of their employers again.

Maybe, the police aren't interested in knowing either. After all, it's the pimps who have had the last laugh. •

The rescued girls: duped innocents



Coming home

Goans start returning from Kuwait, but hundreds are still stranded



GOA

Dinanath Kerkar's house at Sancoale is crowded. The 58-year-old Kerkar has fainted because of low blood pressure. As he is revived, he cries for his son, Amar, stranded in Kuwait. Amar had taken his wife and child with him two months ago. The fate of all three is unknown.

Sixty-two-year old Magdalena Costa from Calangute has been waiting for her children to return home ever since the invasion of Kuwait. She remains glued to the TV, hoping to get some news of her 11 children. She talks about her dream: the plane carrying her children explodes in mid-air.

Such are the travails of people who have their relatives in Kuwait. There are hundreds of Goans who have not heard from their relatives since the country was occupied by Iraq. And a handful of people who have managed to come back, recount their harrowing experiences, adding to the anxiety of the local residents. Their stories are very different from the assuring tales aired by the government of India over the electronic media.

For instance, Agnel Fernandes, who returned to Goa on 21 August, is yet to recover from the 16-day ordeal he underwent in an Iraqi prison. He told SUNDAY that at around 5.50 am on 2 August, when he was on his way to work, Iraqi soldiers suddenly rounded up 4,000 people on the streets, herded them into buses and packed them off to jail.

The prisoners went on hunger strike, which was called off only after they were assured of proper treatment. "Among us was a pregnant Goan woman and there was no one to look after her. We were served either one or half a loaf of bread daily, along with *dal* for meals. Those who tried to run away, were shot," he said.

Anacleto Fernandes, another evacuee , said, "The Iraqi soldiers knocked on the door of my flat. When I opened the door, they stormed in and tried to take me away. When I told them that I had my wife and children inside, they became all the more adamant. I had to leave without bidding them goodbye, because I was dragged away. Till today, I don't know the fate of my wife and my grown-up daughters."

Understandably, after listening to such first-hand accounts the people here grew restive. The worried relatives were seen making a beeline for the local telegraph offices to make telephonic contact with their kin. But, when all attempts to establish contacts failed, tension began to increase.

For days the ruling Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) remained nonplussed. Then, when criticism against the governments' lackadaisical attitude mounted, an information cell was set up in Panaji. Interestingly, this has remained on paper. For, although over 7,500 enquiries were filed to find out about the estimated 35,000 Goans in Kuwait, the Cell has failed to give information on the whereabouts of a single Goan. Worse, the Cell which was scheduled to remain open round the clock, now functions as any other government office.

Following an outcry from the press, over the government's laxity in ascertaining the fate of the Goans, a three-member government delegation, which included tourism minister Churchill Alemao and industries minister Somnath Zuwarkar, decided to tour the Gulf states, in a bid to help stranded Goans.



Education minister Sashikala Kakodkar has, meanwhile, issued instructions that students returning from Kuwait should be given admission in educational institutions. All they will have to do is produce affidavits, if they are unable to furnish school leaving certificates. A task force has also been stationed in Bombay to help those who are coming back. Accommodation is also being provided to those

Soap opera

An attempt to hijack an Indian Airlines plane fails

"I never thought I would fail," moaned Mahalingam, as he sat in the lock-up of a Bangalore police station. He was flying high a few hours earlier, in an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 flight from Coimbatore to Madras, when he thought he would hijack the plane to Australia.

The 26-year-old youth, who dropped out of an engineering course, said: "I either had to go to Australia to realise my dream of becoming a scientist or commit suicide." He opted for the first and tried to pass off a cake of soap wrapped in a handkerchief as a grenade in a bid to scare the captain into flying him to Perth.

But the pilot saw through the hoax, landed the plane at Bangalore airport on the plea of refuelling, and soon Mahalingam found himself behind bars.

While the police put down Mahalingam, who has a brilliant academic record, as "mentally deranged" and some newspapers dubbed him "a desperado", he turned out to be just an emotionally depressed youth. When he read of some Russians successfully hijacking a plane to Karachi and Stockholm, he seriously began



A Goan in Kuwait: end of the dream

who wish to stay in Bombay for a few days before coming to Goa.

At the moment, the concern of the people here is solely about the safety of their relatives in the war-ravaged country. The economic impact of the Gulf crisis on Goa is still not being considered, and what the state government does to rehabilitate the displaced people is left to be seen. But what is certain is that the fortunes of a large number of Goans have been shattered. ●

Bosco De Souza Eremita/Panaji

thinking of doing the same.

For two months he mulled over the idea. When he had saved just enough money, he bought an air ticket, packed a few clothes, picked up all his certificates, and boarded a flight for the first time. "I was excited. I never thought of buying a real hand grenade because I did not want to hurt anyone," he said.

When the pilot saw through his ploy, Mahalingam knew his game was up. And as the police cordoned off the aircraft and came to arrest him, he gave in without a murmur. Now the police, who have held him under a list of charges under the Anti-Hijacking Act, are wondering whether anyone will come to bail him out. As for Mahalingam, an adventure movie [illegible] that his flight thriller [illegible] ending. ●

Writers' block

The Congress(I) stages a show of strength in Calcutta



WEST BENGAL

As chief minister Jyoti Basu and his ministerial colleagues huddled in their air-conditioned cubby-holes in Writers' Buildings, the crowds, raucous but disciplined, began to gather on 12 September. The siege of Writers' Buildings, the Edwardian red-brick seat of the state government, had begun.

Under the scorching September sun, thousands of Congressmen waited with patience and unexpected discipline as their leaders predicted the downfall of the Marxists. The Congress(I) leaders, normally a cabal of warring chieftains, had buried their hatchets that day.

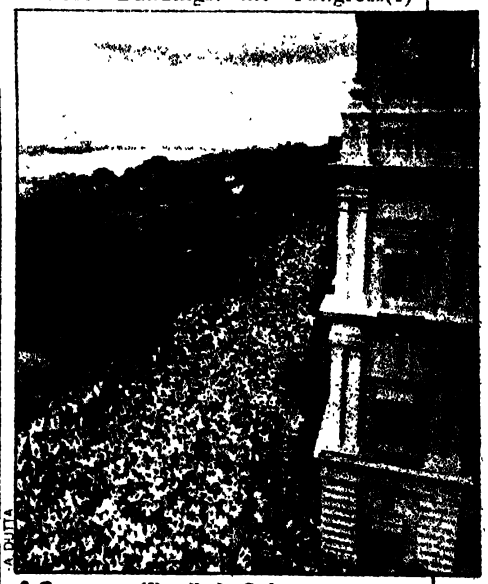
All through the afternoon, six large meetings continued simultaneously in central Calcutta, paralysing the city and Howrah, and leaving Left Front leaders a little pensive. Temporarily at least, the senior Congressmen had forgotten their old blood-feuds and the rally was a departure from the normal divided-we-stand united-we-fall politics.

Quick to counterattack, PCC(I) president, A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury asked Congressmen to prepare for a Bangla Bandh after the Durga pujas, a four-day festival of cheerful extravagance at the end of this month, were over. "Jyoti Basu has lost the confidence of the people. We will drag him from inside Writers' Buildings," he said. Other leaders including former union ministers Priyaranjan Dasmunshi, Ajit Panja, and Pranab Mukherjee, and legislators Subrata Mukherjee and Somen Mitra turned on the heated rhetoric.

Even unprecedented success did not help to paper over all the cracks in the party. Supporters of Ajit Panja and local MLA Sadhan Pande clashed publicly while other hot-blooded workers, in a breach of discipline, attempted to break into the heavily guarded Writers' Buildings.

Despite Jyoti Basu's bluster that the attempts to besiege the buildings had failed, no one was fooled by the ominous attempts at muscle-flexing by the Congress(I). Several lakh workers, mostly from the districts, had attended the rallies. Many more (about 40 per cent of the electorate in the state) are still staunch Congress(I) supporters. The "siege" after the bandhs called by the Congress(I) on August 16 and the SUCI and Naxalite combine a few days later was the third failure of the Left Front, still outwardly intact, but showing signs of inner-party conflict. After 13 years in power, the Left Front is losing its lustre, though there is little evidence that the Congress(I) has gained.

Still, if a journey has to begin to the seats of power in the *gaddis* of Writers' Buildings, the Congress(I)



A. DUTTA

A Congress(I) rally in Calcutta: bouncing back

made several firm strides on 12 September. If only for the exemplary, if unlikely, discipline of its workers the march to Writers' was a success. The state assembly elections are still two years away, but if the long hours of power cuts, the industrial desolation continues and the crime-rate, including atrocities on women, continues to soar, the Congress(I) might begin thinking of an upset even in 1992. But without hard work and party unity, dreams of victory will remain mere dreams. ●

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Chariots of fire

The Bharatiya Janata Party's rath *will send the country up in flames*



In Urdu, it is called *noora kushti*, an exhibition of free-style wrestling where the combatants are not really fighting each other but putting up a display of acrobatics, every move fixed in advance but driving the audience to frenzy by appearing to be the real thing. As BJP president L.K. Advani's chariot of fire rolls out of Somnath and heads out towards Ayodhya, through eight states of central and northern India, the real battle over the future of India is being joined. V.P. Singh's antics are merely a diverting *noora kushti*. Where the real action is the grim struggle being waged between secularism and communalism to capture the destiny of India.

Strange. For we are all, it would seem, secularists now: the reality of our multi-religious society is so overwhelming that the Vajpayees—and even the Advanis—of the BJP are obliged to rein in their atavism and pay lip service, if little else, to an equal place in India for each of our religions: *sarva dharma sambhaava*. What then is it that distinguishes the mainstream secularism of the Gandhi-Nehru tradition from the "positive secularism" of the BJP-RSS-VHP variety? Basically, it would appear, their differing attitudes to our historical legacy. The Gandhi-Nehru tradition exults in our composite culture. It not merely accepts but celebrates the immense variety of India. It does not just come to terms with diversity; it treats diversity as the cornerstone of our unity. It is a tradition which holds that if India is not a palimpset of every major—and several minor—religions of the world, it would not be the *Bharatvarsha* we have known for 5,000 years and more.

The BJP-RSS tradition, on the other hand, looks back in anger. A thousand years ago, they say, India was stolen from the true *Bharatvasis*. One symbol of that armed dacoity they see as the Mandir at Somnath: sacked 17 times by Mahmood of Ghazni and last razed to the ground by Aurangzeb. The other symbol of their sense of deprivation is the Masjid at Ayodhya, built by that "barbarous *lootera*", Babar, who they believe—fact or fiction concerns them not, only what they call their "faith"—demolished a temple and built in its place the Babri Masjid. Advani, flaming sword in hand, casts himself in the role of the avenging angel and sets out from Somnath to Ayodhya to wreak his vengeance on history. Shorn of sweet reasonableness—his usual mode of communication—the president of the BJP ceases to potter around like a benevolent bank clerk. He reveals himself for what he is: not the friendly neighbourhood walrus that you took him to be but an incandescent revanchist, with a chip on his shoulder, hatred in his heart and the impassioned mission of making today's Shahabuddins pay for the sins of their "ancestors", the marauders who entered India from Central Asia many thousands of moons ago.

Listen to him speaking at Himachal Bhawan, New Delhi, on 13 August 1990 (as reported in the BJP's official organ, the *Organiser*, 2/9/90): "The Ram Janmabhoomi movement is the biggest cultural movement in history to unite crores of Indian hearts (note the subtle equation of "Indian" with "Hindu") and assert the emancipation of *Hindu* culture (see, in a minute, how the gloves come off!) against the onslaught of medieval vandals (the *"looteras"*, in BJP chief minister Sunderlal Patwa's far more pungent phrase!) and pseudo-secular and pseudo-intellectual elements (i.e., you and me!)."

Here we have the authentic voice of "positive secularism"—a shrill litany of complaints by an overwhelming majority against a cowering minority. The BJP is not impressed with the fact of the insurmountable majority of Indians—around 85 per cent—being



D P SINHA

Hindus. They will not rest till they have bludgeoned the remaining 15 per cent—most particularly, the Muslims and Christians—into conformity with their version of the "Hindu Way of Life". Paranoia is their hallmark, revenge the leitmotif of their politics: "(The Ram Janmabhoomi movement's) loud and clear message," says Advani "is that Hindu sentiment can no more be trifled with in this country". Who is trifling with this sentiment, he does not say. But onward Hindu soldiers, onwards to Ayodhya!

An echo here too of Advani's blunt assertion to a gathering of BJP *bhaktas* in Brent Council, London, last June: "Secularism has come to be equated with allergy to Hinduism"; followed by the outrageous parody: "The practitioners of pseudo-secularism (how they love the word 'pseudo'—but I am afraid there is nothing pseudo about these sods!) have to believe that though all Indians may be equal yet non-Hindus are more equal than Hindus"!

The BJP just do not understand the



BJP president **L.K. Advani** reveals himself for what he is: not the friendly neighbourhood walrus but an incandescent revanchist with hatred in his heart and the impassioned mission of making today's Shahabuddins pay for the sins of their "ancestors"

desperate need of the minorities to adhere to and assert their identity. Instead, they see every act of sensitivity to minority concerns as "appeasement" and every assertion by the minorities of their respective ways of life as a denial of "justice" to the majority. Why a Muslim turning to Mecca to pray harms a Hindu is not explained, but nationalism is equated with religion and patriotism with majority communalism.

The BJP has no confidence in the fact of the Hindu majority. They have no patience with the minorities' need of an identity. They cannot abide the colourful diversity of our society. Theirs is a catatonic obsession with the fear of being overrun. What Advani is about to do is to unleash across the country the Badlu Ram Guptas of the world. And who, you might well ask, is Badlu Ram Gupta? I don't know. Never met him. And don't wish to. But he is a typical BJP-RSS cadre, infuriated—as he writes in the *Organiser* (29/7/90)—by the 'abject and endless appeasement of the minorities, particularly the Muslims" Gupta adds: "The kind of monstrous interpretation that secularism has acquired here has no parallel or precedent in the entire annals of human history"!

It is this mentality that V.P. Singh has, through coalitions, brought to power in Gujarat and Rajasthan. It is this mentality that V.P. Singh has, through unprincipled electoral adjustments, brought to power on its own in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. It is to pander to the perversions of people like Sadananda Kakde—"The Hindus have fought 76 battles for the restoration of Sri Ram Janmabhoomi and more than three lakh Hindus have laid down their lives for the cause" (*Organiser*, 15/7/90)—that Advani is setting out from Somnath for Ayodhya. Already, innocent Muslims have paid with their lives in Vadodra for Advani's selection of Somnath as his kick-off point. Advani himself may ensure a whistle-clean passage for his jeep-mounted *rath* but everywhere he goes he will be provoking murder and mayhem against "the outward manifestation", as Badlu Ram Gupta has it "of the deep-rooted festering sore of discrimination against the Hindu nation".

Ten months ago, far too many of us—decent, humane people like my generous fellow-columnist, Vinod Mehta, who don't feel intimidated by a small religious minority nor threatened by someone else reading the *namaz* nor polluted by someone spreading the tenets of the *Quran* and the *Bible*—chose to describe a man who had secured less than a fifth of the vote as the "voice of the people". Far

too many of us kidded ourselves into believing that propping up a 20 per cent government with a communalist pillar was not compromise with communalism but "coalition politics". Far too many of us fooled ourselves into believing that the pristine secularism of the communists would not be tainted by association with the communalists. And far, far too many of us thought the BJP could be the bulwark to shore up our democracy against the ruins of the last electoral verdict.

The crunch has now come. The time is *now* to stand up and say,
"Enough, no more
This music mads me
Let it sound no more!". The pretence has to be thrown off, petty politicking has to be put aside—and the real issue faced. In far less time than even so prejudiced an observer as I could have imagined, the communalists are demanding their price. The BJP has dropped all pretence of even-handedness and proclaimed its intention of jettisoning the "secularist mumbo-jumbo", putting the "mad minority zealots" in their place, and pulling down the "mosque-like structure" (not, mind you, the mosque!) called the Babri Masjid. (Quotes from the *Organiser* editorial of 1/7/90.) Advani has described the "country-wide VHP campaign covering lakhs of villages" as "a stroke of genius". And the mad zealots of the Bajrang Dal, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Shiv Sena, the RSS and the BJP have banded together to pressurise the BJP leadership into "confronting the government" on "certain sensitive issues" which—please mark the *Organiser's* (8/7/90) words—"are *basic* to the BJP's policy framework and give the party its *distinctive* identity". No wonder Lal Krishna Advani has threatened in Bhopal to bring the whole crazy mansion tumbling down.

It is appalling, however, that Advani should have claimed he is starting his *yatra* in Somnath because Nehru's Cabinet sanctioned the restoration of the Somnath Mandir. As the *Hindustan Times* editorial of 11 May, 1951—otherwise sympathetic to the restoration of the temple—made clear: "The government is contributing nothing to the reconstruction of the Somnath Temple...Even the Saurashtra government is incurring expenditure only in connection with the usual services which all governments render in time of fairs and *melas*."

Nehru was, in fact, most upset about such "revivalism" which cuts at the very roots of our secular polity, as he made clear in his communication about the Somnath Mandir to K.M. Munshi, Advani's predecessor in the re-writing of history. Panditji wrote to the chief minister on 2 May, 1951: "You must have read about the coming ceremonies at the Somnath Temple... It should be clearly understood that this function is not governmental and the Government of India as such has nothing to do with it...We must not do anything which comes in the way of our State being secular. That is the basis of our Constitution and Governments, therefore, should refrain from associating themselves with anything which tends to affect the secular character of our State" (*Letters To the chief minister*, Volume II, pp. 388-389). And, after the ceremonies were over, Nehru wrote again to the Chief Ministers: "Our frequent declarations that we are a secular State are appreciated abroad and raise our credit. But they are not wholly believed in...The recent inauguration of the Somnath Temple, with pomp and ceremony, has created a very bad impression abroad about India and her professions (of secularism)" (Volume II, p. 462).

It is true, as Advani never tires of stressing, that President Rajendra Prasad himself (in the face of Nehru's stern disapproval) visited Somnath to perform the *puja* to mark the installation of the deity. But so conscious was he of the negative vibes that might be generated that he had to stress: "I would like to make it clear that these celebrations neither imply nor can imply that we are seeking to re-establish in our country the political and social conditions of a bygone age, nor does it imply that we are seeking to open again the psychological or physical wounds which have been healed by the passage of time...The great truth, I repeat, is religious tolerance" (*Hindustan Times*, 12/5/51). So, before Advani starts quoting the scriptures, let him put that in his pipe and smoke it!

Communalism must be stopped. Secularism must be saved. The spirit of Nehru must be revived. The BJP is heady with delusions of grandeur—even as the Janata Dal is heady with delusions of longevity. Rajendra Kumar Gupta, the president of the Uttar Pradesh BJP, may believe that his party has now emerged as the "*teesra vikalp*" (the Third Alternative). And Mulayam Singh Yadav may assert that the Janata Dal will not allow the Ram Mandir to come up in "*saath janam*" (seven generations). But, with only one Indian in ten voting for the BJP, the party—its pretensions to the contrary notwithstanding—is no *vikalp*. And with the BJP pulling its saffron rug from under the JD's feet, the JD has not *saath janam* ahead of it but not much more than *saath haftey* (seven weeks) to go. The end of this interreguum is imminent. But before it ends, the question that each one of us has to ask himself, VP-lover or no, is this: Are we going to let the chariots of fire send our country up in flames? ●

The views expressed in this article are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.



JAGDISH YADAV

The mad zealots of the Bajrang Dal, the VHP and the Shiv Sena have banded together to pressurise the BJP leadership into "confronting the government" on "certain sensitive issues"

The centre will not hold

The plan to open a cultural centre in London creates controversy

Until two years ago, 8 South Audley Street marked the site of a derelict building, crumbling away due to neglect. That, despite its illustrious history: it had, at different times, been the residence of such luminaries as the Earl of Scarborough, the Archbishop of York, Viscount Curzon and Queen Caroline of Brunswick, until it was acquired by the Indian high commission in London. But as dry rot set into the structure, it was used only by drivers of the commission to spend the occasional night.

All that will change now with the high commission's plans to restore the building and make it India's answer to Max Mueller Bhavan and the American Centre. Architects are already at work at what will be called the Nehru Cultural Centre, and will bring India's heritage—music, dance, experimental theatre, paintings, literature and films—to Britain, with a director (such names as Shabana Azmi and Girish Karnad are being bandied about) officiating over the show.

The project hasn't been without its share of controversies, though. A sum of £ 3.2 million has already been incurred on restoring the building and the commission's auditors have raised their objections to this, as the money was, apparently, spent without authorisation. Says high commissioner Kuldip Nayar about the scheme initiated by his predecessor M.K. Rasgotra: "Now that the building is there and work has started, we might as well do something about it. This place can effectively serve as a place where people of Indian origin and the British can meet. It can serve as a link to those who live abroad but like to keep in touch with India, and as a cultural centre."

Nayar now faces the daunting task of raising £ 1,00,000 which will be required if the centre is to function as a full-time office with a director in charge. He has already raised about £ 3,80,000 from contributions from local non-resident Indians and the like. The money, he says, will go to the India Foundation, a charitable organisation incorporated under British laws, to encourage cultural activities in Britain, which will be closely associated with the centre. As of now, the high commissioner is holding meetings with potential members of the foundation in an attempt to raise more money.

Meanwhile work at refurbishing the building at 8 South Audley Street continues. Restoration work includes removing the wet and dry rot, strengthening the foundation and repainting the rooms in colours which are traditionally associated with India. The roof has been covered with new slates and the windows replaced with double glazed units. The timber beams in the interior have been removed and replaced with steel or reinforced concrete, and the timber joists of the first floor strengthened so that it could be used as an auditorium. An attempt has been made to keep as close to the original design—stucco dressings, marble fireplaces and elaborate metal railings—as possible.

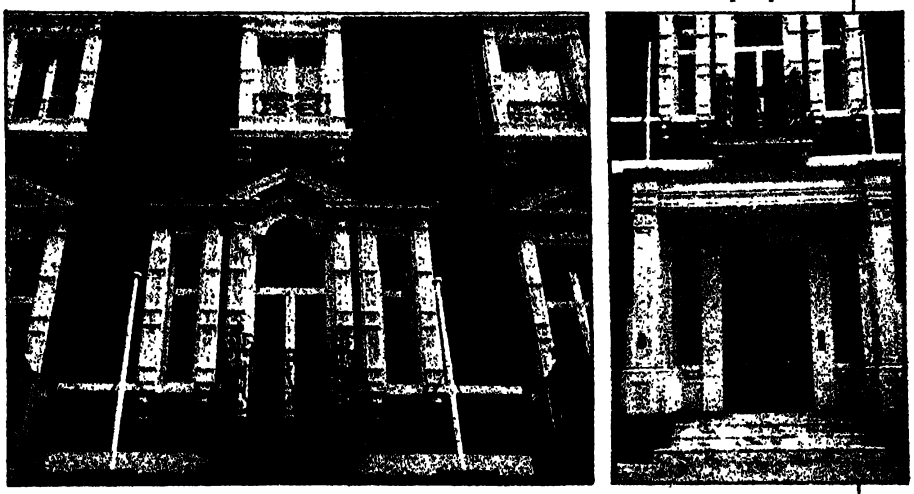
If everything goes according to plan, the reception room on the first floor will be converted into an auditorium, to seat about 150 people. One of the rooms will be converted into a bar and the other used as a reading room. The second floor will be converted into the residential quarters of the centre's director, and the third and fourth floors renovated to house other staffers. The rooms in the basement will be used by the artists. All in all, a plush, roomy centre for Indian cultural activities in London.

Nevertheless, the criticisms of the scheme are many:

- At a time when the high commission is contemplating cuts in jobs and services, such expenditure is wasteful and unnecessary.
- Indian artists are more likely to stage performances at Queen Elizabeth Hall and the South Bank, and don't require the centre.
- Select concerts featuring Pandit Ravi Shankar and Amjad Ali Khan have been held at the high commission before, with around 150 people in attendance. So, a small auditorium, as the one planned at 8 South Audley Street, is not required.
- London-based Indian artists don't need the high commission's backing or performing space, either.
- The post of director will soon degenerate into a job that is offered to oblige somebody by sending him for a paid holiday in London.
- The money spent on the centre could be put to better use by providing an information centre.

But while rumblings of discontent in the high commission continue, with memorandums being drafted and auditors protesting over the expenses, Nayar is looking to inaugurate the centre around the year-end. But it's bound to be a very hassled high commissioner who presides over the opening ceremony. ●

Shrabani Basu/London



At 8 South Audley Street: the proposed Nehru Cultural Centre

Southern offensive

Telugu stars Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna now try to make it big in Hindi films

Vyjanthimala, Padmini, Gemini Ganesan, Hema Malini, Rekha, Rajnikant, Jayaprada, Kamalahasan, Sridevi...The list is endless: of stars who climbed to the top of popularity charts down south: and then risked it all in order to make it big in Hindi cinema. With varying degrees of success. While such actresses as Vyjanthimala, Hema Malini, Rekha and the now reigning queen Sridevi, effortlessly charmed their ways into the heart of the north Indian cinegoer, their male counterparts had a tougher time of it. Nobody remembers Gemini Ganesan's sole Hindi release today, while Rajnikant and Kamalahasan—whose smouldering presence sets southern screens on fire—proved to be the proverbial damp squibs.

Nobody is too sure as to what accounts for this dichotomy. But theories abound. One of them has it that while the fair, buxom southern heroines (and their thunder thighs) are a hit with audiences south of the Vindhyas, colour prejudice works against those short, dark actors, who are derisively referred to as 'Madrasi' heroes.

But, not in the least daunted by this attitude, two superstars of Telugu cinema, Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna, are all set to storm the bastion of the Hindi film industry. And never mind the unhappy experience of their predecessors.

Chiranjeevi, who is to Telugu cinema what Amitabh Bachchan was to Bombay films in the Seventies, is today even more popular in Andhra Pradesh than N.T. Rama Rao was in his heyday. This, despite the fact that he resolutely steers clear of the mythological mish-mash popularised by NTR, acting instead in the regulation *masala* movie, with lots of disco dancing (or what passes for that) and *dishum-dishum*. And his Hindi launch vehicle, *Pratibandh*, an *Ardh Satya*-like movie, where a police officer single-handedly combats the evils of the system, is tailor-made for him, with lots of fight sequences and duets with the chirpily attractive Juhi Chawla.

Nagarjuna, the yuppie hero of Andhra Pradesh (though still second to the undisputed number one, Chiranjeevi) is best known to Hindi film audiences because of his alleged affair with the *Pushpak* heroine, Amala. But with the Hindi remake of his Telugu hit *Shiva*, a "violent campus story", Nagarjuna, the son of the legendary Akkineni Nageswara Rao, hopes to gain recognition for his acting prowess.

Of the two, Chiranjeevi will make an appearance earlier, his *Pratibandh* being released a week or so before *Shiva*. Telugu cinema observers are of the opinion that the film is bound to be a hit. Says Ravi Raja, the director of *Pratibandh*: "Chiranjeevi has worked his way to the top in Telugu cinema through sheer hard work and discipline. I feel he will make it big in Hindi films because he is determined to get national recognition."

Adds a Vijaywada-based distributor: "He dances better than Govinda or Mithun and his fight scenes are as good as those seen in Jackie Chan movies. Nagarjuna or Balakrishna (NTR's son) do not have his charisma. Even his flops are profitable in the long run."

Small wonder then that Chiranjeevi is regarded as a one-man industry in Andhra Pradesh. He commands an amazing price of Rs 41 lakhs, while his films, made on a budget of Rs 1-1.50 crores are sold for anything upward of Rs 2 crores and do business worth Rs 3 crores or so. Last year, his *Attaki Yamudu Ammayiki Mogdu* was one of the top grossers, while his latest release *Jagadeka Veerudu Athiloka Sundari*, co-starring Sridevi, is all set to overtake *Shiva* as far as box-office returns are concerned. Says Allu Aravind, who has produced many Chiranjeevi hits: "His screen presence makes him a veritable gold mine."



Nagarjuna, best-known to north Indian audiences because of his alleged affair with Amala, is determined to gain national recognition with his maiden Hindi film, *Shiva*



At 38, Chiranjeevi—who almost became a cost accountant after arriving in Madras from Mogultur, his village in coastal Andhra Pradesh—is the best Telugu cinema has to offer. Says noted director K. Balachander: "He is half Rajnikant and half Kamalahasan, because not only can he do action, he can also act." This testimonial is a little surprising as Balachander's Chiranjeevi-starrer *Rudra Veena* was a big flop. Though only because, as the star confesses: "People wanted to see me with an AK 47 not a *veena* in my hands."

On an average, Chiranjeevi acts in four Telugu films every year, most of them based on such Hollywood hits as *Rambo* and the various Bond films. Now, however, he'd much rather concentrate on making a dent in Hindi films. He explains: "I have reached a stage in my life when I am craving for a national image and popularity. That is the only reason I am doing a Hindi film. I will not do any second-lead roles and end up like Rajnikant. If I fail I will go back to Telugu films which have made me what I am."

Nagarjuna, the 31-year-old southern heartthrob doesn't share these doubts, appearing quite sanguine about the prospects of the Hindi *Shiva*. An engineer, with an American education, Nagarjuna was first introduced to Telugu audiences by his father Nageswara Rao in *Vikram*, a remake of the Jackie Shroff-starrer *Hero* in 1983. The film proved to be a runaway hit.

But a spate of flops followed until Nagarjuna's career was redeemed by Mani Ratnam, popularly known as the Steven Spielberg of the south, who directed him in *Geetanjali*. Not only did the movie get the cash registers ringing in Andhra Pradesh but was dubbed into Tamil as *Idayate Thirudate*, and proved to be a superhit in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. *Geetanjali* received the Swarna Kamal for its innovative approach in depicting passion and its technical brilliance. What's more, it established Nagarjuna as a major force in south India's film industry.

Close on the heels of *Geetanjali* came *Shiva*, one of the biggest blockbusters of the south. A far cry from the kitsch that passed off as cinema in Andhra Pradesh ever since NTR's days, *Shiva* proved to be the precursor of serious middle-of-the-road cinema in the state. Produced by the Nageswara Rao-owned Annapurna Studios, the story and presentation of the film owed much to Nagarjuna. Though it did glorify the cult of violence and indiscipline in the college campus, *Shiva*, with foot-tapping music by Illaiyaraaja, was the epitome of a slickly-directed pot-boiler, and brought realism into Telugu cinema for, perhaps, the first time.

Directed by Ram Gopal Verma, a former video-shop owner who used to supply Nagarjuna with the cassettes of the latest Hollywood starrers, *Shiva* is based on roughly half a dozen Western movies. Confesses Nagarjuna: "I am definitely influenced by Hollywood and its films. Verma vibed very well with me and we have tried to play down the usual melodrama and hysterics associated with Telugu films. Instead in *Shiva* everything is natural and casual. Most of the scenes were enacted as though we were having a normal conversation."

The idea appealed to audiences, both in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The Tamil version, called *Udayam* and sold with the catchy slogan: "A study in inhumanities", did better business than the average Tamil grosser. Made at a cost of Rs 75 lakhs, *Shiva* is expected to make about Rs 5 crores in Andhra Pradesh and rake in another Rs 2 crores in the other southern states.

But will the Hindi remake be just as successful? Nagarjuna certainly thinks so. "The Hindi *Shiva* looks very north Indian, even the extras are from Bombay and the other characters are well-known Bombay stars," he says. "Today the Hindi audiences are lapping up new heroes and ideas. And if *Maine Pyar Kiya's* dubbed Telugu version can be a hit in Andhra Pradesh, why can't *Shiva* be a hit in north India?"

The *Shiva* star's desire for national recognition, doesn't have to do with ego alone, though. Entry into Hindi cinema will enable him to feature in the kind of big budget slick starrer he likes best, but which is rarely made in his home state. And also star in expensive bilinguals.

Assuming, of course, that he manages to break the hoodoo that never allowed Kamalahasan and Rajnikant to make it in Bombay. Producer-director G. Venkateswaran, for one, is dubious about both Nagarjuna's and Chiranjeevi's chances: "I am very sceptical about their prospects because our heroes don't fit in with the north Indian audience concept. Nagarjuna and Chiranjeevi are wasting their time trying to make waves in Hindi cinema."

But neither of the stars have much time for such prophets of doom. And would much rather wait for the message of the box-office—whatever that might be. ●

Sreedhar Pillay/Madras





Chiranjeevi's Hindi launch vehicle *Pratibandh*, has him throwing his fists around with *élan*, and then taking time off to sing duets with Juhi Chawla

FAMILY HOMES

Suzanne Slesin and Stafford Cliff on distinctive Indian houses. Photographs by David Brittain



HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES

Enrico das Dores Santana da Silva was born in the 300-year-old Portuguese Rococo house known as Seven Shoulders because of its seven gables, only three of which remain. The judge is a member of the eighth generation of a leading family of the imperial Portuguese colony in Goa. Sebastiano da Silva, who built the imposing residence in Margao, was an emissary to the Portuguese viceroy.

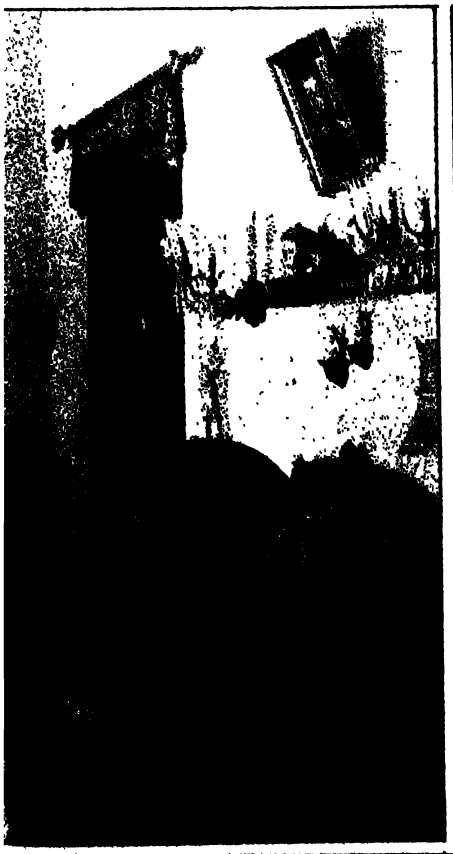


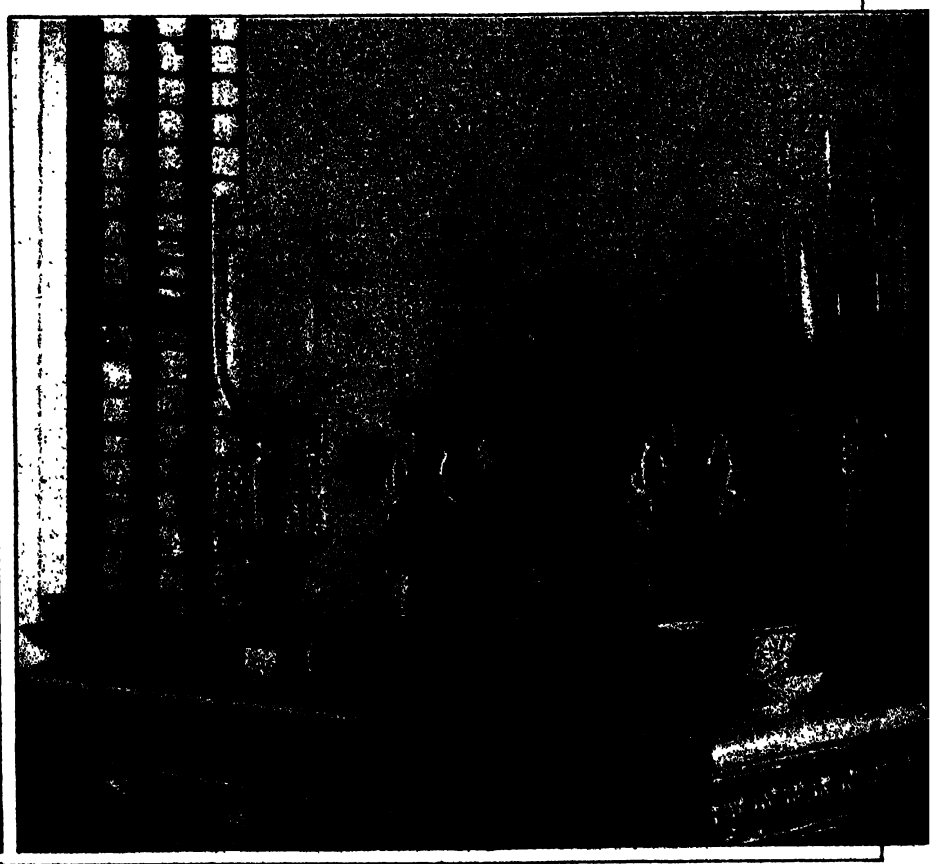
RIGHT: The drawing room was once part of an enormous salon with room for 200 guests. With its austere white walls, black-and-white terrazzo marble floor, and ebonised rosewood furniture, it is both stylish and refined. Gold and scarlet brocaded damask fabric hangs from early 19th century arrow-shaped rods



LEFT: Decorative plasterwork frames the doorways in the tiled-floor bedroom. The painted iron-and-brass Victorian bed has a half tester draped with lace

BELOW: European and Chinese ceramics from the 18th and 19th centuries have been arranged on a marble-topped console table in the drawing room. Carved and gilded wood hands once held large mirrors shipped from Europe

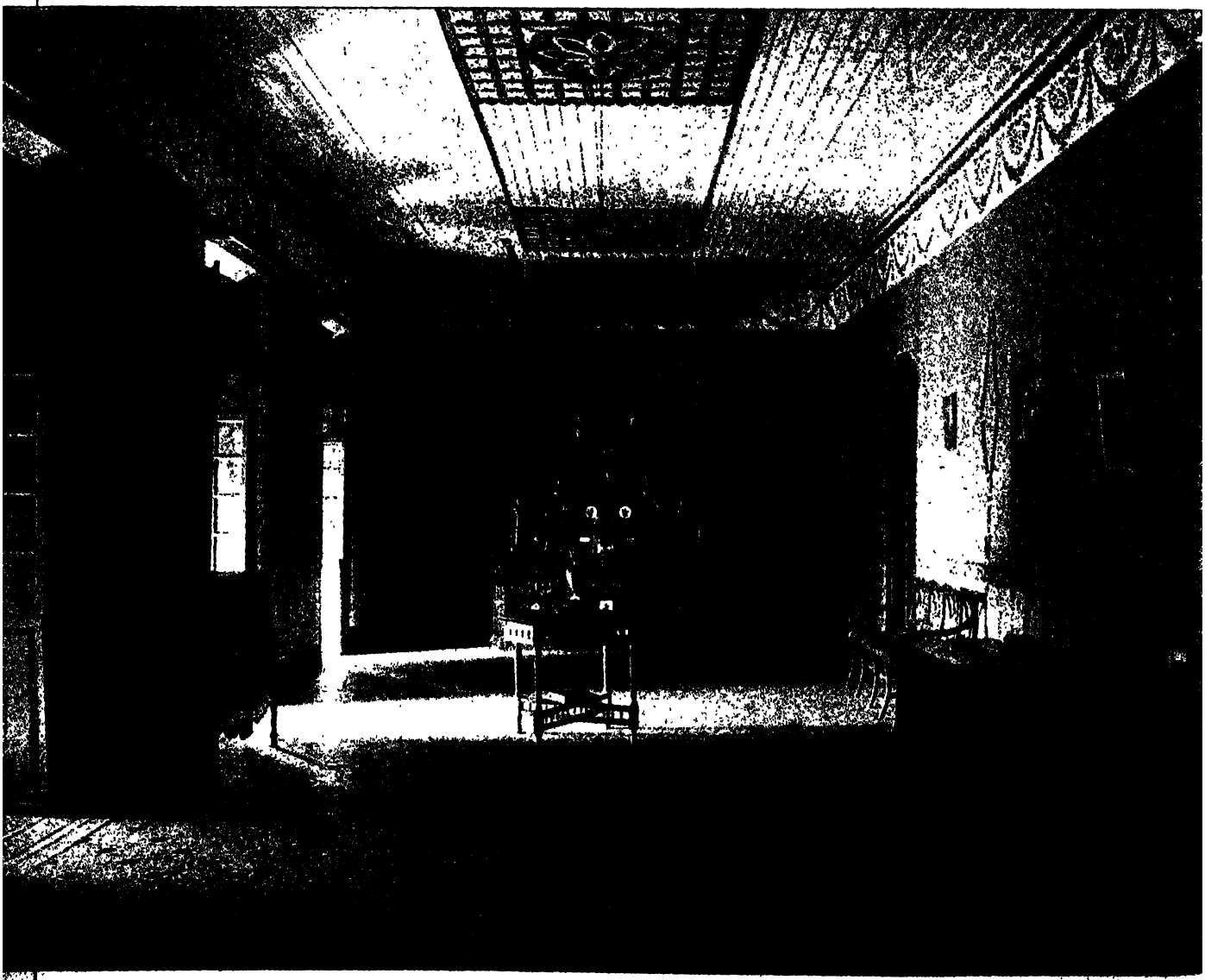




STATELY HOME

The Miranda house in Loutulim is one of Goa's most stately residences and has been in the same family since 1707. The Mirandas, descended from Hindu Brahmins, converted to Catholicism more than 200 years ago. The house's impressive oratory, or private chapel, underscores both the religious and decorative heritage of Goa as a Portuguese colony. It is presently owned by cartoonist Mario Miranda.





MONUMENTAL MANSION

Set on Malabar Hill, one of the grandest sites in Bombay, Kilachand House is a 25-bedroom mansion that was built by a Parsi family in the late 1880s on a street known as the Street of Maharajas. It is presently owned by Tanil Kilachand.



LEFT: Twin symmetrical marble staircases rise gracefully from the entrance hall



LEFT: The oratory is focused on an elaborately carved tiered altar that is inlaid with tile. In spite of the icons, reliquaries, and other religious objects, the private chapel, where the household worships daily, is in keeping with the decor of the rest of the house



Indian Style by Suzanne Slesin and Stafford Cliff. Photographs by David Brittain. Printed by Thames and Hudson, London. Price: Rs 900

Obviously, the Rajiv Rai-Sonam love story has given much cheer to such people as Javed Jaffrey. For, the latest in *filmi* gossip columns is that the dancing *devi*...er... diva has swept up-and-coming oomph girl (if you'll, please, overlook the pounds of excess flesh) Shikha Swaroop off her feet.

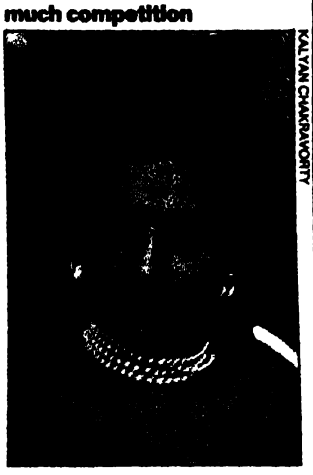
Apparently, the pair discovered each other in the snows of Kulu Manali during a location shoot for *Tehalka* and realised that they had been made only for each other. After the regulation courtship in the course of sundry dance rehearsals, matters progressed sufficiently for them to merit a mention in film rags.

We don't know how things will go on from here. But she doesn't call him "duckie" as yet.

The rumours about the Madhuri Dixit-Aamir Khan affair may not have perturbed Anil Kapoor greatly. But it sure has got Reena, Khan's wife, very worried.

And what's more, it has led to a drastic image change. Reena, she of the demure *Bharatiya nari* looks, has now cut her hair short, wears figure-hugging jeans and T-shirts, and just about stops short of puffing Virginia Slims.

Madhuri Dixit: there's too much competition



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

We're not sure how Aamir reacts to this change.

But when reports last came in, Dixit wasn't too thrilled.



Sangeeta Bijlani: trouble's afoot

There's more trouble on Sangeeta Bijlani's horizon. And it's called Zeba Bakhtiar.

Not content with two-timing Bijli with his air-hostess friend, Salman Khan now has his roving eye fixed on the Kapoors' *Henna* girl. He was first introduced to the Pakistani beauty at Manali. And despite the disapproving presence of the various Kapoors, Chimpoo in particular, Heartbreak Khan managed to chat up Zeba in his own charming manner. And even sent her bouquets of the most expensive red roses in town.

The investment paid off. Zeba invited Khan over for dinner at an exclusive restaurant. Only the evening was spoilt by Chimpoo Kapoor, who sat at the next table and stared balefully at Salman, as he made his way through his now-insipid meal.

Now back in Bombay, Salman's still mooning over Bakhtiar.

And yes, Chimpoo is still out for his blood.

Finally, we have the truth about the Govinda-Neelam break-up.

No, the split didn't take place because the sophisticated Ms Kothari couldn't decipher the Virar *ka chokra's* accent.

Or even, because she resented the presence of old girlfriend/wife (depending on Govinda's public position) Sunita, who was a permanent fixture, despite his professed love for Neelam.

Apparently, the two parted company, on Neelam's initiative, because she couldn't bear being taken for granted. Not only did her lover keep her waiting on the sets, without a word of apology, he also carried on minor flirtations with other girls on the side, while throwing jealous tantrums when she was linked with such heroes as Chunky.

This wasn't the kind of relationship Neelam was looking for. So, she opted out.

After spending years on the fringes of big-time success, finally, things seem to be working out for Kimi Katkar.

No, she hasn't landed another prize role opposite the great Mr Bachchan; Shantanu is still not too keen on an on-going film career.



AMITA DESHMUKH

Kimi: the next Mama Katkar

But there is cause for celebration, nonetheless. For, only a couple of months after a radiant Kimi wed Shantanu, the lady is pregnant.

She's also very bored, what with dear husband coming back late at night from shooting. But the baby will give her something to look forward to.

Not all Greek

B.V. Karanth puts up a bilingual production of Hippolytus

When noted director B.V. Karanth got his repertory, the Nataka Karnataka Rangayana, going, he was sure about one thing. His students, talented though they undoubtedly were, would not be exposed to the paying public until they had got their act together.

All it took to change Karanth's mind was the visit of a Greek theatrical troupe to India. Former chief of the National School of Drama, Suresh Awasthi, informed Karanth that a team comprising such stalwarts as Calitsis Vasilios (director), Philip D. Kovantzis (music director) and Christopher Kikis (production manager) wanted to stage a Greek play in India. And would he like to collaborate on such a venture?

Karanth was willing, and began working on a bilingual production of the Greek tragedy *Hippolytus* with his foreign counterparts. The story revolved around a judicious mix of gods, godesses and mortals. Hippolytus, the illegitimate son of Theseus, incurs the wrath of the goddess of love, Aphrodite, by preferring to worship Artemis, the goddess of virginity. Aphrodite wreaks revenge by making Phaedra, Theseus's wife, fall in love with Hippolytus. Phaedra commits suicide in the end, making her husband believe that Hippolytus is the cause of her death. Theseus uses a divine boon to kill his own son.

This tale of passion and intrigue is told with all the regular trappings of Greek theatre, including a chorus. The only difference being that the chorus speaks in both Kannada and Greek.

Director Vasilios (26), who uses language as a "device of alienation" says: "Theatre which sets itself apart from the reality of the world, has a universal language. It is the only medium which can drive the viewer to think. A bilingual play can succeed better in this, especially with an audience used to leaning back and laughing."

The bilingual approach did provoke some adverse criticism, but Vasilios is unrepentent: "We tried to combine the Greek classic with what could be the most interesting aspects of Indian culture, to see where the two cultures could meet theatrically. And this has nothing to do with the understanding or logic or feeling." And sure enough, though the mix of languages was disconcerting at first, it never allowed the audience's interest to flag.

Vasilios also interpreted the story differently. His Hippolytus did not have "fully developed views" about women, while Phaedra was not a supine, remorseful woman, but one filled with anger at her plight. Raghunandana, a teacher at the repertory, translated the script from English to Kannada, opting for a free verse style, using a vocabulary easily comprehensible to the audience.

What gave the play its distinctive appeal was the quality of the music. Karanth composed the score for two songs, while music director Kovantzis used Byzantine tunes for the other numbers. Says Kovantzis: "In trying to write the music for this play I decided on Byzantine instead of purely Greek or Indian, as its rhythm is similar to Indian music."

But in the end, it was the students and the quality of their performance which kept the show going. The play lasted over three hours with no intermission: intermittent rain and numerous mosquitoes made it difficult to concentrate on the action on stage: and the emotional content of the script often made for heavy going. As Karanth explained to the audience before the performance: "This is an emotional Greek drama. Those expecting funny one-liners in this slow play will be disappointed."

He needn't have worried. The play, with simple sets made of brick and mud and the barest minimum of props, closed to a standing ovation.

For Karanth, however, this was only another play. And singularly unaffected by its success, he got down to working on a bilingual production of *Mrichakatika (The Little Clay Cart)*, scheduled for a January opening in New York.

While the *Hippolytus* team makes its way to Delphi in time for the theatre festival next summer. •

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore





Scene from *Hippolytus*; (above) B.V. Karanth: just another play

Crossing over

An exodus begins from the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church—to various breakaway groups

The Gajraula incident, where two nuns of Saint Mary's Convent were allegedly raped, sent shock waves through the Catholic Church, both in India and abroad. But while media reports played up this incident, several other instances of assault on Christian priests, nuns and teachers went unreported. According to Father Oswald Lewis, vicar general of the Lucknow diocese, over two dozen such incidents had taken place in Uttar Pradesh alone.

But it was Gajraula which proved the catalyst in getting the various bodies of the Church to protest. Protest rallies and marches were held all over the country, while several missionary schools closed down in anguish. In Aurangabad, 4,000 Christians, led by Bishop Dr Ignatius D'Cunha marched to the collectorate to express their unhappiness.

None of this, nor the letters written to the Prime Minister had much effect. Says Michel Joseph, one of the protestors: "If the Church had been strong, this rape would never have taken place. If we had protested strongly when Father Henry D'Souza was kidnapped by dacoits or when Janata Dal workers tried to build a temple in the campus of St John's campus in Agra, things would never have come to this pass. Turning the other cheek doesn't work."

But it wasn't just Christian doctrine which was behind the non-action of the Church. Weakened by the steady exodus from its ranks, it lacked both the strength and the will to take up cudgels against its tormentors. Though the Church professed to be unconcerned about the phenomenon, with Father Leslie J. Ratus maintaining that "those who have left are comparatively few in number, our churches are full, our religious services well attended", it was clear that all was not well with the Roman Catholic order.

For one thing, the number of splinter groups were increasing as was their membership (*see box*). The laity termed this "sheep stealing" but the rhetoric could not mask the fact that the desertion was voluntary. As early as December 1988, the Church recognised the danger—though only in private—and held an emergency meeting to discuss the mushrooming of splinter groups. Cardinal Simon Pimenta, president of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, led the discussion.

This was followed by a study of the exodus, conducted in Pune at the Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth (Papal Athenaeum). Research findings had it that people were disillusioned with the Church because its "doctrinal teachings and religious practices were not related sufficiently to the scriptures" and there was a "serious lack of fellowship".

It was, perhaps, to provide such "fellowship" that Joseph Dias formed CROSS (Christian Revival Oriented Social Service) on Good Friday, 24 March, 1989. Dias, who felt like many others, that the Church was not doing enough, decided to unite Christians under the banner of CROSS. Among other things, the organisation exhorts its members to take part in the political process and stand for election. Says Joseph Dias: "Even in Pakistan, they have a priest as member of minority affairs in the Cabinet. When it comes to temporal and public affairs, the Church must act as a catalyst. Which it is not doing now."

Contraception, divorce, the act of confession and the concept of purgatory are criticised by the splinter groups. And the church has no answer except taking refuge behind dogma



But the ones who have strayed from the flock think nothing of questioning the infallibility of the Church. The Papacy's only reaction is to pound its authoritarian gavel and silence the critics, or even those who ask unconfortable questions. Father Luis Bermejo, for instance. The Italian priest, taught at the Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, the Catholic university in Pune, and published a book, *Towards Christian Reunion*, in 1984. The book questioned the Catholic Church's assumption that it was the only claimant to the title of the Church of Christ, and the scriptures which serve as shackles for the believers.

The wrath of the Church fell on Bermejo soon enough. The 60-year-old Jesuit was banned from teaching theology by Rome. The priest journeyed to the Vatican to plead his case and received another shock. "Six important Church officials felt that the procedure followed by the congregation was wrong," he recounts. "But they said I should keep quiet if I wanted a decision in my favour. I heeded their advice."

But restraint didn't work either. Says the disillusioned Bermejo: "It is strange that while Gorbachev tolerates dissent, the Vatican does not. Ever since Pope John Paul II took



Breaking away

Some of the splinter groups of the Church

The Living Word Fellowship: Founded in 1972 by Allan Vincent. Most of members are Roman Catholics who have joined via the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

Little Flock Fellowship: Its founder, Napoleon Desouza broke away from the Living World Fellowhip to start his own order. Its members meet twice week, for Bible studies and worship.

New Life Fellowship: Headed by Pastor Joseph, it has the largest membership. Funded by tithes and funds, the order meets every Sunday, with much singing, dancing and clapping of hands in praise of Jesus Christ.

Church of Christ: An Afro-Baptist church, it is headed by an American, Henry, and has about 30 members. Its service consists of drinking out of a thousand glasses filled with wine and eating unleavened bread. Members meet in Gemini, a cinema hall, every Sunday.

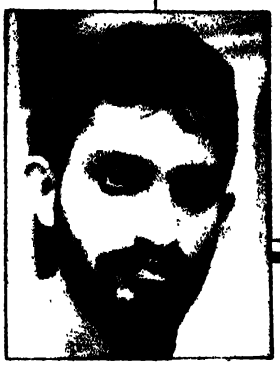
The Bible Speaks Outreach: Run by Americans, 90 per cent of its members are Roman Catholics. Funded by tithes, it distributes audio-cassettes on the Bible.

Jesus Cult: Rabidly anti-Catholic, it is headed by Milly Thomas and Amos, who claim to have been asked by God to preach the Holy Word.

The Charismatic Group: Its members sing the praise of Jesus and say prayers holding hands. The profess allegiance to Christ, but repudiate all practices of the Rome orders.

Emmanuel Prayergroup: Its members still belong to the Roman Catholic Church, but also hold their own meetings. Currently an investigation—headed by Cardinal Pimenta—is on into the affairs after members made some alleged anti-Mary statements.

Businessman's Fellowship: Members meet in hotels, hold massive rallies and claim that they are trying to help the Church of Christ.





Joseph Dias (left) and Cardinal Pimenta: disillusionment with the church (above) runs high

over condemnations have become a routine matter." Bermejo is convinced that his case will be heard one day because God is on his side. But the average Catholic may well cross over to some splinter group or the other in the face of such provocation.

Especially since, as Father Leslie J. Ratus discovered, "these sects...seem to fulfil psycho-religious needs of certain Catholics whose spiritual and ecclestical experience in the Roman Catholic Church prior to contact with the sects left them either untouched or unsatisfied".

The explanation makes sense. As Dawn Gomes, who belongs to New Life Fellowship, one of the splinter groups, says: "Day after day the priests continue to say the same thing. It's almost as if they don't even believe their own rhetoric. They follow a man who was born in a stable but they lead lives of opulence. In the Roman Catholic Church you have to pay for everything and what you get in return are tired words and bookish reasons."

Those aren't the only objections of the various splinter groups. They also find fault with the excessive importance attached to Mother Mary in the Catholic Church and discount the idea of the Immaculate Conception. They believe in the New Testament, and maintain that they can communicate Christ person to person and no canon law can hold them guilty. Contraception, divorce, the act of confession and the concept of purgatory are criticised by them. And the Church has no answer except taking refuge behind dogma. Excommunication, once a powerful tool to get the straying sheep back in the flock, no longer works.

Instead, the non-believers walk out to join some splinter group or the other, most of whom are funded by American money. Or they begin Housechurches, conducting meetings at members' homes, where the mood is decidedly anti-Church.

The Church, for its part, seeks comfort in the fact that much the same phenomenon took place in the Sixties when the Children Of God and Jesus Freaks made their appearance in America and spread all over the world. That fad passed, they say, and so will this. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay and Aurangabad

The friendly Man from Eureka Forbes is about to demonstrate the most convenient way to keep your home free of dust and dirt.

One of these days the friendly Eureka Forbes salesman will ring your doorbell and introduce himself with his identity card.

This man inspires confidence – which is only natural. Because he is a member of the largest, most successful sales organisation of its kind in India. Backed by dependable after sales service.

He will introduce modern home products to cope with today's problems – dust, pollution, contaminated water and the lack of domestic help.

He has two unique products to demonstrate: EUROCLEAN all-purpose cleaning system, which is much more than a vacuum cleaner, and AQUAGUARD on-line, water filter-cum-purifier.





EUROCLEAN removes minute specks of dirt and dust in your home effortlessly. Even dust you didn't know existed. AQUAGUARD gives you clear, safe drinking water on tap – at the flick of a switch – even if the raw water has high bacterial contamination.

The Eureka Forbes salesman will show you – in your own home – how these products can bring the advantages of modern cleanliness and hygiene to your family. Making it a cleaner, safer world for you.

You need not wait till his rounds bring him to your doorstep. For further information do write to us at Eureka Forbes Limited, P.O. Box 936, G.P.O., Bombay 400 001.

Euroclean The all-purpose cleaning system which is much more than a vacuum cleaner.

Aquaguard On-line, water filter-cum-purifier.

EUREKA FORBES LIMITED Pioneers in modern cleanliness and hygiene.



everest/89/EFL/188 R2

Roll over, HTV

Doordarshan gets a new producer for Khula Manch

The Doordarshan saga continues. The National Front government's commitment to autonomy has taken another beating with Hindustan Times Television (HTV) being sacked from *Khula Manch*, the fortnightly interface between a minister and the public.

It was inevitable. Events had inexorably moved towards the terse letter delivered to the HTV office on Saturday, 8 September, informing them that their services as "consultants and presenters" would no longer be needed. In keeping with the new "policy", therefore, the two earlier presenters, Karan Thapar and Mrinal Pande, were replaced by PTI TV's Sashi Kumar and Nalini Singh. But no one was really taken in, least of all the HTV presenters themselves, who knew that this had been coming for a long time. "This is typical of an organisation that goes out of its way to double-deal," said a furious Thapar, who is also the executive producer of HTV.

Doordarshan officials echoed his sentiments. "We knew this would happen. But we were powerless to do anything about it," said an official. The high-profile programme, billed as a successor to the enormously successful *Janvani*, had spelt trouble for the government from day one. The first episode, featuring finance minister Madhu Dandavate, had faced charges of a rigged audience. The second episode, with the outspoken railways minister, George Fernandes, was hacked from 45 to 35 minutes, and let loose a veritable barrage of protests and hostile criticism. All embarrassing questions were slashed, leaving only "tame" questions on the railways ministry.

And, unfortunately for the lone Telugu Desam minister, P. Upendra, the snafu took place when Parliament was in session. Viciously attacked by both the press and MPs, the information and broadcasting (I&B) minister washed his hands off the whole programme and put the blame squarely on HTV. He was helped by widespread complaints that the two presenters, Karan Thapar and Mrinal Pande, were unnecessarily hostile and aggressive. In fact, George Fernandes announced that Thapar, in particular, was a "juvenile delinquent".

Judging by the way HTV was sacked, Upendra's ministry seems to have bungled again. "It is very obvious that someone, somewhere did not like the fact that awkward, forthright questions were being asked," said Thapar. "They throw dirt so incompetently that it sticks to their hands."

The letter, abruptly terminating HTV's services, came on a Saturday, a holiday for all government offices. For two days after that, there was no one in Doordarshan or the ministry to explain why the decision had been taken. "Doordarshan officials remained unavailable, the minister conveniently left for a tour of Hyderabad and the I&B secretary, Suresh Mathur, refused to come on the line," elaborated Thapar. After two whole days, he added, the minister's office informed HTV that he "did not think it appropriate to meet Mrs Bhartiya (the executive president of the Hindustan Times) or Mr Karan". This was particularly intriguing since the minister had been in close touch with them since the inception of the show. And, HTV had been dealing—not with Doordarshan—but with the minister.

Reacting to the ministry's explanation that there was no formal or written agreement with HTV for six shows, Thapar said that the matter had been explicitly stated in two letters dated 1 August, 1990 and 3 August, 1990. "What else is an agreement?" asks another HTV official.

For the ministry, however, things are clear. "The parameters of the programme had been stated clearly in the first episode, when Thapar himself had said that questions would be restricted to the minister's portfolio. This was violated in the second programme. Besides, the response to Thapar's abrasiveness, in particular, was so negative that we had to have another team," said an I&B official. And added hastily, "I am not saying that they will not be called again."



Viciously attacked by both the press and MPs, P. Upendra washed his hands off the programme and put the blame squarely on HTV

In charge of a fledgling TV company, Thapar is not too disheartened. "While I don't think we will get too many assignments now, I am sure things will eventually change," he says. "After all, anyone who is a serious television producer has to deal with reality." The reality of a medium caught in a vice-trap of governmental mores—so what if the Prasar Bharati Bill has just been passed! •

Minu Jain/New Delhi

Behind bars

The Law Commission comes out with a report to improve the lot of women prisoners

It is a report that could well change the profile of Indian prisons—women prisoners in particular—if accepted by Parliament. The Law Commission's report on the status of female prisoners has suggested radical reforms to improve the lot of the woman in custody, who is at the mercy of a "hostile male dominated society".

Prepared at the behest of the ministry of law and justice by the Law Commission, the report makes no bones about giving preferential treatment to women prisoners. As Law Commission chairperson Justice M.P. Thakkar puts it, "We have to see how the law can be made more responsive to the needs of a woman in a male dominated society. After all, women are exposed to certain risks and it is up to us to take preventive action."

The report, which is yet to be debated in Parliament—women's organisations unhesitatingly describe it as "progressive"—essentially suggests the addition of a separate chapter in the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) encapsulating the guidelines for the arrest and custody of women prisoners. For example, the commission has recommended that a pregnant woman should be exempted from undergoing imprisonment (whether for life or for a specified term), whatever the crime. It has instead proposed that the court should have the power to suspend the sentence for a specified period, subject of course, to certain conditions. The report further clarifies, "The period of suspension of sentence will not result in the reduction of the sentence of imprisonment as imposed by the court." It adds "If a woman sentenced to death is found to be pregnant the High Court shall commute the sentence to one of imprisonment for life."

The commission has also proposed that members of the fair sex should be excluded from Section 433A of the CrPC, which makes it mandatory for a prisoner to complete 14 years of imprisonment. The report argues that the "categorical application" of the section could cause undue hardship to women prisoners and their families—especially in cases where a woman's husband dies leaving behind young children.

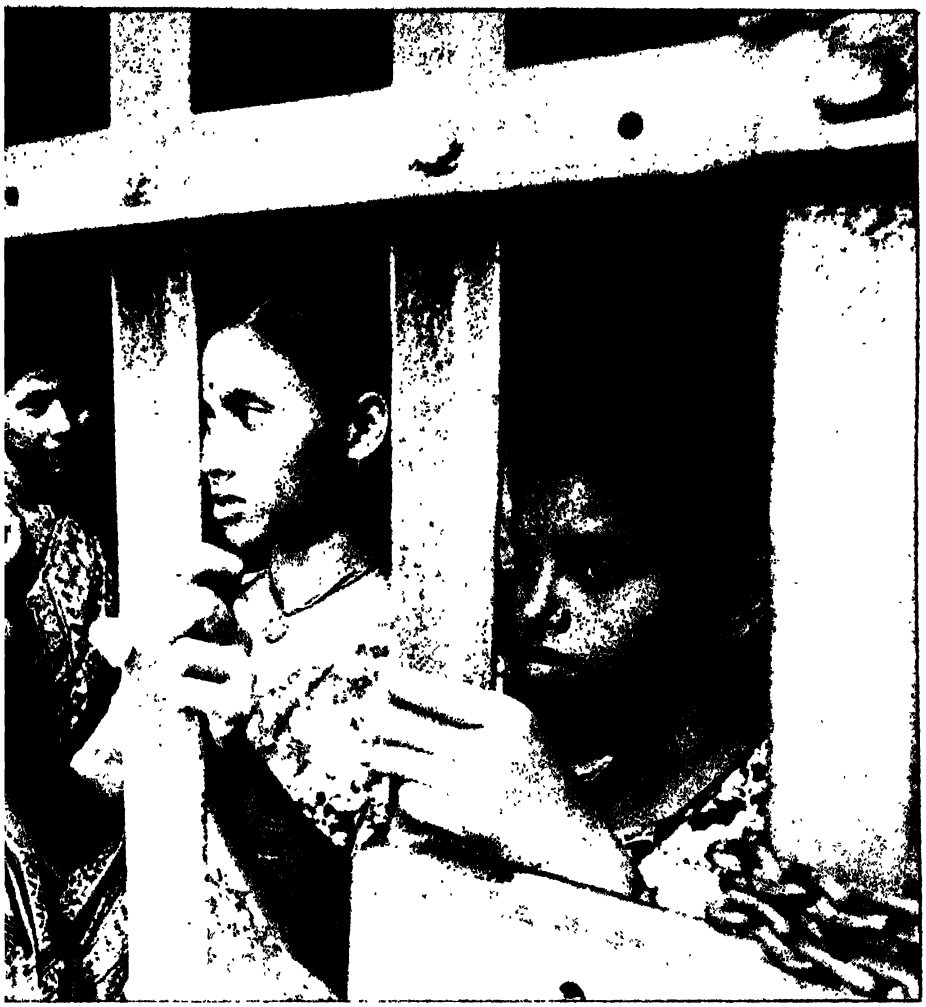
Citing the case of a 17-year-old mother in Allahabad who killed her infant son and then attempted to commit suicide, the report has recommended that life imprisonment may sometimes be too severe a sentence for murder. Elaborating on the incident, the report states that the High Court had sentenced her to life imprisonment but had also observed that the "case was one in which a part of sentence of imprisonment should be reduced by the state government under Section 432 of the CrPC". There was no apparent motive for the murder, which appeared to have been committed "in a moment of rage". Incidentally, the young lady had lost her son and her husband had refused to accept her after that. Section 433A should therefore be amended accordingly, the commission has stated.



Prepared at the behest of the ministry of law and justice by the Law Commission, the report makes no bones about giving preferential treatment to women prisoners

Apart from making specific recommendations to commute the sentence of women prisoners, the voluminous report also concentrates on the treatment meted out to them. In carefully detailed sections, the report lays down the various guidelines to be adhered to at the point of arrest, interrogation and in custody.

According to law, a police officer will actually touch or "confine the body of the person" to signify that he or she is under arrest. The commission has now suggested a provision in the law by which no police officer shall touch the "person of a woman". The report has said that no woman shall be arrested after sunset or before sunrise. In unavoidable circumstances a police officer can do so only after permission from his immediate superior. And, in





Says Justice M.P. Thakkar (above): **"We have to see how the law can be made more responsive to the needs of women prisoners** (left). **After all, women are exposed to certain risks and it is up to us to protect them"**

cases of "extreme urgency", when taking prior permission is not possible, the officer will have to explain the matter in writing to his superior. (A similar proposal was included in the CrPC Amendment Bill, 1988, which has now lapsed.)

On the question of medical examinations of the arrested, the CrPC has already specified that in the case of a woman accused, the examination can only be conducted by a female medical practitioner. This medical examination, however, is carried out only to secure the evidence of crime. The Law Commission, in this report, has added that medical examination should be undertaken as soon as the accused—whether male or female— is admitted to jail. The commission goes on to add that a copy of the medical report should be given to the woman free of cost.

The report lays down norms for interrogating a woman prisoner as well. It has suggested that a "relative or a friend or a representative of a woman's organisation" be present whenever a woman or a "young person" below 15 years of age is being questioned by the police. It goes on to add that a woman prisoner in transit from one prison to the other, or en route to court, or during investigations, shall not be handcuffed or made to wear fetters. And if required to leave the "female enclosure" in the prison, she will always be escorted by a matron or a female warden.

The commission has other ideas too. For instance, it recommends that if there is no suitable place in the prison for detaining a woman, she should be sent to an institution maintained under the Woman and Children's Institution (Licensing) Act 1956.

Finally, to ensure implementation of all the rules, the report has suggested that there should be periodic checks. It further specifies that at places, other than sessions headquarters, a judicial officer shall make an inspection of the jail at least once in two months. At sessions headquarters, such inspections will be conducted by a sessions judge. Says the author of the report, Justice Thakkar, "The object is to ensure that women prisoners are treated with dignity and that the wrong-doers are brought to book." The commission feels that there should also be visitors appointed by the government who will carry out surprise checks and submit reports to the sessions judge.

Most of these recommendations seem so innocuous and simple and yet they are so necessary, precisely because no one has ever thought of them," says a hopeful Justice Thakkar, confident that Parliament will implement it soon. But if experience is anything to go by, the report—tabled in Parliament last session—might well end up like all other Law Commission reports which are gathering dust. ●

Minu Jain/New Delhi

A campus death

And Jadavpur University staffers are charged with murder

The first time her neighbours saw Subala Das panic was the last time they saw her alive. "She was all too sure of herself," says a man who knew her. But on 26 August, Subala, 35, was dead—of burn injuries. And seven of her neighbours have been charged with murder.

Horrible. But not unheard of. What is appalling is that the incident took place inside the prestigious Jadavpur University's campus and the accused are university staff. And nobody is willing to comment. Probably because the accused includes a CPI(M) cadre, and the case might involve the top brass of the university. The silence of the students and teachers looms large as a monument to moral defeat. The ethic that perpetrated the crimes against women some months ago at Bantala and Birati, near Calcutta, seems to be gaining ground.

On 23 August, Subala had a tussle over tapwater with her neighbours in the Class Four staff quarters of the university. What started as a petty quarrel soon turned into a major fight. "Four of them held her as they doused her with kerosene and set her on fire," says Moyna, Subala's sister, flatly. "We couldn't stop them."

Subala's son Ananda, 15, had tried. He is still in hospital, fighting for his life. And receiving placebos as he asks after his mother. "We'll tell him once he's home," says Sumita, Subala's sister.

Home is the room the five sisters, their widowed mother and Subala's two sons shared—the room they were clinging on to, defying repeated unofficial attempts of eviction. The family primarily depends on Subala's younger sister Saraswati, who works at the university, as a peon. Yet, with a TV, a VCP and a fridge, they are clearly richer than their neighbours. Renting out the VCP provides a side-income, they explain. "They sell their bodies," says a campus resident.

"But this is a murder case," says a senior police official. "The victim's morals are irrelevant." However, the CPI(M)-dominated university non-teaching employees' union claims to have urged the administration on 22 August to evict the women on grounds of immoral behaviour. "The next morning, Subala set herself on fire," says Swapan Ghose, a union strongman. "Only to accuse these innocent people..."

The incident took place around nine in the morning. Yet all the neighbours seem to have been too busy with housework to notice a woman burning in the common verandah. "I was cooking and have no idea of what happened," says Anjali Sen, accused of dousing Subala as Anjali's son, Palas, struck the match. Her room is hardly 12 feet from Subala's door. According to Sumita, Bhaskar Rout, a CPI(M) cadre and university court member, had said: "Just burn her and I'll take care of the rest." Rout seems very relaxed as he sips tea in the campus tea-stall, his name written in huge red letters on the wall behind him—remnants of a winning campaign. "I was out shopping," he states. And Gokul Gharai, who reportedly started it all, refuses to comment: "The union will speak for me."

Subala Das and her son Ananda: victims of a bizarre morality?



The university registrar twice refused the police permission to arrest the accused till they got anticipatory bail

And the union does. "The FIR is totally fabricated," says secretary Harishankar Ganguly, quoting minor errors in it. The mistakes are highlighted, perhaps in an effort to weaken the plaintiff's case. Some believe the police to be involved, possibly under pressure, in the cover up. Because, Subala's dying declaration, reportedly taken three times, conflicts with both the FIR charge and the counter charges of the accused.

Even university registrar Bhaskar Bannerjee's behaviour strikes a few as odd. He twice refused the police permission to arrest the accused following Subala's death, till they got anticipatory bail. Charged with murder, an unbailable offence, the accused would have been unable to get out if arrested. "The registrar can't help it," says an administrative official. "He is a CPI(M) man."

In fact, this is not the first time that such a CPI(M)-backed union is accused of protecting criminal members. In 1982, the killers of Parbati Das, 12, who was raped and murdered inside the campus, allegedly by the sons of certain university watchmen, got away unscathed. But last time the ever-vocal CPI(M)-affiliated SFI (Students Federation of India) had taken some interest in seeking justice. This time, it is busy toeing the party line. "She was a prostitute," explains an SFI heavyweight earnestly, "and had no business being here." Bad morals—the unvoiced logic seems to be—justifies murder.

And flaunting its strict love of morals, the Red Brigade that once prided itself on keeping West Bengal the safest state for the second sex, now seems hell-bent on undoing its good deeds.

Antara Dev Sen / Calcutta

V. GANGADHAR

The ugly American

Ambassador Clark accuses India of breaking UN sanctions

The pictures on the television screen are heart-rending. Thousands of men and women, young and old, all unkempt with glassy stares, fight like animals while scrounging for the food packets thrown in their midst. The heat, at 50°C, is savage and sandstorms are frequent. As the starving people surge towards the food packets, security police lash them with bull whips.

This is happening to our brothers and sisters. Not just from India but also from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Philippines. The Gulf refugees come from all over Asia. I could not spot a single White man or woman. According to reports, they are well looked after at five-star hotels.

It is in this context one has to study certain remarks made by William Clark, the US ambassador to India. We do not know if this 'Ugly American' has ever ventured out in 50° plus heat or had to scrounge for food and water. Clark's government which is spending billions of dollars in airlifting troops and arms to the Gulf region, is quite against New Delhi's feeble, belated efforts to send food to its starving population in the Gulf.

Clark told Indian journalists at Washington (he must have felt like Mr Bumble addressing Oliver Twist and his fellow orphans) that he believed there was "sufficient foodstuffs" in Iraq and Kuwait. But, what happens if the food meant for the Indians fall into the hands of the big, and bad Iraqis? Can't Clark persuade his 'wimp' of a President to loan us some Marines as well as members of the 82nd Airborne Division and other units to take charge of the foodstuffs from Delhi and see to it that they reach only Indian mouths?

Over the years, the United States had cared a hoot for UN resolutions. Yet, Clark has the gall to tell the press that food *per se* comes under the sanctions of the UN and that supplies from India would be breaking the sanctions. Ah, how law-abiding is the US! How touching is its faith in UN resolutions!

The 'Ugly American' also pontificated to the Indian press on the Punjab situation, accusing the government of "over-reacting in dealing with terrorism in Punjab when it could have taken recourse to other means of controlling people. This is a violation of human rights."

What others means, Mr Clark? The means used by your government to tackle the PLO freedom fighters who are identified as 'terrorists' by your clique? Why don't you suggest these "other means" to your own government?





Ambassador William Clark (above); Indian refugees in Amman: "sufficient foodstuffs"?

Naturally, there has been no reaction from the lily-livered government in Delhi to Clark's views on the food supplies and Punjab. How can they say anything after arranging a VIP tour of Punjab for Clark? I am a bit surprised that our media did not comment editorially on the views of the 'Ugly American'. Most of our papers are busy reproducing rubbish from the West portraying the Arabs as savages and Saddam Hussein as a particularly offensive specimen of the lot.

Criminal negligence

Sports and crime. These are the two most eagerly-read sections in any newspaper. Unfortunately, pontificating editors tend to look down on these two beats. Naturally, the quality of coverage suffers in consequence.

But there seems to be some change these days. Sports is getting better coverage, correspondents freely travel abroad to report on cricket, athletics, Olympics and so on. But there is no discernible improvement in covering crime.

Take the case of 'Auto Shankar' of Madras. It had everything readers would wish for—violence, blood, sex and the criminal-police link. Yet, after Shankar managed to escape from custody and was finally recaptured with his paramour in Rourkela, very few papers did justice in covering and capturing the human drama involved in it.

Starting as a rickshaw puller, Shankar soon switched over to auto-rickshaws and made money through the supply of illicit liquor and women to the Madras hotels. Ambitious and ruthless, he would not stand any competition and is reported to have murdered half a dozen people who came in his way, burying their bodies under the flooring of his house or burning them. He also had most of the policemen and politicians in his pocket. Such was his clout, that several jail officials are suspected to have helped him break out from prison and escape.

What a story! When our newspapers can ferret out so many secrets and shady deals of selected corporate giants and also uncover corruption at distant Sweden and Switzerland, why can't they do justice to simple, crime stories at home? Perhaps, there are no lobbies briefing them on these. ●

Over to Beijing

But not all is well with the Asian Games movement

Not since the Israel issue has the Asian Games movement received such a jolt. The threat to the pan-Asian sports jamboree was so real that, even a week before the eleventh Asian Games were to begin in Beijing, no one was really sure whether they would be held at all. And even if it did, whether the Games could be held smoothly.

On 2 August, Iraq overran Kuwait and proclaimed it as another province of that country. On the sports front, this meant Kuwait could no longer participate as a separate entity in the international arena. Had this "acquisition" received universal approval, all it would have meant to the Beijing Asian Games Organising Committee (BAGOC) was a change in its computer feed and minor readjustments in the schedules of some disciplines.

Unfortunately for Iraq, there was almost universal condemnation instead of approval. With the threat of a joint superpower military action, Iraq itself found it impossible to prepare itself for the Games. Despite the brave front it put up, it is difficult to see Iraq participating in full strength.

So much for Iraq's intentions. At the time of going to press, the pro-Kuwait lobby was working overtime to oust Iraq not only from the Beijing meet, but also from the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA). (The OCA controls the Asian Games movement.)

Ever since the president of the OCA, Sheikh Fahd al-Ahmed, was killed while trying to defend the royal palace from Iraqi soldiers, opinion in the OCA was overwhelmingly against the invaders. Sheikh Fahd, younger brother of the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber, remained in the country after his brother had fled.

The Kuwait Olympic Committee being a one-man show, it was difficult for Kuwait to organise teams—especially from among the sportsmen in exile. With the country still under occupation, it was doubtful whether even officials of that country would attend the Games.

Even the legality of Kuwait's entry is in doubt, unless the OCA votes to maintain *status quo*. Headway had been made in this regard when the 11-member working committee of the OCA recommended that not only Kuwait be allowed to maintain its separate identity but that Iraq be banned from taking part in the Beijing Games. The committee went a step further in suggesting that Iraq's membership of the OCA be cancelled.

Two days before the scheduled opening of the Games, the full OCA council, consisting of 38 members, were expected to vote on the working committee's recommendations. Saudi Arabia, taking the lead in mobilising opinion against Iraq, hoped to get a comfortable majority when the issue was put to vote on 20 September.

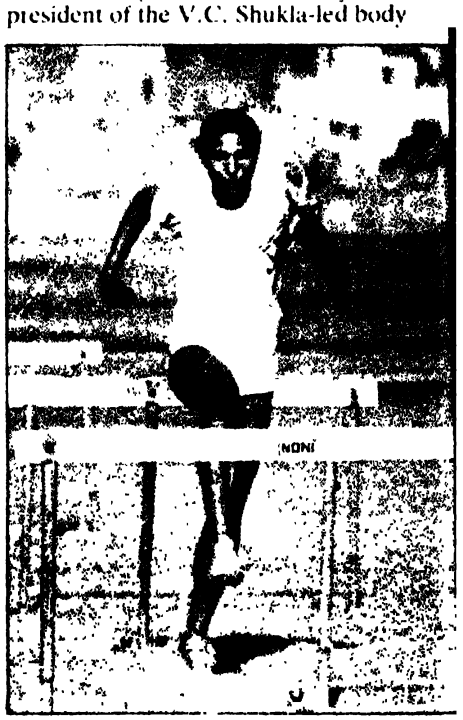
The liaison officer for the Iraqi Olympic Committee in Beijing, however, had scoffed at the idea of the resolution being passed. "Politics should not be mixed with sport," Kais Al-Yacpubi said. He also felt that many of the bureau members who had voted for Kuwait would change their stance once the full council met.

But, with the International Olympic Committee voting to continue its recognition of Kuwait, the Saudi faction is already flexing its muscles. With negotiations still continuing, it is expected that the neutral members of the Asian Games movement will strive to maintain *status quo*, keeping Kuwait as a full-fledged member, but also ensuring that Iraq continued to participate in the Games.

The Games mascot



However, the most ironical development prior to the Games was, perhaps, the "Indian affair", as it is being called. The secretary-general of the OCA happens to be India's Chiman Lal Mehta, a former secretary-general of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and currently vice-president of the V.C. Shukla-led body recognised by the central government.



P.T. Usha: still the country's best bet

Mehta has no powers beyond convening meetings and chairing them on some occasions. Internal squabbles in the IOA had led to court cases on the one hand and administrative wranglings on the other. Even as different courts in the country heard the petitions of the two warring parties—one led by Shukla and the other by B.S. Adityan—the two were busy finalising their list for Beijing. BAGOC was in a quandary, not knowing which list to

approve. And Mehta could do very little either.

The situation would have remained uncertain had not Roshan Lal Anand, former director-general of the NSNIS and now the IOA secretary-general of the Shukla group, sent an ultimatum to BAGOC. He stated that unless the Beijing authorities approved the list sent by him, India would pull out of the Games. BAGOC immediately relented and approved the list.

But then, once the Games get underway, attention will hopefully shift to the various arenas where skill will be matched by vigour and determination as 38 nations vie for the honours.

India may not do as well as they had done either in New Delhi in 1982 or in Seoul. This is because P T Usha, the golden girl of Indian athletics, is past her prime and will not be as strong a contender as she used to be. Even so, she is likely to top the Indian medal winners' list, with Bahadur Prasad in the middle distances and the men's and women's relay squads expected to win the gold, or at least, be among the medal winners.

The surest gold, of course, will be in kabaddi, an Indian sport being introduced in the Asian circuit for the first time. Preparations for the sport in Beijing began more than six months ago, with videotapes, copies of rules and demonstration games being staged.

Apart from kabaddi, medal prospects are bright in archery, boxing, hockey, rowing, shooting, yachting and weightlifting and perhaps, tennis. But if we win more than an overall tally of 25 medals, it should be considered an achievement of sorts. And never mind the pompous claims of the Sports Authority of India, which had initiated a programme of "excellence" four years ago, claiming that it would lead to more than 90 medals at Beijing! •

Arijit Sen

Playing host

China uses the Asian Games to improve its image

Ever since the 4 June massacre at Tianenmen Square last year, which horrified television viewers all over the world, the Chinese are desperate to end their international isolation and project a different, more humane image. And the rulers in China felt that the Beijing Asian Games could be used to do that. In fact, the Chinese authorities have not spared any expenses—it is estimated that the Games would cost a whopping 500 million US dollars—to make the event a grand success.



The main stadium in Beijing: the show begins

Beijing has already received a facelift. Roads have been repaved, building blocks have received a new coat of paint and the chubby Pan Pan—the official mascot—hangs all over the city. The authorities have also come down heavily on suspected trouble-makers. The fine for spitting on roads has been increased to ten times the usual amount. Some hoodlums have already been executed and the residents of Beijing have signed a pledge not to indulge in anti-national activities during the Games. As many as 728 students of Beijing University, who spearheaded the pro-democracy movement, had to spend ten months at the Shiziazhuang Military Academy for re-education. The kind of importance the Chinese are attaching to the Games can be gauged from the fact that 20,000 students in Beijing have given up their vacation to prepare for the Games.

The Chinese are using this sports extravaganza as a forum to clear the Tianenmen misconception. Said Wu Zhongyuan, a member of the organising committee: "The events of 4 June created some inaccurate impression in the minds of the people." And the organisers have begun a major international public relations exercise to set this right.

Here are some of the results:

- **President Roh Tae Woh of South Korea is expected to attend the Games, although relations between the two countries are far from normal.**
- **China has mended fences with Indonesia, has resumed dialogue with Saudi Arabia and has established normal relations with Singapore.**
- **The symbolic flame of the Games started its journey from Tibet, which is under Chinese occupation.**

But only time will tell whether all this was worth it.

Shevlin Sebastian/Beijing

ODDS AND TRENDS

March for power

■ Calcutta, the much-touted City of Joy, is celebrating its tercentenary with flashy rides on horse-drawn trams, costume dramas and, predictably, long hours of loadshedding. It was in protest against the worsening power situation that hundreds of Calcuttans participated in a novel 'march for power'. On 10 September, the citizens of the city turned up in large numbers—braving heavy rain—to make Calcutta's first major non-political procession a success.

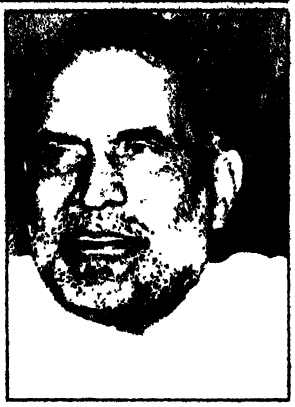
Organised jointly by the Calcutta Action League, Friends of Trees, INTACH, People United for Better Living in Calcutta (PUBLIC), Consumer Protection Centre and various Rotaract and Lion groups the silent march started from the Victoria Memorial and ended at the Deshapriya Park in south Calcutta. The processionists dressed in black and carried lanterns and torches, while marching down some of the busiest thoroughfares of the city. They also carried several placards with interesting slogans, denouncing the apathetic attitude of the state administration towards the power problem that has plagued the city for the last 20 years. Some of the snappier slogans were: "We pay for electricity not excuse" and "Kolaghat generates WHATS???"

At the end of the march, a charter of seven demands was adopted. Copies of this have been sent to chief minister Jyoti Basu and minister for power Prabir Sengupta. "We may not increase power generation with this march," said one of the organisers, "but we no longer intend to sit back and complain. We are determined to make those responsible feel just a little more uncomfortable than they have been doing."

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Ramakrishna Hegde



Chandra Shekhar

A new high

■ Mountaineers will have new heights to scale. The world's highest peak, Mount Everest, is supposed to be growing at the rate of half an inch every year, according to Professor Roger Bilham, a geologist at the University of Boulder in Colorado, USA. Professor Bilham has discovered that the Indian and other Asian landmasses are colliding at the rate of about two inches a year, "pushing the Himalayas upwards and the Everest, which about ten million years ago was under the sea, will go on growing because there is nothing to erode it".

Moreover, in the absence of any rivers to wash away the base of the mountain, its growth will continue indefinitely. Professor Bilham came to this astonishing conclusion after measuring the Everest with a gravity machine from the top of the peak using an atomic clock to calculate the changing height. So mountaineers can gear up for greater challenges.

MILESTONES

KILLED: Saimukh Singh, the Patiala district Nirankari chief, by armed terrorists in Patiala on 13 September.

DIED: Laxman Patro, noted freedom fighter and Sarvodaya leader, on 11 September at Berhampur.

DIED: Mukul Dutta, veteran sports journalist, of cancer on 12 September in Calcutta. He was 70.

ARRESTED: Arjun Singh, Madhya Pradesh Congress(I) chief, at Pichore town of the state on 11 September for his participating in an anti-reservation agitation.

ARRESTED: Kanji Karan Padiyar, the kingpin of drug trafficking in Bombay, on 11 September for smuggling heroin worth Rs 8½ lakhs.

CHARGED: Laloo Prasad Yadav, chief minister of Bihar, in a murder case regarding the 4 September anti-reservation violence on 11 September at Patna by the chief judicial magistrate of the city, Surender Narain Singh.

SELECTED: Utpal Dutt. eminent actor and theatre personality, for the Sangeet Natak Academy fellowship to be presented in February 1991, on 12 September in New Delhi.

SELECTED: Ram Gopal, noted dancer, for the Sangeet Natak Academy fellowship on 12 September in New Delhi.

AWARDED: Mercury Travels (India) Limited, the highest tourism award for 1989 for the promotion of tourism in India, on 11 September in Calcutta by the Union tourism department.

AWARDED: The Windsor at Melbourne, an Oberoi hotel, the award for top hotel accommodation and best restaurant by the Australian Hotel Association at Melbourne.

RE-ELECTED: Mother Teresa, as the superior-general of Missionaries of Charity for the sixth consecutive term on 8 September in Calcutta.

BEGINNING 23 SEPTEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL.

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



This is not a good week for those in service. You might have to face opposition from your colleagues. For artists, the time is favourable for they will be admired for their efforts. Letters will bring good news.

Good dates: 23, 25 and 29
Lucky numbers: 2,5 and 7
Favourable direction: South

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Not a good week for you. There might be problems on the domestic front. Be cautious on the professional front. Also, you will have to shoulder added burden. However, this is the time to strike new deals.

Good dates: 24, 27 and 28
Lucky numbers: 1,3 and 7
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



A very good week for courtship and marriage. Businessmen might suffer minor setbacks. However, others will make steady progress on all fronts. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 23,26 and 29
Lucky numbers: 4,6 and 8
Favourable direction: North

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



This week you must pay attention to your domestic front. Bad times will soon be over. Exercise tact and patience on the professional front. The time is not ripe for affairs relating to the heart.

Good dates: 26,27 and 28
Lucky numbers: 3,6 and 9
Favourable direction: West

LEO (21 July—20 August)



Those of you who are involved in intellectual pursuits will be successful. Others will have to face challenges. Be cautious in your dealings with members of the opposite sex. Romance is on the cards.

Good dates: 25,26 and 29
Lucky numbers: 3,4 and 6
Favourable direction: South-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



Those in service will be rewarded with promotions. Romance is in the offing. Be on the guard against deceit. Exercise utmost caution in what you say and do. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 24,25 and 27
Lucky numbers: 1,6 and 7
Favourable direction: East

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



Your courage and confidence will see you through. This is a very favourable week for you. Romance is on the cards. The time is ripe for matrimony. A letter will bring good news.

Good dates: 24,26 and 28
Lucky numbers: 5,7 and 8
Favourable direction: North

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



Keep an eye on your health. Make the best use of the opportunities that come your way. The unemployed may get jobs. Businessmen should be careful in their dealings. Exercise caution and tact in whatever you do.

Good dates: 25,27 and 29
Lucky numbers: 2,4 and 9
Favourable direction: West

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



A fairly good week lies ahead of you. Steady progress is forecast on all fronts. Letters will bring good news. Avoid gambling and speculation. Also, seek advice from elders before taking an important decision.

Good dates: 23,24 and 26
Lucky numbers: 6,7 and 9
Favourable direction: North-west

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



Servicemen may get promotions. This might be a lucky week for you. A windfall is in the offing. A journey might prove helpful. Also, pay utmost attention to your business transactions.

Good dates: 23,26 and 27
Lucky numbers: 2,5 and 8
Favourable direction: South

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



You are extremely fortunate this week, for your efforts will bear fruit and you will be admired and appreciated by the people around you. Keep an eye on the health of your family members.

Good dates: 27,28 and 29
Lucky numbers: 5,8 and 9
Favourable direction: East

PISCES (21 February— 20 March)



A good week for those connected with intellectual pursuits. Others might face a few problems on the professional front, but courage and fortitude will see them through. Your domestic front will remain calm.

Good dates: 26,27 and 29
Lucky numbers: 4,5 and 7
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—AQUARIUS

The Aquarius man might not appreciate the intensity of the Scorpio woman's emotions. His involvement with the outside world is at odds with her possessive nature and the relationship might be threatened in the long run.

HOPE

All Stainless Steel Thermo Jugs

SALEM STAINLESS STEEL INSIDE OUT

- High-efficiency PU foam insulation.
- Unbreakable
- Superior quality
- Value for money
- Latest technology
- Hygienic
- Easy to maintain
- Retains heat/cold for long hours
- No glass refill



Distributors for West Bengal

Giff-n-Giff

Room No. S-2, Fourth Floor
77, N.S. Road, Calcutta - 700 001
Phone: 256796/253908/257190

Manufacturers
HOPE (INDIA)
8, Vasu Street, (Behind Ega Theatre)
Kilpauk, Madras 600 010.
Phone: 665470.

Licencee
STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

Available in different capacities & colours.

Institutional & Trade enquiries solicited.

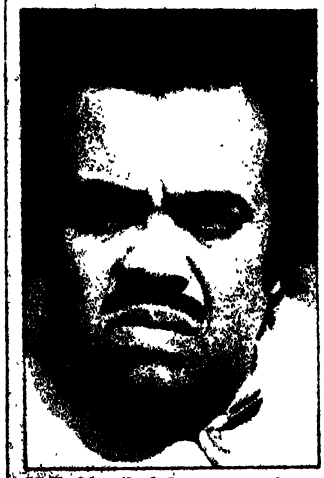
Adwise/2362/90

Unni's travels

When you're the leader of a one-man party, you have to try that much harder to keep your support base intact.

Which is why K.P. Unnikrishnan decided to take a flight to the Gulf to express solidarity with his fellow Keralaites stranded in the Middle East. Only the foray into foreign lands didn't work out as the minister had envisaged.

Unnikrishnan, who had arrived without any aid package to offer the refugees, was heckled, booed and pushed around by his compatriots, who were livid at the inaction of the Indian government. Eye-witness reports have it that Unni extricated himself from the mob with difficulty, to run



K.P. Unnikrishnan: run for your life

into the comparative safety of his car.

And vowed he'd never indulge in such (mis) adventures again.

Identity crisis

As far as the Congress high command is concerned, H.K.L. Bhagat and C.K. Jaffer Sharief are general secretaries of the AICC with special charge of various states. But both have different ideas about the role they are required to play. Bhagat, for one, spends all his time organising agitations in Delhi, on one issue or the other, and setting up road blocks to express sympathy for Sajjan Kumar. His leisure is spent in rowing with fellow Congressman Jagdish Tytler.

Jaffer Sharief seems to be labouring under the delusion that Bangalore is India and India is Bangalore. Whenever party president Rajiv Gandhi summons him to discuss issues of import, the leader is ensconced in the garden city, busy trying to cut local rivals down to size. Though Sharief is ostensibly in charge of Uttar Pradesh affairs, none of the state's leaders have as much as set eyes upon him—except, of course, those who can fly down to Bangalore to say hello.

Congress workers, utterly fed up with the state of affairs, insist that the duo be appointed presidents of their respective state units. And it appears that they may well get their way.

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL

***Jis ke tan par kal tak kapda nahin tha, woh aaj kapda mantri hai.* (The man who didn't have any clothes on his back until yesterday, is now the textiles minister.)**

DEVI LAL ON SHARAD YADAV



Bhagat and Jaffer Sharief: confusion confounded

CHECK-LIST

Who wants elections in Punjab—and who doesn't

■ **Simranjeet Singh Mann:** The Akali leader is convinced that the only solution to the state's problems lies in an early election. Especially since, as he reiterates at every available opportunity, the people will return his party to power.

■ **Prakash Singh Badal:** One of the moderates in Punjab politics, Badal has retained his faith in the parliamentary process. And believes that the state will return to normalcy faster if the administration is run by someone whom the people have chosen.

■ **I.K. Gujral:** The external affairs minister was returned to the Lok Sabha from Punjab. Ever since that electoral win, Gujral has been convinced that polls are the only way out of the Punjab imbroglio.

■ **Veerendra Verma:** He thinks he isn't doing such a bad job of administering the state. So, why should anyone want to discontinue President's Rule, especially since elections may well result in a fresh outbreak of violence.

■ **Arun Nehru:** The commerce minister has always been a hardliner on Punjab. He believes that the announcement of a poll will be treated by militants as a fresh excuse to spread terror, any which way they can. The best bet, in his opinion, is to let Verma rule until the law and order situation improves.

The party is over

The results of the Janata Dal parliamentary party elections didn't hold much cheer for the Raja. All the candidates of the Chandra Shekhar camp—Kamal Morarka, Hukum Deo Narayan Yadav and Hari Mohan Dhawan—were declared elected, while the Prime Minister's men took a beating.

VP was particularly unhappy at the victory of Hari Mohan Dhawan, who has often embarrassed him in parliamentary party meetings. The Raja had taken a personal interest in getting Dhawan defeated, even setting up a candidate against him. But while the PM's man got only 18 votes, Dhawan was elected by a thumping majority.

Is this a portent of what the future holds for the Raja of Mandal? ●

Oops, wrong telex!

Madhu Dandavate is regarded as one of the more efficient ministers (*see Cover Story*) of the Janata Dal government. But even the best of us can slip up, as the finance minister did the other day in Parliament—with a bit of help from revenue secretary Rajiv Lochan Mishra.

Congress(I) members were grilling the professor on the excise duty scandal, first exposed by Chandra Shekhar in his SUNDAY interview (*see issue dated 26 August—1 September 1990*). According to Shekhar, the government had been paying the excess excise duty back to the manufacturers, when the money by right belongs to the consumers. What did the minister have to say to that, asked agitated members.

Dandavate had his defence ready. He wasn't the only person to issue such



Madhu Dandavate: some mistake, surely

instructions, he disclosed. Even finance ministers of the previous Congress(I) regime had done the same and he had telex messages which would prove the point.

The Congress brigade, headed by the raven-haired R.K. Dhawan, wasn't willing to take his word for it. "Would he please produce the telex messages in question," they asked.

Dandavate immediately got the file from the officials' gallery and began reading out. Only to stop short when he realised (after some prodding from parliamentary affairs minister Jagdeep Dhankad) that all the messages—apart from the ones he had sent—asked that the payment *not* be made.

As the heckling from the Opposition ranks grew even more ferocious, an embarrassed Dandavate hurriedly sat down.

And then made a rapid exit to upbraid revenue secretary Mishra, who had handed him the wrong file.

HEARD IN THE LOK SABHA

You are the modern-day Manu, who will be held responsible for fragmenting Indian society.

VASANT SATHE TO V.P. SINGH

Arun aur Arun

Will V.P. Singh go the way of Rajiv Gandhi? Yes, say some Janata Dal MPs, if he continues to stick close to the two Aruns (Nehru and Singh) who played a major role in the destruction of Rajiv.





Arun Nehru and Arun Singh: the nemesis of the Raja?

These leaders, most of whom belong to the erstwhile Lok Dal, are of the opinion that the Raja should junk both the Aruns (especially since their names are cropping up increasingly in the Bofors investigations) as they are programmed to destroy the people they are closest to.

But the PM isn't paying much attention. He'd much rather deal with the third Arun (Shourie) first.

MANDALWATCH

Political parties and the reservation policy

■ **Janata Dal:** The Raja, in his Mr Caste avatar, is intent on implementing the Mandal Commission's recommendations—and reaping the electoral benefits he is convinced will follow. Some of his partymen have reservations about the wisdom of this move, but the PM is now beyond reason.

■ **Congress(I):** Reservations are fine on principle, says Rajiv Gandhi, but should not be made on the basis of caste. Economic criteria should be brought into play, instead. A poor Brahmin, the argument goes, is much more deserving of a job than the son of Ram Vilas Paswan.

■ **BJP:** Considering how unhappy the party was with the implementation of the Mandal recommendations, it is almost a minor miracle that it didn't withdraw support to the government on this issue. But Advani makes no secret of the fact that he'd rather have quotas on the basis of economic criteria.

■ **CPI(M):** Marxist ideology revolves around the concept of a classless—not casteless—society. Nonetheless the communists are dead against the perpetuation of the caste system, as envisaged in the Mandal Report. Positive discrimination is all very well, they say, but shouldn't be decided on the basis of caste alone.

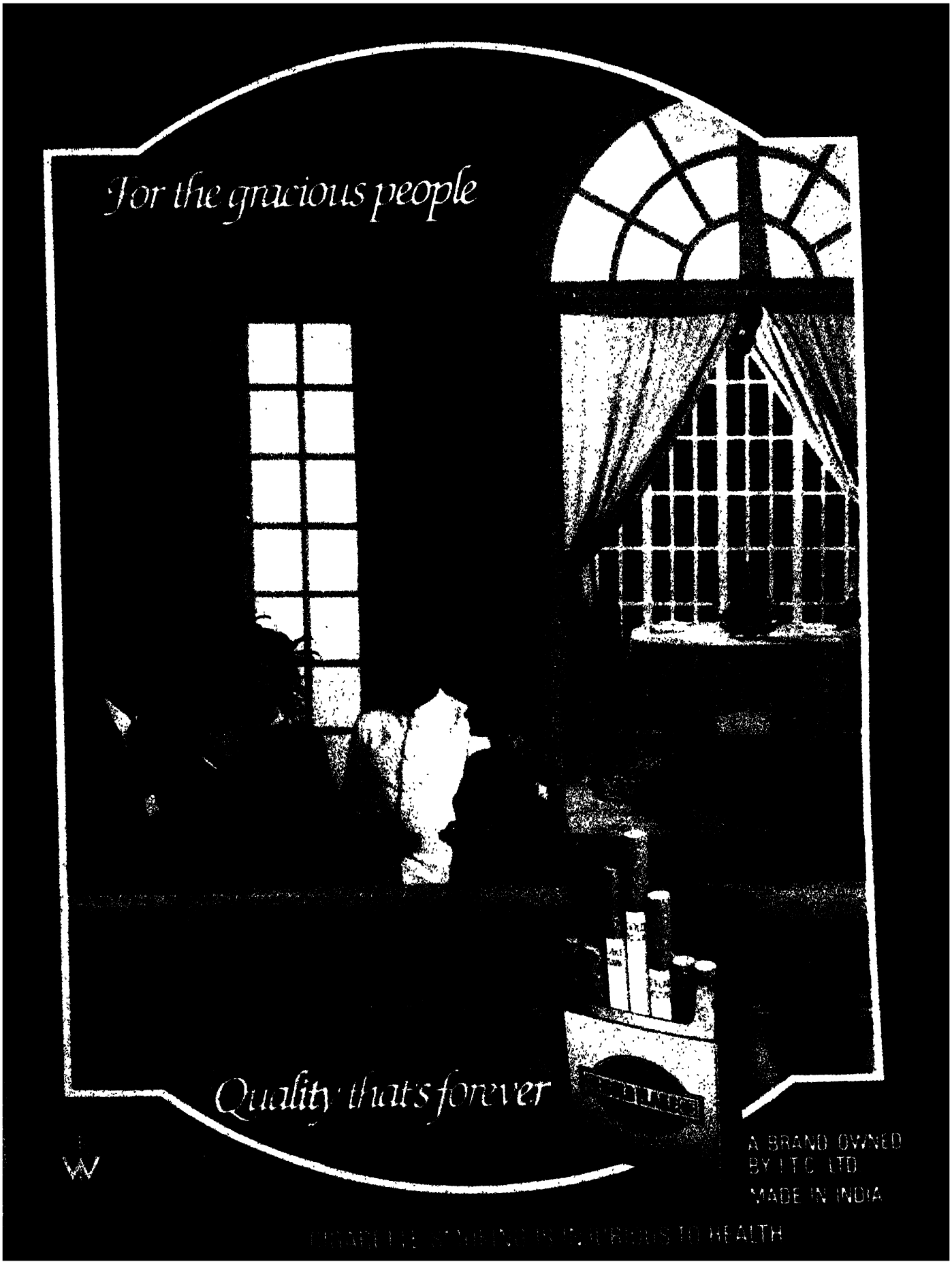
I'm an umble man

The Raja is really taking this man-of-the-people bit very seriously. So much so that the Prime Minister even instructed his office to cancel his membership of the Chelmsford Club in New Delhi, for fear that the *hoi polloi* would associate him with the capital's elite, if they ever found out.

The austerity drive didn't stop at that. V.P. Singh was the proud owner of a scooter in Deogarh, Rajasthan. The vehicle, though registered in the Raja's name, was used by his brother-in-law's family. A few weeks back, however, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) asked the district [illegible] authority of Udaipur to transfer the ownership rights of the scooter to V.P.'s brother-in-law.

What next?

Will the Raja donate Aish Mahal to Sher Singh? Or surrender the Lucknow lamb fur cap to Maneka Gandhi? ●


For the gracious people
Quality that's forever
A BRAND OWNED
BY I.T.C. LTD
MADE IN INDIA

To the world
your stride.



dinesh

Exclusives ▲ Suitings ▲ Co-ordinates ▲ Safaris

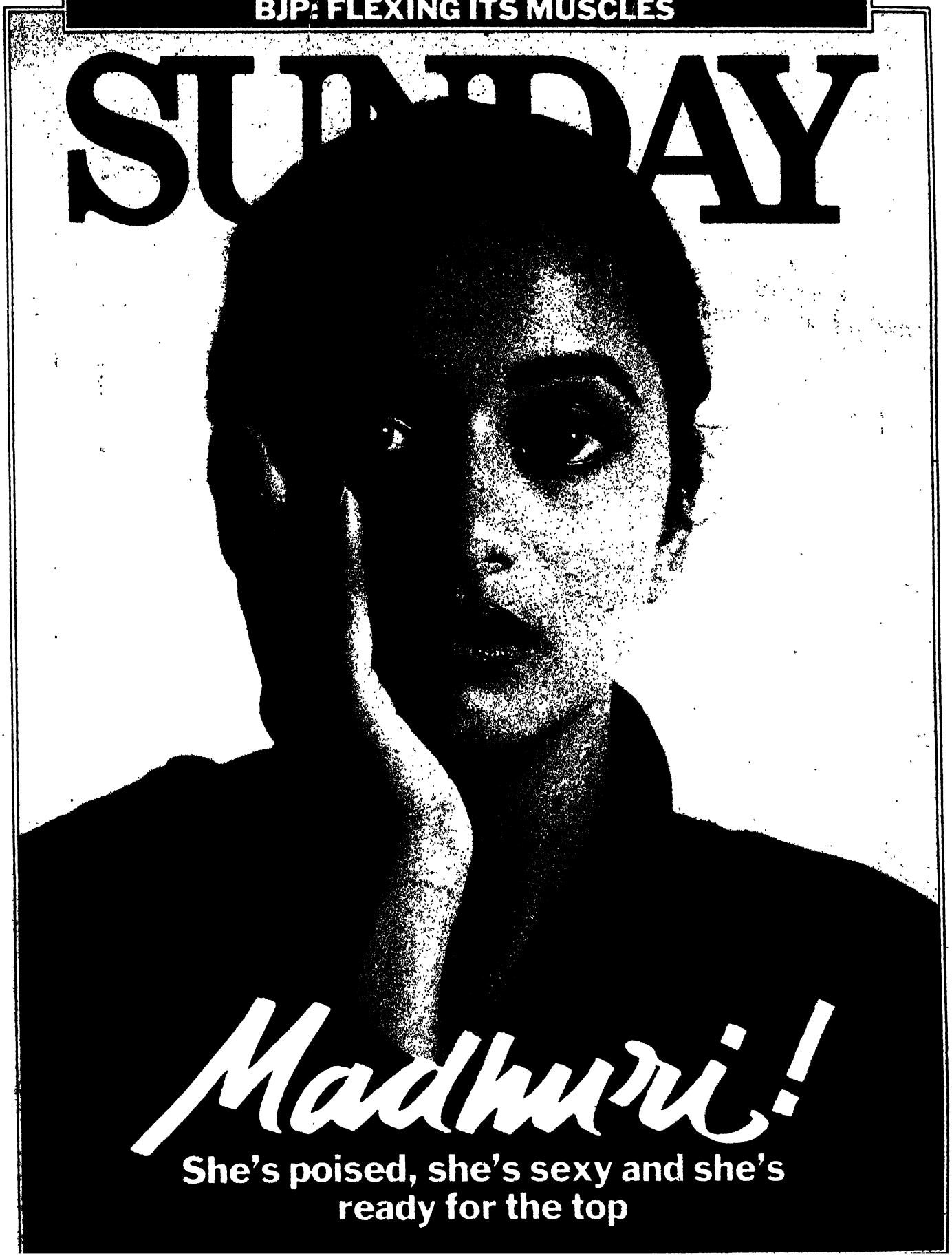
The choice of leading fashion houses, internationally.

Exclusive showrooms: **BANGALORE:** Pushkar • **MYSORE:** Sagar • **BHOPAL:** Vishal Corner • **INDORE:** Dawar's • **BHAGALPUR:** [illegible] • **BUXAR:** Vastralok • **JHARIA:** Bharat Cloth Store • **PATNA:** Bhartiya Bastralaya

7—13 OCTOBER 1990 □ AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION □ RS 7.00

BJP: FLEXING ITS MUSCLES

SUNDAY



Madhuri!

She's poised, she's sexy and she's ready for the top





ieations for a Masterpiece.

JCT FABRICS

SUITINGS • SHIRTINGS • DRESS MATERIALS

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 39 □ RS 7 00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
7—13 OCTOBER 1990



40
COVER STORY

Ek, do, queen

She's sexy, she's poised and she's aiming for the top. That's Madhuri Dixit.



12
DIARY

Journey to Jaffna

[illegible] on a war that has [illegible] properly [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Amnesty [illegible]

24
SPECIAL REPORT

Flexing its muscles

The Bharatiya Janata Party gets tough with the National Front government.



28
PROFILE

The investigator

A profile of Chitra Subramaniam, probably the best investigative [illegible] India has. [illegible]

54
BUSINESS

The living daylights

The ULFA's vision of a future Assam is wrecking the present.

82
BOOK EXTRACT

The enemy within

Communist leader Satpal Dang on the terrorist problem in Punjab.



LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
BODYLINE 8
SOUTH BLOCK 9
COUNTERVIEW 10
PERSONALITY 18
Mother knows best
FOCUS 22
Speaking out
MANI-TALK 36
BUSINESS DIARY 61
DE JURE 62
MEDIA MUSINGS 67
KHAAS BAAT 70
SPOTLIGHT 72
NEWS 76
THIS INDIA 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency:
Gautam Patole

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by V r Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North-eastern states 30 paise



The move that backfired

The cover story (*Mr Caste*, 9—15 September) has been most timely. With so many problems facing the country today—spiralling rise in prices of essential commodities, the oil crunch and the Punjab and Kashmir crises—there was no reason for V.P. Singh to release the Mandal Commission Report and press for its implementation. There seems to be no rationale behind the declaration of 27 per cent reservation for the backward classes. It was nothing but a political gimmick with some ulterior motive. Neither the BJP nor the leftists have approved of the idea.

The anti-reservation movement has gained momentum and is being spearheaded by the students, who are the real sufferers. It is high time the Prime Minister did something to restore his crumbling image, before it is too late.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ V.P. Singh seems to be fast drifting from reality. He does not know how to be decisive and is, therefore, facing one crisis after another. His most recent bungling has been the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. This decision will divide the society along caste lines and, for that, the nation will have to pay a heavy price.

R.K. Gulati, Siliguri (West Bengal)

■ Ever since assuming power, the Prime Minister has been walking a tightrope. And recent developments show that all is not well with the government at the Centre. By implementing the Mandal Commission recommendations, V.P. Singh has created tremors throughout the country. Perhaps this is the last straw with which the PM hopes to hold on to power.

Subhashis Ray, Rourkela (Orissa)

■ The cover story was a rational analysis of a leader, whose popularity is on the wane. Nobody could imagine that V.P. Singh, the prophet of value-based politics, would use caste as his trump card. When he failed to resolve the Punjab and Kashmir problems, he opened up another front by accepting the Mandal Commission Report.

The widespread anti-reservation agitation has already tarnished his image among the youths and the country is in turmoil. How V.P. Singh will contain these agitations remains to be seen. He will definitely go down in history as the man who fanned and exploited caste consciousness to win votes. It is high time the Prime Minister reviewed his decision in the wake of his failure to obtain a consensus.

Amitava Sen, New Delhi

■ The Prime Minister has been rightly termed "Mr Caste". V.P. Singh's decision to go in for reservations, shows that he can stoop to any level in order to protect his chair. Actually, Singh's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report has boomeranged. He has lost the support of the middle classes, which form a major chunk of his sympathisers. Therefore, by introducing the quota system, V.P. Singh seems to have driven the last nail in the coffin of his crisis-prone government.

Abhinandan K. Singh, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)

■ The spectre of a caste war looms large over India, thanks to Prime Minister V.P. Singh, who has legitimised the caste system for petty short-term political gains by accepting the Mandal Commission Report.

Sadly, the bosses in Delhi do not realise that the good work done by the founding fathers of the Constitution in framing a secular and classless society have been negated in one stroke by the present government.

Anamika Mehta, Ahmedabad (Gujarat)



Students demonstrating in New Delhi: a popular stir

Not at home

The profile of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (*Does anybody remember this man?* 9—15 September) reveals the inefficiency of the home minister.

Though the Prime Minister's choice of Mufti for the home portfolio drew a good response initially and created confidence among the Muslims, it has done much harm to the nation in the long run. Within days of the Mufti assuming office, his daughter Rubaiya was kidnapped, and in order to secure her release, some hardcore Kashmiri militants had to be released, which complicated the Jammu and Kashmir crisis further.

Now, the Mufti's morale is at an all-time low. And with the law and order problem worsening in many parts of the country, it is time the Mufti called it a day.

V. Badari Narayana, Mysore (Bangalore)



The Mufti: ineffective

Crowing over Violet

The introduction of Violet Dias Lannoy (*Violet Dias Lannoy*, 26 August—1 September) by Khushwant Singh was not quite palatable. I cannot agree with him when he says that every late or living soul who came in contact with Gandhiji, can be considered to be a personality above the masses.

Violet mainly worked outside India. Even if Khushwant tries to portray her as an extraordinary person, who developed some kind of a philosophy and tried to share it with others by writing a novel. This is neither unique nor extraordinary. It seems Khushwant Singh is running out of ideas.

Sachin Sahai, Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh)

Shattered dreams

Your write-up on Maneka Gandhi (*Maneka versus everybody*, 26 August—1 September) reveals the personality of the green minister. Maneka has won the hearts of millions of people within a very short span of time as a free, frank, fearless and an efficient minister. The steps taken by her have encouraged nature-lovers and environmentalists. But she cannot change things overnight.

The development of a country like India depends upon industrialisation and it cannot be stopped because of environmental reasons. Unlike Maneka, Nilamoni Routray may not be very articulate, but his ability to take the right decisions cannot be doubted. His past record, both as a minister and chief minister, was clean and above suspicion. Therefore, this controversy could have been easily avoided.



Maneka Gandhi: losing out

Jagadish Patra, Matkamboda (Orissa)

Moving backwards

The interview of Ram Vilas Paswan (*"We will not yield to pressure"*, 26 August—1 September) on the anti-reservation stir reveals that the Mandal Commission recommendations are perfectly in keeping with the Constitution and the government has done the right thing by implementing it. But the issue raises some pertinent questions.

Paswan says that the backward classes form 52 per cent of the population and the commission recommended only 27 per cent reservation for them. He also says that the reservation should be equal to the proportion in the population. Now, can he say for sure that all other castes which are not in the backward caste list have got their proportion of employment according to the population? Is merit, the criteria of employment so far, of no consequence? Again, if the government is not opposed to reservation on economic basis, then why has it not been implemented so far?

The unemployed youth of India, whether they are rich or poor, backward or forward, only want more employment. Not more reservation.

Arup K. Dutta, Patna (Bihar)

Paswan: defending Mandal



Suggesting remedies

The answers to the questions posed by V. Gangadhar in *Out, damn Agenda* (9—15 September) are as follows:

Q: Why do our factories produce sub-standard goods?
A: Because we don't have enough competition. Scrap licensing and we will have more competition and better quality goods. Open our doors to the world and we will produce even better quality.

Q: How is it that many units fall sick?
A: In a competitive market the less efficient units or the ones making poor quality goods will fail. They should close down. In India they are not allowed to close and hence they become "sick". If the enterprise fails the entrepreneur should also pay the penalty of failure.



Gurcharan Das

Q: Why is there so much dishonesty among our businessmen?
A: Because of state controls. If you don't need any permissions you won't need to bribe anyone.

Q: Is the foreign technology we get outmoded?
A: Only the market can judge this, not you, nor I, nor someone in Delhi. If a particular technology helps a business to succeed then who is to say it is outmoded. If we free our economy we will automatically get the latest technology because that is the way you succeed in the free market.

Q: Will we lose our sovereignty if we open our doors to foreign investment (e.g. Chile)?
A: The record of the past 40 years shows that countries which have attracted foreign investment have performed better than those who have not. And in no way have they compromised their sovereignty.

Q: Das' lingo is that of the typical entrepreneur?
A: No, it is the lingo of the world, including China and Eastern Europe.

Gurcharan Das, chairman and managing director, Procter and Gamble India Limited, Bombay (Maharashtra)

Running battle

The photo-essay (*Golden girls*, 9—15 September) featuring the Indian women sprinters was an eye-opener. Undoubtedly, the whole nation is pinning its hopes on them to win gold for India in the Beijing Asiad. But there is an undercurrent of hostility among the athletes, especially between P.T. Usha and Ashwini Nachappa. Though Usha is over the hill, and will soon be part of



P.T. Usha: fading out?

history, she has to be given her due, for she has done the country proud.

Siddharth Sharma, Serampore (West Bengal)

Bowled out

The write-up on sports (*Mixed fortunes*, 9—15 September) was an interesting piece. The Indian cricket team failed miserably in contrast to their performance during their earlier visit to England. India's defeat can be attributed to a lack of strategy right through the series The killer instinct and the professional approach to the game, which their opponents displayed in ample measure, was totally lacking in the Indian team.

The fact that the English batsmen mauled our bowlers and notched up high scores in most of the matches establishes India's need for bowlers who can produce results. The good work done by the batsmen came to naught because of poor bowling.

Instead of sparking off rows and controversies, the cricket Board should do something constructive in order to improve the quality of Indian cricket in future.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

Society's version

In the article (*Getting it right*, 9—15 September), the reporter quotes Uma Bharti as having said that her opinion of Madhavrao Scindia's looks was fed to her by the author of the article on her in *Society*.

This is not true. Ms Bharti did indeed say that she found Madhavrao Scindia good looking. Her exact words were "beautiful", which, you'll agree, is a far more potent compliment.



Uma Bharti

Furthermore, the *Society* clarification had nothing to do with the Madhavrao Scindia episode. It referred to her objection to the words "sexy sanyasin", that appeared as the heading.

Anselm Thomas, business manager, Lana Publishing Co. Ltd, Bombay (Maharashtra)

All is gossip

Please do not let Khushwant Singh misrepresent facts (*Apple of her Papa's eye*, 12—18 August). Far from being disrespectful, I showed him every consideration due to an elder who was also my editor. During the seven years I worked with him, he never had any complaints. Now, suddenly, he has discovered that I am an egoistic, ungrateful, graceless person, "unpleasant to deal with".

I was hardly out of my teens, when I had to migrate, along with my family, during the Partition riots. Sahir Ludhianvi and Sajjad Zaheer had already come back to India, when, in 1956, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (an old friend of my father) promised to help me if I wished to return. The Maulana died in 1958. I was in England in 1961 when, instead of settling there, I chose to come back to India. Khushwant Singh writes that I was "fixed up" with *The Illustrated Weekly* on my return. As a matter of fact, I worked in Bombay first as a script-writer for the Films Division. (*Malwa* scripted by me, was awarded the President's Silver Medal in 1963.) Later, I was copywriter with a leading advertising agency in Bombay. From 1964 to 1968, I was managing editor, *Imprint* magazine. I resigned in 1968 (when the management changed hands), and joined the *Weekly* as a staffer. Such ups and downs are part of a journalist's career.

Khushwant Singh writes that when I got a better job in Delhi, I "promptly left without a word of thanks or farewell".

The job as adviser to the chairman, Central Board of Film Censor, happened to be in Bombay. There was a farewell party in the *Weekly* office, in which a present was given to me jointly on behalf of Khushwant Singh and Fatima Zakaria. (The editor himself was probably out of town.)

The censor board job was terminated in a most high-handed manner during the Emergency. (Nevertheless, a gentleman who had been appointed along with me, was taken back in a sister organisation after a few days. I kept quiet, knowing well that it was a man's world.)

Now, in the words of Khushwant Singh, "When the Delhi job wound up, she was back in Bombay not a bit shamefaced, but condescending as ever." Then, according to Singh, I was taken back by *The Times of India*. "When she got a better offer, she quit it again, with as little grace as she did the first time, and without a word of thanks for the people who had stood by her in the hour of her need."

What on earth is Khushwant Singh talking about? I never joined *The Times of India* again, although I was in Bombay till 1981.

It's sad, because although I haven't had a chance to meet Khushwant Singh for a long time, I have always spoken highly of him, and have continued to defend him, whenever people have criticised him.

Qurratulain Hyder, New Delhi

Owing to the Puja holidays, there will be no issue of SUNDAY dated 30 September—6 October 1990. The next issue will be dated 7—13 October 1990.



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ While we would be happy if the court proceedings are expedited, we do hold that courts cannot resolve the triangle.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president, on the Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri Masjid controversy*

■ The threat today comes from elements that are [illegible] or no law, [illegible] the judiciary, [illegible] will be built.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Janata Dal leader, on the Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri Masjid dispute*

■ Has the Prime Minister himself read the Mandal report? I doubt it.

SHATRUGHAN SINHA, *actor*

■ We will stand by the decision even if our government is destroyed in the process.

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister, on the implementation of the Mandal Commission report*

■ This government was born deaf: it has now become dumb under the pressure of its own contradictions.

M.J. AKBAR, *AICC(I) spokesman*

■ If Sikhs despite their enormous sacrifices in the past, are being dubbed as unpatriotic, I will say there is not a single patriot in the country.

MULAYAM SINGH YADAV, *Uttar Pradesh chief minister*

■ Tweedledum Tweedledee, old wine and new bottles. I mean, no difference as the central policy remains the same.

S.S. MANN, *Shiromani Akali Dal (Mann) president, on Virendra Verma, the new Punjab Governor*

■ If merely stating a fact is a sin, I have nothing to say.

VEERENDRA PATIL, *Karnataka chief minister, on his inference that Ramakrishna Hegde was aware that telephones were being tapped*

■ It is unfair to ask us to give up control altogether and yet blame us when anything goes wrong.

P. UPENDRA, *Union minister for information and broadcasting, on the granting of autonomy to the electronic media*

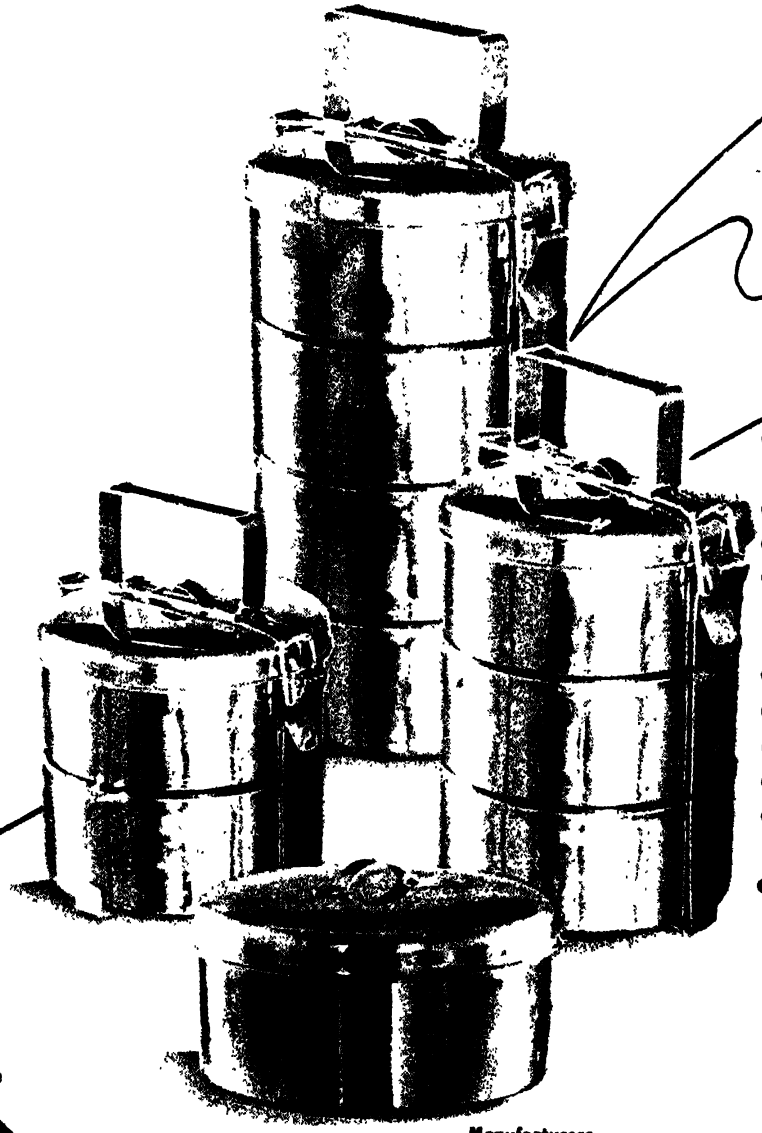
■ People are making Hindi versions of Madonna and Michael Jackson. I might as well make a Hindi version of myself.

REMO FERNANDES, *pop star*



HOPE

All Stainless Steel Thermo Tiffin Carriers



SALEM STAINLESS STEEL INSIDE OUT.

- High-efficiency PU foam insulation.
- Latest technology
- Superior quality
- Each container individualy insulated to carry hot and cold together
- Unbreakable
- Value for money
- Hygienic
- Easy to maintain
- Retains heat/cold for long hours
- Easy to carry

Licencee

STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

Manufacturers
HOPE (INDIA)
8, Vasu Street, (Behind Ega Theatre)
Kilpauk, Madras 600 010.
Phone: 665470.

Distributors for West Bengal
Ega-Ega
Room No. S-2, Fourth Floor
77, N.S. Road, Calcutta - 700 001
Phone: 256796/253908/257190

Available in different capacities

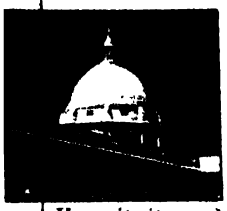
Institutional & Trade enquiries solicited.

Advtse/2383/90

INDER MALHOTRA

Sweating in the desert

Who is responsible for the plight of Indians stranded in Amman?



Sooner or later it was bound to happen. With the massive stampede of panicky Indians trying to escape from Saddam Hussein's clutches in Iraqi-occupied Kuwait, it would have been a miracle if complaints of inefficiency, callousness and worse on the part of relevant Indian diplomatic missions had not been heard. In the event, the howl of protests has been a lot louder and more shocking than might have been expected.

Since Amman, the Jordanian capital, was the only escape hatch for the fleeing mass, it is no surprise that the man up front in the firing line is the ambassador to Jordan, K. Gajendra Singh. The heaviest fusillade on him has come from Kerala, led by the Union minister for surface transport, K.P. Unnikrishnan, for the simple reason that the Keralites form the vast majority of the 1,70,000 Indians for whom yesterday's El Dorado has turned into today's nightmare.

It is possible, indeed probable, that the rather short-staffed embassy presided over by Singh left a great deal to be desired while trying to cope with a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. It may also be that Singh's performance, despite his seniority and creditable record in the past, might have been affected by the almost constant row he has had in recent years with his superiors over his request to marry a foreign sweetheart which was curtly denied. However, is it fair to blame him or his embassy for the unholy mess created not by him, but by faulty policies adopted at a much higher level?

The original sin in this connection was committed by the government when it decided to undertake the impossible task of evacuating such a huge mass of people, many of whom were inclined, wisely enough, to stay put and face the future along with the local Kuwaiti population. This imprudence was compounded further when Inder Gujral readily trusted Saddam Hussein's assurance that India could freely send planes and ships to take away the Indians. Almost every Indian was encouraged to pack his or her bag. Predictably, the wily Saddam went back on his word. Indians, looking forward to returning home comfortably, became hostages.

Thus it was that more than 20,000 Indians found themselves consigned to a hell-hole in the desert on the Iraq-Jordan border, burning by day, freezing by night, without food, shelter or even water. Totally without hope.





Indians trying to escape from Saddam Hussein's clutches found themselves consigned to a hell-hole in the desert

Singh and his colleagues had not created this situation. There wasn't much that they could do to mitigate it because they just did not have the resources, human or material. But where Singh certainly went wrong was in not having visited the Indians at the Shalan refugee camp even once. This is something for which Unnikrishnan has lambasted him and the refugees have cursed him.

In addition to this failure, much else also went wrong, which is not at all difficult to understand. For the lapses that seem to have infuriated the refugees are rooted deep in this country's bureaucratic culture. To put it bluntly, why should anyone expect Indian diplomats abroad to treat the general run of Indians any differently than is done by officialdom at home? Of course, theoretically, at least people in distress away from the country's shores are entitled to a more humane treatment by the government's representatives than might happen in New Delhi, a state capital or a district headquarter. But what is the reality?

Even at the best of times, visitors to Indian missions abroad come back with complaints of indifference, neglect and downright rudeness. For their part, diplomats abroad tell horror stories about impossible demands by Indian visitors, especially those having any pull back home. There is an element of truth in both the set of grievances. In a crisis situation, the mutual irritation gets aggravated a million-fold. •

VINOD MEHTA

Temple of discord

Now, even the BJP is divided on Ayodhya



It's finally happened. One of India's most astute, charismatic and urbane politicians has decided to challenge party orthodoxy on an issue which, if inflamed, could make the reservation riots look like inter-*mohalla* wrangling. As a result, this same politician has forced the Congress, the BJP and the VHP to re-examine long-held positions on a potentially devastating discord. I refer of course to Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee who at last has come clean on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, thus providing the nation with the first glimmer of hope that the crisis might be resolved without large-scale communal havoc.

And the first person he has taken on is his own party president, L.K. Advani. On 19 September, Mr Vajpayee told Smita Gupta of *The Independent*, "Our approach has always been different from that of the VHP—it is they who have said they don't believe in a court verdict on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue as it is based on faith rather than fact. As a major national party, how can we say that we repudiate the authority of the courts?"

Our approach? On the day Mr Vajpayee was enunciating his stand in Delhi, Mr Advani, in that city was explaining his. "They (the courts) cannot determine whether or not there was a temple at Ayodhya that was pulled down by Babar in the 16th century, whether a mosque was built in its place, and, if so, what should be done about it. This remains our position till today."

On the court verdict then, it would seem that Mr Vajpayee is out of step with his party. Why, even on L.K. Advani's 10,000-km *Ram rath yatra*, scheduled to begin later this month, Atalji seems to be both sceptical and apprehensive. "Remember," he warns the faithful, "you are going to Ayodhya, not Lanka. At times the *vanar sena* does not realise where it is heading."

Grateful thanks at this juncture must be extended either to Prof. Satish Chandra, the convener of the committee for the promotion of communal harmony, or to a yet unnamed North Block official. It was their ineptitude (deliberate?) that brought the differences between the two leaders into focus. Usually, meetings of the communal harmony committee are occasions for show-biz glitterati, politicians, journalists and academics to spend a few pleasant hours debating the discharge of onerous social responsibility. However, Prof. Chandra achieved a real miracle. He and other members (Chandra Shekhar seems to have been a major player) of the committee got Advani and Vajpayee to initiate a unanimous resolution recommending that the court's decision on the Ayodhya issue be accepted. It was an extraordinary achievement, not the least because it was so unexpected. Alas, the unanimity lasted all of 24 hours.

Mr Advani was the first to protest, declaring that the resolution conveyed a "totally misleading impression" of his party's position. He had nothing to do with it. Once again, Atalji demurred, confirming to journalists that both he and Advani had been party to the resolution. And here we get into a murky area. Apparently, the commit-







Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has at last come clean on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. And the first person he has taken on is his own party president, L.K. Advani



ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

The VHP's *Ramshila puja*. Without the BJP's support, the organisation would be lost

tee had agreed that the recommendations of the meeting be kept secret until 22 September, when they would be presented to the National Integration Council scheduled to meet in Madras. The convener and the government official, working individually or in concert, ignored this directive and leaked the recommendations to the press. As I write, Mr Vajpayee has resigned in protest at the "breach of faith".

Considering the import of the resolution, it seems a small lapse. Timing is doubtless critical to decision-making in public affairs, but would a delay of four days have made such a difference? At any rate, the BJP president swiftly backtracked, thereby fuelling the mystery of his endorsement in the first place.

Almost on cue, some instant soul-searching was conducted by the Congress. There were reports that Rajiv Gandhi was under pressure from the rank and file of the party to drop his week-long *padayatra* from Delhi to Ayodhya. Given the party's record of ambivalence and triplespeak on the subject, why remind the electorate of an unsavoury past? Moreover, the overwhelming feeling within the Congress is that there are not too many votes to be won through championing secularism at this time. But the biggest fear centred around the possibility of clashes between the BJP and Congress stalwarts. If serious violence broke out, the government would be quick to blame the Opposition. As of now, no firm decision has been taken, but it is likely that if Mr Gandhi insists on going ahead with his "mass consciousness" drive, it will be curtailed in scope and scale.

Already, some states, beginning with Bihar, have banned not only the entry of Parishad officials but of BJP members too. Additionally that stern policeman in Lucknow, Mulayam Singh Yadav, shows no signs of relenting. With the formation of a statewide body called the Anti-Communal Action Committee, supported by the communists and Kanshi Ram's BSP, he is geared to crack the whip.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad meanwhile, seems hesitant and marginalised. I have always maintained that these self-style guardians of Ram and Krishna have no real hold on the Hindu mind or on Hindu society. They are perceived throughout the nation as dangerous rabble-rousers exploiting the poor and uninformed. Without the active support of the BJP, they would be lost.

More pitfalls confront the advocates of Hindu revivalism. The holy men are squabbling among themselves. The *sarkari* Jagatguru, who Mulayam Singh arrested recently, is a known opponent of the VHP and is bound to queer the pitch. Now a much more respected voice, the Shankaracharya of Kanchi, has expressed his fears and urged all concerned to work towards a peaceful, out-of-court settlement. The Babri Masjid Action Committee, Muslim intellectuals and the Imam Bukhari of Jama Masjid have hailed the Shankaracharya's intervention. Swami Chinmayananda favours a similar strategy. Thus, the facade of Hindu unity on Ram Janmabhoomi is slowly but surely cracking up.

However, it is dissension within the BJP that poses the biggest danger to the VHP. Mr Advani's party has a formidable reputation for discipline. Nevertheless, Mr Vajpayee's brave and lone voice of dissent suggests that the few 'wets' in the BJP might speak out if the hardliners insist on going all the way. In this scenario it is difficult to label L.K. Advani. Despite his strident rhetoric, he will carefully assess the direction of the political wind before taking the final plunge.

Mr Advani knows that his party's chances for capturing power at the Centre have never been better. Today the BJP runs three states, administering over 100 million people. In two others, Gujarat and Bihar, its support is crucial to keep the Janata Dal government in office. L.K. Advani must surely want to build on this strength, not fritter it away in an unnecessary general election. All the opinion polls indicate that if V.P. Singh dissolved Parliament, the BJP would be hard put to return even half its MPs and MLAs.

Moreover, the BJP president is aware that the big prize cannot be won from the fringes. If *New Delhi chalo* is the cry of the party, then boxing itself in an ultra right-wing strait-jacket would be fatal. To achieve its national ambitions, the Bharatiya Janata Party will have to steadily move towards the Centre, in which case its links with the VHP in particular become unsustainable.

Dark clouds hover over the republic, but in one sphere at least there is a hint of sunshine. The single political party that has absolutely refused to accept the jurisdiction of the judiciary in the dispute is, at the very least, rethinking its position. The news from the special bench of the UP High Court which is hearing the case is that, leave alone a verdict, we will be lucky if by 30 October all the objections to the supplementary report of the survey commissioner are disposed of. In other words, the actual hearings can only begin after 30 October—and they could go on for years.

Meanwhile, Hindus and Muslims should pray that the incipient gulf between Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishan Advani persists and widens. Therein lies the nation's best hope.●

Journey to Jaffna

Jottings on a war that has never been properly understood

Getting to Jaffna isn't very easy nowadays—especially if you're driving an aging Toyota that splutters and wheezes. But engine trouble—you soon discover—is the least of the hazards.

The Sri Lankan armed forces are no longer willing to allow journalists into the peninsula. ("We can't afford to have pressmen interfering with army operations," is a constant refrain.) In fact, passes ("at your own risk") are issued only up to Vavuniya town, which lies some 100 kilometres south of Jaffna.

In Vavuniya—which the army overran a couple of months ago leaving it almost deserted—it is necessary to call in at the town commandment's office. "So, you're planning to go to Jaffna?" asks the affable Major Chandrasiri. "Be careful, there are lots of air force helicopters and Tiger mines about." The helicopters are the bigger problem and the huge 'Press' signs stuck down on the car's roof and bonnet are not much of a safeguard. For one, there is a curfew in the region and every vehicle—as the military never fails to remind you—is a 'LTTE suspect'. And then, as the choppers are not armour-plated (being essentially transport carriers fitted with heavy machine guns), they usually fire from a great height. "We can't afford to fly too low because of the LTTE's guns," says Chandrasiri.

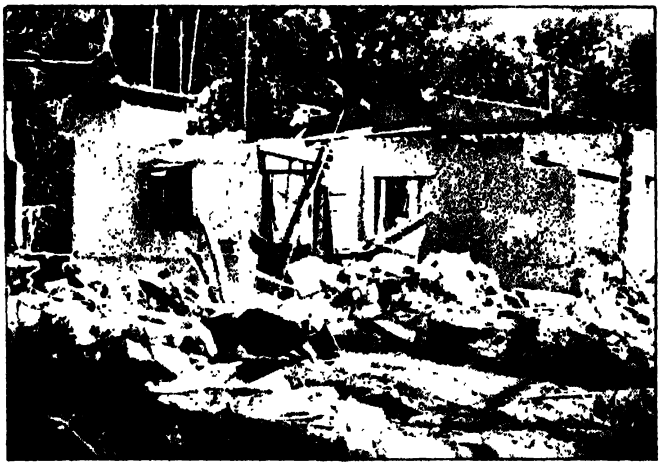
As for the mines, they are relatively easy to avoid. Although the main road that heads north is heavily mined all the way up to Jaffna, there is a safe dirt track—which heads towards Madhu—out of the town.

The key is to keep asking villagers about the state of the road as you go along. A week or so before I made the journey, an American journalist drove her car over a mine. Luckily for her, the device was what the LTTE call a 'Johnny bomb'—a small locally manufactured mine which is designed more to tear a leg off than to blow up a vehicle-load of people. It ripped the tyre to shreds and damaged a side of the car, but she got away unscathed. One spin-off from the adventure—which included a close shave with a helicopter—is that it makes the subject for the next cover story of her magazine. My trip, however, is relatively uneventful. Save the odd overflying plane, there is no sight of the Sri Lankan armed forces.

At Vavuniya, the Socio-Economic Development Council (SEDC), a wing of the Roman Catholic church, is readying a food convoy comprising seven trucks bound for Jaffna. "Can I drive behind the trucks?" I ask the fathers and nuns who are accompanying the convoy. "No problem," they say. It seems far safer to make the journey this way. The Sri Lankan Air Force has been alerted of the convoy and, moreover, seven trucks with large white flags look unmistakably like a relief mission.

But, just three kilometres or so on the dirt track out of Vavuniya, we are stopped at an LTTE camp. Three Tigers head straight for the car. "Are you Sinhalese?" one of them asks somewhat menacingly. "Tamil," I reply. "OK, you can go then," they say.

However, not everyone on the convoy is Tamil. Four nuns and one driver—who appears frightened out of his wits—are Sinhalese. The LTTE camp leader says he cannot let them pass and suggests that the convoy go on without them. A protracted debate ensues. "The food is meant for starving Tamils—the people you are fighting for. How does it matter who brings it?" the fathers argue. The matter is



THE DAMAGE: Various parts of the Jaffna peninsula have been subjected to aerial bombardment. It is the people and not the Tigers—who have strong bunkers—who have suffered the most from these attacks.



LTTE FUNERAL: Seventeen-year-old Mirash Colombo fell to a sniper's bullet near the Jaffna Fort area. The Tigers gave him a fitting funeral but had no way of telling his parents in Colombo that he had died.

referred to the LTTE's area commander who takes a couple of hours to be contacted. "The Sinhalese can't go," he orders. "Nor will the convoy then," say the fathers and the trucks head back for Vavuniya.

It's a two and a half hour ride on a bumpy road track from Vavuniya to the famous Catholic church at Madhu. It is here that the extent of the economic and social dislocation that the war has caused, begins to dawn on you. Almost 10,000 refugees have sought the safety of the church. Most of them live around it in makeshift structures that they have built themselves. The majority have come from various areas in Vavuniya district but there are a number of families who have left their homes in the north.

Food is available but not in the quantities that the church would like. Says Father Yesuraja. "We hand out a certain amount of rations to each family. For many, this means making do with only one meal a day. We appeal to all concerned for more assistance."

From Madhu, the safe route to Jaffna means taking the forest track to Vidataltivu and then travelling up along the western coastline up to Ponneryn. There is no Sri Lankan Army presence in this area. There don't seem to be too many Tigers around either—and the few there are make no attempt to stop the car and ask questions.

About five kilometres from Ponneryn, the LTTE operates a nightly boat service to Kerativu in the Jaffna peninsula. It is virtually the only means in and out of the peninsula as the land route is closed with the Sri Lankan Army having occupied the Elephant Pass.



THE ISOLATION: The LTTE's Mahatayya (right) and Balasingham feel that Colombo has the edge in the propaganda war. "We have no access to the world press and this is affecting us badly," they admit.

The service, which is crucial to food-starved Jaffna, is availed of mainly by petty traders and shopkeepers, who the Tigers charge a small fee. Every night, hundreds of people take the boat with their bicycles to buy rice, sugar and other essentials from the southern regions. The queue of people returning to the peninsula with their commodities is just as long. Says Gangadharan, who owns a shop in Jaffna town: "We undertake this risky and difficult journey because we have to. Otherwise, our own families would starve."

Although the boat service only operates under the cover of night (between 8 pm and 3 am), the Sri Lankan armed forces are not unaware of it. A little over a month ago, the ferry point at Kerativu was bombed killing seven and injuring about 30. However, it is something of a mystery why the boats have not been subject to more frequent attacks. The charitable view goes that Colombo realises the discontinuation of the service would result in the starvation of the peninsula. The cynics maintain that the government wants to encourage people to leave the peninsula so that military operations against the LTTE are not complicated by the presence of civilians.

The severity of the fuel shortage becomes evident once you reach Kerativu. Jaffna town is barely 20 miles away, but it takes all of five



TALKING TOUGH: "If the Sri Lankan armed forces try to occupy the peninsula, they will understand why they can never defeat us by military means," says the LTTE's high-ranking Yogaratnam Yogi.



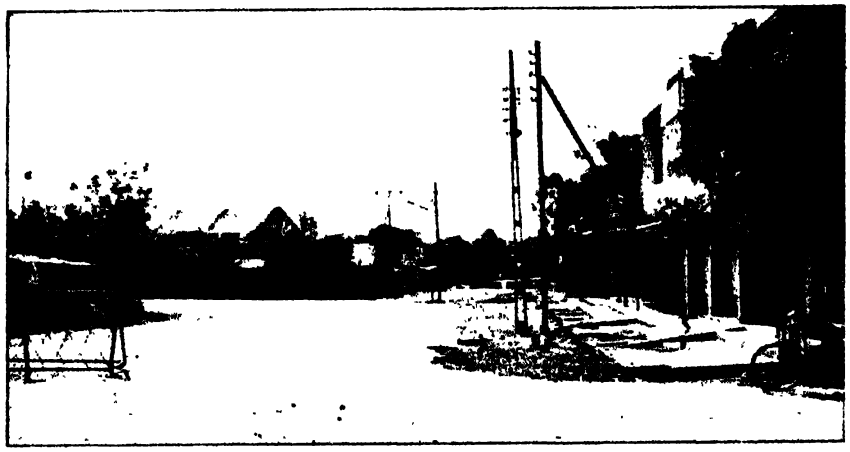
SOUTHERN SUPPORT: Posters exhorting the Sri Lankan armed forces to eliminate the Tigers are a common sight all over the south. This time, the army action has met with widespread support among the Sinhalese.

hours to find a vehicle heading that way. The lack of public transport (autorickshaws are available but there are very few in operation) makes one usually have to depend on the LTTE to get around. At Rs 250 a litre of petrol, even the Tigers feel the fuel crunch. If they loan you a vehicle, they ensure that it runs on diesel (relatively cheaper at Rs 180 a litre).

Surprisingly, the LTTE's main camp at Kondavil is exactly as it was in April—when it was set up after the Indian Army withdrew. The only noticeable difference is a large underground cement bunker which is tucked away discreetly. When asked why the camp—unlike scores of other LTTE hideouts—has not been bombed, the Tigers invariably share your astonishment. However, a helicopter did strafe a moving car on the road adjacent to the camp when I was present. This had everybody ducking for cover, but after the chopper left, there was much merriment among the Tigers. It was as if there was more cause in the incident for amusement, than concern.

The people of Jaffna know their aircraft. Almost everyone can distinguish an Avro, Sia Marchetti, Y-8 or Y-12, by the sound it makes. But it is the choppers (or 'helis' as they are known in Jaffna) that are the most dangerous as they overfly the whole peninsula and shoot at any moving vehicle. The approach of one is met with loud cries of "heli, heli" as the people scramble for cover.

Of the planes, it is the lumbering Chinese-made Y-8s and Y-12s that do the most damage as they carry the largest explosives (barrel bombs or pipas). On one such outing, the Landrover I am in, happens to pass under an overflying Y-8. There is no doubt that we are spotted as the plane attempts to turn towards the course of the road. The elderly guide with me goes into a frightful panic and keeps urging the driver to step on it. After shrugging off the plane by going through some bylanes with a speed that would have shamed Niki(?) Lauda, the driver—seemingly nonchalant—explains: "There was no real danger. Y-8s never conduct spot bombing. They always go for predetermined targets."





THE DISLOCATION: Almost everyone fled Vavuniya (top) after the army overran it. Many have sought shelter and food at the Catholic church at Madhu, which now takes care of almost 10,000 refugees.

Although most parts of the peninsula have come in for aerial bombardment, it is the area around Jaffna Fort that has seen the worst of it. At both day and night, planes—sometimes two or three at a time—take off from Palaly Airfield to pound Tiger hideouts near the fort. The objective: to break the siege of the fort, where about 200 Sri Lankan soldiers—constantly harassed by the LTTE's artillery—have been trapped for a couple of months.

Four days after I leave Jaffna, the armed forces manage to enter the fort in a dramatic midnight operation and evacuate the soldiers. A 100 Tigers and around 27 armymen are estimated to have been killed in the fighting. It is a victory with little strategic significance as the fort cannot be used as a base to advance into the town. But the successful operation—which is rumoured to have been conducted against the advice of senior army officials—delights Colombo. The government has held all along that breaking the siege was important as it would demoralise the Tigers—show them that they could be defeated in their own backyard, Jaffna town.

The bombing and strafing of the peninsula has hurt the people far more than the Tigers. Admits the LTTE's ideologue and theoretician Anton Balasingham: "We have strong bunkers that protect us. But what can the people do against this indiscriminate bombing?" The LTTE estimates that no more than a handful of its cadres have been killed by aerial attacks. Most of its men (or boys rather) have been lost in operations on the ground.

Seventeen-year-old Mirash Colombo is one of them. He died in a direct confrontation in the fort area, when he was hit by a single bullet. Mirash left his school and parents in Colombo to join the Tigers about three years ago. As his body lies draped with the LTTE flag in the house of a relative, there are emotional speeches made about his valour, his love for the Tamil people and his dedication to Eelam. When his body is ready to be taken for cremation, about 20 of his uniformed and armed comrades solemnly march around it.Then, the funeral procession—flanked by the Tigers—leaves the house. Mirash's parents don't know that he is dead. Says an LTTE member: "We had no way of informing them. We will have to wait until someone leaving for Colombo can pass on the bad news. This may take a few days."

His words remind me of how severely cut off Jaffna peninsula is, from the rest of the island. Of a place where the people suffer in utter and dismal isolation. Of a war that has never been properly understood. •

Mukund Padmanabhan/ Jaffna

PHOTOGRAPHS: MUKUND PADMANABHAN

ACQUITTED!

Sanjay Singh and Ameeta Modi are cleared in the Syed Modi murder case

Few court cases have generated such countrywide interest. And few judgements have been more keenly awaited as the one delivered on the Syed Modi murder trial on 17 September by the district and sessions court, Lucknow. The crowds that had been thronging the courtroom ever since the hearings had begun on 16 August swelled in even larger numbers on 17 September. Though the seven accused were present in court, all eyes were trained on two of them: Sanjay Singh, the Rajya Sabha MP, and Ameeta Modi, a former national badminton champion and wife of Syed Modi.

And as the onlookers waited with bated breath, sessions judge Om Prakash Pradhan delivered his judgement from a 67-page voluminous report, from which he read out the gist in two minutes flat. The main accused, Sanjay Singh and Ameeta Modi, were absolved of all the charges levelled against them by the prosecution—the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The judge, however, opined that the cases against the other five accused—Akhilesh Singh, Amar Singh, Bhagwati Singh, Jitendra Singh and Tinku—could be pursued. As soon as Pradhan delivered his ruling, cries of *"Sanjay Singh zindabad"* and *"Sher-e-UP zindabad"* filled the courtroom. Singh himself chose to betray no emotion, conveying the impression that the implications of the verdict hadn't quite sunk in. Ameeta, who was accompanied by her brother Sanjay Kulkarni, too, was calm and composed. Later in the evening, a visibly excited Sanjay Singh told newsmen, "I have won, my conspirators have lost." Ameeta, who left for Delhi the same night, said, "I am dying to meet my little one, who is with my parents in the capital." Akhilesh Singh, however, was visibly upset. "I couldn't ditch the other four, could I?" he asked.

The main thrust of the prosecution's argument was that Sanjay Singh and Ameeta Modi were involved in an extra-marital relationship and Ameeta's husband, Syed Modi, was greatly resentful of this. The two lovers, thus, conspired to eliminate him. The CBI's murder theory was buttressed in the main by some significant jottings in Ameeta's diaries and letters written by her to Sanjay Singh, a letter from Ameeta's mother in which she expressed concern about her daughter's increasing involvement with Singh, a feverish letter penned by the slain Syed Modi, a letter written by Garima, Sanjay's wife, in which she offered to set her husband at liberty if he had "found a better companion", and the testimony of a close friend of Modi, Gyan Prakash Jaiswal.

Having attempted to establish the relationship between Sanjay Singh and Ameeta, and between Singh and Akhilesh Singh, who was described as "a person who could get anything done", the prosecution deemed that "a conspiracy could be proved on the basis of circumstantial evidence, which suggested physical manifestation of agreement betweeen conspirators". The CBI's counsel, S.G. Samant, even referred to the Supreme Court verdict in the Indira Gandhi assassination case in which Kehar Singh was convicted under similar circumstances. The defence lawyer, Ram Jethmalani, spiritedly argued that the relationship between Sanjay and Ameeta was a "platonic one", that the triangular relationship between Ameeta, Sanjay and Modi was a "harmonious one", and that Syed Modi merely overreacted on occasions.



KRISHNAN SATH

Soon after sessions judge Om Prakash Pradhan delivered the judgement, an elated Sanjay Singh said: "I have won, my conspirators have lost"

But Jethmalani's argument cut no ice with judge Pradhan. He conceded that Ameeta and Sanjay were involved in an illicit relationship, but that "motive" (on which the CBI based its murder theory) alone was not strong enough to establish their involvement in the conspiracy to bump off Syed Modi. "The mere existence of motive is, by itself, not an incriminating circumstance; motive, by itself, is not much..." the judge opined. Just as the prosecution chose to read out only those portions from Ameeta's diaries and missives which revealed her amorous links with Sanjay, judge Pradhan too selectively emphasised those passages which showed that she continued to enjoy

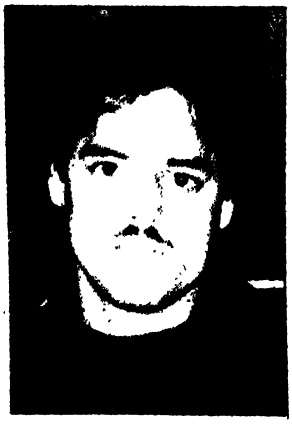
physical relations with Modi, despite her closeness to Singh. He chose to ignore those very parts which had made people sit up only two weeks ago, when Samant had read them aloud in court. Some samples from Ameeta's diary: "Today S2 (code name for Sanjay Singh) enjoyed for first time, second time. I have never seen him like that before (23 February, 1986)." And another entry on 16 February, 1986: "The night was memorable. Called on me again at midnight. Today was unusual, sent raptures, ecstasy..." Judge Pradhan, on the other hand, alluded to a diary entry of Ameeta's made sometime in mid-January, 1986, when Modi was supposed to have played a match against one Vimal, to prove her "deep concern for Modi": "Had an awful night as far as sleep was concerned. I was having total body pain. The agony of having lost and the anxiety of Modi's match against Vimal was practically eating me..." When Modi ultimately won the match, the judgement records how Ameeta expressed her "delicate feelings of love and affection": "I finally swore the worst and that was to have nothing to do with S2 even if it meant our relationship finally broke off. After Modi's match finished on 15/12, 15/11, he came and touched me. It felt lovely, but this time my stakes were high. I was upset but did not dare to show it to him. I was wondering what was in store for me. After he changed, etc., we came home for ten minutes. He became demanding again. I gave in, because he was too happy to be upset..." Again on 28 January, 1986: "Came home and today we decided to cook. We made *kichidi*, which was real yum for a first attempt. We were happy and made love before we went into deep slumber clinging to each other..." Her entry on 24 February, 1986, reads, "Had a ball in the bed. I just did not feel like leaving the warmth I was getting from Modi, sleeping so close."

While admitting that Ameeta's diaries revealed that Modi time and again expressed his resentment and suspicion over her proximity to Sanjay Singh, which led to quarrels, the judgement observes, "All the fights and quarrels, that make the wear and tear of married life, somehow got sorted out." For example, Ameeta's diary recording of 19 March, 1986, shows that Modi had admitted to her that he had either visited a brothel or a massage parlour in London during a recent trip to London, apparently to get even with her.

In a similar vein, judge Pradhan has sought to vindicate Ameeta's coldness and animosity towards the Modi family—which was played up by the prosecution to prop up its thesis that everything was over between the Modis and Ameeta. Regarding the CBI's contention that she did not stay with her in-laws but instead put up in a hotel in Gorakhpur when she went to attend Modi's burial, the judgement deemed that this was understandable in the context of the marriage being an inter-religious one, and therefore, "not palatable to Modi's family". Similarly, the judge felt that Ameeta's not attending the *majlis* ceremony held at Modi's parental home was justified on the ground that this was purely a religious ritual and Ameeta was not bound to participate in it because she hadn't converted herself to Islam after marriage.

Much weightage was given by the CBI to a statement reportedly made by Sanjay Singh to Ameeta's mother that he would "silence Modi in his own way" ostensibly because the going had got tough for him and Ameeta. The judgement, however, does not construe this remark as indicative of Singh's desire or intention to liquidate Modi. Referring to four specific letters penned by Modi to Ameeta between March and April, 1984, judge Pradhan inferred that Modi was always favourably disposed towards Singh, and had even once expressed his gratitude to Sanjay for "having taught him to live and socialise". There was enough material to conclude that Sanjay Singh had dispelled Modi's suspicions on his involvement with Ameeta on more than one occasion, and therefore, the statement in question could also mean that he intended to deal with Modi in his own way, as he had done in the past. On the crucial charge made by the prosecution that Sanjay Singh had hatched the conspiracy to kill Modi along with Akhilesh at Yatrik Hotel in Allahabad sometime in June 1988, the judgement observed that the testimonies recorded merely indicate that Singh and Akhilesh were staying there to campaign for V.P. Singh, who was contesting the parliamentary elections. The judge also dismissed all the other facts garnered by the CBI in support of the conspiracy theory. Ameeta's capacity to love both Modi and Sanjay Singh equally, Modi's favourable disposition towards Singh and the lack of even a shred of direct evidence to suggest that Sanjay and Ameeta were involved in a conspiracy clinched the judgement in their favour.

Syed Modi

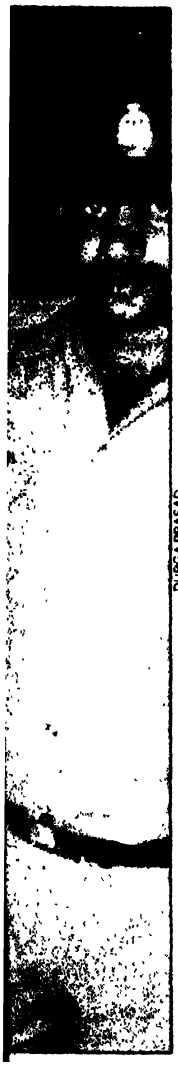




Ameeta Modi coming out of the courtroom: the agony is over

But on what grounds have Akhilesh Singh and the others been convicted? The major premise is the statement of Abdul Khalik, who owned the white

Maruti van (MYG 999), which was allegedly used as the getaway vehicle by the assassins. Khalik, a contractor from Maldwani in Nainital district, said that Akhilesh Singh had borrowed it from him for some "urgent work", giving him in exchange his Maruti Gypsy. The van and its number plate were subsequently identified by a rickshaw-puller, Kishon Bahadur, who was present on the spot of the murder. The second round of the trial will commence on 26 September, when Akhilesh and his accomplices will have to defend themselves. But with Sanjay and Ameeta out of the scene, public as well as media interest in the case is bound to peter out, the likes of which Lucknow never witnessed before.





DURGA PRASAD

The PM with Sanjay Singh: In a dilemma

Meanwhile, Sanjay Singh is playing his cards close to his chest. The consensus political opinion in Lucknow is that the favourable judgement notwithstanding, his political career has suffered a serious setback. The UP Janata Dal is dominated by Mulayam Singh Yadav and Ajit Singh, and the former has made no bones of his resentment towards Singh by first denying him a nomination to the Rajya Sabha last March and a Vidhan Parishad nomination a month later. Given the caste equations in UP, Yadav, who is the undisputed leader of the backwards, who are themselves emerging as a powerful political lobby, wouldn't really like to see a Thakur getting an upper hand in the state's politics. Besides, Singh's own personality hasn't exactly endeared him to even the Jan Morcha members in the state. But if his proven resilience and propensity to worm his way into the hearts of the powers-that-be are an indication, Singh could resurrect himself. •

Radhika Ramaseshan/Lucknow

Union minister Sanjay Singh?

But will the Prime Minister oblige?

Now that the sessions court in Lucknow has acquitted Sanjay Singh in the Syed Modi murder case, the stage is perhaps set for his inclusion in the Union Cabinet. Not surprisingly, the recently-nominated Rajya Sabha MP is spending most of his time in the capital these days. And Singh's supporters in the Janata Dal are sparing no efforts to convince the Prime Minister to include his relative in the Union Council of ministers.

A powerful group of Janata Dal MPs have already met senior party leaders and have requested them to press for Sanjay Singh's inclusion in the Union Cabinet. Their argument is that Singh had done a lot for the Janata Dal and was among the first Congressmen to join the Opposition. Moreover, as events later proved, Sanjay Singh was even prepared to lay down his life for the party and the Prime Minister. (Sanjay Singh was shot at during the parliamentary elections in Amethi last November.) These MPs have even decided to meet V.P. Singh to pursue the case.

But there is another group within the Janata Dal which is vehemently opposing the idea of making Sanjay Singh a Union minister. Its prominent members include at least two young MPs, who were once very close to the Prime Minister but have fallen from grace now. The main thrust of their campaign against Sanjay Singh is that though the latter's name has been cleared by the courts in the Syed Modi murder case, nonetheless his inclusion in the government will give the Congress(I) a stick to beat the regime with. What is more, the anti-Sanjay lobby has been maintaining that the Prime Minister would do well not to promote the interests of his relatives, lest he be accused of nepotism.

The Congress(I) too has launched a concerted campaign against Sanjay Singh. Though the party high command is yet to react to the recent judgement, many Congress(I) MPs have demanded that the CBI, which had investigated the case, appeal against it in the Allahabad High Court. According to them, the home ministry is pressuring the CBI to drop the case—an allegation, say Sanjay Singh supporters, which is baseless and politically motivated.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister V.P. Singh has kept everyone guessing. •

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Mother knows best

And no, she's not retiring, after all

So, after the touching farewell, the parting advice, the goodbye kiss—she stayed on. Mother Teresa respected the choice of the electoral college and decided against relinquishing charge of the Missionaries of Charity. Even though the Pope had granted her permission to retire due to ill-health.

For the sixth consecutive term, Mother Teresa was re-elected superior general—the post she has held since 1961—of the order she founded four decades ago. However, Father Van Exem, framer of the congregation's constitution, specified that she could not assume office till the Pope ratified her re-election. Each time the Mother was re-elected, permission was necessary because the constitutional clause, stating that a superior-general cannot continue for more than two consecutive terms, had to be waived. "For many of us it is a surprise," said Monsignor Francis Gomes, representative of the Archbishop of Calcutta, who presided over the five-hour secret proceedings. "But then, it is God's will." And once again, Mother Teresa bowed acquiescence.

Earlier, too, in 1948, Sister Teresa had answered God's call: "I want you to serve me among the poorest of the poor." She moved out of the Loreto cloister and into the slums of central Calcutta. Starting out all alone, she built the order that now has 3,000 committed workers in 410 establishments worldwide. And since 25 April, when the guiding spirit announced her retirement, the world has been speculating about her successor.

The successor had to be chosen from the six-member top council, by an electoral college. Sister Agnes, Mother Teresa's first disciple and assistant-general of the congregation, was the strongest favourite. But in this election, following "an amendment from the Vatican", all except one member of the last council were dropped and a new four-member council formed. And Sister Agnes was conspicuous by her absence.

This major reshuffle raised quite a few eyebrows. After all, the Mother calls Agnes her 'second self'. The 19-year-old Subhasini Das had simply walked into her mentor's life one day in 1949, when she had been struggling to cope singlehanded with the slumdwellers of Motijheel. She took the Mother's name—Agnes Gonxa Bojaxhiu before she became Sister Teresa—and helped her build the world s most famous missionary order. Till now, whenever the Mother was away, Agnes was in charge. Deeply spiritual and publicity-shy, Agnes was voted first councillor in 1985, despite being known as a mediocre administrator.

This reputation might have been behind her ouster from the second-in-command status in the 1979 election. And though Mother Teresa's preferance seems clear from the fact that she took Agnes with her to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, she had not voted for Agnes, in the election that same year.

So administrative abilities might be top priority. That explains keeping Sister Priscilla Lewis, former secretary-general and number three in the order, in the new council. Agnes has been replaced by Sister Federick, of Malta, who was the regional supervisor in the United States. Third in line is Sister Joseph Michael, till now the regional supervisor in Rome. The fourth councillor is Sister Monica, who was in charge in Holland.

"Looks like they want an all-white cast," says a convent teacher. Not really. Monica is a Bengali and Priscilla an Anglo-Indian. Besides, Sister Andrea Bonk, excluded from the new council, was a Polish-German. However, judging from the global exposure of the chosen faces, the order does seem to have an eye on the international scene. But, other than Agnes, the dropped councillors—Sisters Shanti D'Souza, Dorothy Francis, Camillus Pereira and Andrea Bonk—all had international experience. So, why this sudden shake-up?

"The congregation is turning corporate," explains a volunteer worker. Possible. Mother Teresa will delegate her responsibilities to the councillors and remain "an institutional figurehead". And, probably the emphasis on corporate efficiency has led to this reshuffling. In the bargain, the order might have deviated somewhat from its constitution which specifies God's work and the good of society as determinants for votes.

This stress on efficiency might have necessitated Mother Teresa's re-election. A New York Governor had once said: "When the only living saint asks you for something, how can you refuse?" However, that after 40 years of sustained applause, the order still needs the charisma of a figurehead to hold it together, might not be a happy sign. "I was expecting to be free, but God has other plans," the Mother commented.

And, from the enormous changes sprung upon the order, the plans are not quite clear. Not surprisingly, a cartoon front-paged by a leading Bengali daily showed someone reading about this election in the papers and exclaiming: "Dear God! Politics in Thy Kingdom too!" ●

Antara Dev Sen/Calcutta

Mother Teresa: happy returns



ALL -IN- ONES





GREAT SOUND GREAT LOOKS
GREAT POWER GREAT PERFORMANCE
GREAT RECORDING

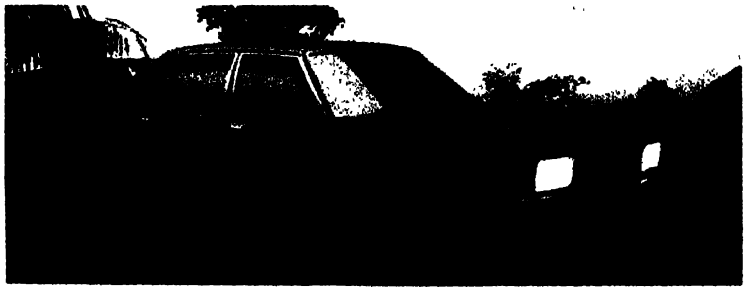
YES, WHY SETTLE FOR A TWO-IN-ONE, WHEN YOU CAN GET A VIDEOCON ALL-IN-ONE?

TURBO POWER	SX 48	• Detachable speakers • 60 watts PMPO • Hi speed dubbing • 5 band graphic equaliser • Rs 3375
SUPER WOOFER	SF 44	• Bass Boost selector • 60 watts PMPO • Hi speed dubbing • 5 band graphic equaliser • Rs 3050
AUTO REVERSE	SF 62	• Continuous play • 20 watts PMPO • Hi speed dubbing • 3 band graphic equaliser • Rs 2975

Prices inclusive of all taxes

May we suggest an alternative to judgi





Contract HW 22-69A

Accessories shown in the picture
are not part of standard equipment

A Limousine to every other car

ing a man by the company he keeps?



Simple as it may seem, judging a man by the company he keeps isn't easy since it means you have to judge the company itself

One possible shortcut is by casting a quick glance over the cars parked in the driveway. And if they happen to be Contessas your problem is solved. Because the Contessa speaks volumes about the people who possess it.

A 1.8 litre Isuzu engine is an indication of power.

Five forward gears, including an overdrive, demonstrate an ability to perform at high speeds.

An impressively responsive steering confirms complete control.

Power disc brakes express the ability to respond swiftly and surely in times of crisis.

And, of course, a plush interior, an independent suspension and air conditioning point to an appreciation of the finer things in life.

But there's much more to the Contessa So why not get in touch with us. And judge for yourself.

CONTESSA
Classic 1·8 GL

Speaking out

It cost Lt. Gen. Sardeshpande his job

The bureaucracy can be brutally unforgiving. Especially when it comes to dealing with individuals who threaten to expose the system. The Indian Army's Lieutenant General S.C. Sardeshpande realised this a little too late. Having won a number of battles, he perhaps presumed that his career could also survive a skirmish with the military bureaucracy. Events, however, proved him wrong and a brilliant career spanning 34 long years was prematurely terminated this August.

His dismissal had everything to do with the Indian misadventure in Sri Lanka. The bunglings and the strategic short-sightedness of the Indian military high command in the 'peace keeping' operations are fast becoming history—but a history the army top brass is understandably not too keen to record, far less to publicise. The problem with Lt. Gen. Sardeshpande was that he was not the type to play ball. As chief of staff (COS) of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) headquarters in Madras, Sardeshpande had openly clashed with his higher-ups. And as the general officer commanding (GOC), 54 Division, in charge of Jaffna, he had exposed the strategic weakness of Indian military planning.



NITIN RAI

Lt. Gen. Sardeshpande was dismissed because as GOC, Jaffna, he had exposed the bunglings and the strategic short-sightedness of the Indian military high command in the Sri Lankan operations

Lt. Gen. Sardeshpande was posted as GOC, 54 Div, because he had considerable experience in counter-insurgency operations in the north-east. He had been awarded the AVSM for his tenure as an Assam Rifles DIG in Nagaland. When he went to Jaffna in January 1988, the Tamil guerrillas had just been cleared from the peninsula town but retained control of the adjoining areas. It was a tense period for the Indian 'peace-keepers', who were routinely ambushed, shot in the back and blasted by mines. The army was fighting with its hands tied behind its back and the troops were taking a terrible beating. But not a single jawan or officer questioned the decision to go into battle. The army's job was to obey. Scores of young officers, most of them in their early twenties, fell to enemy bullets while leading their troops. Gradually, and at great cost, the Indian soldiers managed to bring down the level of LTTE violence to a point where elections could be held and a semblance of civil order restored.

The task of the IPKF was made even more difficult since the LTTE, no matter how murderous it might have been, was secretly revered by the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The LTTE supremo, Prabhakaran, had become a cult figure. The experiences of Vietnam and insurgency in the north-east had amply demonstrated how military power alone can never win a war in such circumstances. And this is precisely what Sardeshpande had pointed out. He felt that military operations in the Tamil-dominated areas of Sri Lanka should be just one strand in the Indian grand strategy. He repeatedly told his bosses that India must launch a large-scale, concerted psychological operation aimed at winning over the Lankan Tamils, against the highly successful LTTE propaganda effort.

Just as the idea of a Naga nation-state had been countered by the granting of statehood to Nagaland, Sardeshpande felt that Indian intervention in north-eastern Sri Lanka could succeed only if it managed to project a credible, viable alternative to the Eelam idea. He believed that the IPKF was only further isolating itself by just killing LTTE militants and lamented the fact that Indian policy-makers were not prepared to hear what the Sri Lankan Tamils had to say. He wanted Indian strategists to start large-scale, rehabilitation and relief work to divert the attention of the local Tamils. As it turned out, however, India could never prove that it was genuinely concerned about protecting the interests of the Tamils. In the end, the IPKF packed up and went home, leaving a debilitated LTTE to ward off the brutal, all-out attacks by the Sri Lankan military.

A number of senior Indian Army officers had foreseen precisely such a despairing denouement but few had spoken out. Sardeshpande, however, was different. As GOC, Jaffna, he had tried his best to build bridges with the local people, had formed a Civil Affairs Cell which heard complaints

against Indian soldiers and he tried to prove to the locals that the IPKF was not their enemy. The idea was to win the "hearts and minds" of the Lankan Tamils. But it was the LTTE which was winning this battle since the IPKF failed in its public relations efforts. Sardeshpande had protested and even threatened to return the UYSM award conferred on him for his services in Jaffna.

After 14 months in Jaffna, Sardeshpande was transferred as chief of staff (COS) to the IPKF headquarters in Madras. Here he came up against yet another problem that suggested that the system was not working properly. The IPKF headquarters had been raised in April 1988 with a total strength of 350 officers and other personnel. Initially, Madras was declared a peace station for the IPKF, and the soldiers who could not get military accommodation took civilian residential quarters on rent as is the procedure in all peace stations. Sardeshpande, when he took over, found that a number of his officers and men had not been able to obtain permission for hiring houses even though they had brought their families to Madras and admitted their children to local schools. All senior officers, on the other hand, had been given official accommodation and, Sardeshpande felt that this was not fair.

As an officer, one of the first things he had been taught was that the welfare of subordinates came first. Every general knows that armymen are prepared to lay down their lives, but expect that they and their families would be looked after during peace time. At the IPKF headqurters, however, this age-old lesson seemed to have been conveniently forgotten. For 8-9 months, junior and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) had been paying steep rents out of their meagre earnings but the army high command was not responding to Sardeshpande's desperate messages. Finally, in June 1989 the army top brass declared that Madras was not a peace station but a 'field area' and no reimbursements would be made to officers and men who had hired civil quarters.

This was patently unfair. For, there were many IPKF personnel who had been reimbursed or had got official accommodation. Some IPKF officers even challenged the decision in court while other young officers were openly cursing their superiors. Sardeshpande felt that officers and men at the IPKF headquarters in Madras were losing faith in the system and that this trend had to be countered. In late October 1989, the IPKF, COS, wrote to the army chief in New Delhi, saying that if the reimbursements were not made, he should either be relieved of his present assignment, or, if that was not possible, to accept his premature retirement from the army.

The reimbursements for rents paid might appear to be small thing in the army's grand scheme, but it reflected much more. Here was the IPKF waging war in a foreign country and yet the army top brass could not satisfactorily solve such a small administrative problem. But no matter what Sardeshpande did, the army high command did not respond. Finally, in March this year, the IPKF returned from Sri Lanka and in April, Sardeshpande was promoted to Lieutenant General and transferred to the army headquarters in New Delhi as director general (Infantry). In June, he was suddenly asked if he wished to pursue his request for premature retirement. Taken aback, Sardeshpande pointed out that his request had been conditional. Since he was no longer the COS, IPKF, the quesiton of seeking retirement was no longer valid. He then wrote an official letter withdrawing his application for premature retirement and forgot about the whole thing.

A month later, Lt. Gen. Sardeshpande was served with a premature retirement order which said that his earlier application for the same had been accepted. This was the sack. And the general, not knowing what to do, filed a statutory complaint explaining the details of the case. In his letter, he pointed out that while his application for premature retirement had been processed so speedily, the army had proceeded at snail's pace with the demand for housing reimbursement of IPKF personnel. His complaint, predictably, was rejected and on 22 August Sardeshpande was out of uniform.

Ironically, Sardeshpande later learnt that the army headquarters had sanctioned the reimbursements sometime in end-June, which is roughly around the same time he had been served with the premature retirement order. Any other person would have gone to the courts. But Lt. Gen. Sardeshpande didn't take such a step since he believes that the army should sort out its internal problems. He has done his bit. Now, he feels that his fellow officers must stand up and learn to speak out before it is too late.●

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi



India failed to prove that it was concerned about protecting the interests of the Lankan Tamils. In the end, the IPKF returned home, leaving a debilitated LTTE to ward off the brutal attacks by the Sri Lankan Army

In the name of Ram

The BJP prepares to do battle with the government

Now it seems to be the BJP's (Bharatiya Janata Party) turn to get tough with the National Front government. And what's worse, the party has chosen to register its unhappiness at a time when the Raja finds himself in the worst trouble ever since he assumed office. The law and order situation in the country has deteriorated what with the anti-Mandal Commission stir spreading throughout the country, while the Punjab and Kashmir problems are no nearer solution. The economy shows no signs of looking up, either. In such a scenario, the desertion of the BJP would be the worst thing to happen to V.P. Singh. But if the party's dissatisfaction with the government's working is anything to go by, such a situation may well arise.

Earlier, all talk of withdrawing the BJP's "critical support" to the Dal regime came from hardliners like Shanta Kumar and Sunderlal Patwa. But now party president L.K. Advani has also begun to send out warning signals to the government. Not without reason. The provocations have been plenty. First, the removal of Jagmohan as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, despite the BJP's known preference for the man. Other points of disagreement followed soon. The party was livid when Om Prakash Chautala was reinstated as Haryana chief minister, despite the Meham incident. But the BJP decided to stand by the National Front during its moment of crisis, anyway. More recently, the BJP has been irked by the government's insensitivity in reviving the Mandal Commission Report and implementing its recommendations without consulting the party and its stand (or the absence of it) on the highly volatile Ram Janmabhoomi issue.



Advani and Vajpayee at a BJP rally: growing in strength

But it was the Mandal Commission Report and Ram Janmabhoomi which dominated proceedings at the three-day study camp for BJP MPs and

The coming confrontation ☐ *The BJP and the government will clash*



THE MANDAL WAR

The BJP is in the awkward situation of having to go along with the Mandal Commission though it detests the idea.



V.P. SINGH'S UNPOPULARITY

"We have the responsibility but no power," Advani told SUNDAY two months ago. Now, the BJP is tiring of taking the rap for V.P. Singh's mistakes.



STATEHOOD FOR DELHI

The BJP feels let down by the government's refusal to grant Delhi statehood.



MLAs held in Bangalore. The general mood was best summed up thus: "We sincerely want that this government should last its full term but it would be a monumental folly on its part to presume that it can take our support for granted for all time to come."

The camp, the fourth such held by the BJP so far, was part of a concerted effort of the party to carve out a distinctive indentity for itself. "We want to be different from other political parties" said BJP general secretary, Kedar Nath Sahni. "We want the people to judge us on the basis of our performance in the states we rule, the assemblies there and in the Parliament."

The mood of introspection, however, could not mask the truth that the rift between the BJP and the Janata Dal had become far more serious. And that the two parties seemed to be moving towards a showdown on 30 October, when BJP would commence construction of the Sri Ram temple at the disputed Ram Janambhoomi/Babri Masjid site. While the *shilanyas* ceremony had been coordinated by senior members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), this time the top leadership of the BJP will dominate the show. And the stage seems set for a confrontation.

Advani has announced that he will participate in a 10,000 kilometre *rath yatra*, from Somnath to Ayodhya. Covering 300 kilometres a day, the *yatris* will pass through eight states, mobilising support for the temple construction. Advani has invited all party MPs and MLAs to join the *kar seva* which will follow the *rath yatra*

Advani's message was clear. If the Raja persisted in his attempts to win votes by fragmenting Hindu society with such weapons as the Mandal Commission Report, the BJP would go all out to unite Hindus on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue.

While Advani promises a "peaceful *satyagraha*" at Ayodhya, others fear that the situation may well take a violent turn. The Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, for one, has warned the BJP that if court orders are violated, he will crack down in his usual no nonsense manner. V.P. Singh seems to have given a *carte blanche* to Yadav to deal with the situation as he sees fit. And the fact that Yadav has the support of Chandra Shekhar as well makes him a formidable force to contend with, as far as the BJP is concerned. But the party can take some comfort from the fact that Chandra Shekhar spoke in its favour at the meeting of the Committee on Communal Harmony.

The BJP's stand on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is clear There is little to be said in favour of wanting for a court verdict. High Court decision on several such contentious cases as the Shah Banu one have been nullified by subsequent orders of the Supreme Court. So, what guarantee is there that the dispute will end with the court judgement?

But it was left to BJP vice-president, Vijayaraje Scindia to take up Mulyam Singh Yadav's challenge. Said the Rajmata: "If Mr Mulayam



THE KASHMIR MUDDLE

Ever since Jagmohan was removed, the BJP has been appalled by the regime's Kashmir policy.



MULAYAM SINGH YADAV

The BJP regards his objection to the temple construction as pandering to Muslims



RAM JANMABHOOMI

The big one. The BJP's best hope of victory lies in a Hindu wave over the temple—V.P. Singh can't let this happen.

"We had cautioned the government"

BJP president L.K. Advani on the Mandal Commission report and the party's rath yatra *programme*

Q: Prime Minister V.P. Singh has recently said that in case the BJP withdraws support, the President will be free to invite the Congress(I) to form the government. Do you foresee such developments in the near future?
A: It is his style to make such statements. All I can say is that whether it be his earlier statement about the possibility of a national government or the episode of his resignation or this one—such things should not be done at the level of a Prime Minister. I have met many of his colleagues in the government who feel unhappy that the responses of the Prime Minister should be of this nature. His statements contribute to a sense of uncertainty and thereby undermine the efficacy of the government.

Q: But do you think V.P. Singh is prepared to go to the people? Has he lost credibility?
A: I would not like to speculate or make comments which would seem a subjective assessment of his personality. All I can say is that his own colleagues are not happy with the consequences such utterances have for the country.

Q: Do you think events are leading upto the announcement of a mid-term poll? V.P. Singh has already said he is prepared to sit in the Opposition...

A: Look at it this way: when this government assumed power there was the doubt whether a minority government supported by two ideologically different parties would last. Then came the resignation of Devi Lal and the scepticism returned. It is also true that whenever there has been a false step taken by the government we have not hesitated to criticise it—be it Rubiaya episode, the Jagmohan affair or their assessment of Mann or the ULFA. And everytime people ask us: why are you supporting the government then? Why are you not withdrawing support?

Most of them may be pertinent questions but the mere fact that they are being asked and answered has also contributed to a sense of uncertainty. I will not deny that. But that was only till the Mandal Commission. I think the way they have gone about handling the Mandal Commission has introduced a more serious dimension.

Q: Don't you think some problems like Kashmir and Punjab were inherited by the government?
A: Yes, they have been there. These and to some extent the problems on the economic front. We have pointed out to the Congress(I) in particular that they have no right to complain. We (the BJP) certainly have. To that extent we have been defending the government against the Congress(I). But it has been impossible to defend the government on the Mandal Commission. It is a matter on which both the BJP and the Marxist parties cautioned the government not to go ahead without consultation or without analysing the consequences. We were alive to the problems that its total implementation would create. The BJP has been unanimous in its condemnation of the Mandal report.

Q: Could the developments over Mandal Commission or the handling of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue become a flashpoint for the BJP?
A: I would not use the word but I have said the same thing quite sharply in Madras and harshly in Bhopal. I have said that the government ought to find out why, while it took two-and-a-half years for the cheers for Rajiv to be converted into jeers, in this case the change has come about in months. Why? I do think the decision to implement the Mandal Commission report on the one hand and the 15 August speech of the Prime Minister on the other have contributed to bringing down the credibility of the government very steeply.

Q: It is felt the *rath yatra* you are undertaking is intended to counter the caste division created by the Mandal Commission report?
A: People forget we had announced the 30 October programme three-four months ago. For a long time I had been thinking of undertaking some programme to project the party's viewpoint in a more comprehensive manner. But I don't blame anyone for relating the two things because my announcement came a fortnight

V.P. Singh's statements contribute to a sense of uncertainty and thereby undermine the efficacy of the government



after the Prime Minister's announcement on the Mandal Commission. But the actual position is that the two are not related.

Q: Don't you think that the Muslim leaders are relatively quiet on the issue?

A: Yes, I have a feeling the Muslims are reconciled. Had it not been for pseudo-secularists like Mulayam Singh Yadav, who are inciting and provoking people, there would not have been any problems. The intensity of Hindu feeling is understood and appreciated and by and large, I feel there should be no problems on 30 October.

Q: But the Prime Minister seems to have given the Uttar Pradesh chief minister a free hand to deal with the problem?

A; I do not know. According to me the Prime Minister has twice said that he does not approve of it (Mulayam Singh's handling of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue) and that he was unhappy about it. He said he would restrain him (Mulayam Singh Yadav) but that is not happening.

Q: What will the BJP's stance be if elections are announced? Some BJP office-bearers have said that the party will maintain an independent identity.

A: It will depend on so many factors. The scenario has been changing so rapidly. Even two or three months before the last election, nobody knew what the strategy would be. So, for any party to say that it would fight the elections alone would not be a correct assessment.

Q: Are you confident that the BJP will increase its present strength in Parliament?

A: It depends on how the election comes upon us. I would not deny that the failures of this government would affect our prospects as well. This is despite our attempts to distance ourselves from the government by criticising it. Everyone knows we are supporting it and the minute we withdraw support it cannot last. But I know, even three months earlier there was a general feeling, even with in the Congress, that if there is a mid-term poll, the BJP would gain from it.

Singh Yadav becomes on obstacle, he will have to deal with Lord Hanuman since (the construction of the temple) is Bhagwan Ram's work." She added that the temple would be constructed at any cost; the survival or collapse of the National Front government was irrelevant in this context. Added Kedar Nath Sahni: "Mr Advani has already said that Ram Janmabhoomi could become a flashpoint for us. And if Mulayam Singh does what he has been threatening to do, then it will surely lead to a confrontation."

Advani himself asserted (*see interview*): "My only concern is that the temple should be built at the site which is believed to be the birthplace of Ram. And I would like it to be done wihtout hurting the sensibilities of any other section." The BJP president pointed out that while the foundation stone has been laid at the main gate (*singha dwara*)of the proposed temple, the sanctum sanctorum (*garba griha*) will come up exactly where the Hindu idols are placed inside the temple' *masjid*

But if that is done, the entire existing structure will have to be demolished. Which is what the Muslim community has been agitating about But as Advani points out quickly, "The proposal of the VHP is not to demolish it but to lift it and place it elsewhere. This should not hurt the sensibilities of anyone."

Congress(I) spokesman, V.N Gadgil, maintains that the BJP is playing the same game it did before previous elections: appealing to Hindu chauvinism In 1966, there was the cow slaughter incident; in 1984 *ganga jal* processions were taken out; and just before the 1989 poll, the *shilanyas* ceremonies were organised all over India.

Unfortunately, the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report and the boiling over of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue have coincided, thus diffusing attention somewhat. The BJP's main objection to the Mandal recommendations is that they could well lead to a disintegration of the Hindu community. The party feels — with the Congress(I)—that the government's decision could provoke caste holocaust. And that the Raja, in an attempt to garner electoral gains, has resorted to as cheap a trick as this.

What is causing some worry to the BJP is that despite the heady gains made by it in the general elections, nothing has really gone the way the party would have liked it to. The influx of refugees from Kashmir continues, with the situation in the Valley getting no better The Delhi Statehood Bill, the BJP alleges, was sabotaged by the Janata Dal and the Congress(I). The party's views on the postponement of Assembly elections in Punjab, too, have not been paid heed to.

But now that the party has announced the 30 October programme, the Dal has suddenly become concerned about the intentions of the BJP. And whether a dispute with the government on the temple would eventually lead to it pulling out of the alliance with the National Front

Advani admitted during a press conference in Delhi that matters were, indeed, coming to a head "Perhaps", he said, "it is inevitable because of the dithering attitude of the National Front government No earnest attempt has been made to solve the problem during the past seven months."

There seems to be a growing feeling among the party members that going alone in the next general election may be a good idea As Krishna Lal Sharma said "We will put up a good



BJP activists demonstrating against the Mandal report: lambasting the government

dates for almost all the seats Our appeal to the people will be that since both the Congress(I) and that Janata Dal have been tried out they should give a chance to the BJP now."

And that's where the Ram Janmabhoomi issue comes in The BJP is aware that the only way it can have substantial electoral gains is if it manages to get the majority community on its side. And what better way to rally the Hindus than by construction of a temple for Ram. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

THE INVESTIGATOR

How Chitra Subramaniam did it

Sometimes, when Chitra Subramaniam is in a self-deprecatory mood, she will joke about her success. "You know," she will say, "I think my sources were just so surprised to see a pregnant Indian woman walking the streets of Stockholm, speaking no Swedish at all and still hoping to get to the bottom of Bofors that they felt sorry for me."

It is an attractive image and Subramaniam's reluctance to blow her own trumpet has consistently led people to underestimate her. At one level, she is a good-looking, South Indian dancer-type in a sari, with a young son who was born in the midst of the Bofors controversy.

But there's much more to her than that. Subramaniam is also the best investigator in Indian journalism today. Whereas the majority of today's 'scoops' consist of lies, innuendo and politically-motivated fabrications, Subramaniam's Bofors stories were well-documented, had been verified by two independent sources before they saw print, and made no points beyond those justified by the evidence available. Nor did she see herself as the conscience of the nation or regard it necessary to lecture her readers on ethics.

Her detractors like to say that she was no more than a post office for leaks from the Swedish prosecutor's office, but this view ignores two realities. One: since the focus of the investigation has shifted to Switzerland, she has still come up with scoop after scoop—and these could not have emanated from the Swedish prosecutor. And two: she did not simply reprint documents that others had handed her. She double-checked each 'revelation', put it into context and then decided *where* to look for the next document.

The results were devastating. Subramaniam's stories—more than anything else—sealed the fate of the Rajiv Gandhi government.

Why did she do it? Subramaniam says she had no political motives. She began investigating the story with an open mind and had no idea that it would become such a major exposé. When she started out, her ideological position was clear (she was a Marxist) but it had little relevance to the story.



And she had the backing of her husband, Carlo, an Italian engineer she had met when they were both students at Stanford. "It was Carlo who taught me the importance of proof," she recalls. "At Stanford, I remember he once asked me to prove that ten was greater than zero. I told him, it was obvious. He said: 'May be, but can you prove it?' That made me realise how important it was to prove everything including things we consider obvious."

Carlo subsidised Chitra's travels because she told him that it was unreasonable to expect Indian journalists to have access to large sums of money. He thought hers was the right cause and that, as a journalist, she had an obligation to go where the story took her.

Of late, however, he has tired somewhat of Bofors. And Subramaniam too says she wishes that the story would come to an end soon. Not only has it come to dominate her life but she has also—over the last two months—become a controversial figure. A section of the media believes that she compromised her integrity by becoming part of the investigation. And the investigators, in turn, believe that she has no business speaking to the likes of Amitabh Bachchan.

In the midst of all this has come the controversy over her Arun Nehru story (see SUNDAYS *passim*) and her resignation from the *Express*. The *Express* lobby suggests that she tried to involve Nehru to throw the investigation off the rails.

And *The Independent* (which carried her Nehru documents) says that the *Express* sat on her story to protect Nehru. Adding to the confusion is the somewhat ambiguous role of N. Ram, her former editor at *The Hindu*.

Subramaniam will tell her side of the story next year in her eagerly-awaited Penguin book on the Bofors scandal. Till then, we will have to be content with the interview that follows. ●

Vir Sanghvi

Bofors and ethics

Some plain speaking from Ms Subramaniam

SUNDAY: Do you consider yourself part of the investigating team?
Chitra Subramaniam: No. Certainly not.

Q: Why do people have the impression that you are part of the team?
A: The decision to cooperate with the investigation was taken by N. Ram, when we were with *The Hindu*. This was announced in the press. I objected to this but it was too late and later, Ram informed me that he felt that he had a moral obligation to explain to me why he had done this.

His explanation was that the journalistic investigation into Bofors had gone as far as it could. After that, it had to be an official investigation and we would assist them from the outside.

This was very controversial because I don't think journalists can collaborate with an investigative arm of the government. I objected, and my objections are on record. The CBI's mandate is not the same as mine.

Q: So you did cooperate?
A: Well, the impression gained ground because I came with them. I was *asked* to come with them.

Q: By whom?
A: By V.P. Singh.

Q: Is this why people like Dr Schmid (of the Swiss police) thought you were part of the team?

A: I was never a part of the team. Before I had met Schmid with the team, I had met him soon after the elections as a journalist.

I have been in touch with Schmid as a journalist for two years now.

I met Schmid in December and told him that I thought that there would be another request (for assistance from the government) but I made it clear that I was a journalist and not a Government of India person.

I went to India after that. That's when I met V.P. Singh. I like V.P. Singh and he wanted me to come with the team. I immediately said 'no'. I had a commitment to my family that I would just stop all this now.

But I got talked into it. You can say I was weak but I got talked into it. But I *was* interested in the story.

I came here and phoned Schmid from Rome airport and said we were coming. And he said 'what are you doing here?' And I said 'I'm just a sidekick. I'm not an investigator.'

Q: When you say 'we', who do you mean?
A: Mr Madhavan (DIG,CBI), Mr Arun Jaitley (additional solicitor-general), and Mr Bhure Lal (joint secretary, PMO). Mr Bhure Lal had no real role in the investigation, though, as far as I know.

So, I introduced the team to Schmid and said 'this is the team' and then, I left the room.

The second time I came with the team I arranged for Marc Bonnant, the lawyer. I was asked to go to Sweden from here and I refused though my ticket was Switzerland-Sweden.

It was totally open and above-board.

Q: So you were part of the team and



I don't think journalists can collaborate with an investigative arm of the government. I objected and my objections are on record



I'm not saying that Arun Nehru made money on Bofors... I left the *Express* because I was made a fool of

yet you were not. Did you see the documents that were handed over?
A: No. All I saw of the Letter Rogatory (LR) was the covering letter and that too I saw later. It was just the usual 'the judge presents his compliments' kind of letter. But I saw nothing else

Q: Did you see the now-famous letter from Mr Madhavan submitting a list of suspects?
A: No. Not at all.

Q: That is quite crucial because it does relate to whether you were in a position to plant stories based on this secret information.
A: But how could I plant anything? For me, the whole thing has been 'damned if you do, damned if you don't'. I did not want to get into the investigation. Yes, I could have put my foot down and said no. But I didn't do that. That was my mistake and I'm paying for it.

And as for all this rubbish about my competing with the CBI, that's nonsense. How can we compete? We have different mandates.

Q: But apparently you were present in the room when the Swiss told Mr Jaitley and Mr Madhavan that there was a sixth account?
A: What?

Q: Weren't you?
A: Rubbish. This is not true. Even Mr Bhure Lal was not present We were in another room. I remember I had a cold and Bhure Lal, who is into Ayurveda, was talking to me about Ayurvedic remedies

And then Dr Schmid came into the room and I asked him 'what's going on?'

He told me that Mr Madhavan was typing out some additional information. Then Schmid and the rest of us talked about Ayurveda Mr Bhure Lal was the witness.

Q: Well, the version that appeared in *Dagens Nyheter (DN)* was that Dr Schmid, when asked to freeze five accounts, said 'well, there is also a sixth account.'
A: What? Are you mad?

Q: Why do you say that?
A: Dr Schmid is known in Switzerland as the king of secrets. Here is this man that every government talks to and wants to buy off because he knows everything about everybody's accounts.

Come on! He is not going to open his mouth and volunteer information. This story is simply incorrect.

Q: Well, this is the *DN* story.
A: I think what may have happened is that the Indian investigators stumbled on some information, but certainly it did not come from Schmid.

Q: So what was the sixth account?
A: Five accounts had been traced earlier. And a sixth was then blocked. The only way that could have happened was if the sixth account was linked to one of the five accounts.

Q: You've done a story in *The Indian Express* stating that the sixth account belongs to a company called Jubilee Finance.
A: No. I've said it is a strong possibility. We know that an account is pledged to Mont Blanc as part of a laundering operation; but let's leave it at that.

Q: That's not the version that appeared in *DN?*
A: No. It isn't.

Q: The general view is that the *DN* story came from you. That the investigators told you about it but that you lacked the verification necessary to carry it yourself. So, in a fit of over-enthusiasm, you called up your friend Bo Andersen and gave him the story. Bo knew your record on Bofors, so he rushed to print with it. Had Bo been more cautious and checked with the CBI, then they would have told him to hold on.
A: Let me try and shoot this down. First of all, I was not present in any of the official meetings, so this can be verified independently through Dr Schmid's office.

I sent Andersen my story on fax as I've been doing since 1988. The next afternoon, Bo phoned me and asked, 'what do you mean by at least five accounts have been frozen.'

He wanted to know if there were



I refused to go to the Press Council for suppressing the Bofors story. Because then I would have had to go against Ram also

more. And if so, who did they belong to. This is how I told him what had been told to me about the sixth account.

Q: Told to you by whom?
A: A member of the investigating team who was present with Dr Schmid when this supposed conversation took place.

Q: According to you, there were only two persons present in the room with Dr Schmid. So, do you realise the importance of what you are saying?
A: Yes, I do.

Q: Okay, but that still doesn't mean you did not leak the story. The investigators may have heard about the sixth account and then told you as a charter member of the team. But they didn't tell Bo Andersen. You, on the other hand, did speak to Bo.
A: Bo Andersen and I have been cooperating very closely since 1988. I contacted him because I needed some help and he translated all my documents. He is considered quite an authority on Bofors.

I told him the story that the investigators had given me and he said 'why don't we use it?' And I said, 'because I don't trust the information. I know Dr Schmid and unless he gives me an independent confirmation, I won't use it. I don't think you should use it either.'

I went back to India and he phoned me frantically one evening, telling me that *Expressen* had carried the story just as I had told him it had been told to me. Exactly in the same fashion.

He asked me if it had appeared in India and I told him that no, it hadn't. Then I said, 'I don't think you should use it and you should speak to N. Ram and see what he has to say.' I told him that this could never be proved.





V.P. Singh told me 'this is all your work' and I felt I had to help with the investigations. I still admire V.P. Singh

Bo spoke to N. Ram who I believe told him that even *The Indian Express* hadn't used it, implying that their standards of verification were not as high as ours and if they hadn't used it, then he shouldn't use it.

But Bo phoned me back and said that as the story was out in *Expressen*, he no longer felt bound to not write it. He felt the pressure. And he wrote it.

Q: So you are saying that it wasn't a *DN* story originally. But that it was a *Expressen* story.
A: Yes. But *Expressen* has no credibility, so the *DN* story got picked up.

Q: And had you spoken to anybody at *Expressen* before the story appeared?
A: No. I don't know anybody there.

Q: Who filed the story?
A: Per Wendel. If my memory serves me right, then it was him.

Q: Was this the same story you had been given?
A: Not just me. *Five* other people in India were given the same story from the same source.

The Indian Express carried another story saying that this account was at Pictet & Co., which was news to me.

The Illustrated Weekly also wrote about the sixth account and said that it had been found thanks to the legal acumen of a member of the team. Coomi Kapoor, who wrote the story and had got it from the same source, asked me about it but by then it had all got out of hand.

Q: But the sixth account and Pictet & Co. are in the I.R.
A: I didn't know that then. I do now.

So, if I planted the sixth account story, did I plant it in the Letter Rogatory?

I think that is the crucial question.

Q: How do you react to the attacks on you?
A: It's not even intelligent. I wish there were some intelligent attacks. It upsets my parents who live in Bangalore which I feel sorry about.

Q: But there's more to it than that. You are being taken to court by AE Services. The Bachchans are naming you in a criminal conspiracy case for leaking the story to *DN*.
A: Oh that's all right. That's part of the game. I have no problems with that. I have nothing to hide. I'll go to court and tell the truth.

The important thing is that my sources haven't lost faith in me. The media called me Mr V.P. Singh's agent and Amitabh Bachchan's mole, so it cancels itself out.

Q: Moving onto the Arun Nehru controversy, how do you respond to the suggestion that the story was a plant?
A: I fall off my chair in amazement.

Q: Why did the story take so long to appear?
A: I don't know.

Q: Is that why you left *The Indian Express*?
A: Yes. I think so. I felt I was made a fool of. The documents were circulating freely in Delhi after I sent them to the *Express*.

Q: Do you think the documents incriminate Arun Nehru?
A: I'm not saying that he made money on Bofors. All I'm saying is that his role requires examination.



I have nothing to hide. I'll go to court and tell the truth... The important thing is that my sources haven't lost faith in me

Q: You are very self-righteous about the *Express*' delaying the story. But isn't it a fact that you had these documents in October 1989 and held them back to avoid jeopardising the Janata Dal's chances of winning the elections?
A: I was only an employee then.

Q: All right. Did G. Kasturi (editor of *The Hindu*) stop you from carrying them?

A: No.

Q: Who did?
A: If I tell you a lie then I won't be able to face Bo Andersen or my sources.

The decision to use or not to use (the) documents was not mine.

Q: Whose was it?
A: I was working with N. Ram who had all the responsibility about using documents.

Q: And this was fine by you?
A: There was no discussion. Ram's decisions were final

Q: The obvious question, then. If you are so self-righteous about Arun Shourie now, then why didn't you get equally outraged by N. Ram?
A: I didn't get self-righteous about Arun Shourie

I left the *Express* not because they sat on my story. I left because my stories were being circulated in Delhi while I was being asked to check up on certain points

Q: You don't see any contradiction in accusing the *Express* of playing politics if first Ram and you sat on documents and then promptly joined up with the investigation? You don't think it is a little late in the day to discover that editors have political motives?
A: No you don't understand With Ram, it was difficult to attribute motives because I trusted his judgement. I didn't have a relationship with Arun Shourie

For instance, we wanted to use Martin Ardbo's diary and I asked Ram why and his answer was 'the right context had to emerge'

Q: When did you get the diary?
A: 1988.

My sources—the people who gave them to me and the people who translated them—knew when I got the documents. So, there is no question of my being wrong on the dates.

Q: Let me get this straight. In 1988, you had documents that you did not publish till 1989. In 1988, you had the reference to the 'Gandhi's trustee lawyer'. But you waited till the election campaign before using it. And at that stage you treated it like some kind of smoking gun?
A: Yeah

Q: Does that make sense to you as a journalist?
A: No, it doesn't.

I don't want to pass the blame but I couldn't decide. You know, with Ram you don't argue

I share the responsibility I should have questioned his decisions I had no power to print.

Q: No. But you had the power to quit.
A: Yeah But I respected Ram. With the diary, we constantly talked about it I kept asking, 'when is it coming?' But he decided when to use it

Q: Was this true of all stories?
A: In the beginning it was very obvious We used it as we got it, once we had verified it

But later, there were delays and I share the responsibility But it was clearly stated to me that I was just an employee

Q: Did you assert yourself?

A: Yes. I refused to go to the Press Council against Kasturi for suppressing the Bofors stories. Because then I would have to go against Ram also Because I was a witness—and you could even argue that I was a participant, however grudgingly, to the decision to delay the publication of certain documents. When you respect somebody, the way I respect Ram, then you don't attribute motives to them in the beginning.

I did not have a clear conscience because I shared the responsibility.

But there is a difference. The *Express* circulated my stories around. Ram never did that

Q: Are you wiser as a result of this controversy?
A: Yes My admiration for V.P. Singh influenced my decision. He told me 'this is all your work' and I felt I had to help. I still admire V.P. Singh and I respect people like Mr Bhure Lal.

But I'm wiser now about journalists who pass themselves off as outposts of public morality. I was a fool to have believed in people who talk about ethics. ●

Interviewed by Vir Sanghvi

The CBI bungles

The move to arrest former Congress(I) MP Sajjan Kumar backfires

It was the first positive step taken by the nine-month-old National Front government to assuage the feelings of the Sikh community. On the morning of 11 September, a high-powered Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team swooped down on Sajjan Kumar's residence at Madipur, New Delhi. The purpose was to arrest the former Congress(I) MP and a general secretary of the party, against whom there were serious charges of inciting the anti-Sikh riots of November 1984 following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Sajjan Kumar, it was alleged, had personally led the rioting in Delhi and other parts of north India.

But as usual, the CBI bungled and in the end had to return empty-handed—and humiliated. The entire operation was kept a closely-guarded secret, so much so that even the Delhi Police was not informed about it. But Sajjan Kumar's supporters got wind of the CBI's plans and prevented their leader from being arrested.

As soon as the investigating officials entered Sajjan Kumar's house, crowds began to gather outside. "*Laathi goli khayenge, lekin Sajjan ko bachayenge,*" they shouted even as the sleuths were searching the premises. Soon, the mob swelled to well over 80,000. What is more, Sajjan's supporters began stoning cars and buses plying on the road. The crowd even damaged the vehicles in which the CBI officials had come. Sensing trouble, the sleuths quickly contacted the local police station and an ugly situation was somehow averted by the cops.

Inside the house, the CBI officials had a tough time interrogating Sajjan Kumar. "I am a Jat and I know how to use the *laathi*," the Congress(I) leader thundered. The confusion lasted for several hours—by which time Sajjan Kumar managed to get an anticipatory bail from the Delhi High Court. The CBI's early morning operation, reportedly masterminded by Bhure Lal, the powerful joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, came to nothing.

What is worse, senior Delhi Police officials confided that even if the CBI had succeeded in arresting Sajjan Kumar, his involvement in the November 1984 anti-Sikh riots would have been difficult to establish. For one, during riots, evidence is extremely difficult to come by and people are too scared to depose before the courts. Sajjan Kumar's case is even more feeble since the complaint against him was lodged three years after the crime was allegedly committed.

The complaint against the former Congress(I) MP was lodged by Anwar Kaur, whose husband Navin Singh was killed inside the Sultanpuri housing colony during the November '84 riots. Ms Kaur alleged that Sajjan Kumar had led the rampaging mob on that fateful day. But why did she file the complaint so late? Anwar Kaur said that though she went to the local police station soon after the incident, the cops refused to record her statement against Sajjan Kumar.

By then obviously all evidence of Sajjan Kumar's involvement in the crime had disappeared. Most police officers feel that the CBI pointlessly searched his house. And all they found of consequence were some *saropas* and *kirpans*, gifted to Kumar during his visits to gurudwaras.

Expectedly, the CBI's action provoked angry responses from the Sajjan Kumar camp. Demanded R.K. Anand, a senior lawyer who had rushed to help out the Congressman on 11 September: "If this is a criminal case, where is the post mortem report? Moreover, how can a case be logded on the basis of an affidavit especially since the Delhi High Court had recently questioned the validity of the affidavits filed by the 1984 riot victims?" Kumar added: "The government is clearly being vindictive."



Sajjan Kumar with his supporters: defiant

Although the CBI raid on Sajjan Kumar's house caused a temporary scare in the Congress camp, the party quickly fought back and mobilised support for its general secretary. And it was former Union minister H.K.L. Bhagat—he too faces similar charges of instigating the Delhi riots—who was most active in this regard. Two days after the fiasco, Bhagat addressed a rally of Congress(I) workers, where he warned the government that any attempt to involve Congressmen in the anti-Sikh riots would not be tolerated.

The government, too, is not likely to try such a thing in future. Ostensibly, the V.P. Singh regime had planned to follow up the arrest of Sajjan Kumar with the announcement of a "package" for Punjab. But now that the CBI fumbled in the first instance, it remains to be seen what the government will do next. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

V. GANGADHAR

Poor Mr Kamath!

Too many avoidable mistakes in the newspapers

The Bombay-based Maharashtra United Nations Association recently organised a seminar on 'Gulf crisis and the UN'. One of the speakers was senior journalist and columnist M.V. Kamath. Reporting his speech, the *Indian Express* wrote, "Mr M.V Kamath attacked the double standards of the United Nations, which did nothing to stop the US aggression on Vietnam, Pakistan's attack on Kashmir and for that matter, India's swallowing up of Sikkim .Turning to India, Mr Kamath said we are in no position to condemn Iraq, after our aggression against Goa, Hyderabad and Sikkim."

A couple of days later, the daily carried a letter from Kamath in the '*Letters to the Editor*' column. "In the first place I made no reference to Sikkim In the second place, the reference to Goa and Hyderabad was made in a different context. I am afraid the reporter tried to summarise what he thought I said, than what I actually said I never made any reference to 'India swallowing up Sikkim'. I am a strong supporter of India's action and cannot possibly have said the words that have been put in my mouth."

Neither the reporter concerned nor the editor had any comments to make on this issue. And this makes one wonder. how can a reporter write something which is the opposite of what had actually been said? How can there be so many mistakes in reporting a straight-forward speech?

Poor Mr Kamath! During the course of the same week, *The Independent* published his article, *Beginning of the End*,on the Gulf crisis, but carried a sketch of another columnist, Mr Nihal Singh. Till now, no apology has been published, and Mr Kamath has not chosen to write to the paper concerned.

The senior journalist is not a bit perturbed that he was booed out of the stage-managed seminar of the Maharashtra United Nations Association. But he is distressed at the declining standards of local reporting.

Another titbit on the same issue. All the Bombay dailies reported the death of film actor Dev Kumar. *The Times of India* and *Free Press Journal* stated that the late actor was 60. The PTI report in *The Daily* said he was 67. According to the 'film correspondent', the actor was 54. The late Dev Kumar is in no position to complain but what about the credibility of the press?

Remembering Christie

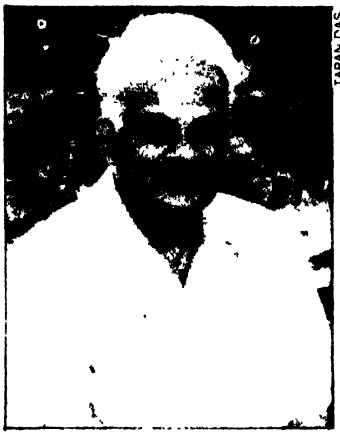
By and large, the Indian media did justice to the 100th birth anniversary of the Queen of Mystery, Agatha Christie, which fell on 15 September. Tributes, features, critical assessments and quiz on her works appeared in quite a few papers.

I was pleasantly surprised that even some of the smaller newspapers did not lag behind. The Sunday magazine of *Gomantak Times*, published from Goa, had an excellent two-page coverage of Christie with photographs of St. Martin's Theatre, London, where her famous play, *The Mousetrap*, is still running.

Murder Sife Said by Dom Moraes in *Vantage*, the Sunday magazine of *The Independent*, was obviously dashed off in a hurry and was marred by a couple of avoidable, but glaring errors. Hercule Poirot makes his appearance in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (published in 1920) and not in *The Sittaford Mystery* as mentioned by Moraes. Further, Miss Jane Marple lived at St Mary Mead and not at St Mary Abbot.

Now, memory can play tricks and anyone can make mistakes. But Dom Moraes knows he is not sure of his facts, yet makes no effort to cross check his material. "I have the impression that Hercule Poirot first appeared in *The Sittaford Mystery*. I may be wrong; but whichever book he made his debut..." Such carelessness does no credit to the writer, who is referred to as a 'genius' by a fawning Bombay eveninger.

The Bombay edition of *The Times of India's Sunday Review* was forced to drop an article on Agatha Christie to accommodate yet another huge colour ad. But Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple would have understood the issue. Tapping his egg-shaped



TAPAN DAS



M.V. Kamath is not a bit perturbed that he was booed out of the 'Gulf crisis' seminar. But the senior journalist is distressed at the declining standards of local reporting

Personally I feel that a bit of investigative reporting would have been quite in order. Why did Mother Teresa at this age decide to contest the election once again? Was there any justification in her remark that the Order would "fall apart after her resignation?"

head with two fingers, Poirot would have exclaimed, "*Eh bien*, these ad-blokes They lack those little grey cells." Jane Marple would have looked up from her knitting, laughed and said, "My dear, human nature being what it is, who can stand up to greed?"

Whose will?

"God's will!" That's how Mother Teresa explained her holding on to the post of the secretary-general of the Missionaries of Charity and the entire media appears to have been convinced by the Mother's words.

Personally I feel that a bit of investigative reporting would have been quite in order. Why did the Mother at this age and with the history of recent illness decide to contest the election once again? Was there any justification in her remarks that the Order would "fall apart after her resignation"? Why was Sister Agnes Das, who was groomed as the Mother's successor, dropped from the select, four-member council?

Of course, there cannot ever be another Mother Teresa. But that does not mean the press should ignore the behind-the-scenes happening at an 'election' which was obviously master-minded to prop up one personality.

Memory can play tricks and anyone can make mistakes. But Dom Moraes knows he is not sure of his facts, yet he makes no effort to cross-check his material

Fighting shy

Indian journalists often complain that even the most elementary military details are not made available to them on the grounds of 'national security' Such an attitude has led to extensive kite-flying with total disregard for facts.

Senior defence personnel are generally very reluctant to meet the press. Under the circumstances, it was refreshing to read about Gen. Mike Dugan, who was recently sacked as the US Air Force chief for his intemperate remarks on the Gulf situation. The general was so publicity-conscious that he had sent around laminated cards to various reporters giving his telephone numbers and asking them to call him in case they had difficulties in obtaining information from his subordinates. The general loved to match wits with the press whose representatives were often invited to the Pentagon for off-the-record sessions.

If only we had someone like Gen. Dugan during the finalisation of the Bofors purchases, we would not have needed Chitra Subramaniam or N. Ram!



Wrote the *Afternoon Despatch & Courier*: "Artist M.F. Husain's 75th birthday was celebrated with appropriate nostalgia on a specially prepared set. Some 800 guests, paying Rs 1,000 per head, attended the celebrations complete with a Hyderabadi banquet



By and large, the Indian media did justice to the 100th birth anniversary of Agatha Christie. Tributes, features and quiz on her works appeared in quite a few papers

Business sense

A very select few in the media business exploit every natural or man-made calamity. It may be cyclone, floods, fire, famine, war and now the Gulf crisis I am referring to the advertisements in the media extolling the 'SALE' of silk sarees, jeans, readymade garments and such other stuff .

In almost all the cases, the organiser just wants to get rid of his surplus, unsold suff and takes recourse to bizarre advertisements portraying himself as a victim of natural or man-made calamities, forcing him to sell stuff at throwaway prices.

One does not know if these gimmicks are successful but the ads make interesting reading!

The two faces of India

This news item appeared in Bombay's *Afternoon Despatch & Courier*: "Artist M F. Husain's 75th birthday was celebrated last night with appropriate nostalgia on a specially prepared set at the Famous Cine Laboratories. Some 800 guests, paying Rs 1,000 per head, attended the celebrations complete with a Hyderabadi banquet, *mujra* dancers, and *qawalli* singers. The highlight of the evening was the auctioning of a painting by the artist. It went to Mrs Parmeshwar Godrej for a bid of Rs 12.50 lakhs."

Underneath that, appeared another news item under the heading,

'*Jobless Father, Kills Baby, Self.*'

"An unemployed man committed suicide yesterday, after killing his two-year-old baby at his residence in Ghatkopar (East). The police said that Harsh Vasantrao Parikh (31) was frustrated since he had been unable to find a job."

That's India for you. ●

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

The circus manager

The BJP lion and the leftist lamb will make a meal of V.P.Singh



Aboard the IAF aircraft, of which he is growing inordinately fond just as it seems to be slipping from his grasp, our Prime Minister, returning from Madras, has vouchsafed the nation that should he have to go, it would not necessarily mean a mid-term poll. He has gratuitously added the suggestion that the President could ask the leader of the single-largest party in Parliament to form the government, after which there could be a realignment of political forces to help Rajiv Gandhi become Prime Minister again. The Raja Saheb, for his part, says he would be content to resume his natural place on the Opposition benches.

How very generous of him! How very white! Not only is our Prime Minister willing to put anyone and anything together to form his own government, he is willing to offer his expert consultancy services—gratis—to others less schooled than him in artful marriages of convenience to breed coalitions that are not only of intriguingly complex pedigree but of a legitimacy that would make an alley cat look askance! The Raja finds it difficult, apparently, to recognise that there might be people in politics who have an objective nobler than spending all their time looking for disparate nails to hammer together a political plank to stand on.

For the politics of the Raja has always been long on expediency and short on principle. He quit the PSP and joined the Congress the moment the doors of opportunity on the Treasury benches set fair to open on his ambitions. He donated much of his extensive domains to Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement only to plead later in a court of law that he had done so in a fit of madness. His commitment to democracy made him one of the leading gauleiters of the Emergency. He won his spurs as the minorities' favourite chief minister presiding over the carnage at the Eidgah in Moradabad on the very festival of Id. And he had a running battle with the dacoits of UP—who just happen to be among the more shining examples of the backward communities of the state. He went on to become so faithful a servitor of the Gandhi family that for months after his servitude was ended he protested to anyone who would listen that Rajiv Gandhi was his leader, his only leader. His devotion to unimpeachable financial integrity made him find in Arun Nehru a true soul-mate. His secularism was expressed in seeking out two Muslim companions with equal felicity—the liberal messiah, Arif Mohammad Khan, and his counterpoint in rabid communalism, Maluana Obaidullah Khan Azmi, Rajya Sabha MP, no less! VP then matched this opening to minority fanaticism with an opening to the other end of the spectrum—an electoral alliance with the spokesparty of majority communalism.

Meanwhile, he had discovered the delectable joys of casteism as our late Tau (last heard of orating to audiences of two cows and one milkman in the wilds of distant Gujarat) taught him the alphabet of A for Ahir, J for Jat, G for Gujjar, and R for—gotcha!—the Raja of Manda! Always quick to learn, our Raja soon mastered the arithmetic of caste. It was to stand him in good stead when he discovered in Mandal, the means of manhandling not only his enemies without but—oh! what fun!—even his friends within. When the Tau departed, VP was nothing fazed, for by then he had discovered two rumblers in his council of ministers—Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav—only raring to discover your caste as a preliminary to taking it out on you.

The only problem is that it has landed him in a bit of a bind. He chose his



Trimming his sail to any wind however it blows, V.P. Singh has discovered a fascinating new technique of governance—which is to never have a view on anything, to never have a policy and to concentrate on the gift-wrapping paper to package his next gimmick

constituency of Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh primarily because it was chockablock full of his fellow-Thakurs. Now that he has mandalised himself so thoroughly, his Rajput voters are furious with him for cozying up to the very kind that the code of the Princeling-Warriors expressly forbids. VP has always had a pretty shrewd idea of how long he can con whom, so he consistently wades into as election promising to be the Forever Candidate from that constituency. Since, in the somewhat elastic morality of Manda, promises are made so that they might be broken, friend VP has never fought a second election from the same rotten borough. So he can't be losing much sleep over the end of his affair with Fatehpur for, all his protestations of last November notwithstanding, he has no intention of setting himself up again in Fatehpur. (Wanna bet? Remember Allahabad and his solemn promise that he would not leave Allahabad till the *sangam* ran dry? *Meri man ka wayda/Aur teri man ka kayda/Bol voter/Bol sangam/Hoga ki nahin?* To which the answer, of course, is *"Nahin, nahin, nahin!"*)

When it comes to economic policy the Raja Saheb made quite a name for himself as the Great Liberaliser. He took pains to let all and sundry know that the 1985 budget—which had even Nani Palkhivala going all gaga—was his personal handiwork. None of which then stood in the way of his announcing himself, when the time came, to be the "natural ally" of the left. (Our left, of course, is notorious for not letting even itself know what its right hand is doing, which is what makes Dhirubhai Ambani Joyti babu's favourite dinner companion and Calcutta the most accommodating of our state capitals for any carpetbagger on the make!)

VP started out last December as chairman of a Planning Commission dedicated to ending the tyranny of growth—and has now transformed himself *(gillie! gillie!)* into the dispenser of 5.5 per cent growth at Rs 16,00,000 crore a try (not accounting for what the oil sharks might yet do to our sums). Now, that transformation is, of course, all to the good—until you wake up sweating in the watches of the night at the realisation that our Quick-Change Artiste might anytime find it more convenient to put the brakes on growth. That would have nothing to do with economics but everything to do with whether Ajit Singh is to be pulled down or pushed up—or even with whether he is to be pushed up as he is really being pulled down; or even vice versa; or, who knows (who cares?) even versa vice! The Artful Dodger can make the most linear programmer of the Planning Commission look twisted as a corkscrew if that is what the imperatives of palace intrigue demand.

So with defence. The profligate days of Spendthrift Rajiv we were told were over. But just as we were reconciling ourselves to taking on the Pakis with our bows and arrows (not to mention the rubber slings with which, as children, we used to take a shot at nesting birds) VP decided to find a sweetheart in the BJP. Now the BJP believes passionately in getting a bigger bang for its buck (especially if that can knock the kulla off a passing mullah). So the NF manifesto was consigned to the dustbin and we've got ourselves the biggest defence budget ever and a defence provision in the latest draft Plan that kisses goodbye forever to monkey-nuts at *chhota hazari*!

Trimming his sail to any wind however it blows, VP has discovered a fascinating new technique of governance—which is to never have a view on anything, to never have a policy and to concentrate his own energies on the gift-wrapping paper to package his next gimmick. As for the problem itself, he calls in all the incompatibles from all the different parties together and asks them to tell him what to do. When they fail to agree among themselves, Weepy wails that no one ever



V.P.Singh persuaded himself that with 18 per cent of the popular vote and a bare quarter of the seats in the House, someone had booked the circus ring for him to return a sterling performance. In he stepped. Out came the **BJP** lion. Next came the **leftist** lamb



V.P. Singh's devotion to financial integrity made him find in **Arun Nehru** a true soul-mate





Always quick to learn, our Raja soon mastered the arithmetic of **caste.** It was to stand him in good stead when he discovered in **Mandal** the means of manhandling not only his enemies without, but even his friends within

helps him govern. When that fails to work, Weepy instructs his press-*wallahs* to spin a yarn to the press. The press, of course, is ever ready to bite at any bait. An uproar ensues, with everyone accusing everyone else; arcane details are leaked about who did what to whom; denials, clarifications, elucidations and rebuttals follow in hot succession. In the melee, everyone forgets that they had got together in the first instance to help VP govern. VP, for his part, persuaded that the Prime Minister's task is to put the cat among the pigeons, is content to let one problem smoulder as he moves on to stoke the next fire. The burning down of Vigyan Bhawan is the paradigm of this government's conception of what the country needs. We don't have a Prime Minister; we have an arsonist!

Such a Prime Minister can, of course, think in no other terms than other politicians also resorting with delight to the art of managing contradictions. So he suggests that if his round of musical chairs is coming to an end, the next birthday party child might continue playing the same game. He forgets that last November, Rajiv Gandhi declined to stake his claim to forming the government, notwithstanding his leadership of the largest single party in Parliament, because he had not got a majority of the seats and, therefore, recognised that he did not have the mandate of the people to govern. Therefore, he gracefully bowed out.

Anyone other than a circus manager would have recognised that if the largest party had not received the mandate to govern, then none of the smaller groupuscules had received it either. But our circus manager's special skill is at making the lion and the lamb lie together. Therefore, instead of admitting that no one had received a mandate to form a government and recommending a return to the electorate to secure a clearer and more decisive verdict, VP persuaded himself—with much cheering on the sidelines from editorialists and column pundits—that with 18 per cent of the popular vote and a bare quarter of the seats in the House someone had booked the circus ring for him to return a sterling performance. In he stepped. Out came the BJP lion. Next came the leftist lamb. For a while, the lion and the lamb were content with the novelty of finding themselves together. Now the snarling has begun. And circus manager Weepy is shinnying up the maypole to get away from it all. He knows that the minute he comes down, the lion and the lamb are first going to make a meal of him before they turn on each other.

It is not for such games that serious politicians are in politics. When the supporting parties finally say, *"Basta"* and bring the whole sham crashing down, there won't be any Rajiv Gandhi around for them to play footsie with. There will be a fresh election. Which, without a shadow of doubt, the Congress will win.

Meanwhile, Weepy has found the ideal solution to his dilemma. His press advisor, Prem Shankar Jha (Mack the Leak), has become the *de facto* Prime Minister. And he even has his own Tau—in the redoubtable person of principal information officer Rammohan Rao! Good luck all—till we meet again at Philippi! •

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position

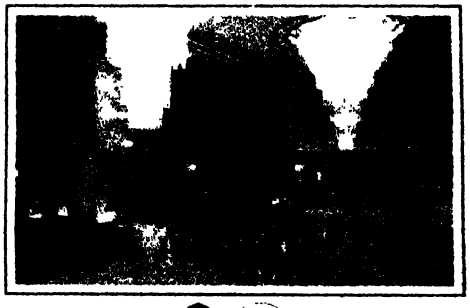


Ashok and Radisson offer you new standards of world class hospitality at Delhi

Radisson Hotels Corporation with its dynamism, its philosophy 'Yes I can' is the fastest growing hospitality group in the world, with hotels at 240 locations.

Ashok now joins hands with Radisson to bring you the finest international hospitality at New Delhi and three other places in the country. With a new work culture, a new ethos to ensure even greater consumer satisfaction.

Other Ashok Radisson Hotels: Ashok Radisson Lalitha Palace Hotel, Mysore; Ashok Radisson Hotel, Bangalore; Ashok Radisson Beach Resort, Kovalam.



Ashok Hotel
New Delhi

An affiliate of Radisson Hotels Corporation

50 B Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021
Tel: 600121, 600412 Cables: ASHOKAHOTEL
Telex: 031-65207, 031-65647 ASOK IN
Fax: 91 11-6873216

VISIT INDIA
TOURISM YEAR 1991

AKSHARA/ITDC-210

INDIA'S HOST TO THE WORLD

Ek, do, queen

Madhuri Dixit. The making of a star

In an industry where hearts beat with the box-office, nobody had given Madhuri Dixit an outside chance. Since her debut in 1984, she had delivered a series of flops—*Abodh, Swati, Mohre, Awara Baap, Hifazat* and *Uttar Dakshin*—and despite such mentors as Subhash Ghai and Boney Kapoor, the film world appeared to have given up on her.

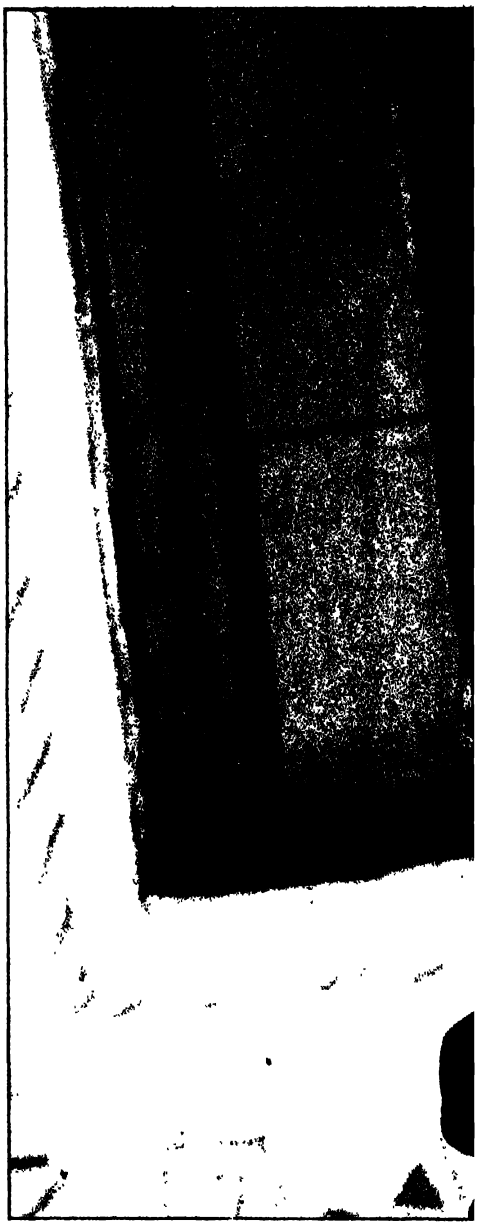
If anyone didn't give up it was Dixit herself.

And with *Tezaab* (1988), her quiet confidence was vindicated several times over. The N. Chandra-directed potboiler was a runaway hit, going on to chalk up a golden jubilee run, and doing business worth Rs 5.5-6 crores in the first 12 months after its release. And in the process, Madhuri managed to turn the conventional wisdom on its head. For, despite the ubiquitous presence of current number one Anil Kapoor, and the fact that the script favoured him quite unabashedly, Dixit managed to pull off the impossible. She ensured that *Tezaab* was seen as *her* film. And what's more, *her* hit.

Of course, *Ek do teen,* which had Madhuri gyrating sexily in a skimpy sequinned outfit, and dancing right into the heart of every cinegoer, had a lot to do with it. Dixit positively sizzled in this sequence as Mohini, the professional dancer who has her audience chanting her name in a frenzy. When the rushes were shown to Anil Kapoor, he read the writing on the screen only too well, and demanded that the song be picturised on him as well. N. Chandra obliged.

But by then, it was too late. Madhuri had already put in an unbeatable performance. And Kapoor, despite straining every sinew, couldn't match it. Dixit was the winner, by a very long margin.

Inevitably, this led to comparisons with the reigning queen, Sridevi. The film press, always willing to create a controversy, played up Dixit's success and pronounced that Sridevi's place at the top could well be threatened. While Sridevi seethed, Madhuri played it cool. No, she maintained, she was only a newcomer and couldn't even hope to compete with such a senior star.



WITH HER PARENTS *They are her greatest strength*



GAUTAM PATOLE

It was a smart move. For, it put her rival off guard. And while she relaxed, Madhuri notched up further successes: *Ram Lakhan* (a golden jubilee, grossing Rs 7 crores in the first year of its release), *Prem Pratigya* (silver jubilee), *Tridev* (which did business worth Rs 5 crores in the first year) and *Kishen Kanhaiya* (which grossed Rs 3 crores in the same time-span). None of these films revolved around Dixit, the way *Chandni* did around Sridevi, but they were hits nonetheless. And, as they say in the trade, everyone benefits from a hit. Madhuri more than others, for her electrifying screen presence meant that she stayed in the minds of the audience far more than her roles warranted.

It was only with *Dil* (1990) that she was given a role that exploited her undoubted calibre as an actress. Madhuri was required to play a young college girl, who graduates to becoming a young wife whom circumstances force to desert her husband. The role asked for a lot from the actress, who had until then performed the regular dance and disappear routine. Madhuri proved more than equal to the situation. Her top-notch performance was duly appreciated. The film has already raked in Rs 4.5 crores and the figure, say trade ex-

GAUTAM PATOLE



A STAR IS BORN *But minus the mystique; Madhuri remains her natural self*

perts, is bound to grow even further once the new song, *Dum duma dum*, is added on.

Critics, of course, point out gleefully that for every *Dil*, Madhuri has had a *Deewana Mujh Sa Nahin*. But even such rank disasters cannot detract from Dixit's success. For, Madhuri has the ability to break every rule of the industry and thrive. She can star in indifferent films by the dozen. come a cropper at the box-office ever so often, and yet Madhuri Dixit remains a star.

For, *her* star quality is independent of the cash registers.

The relationship between Madhuri and the film world is symbiotic. While the industry needs a heroine who can draw the crowds—as she undoubtedly can—Dixit is unlikely to be as big a success at anything else

It all began when a family friend introduced her to the Barjatyas of Rajshree Productions. Madhuri was never too keen on a film career, preferring microbiology instead, but she played along for a lark. She admits all too readily: "I entered the film industry just by chance. So, when *Abodh* was released and flopped, I did not feel too bad about it. The way I saw it then I didn't have much to lose anyway."

A series of eminently forgettable films followed, before Madhuri's luck changed. She was signed on by Subhash Ghai for a small role in *Karma*.

Dixit put all she had into it and Ghai was duly impressed. This girl, he decided, had potential. He promptly shot a video on her and showed it to Boney Kapoor, who was then (1986) looking for a co-star for his youngest brother, Sanjay, in the film he'd decided to start after *Mr India*.

Boney approved of Dixit and with Ghai he took out an advertisement in the trade papers, with a dramatic black and white picture of Madhuri and the caption: "Who's that girl?" The write-up that accompanied the photograph answered that question. As a publicity stunt it wasn't too innovative, but it managed to arouse the curiosity of the industry folk.



GAUTAM PATOLE

THE ARTIST *With her sketches, Dixit makes a pretty picture*

Says Boney Kapoor: "Subhash and I were convinced she had it in her. I have never seen any scene in which she falls short. She is the kind of actress who enhances her role by her ability. She is not the kind of actress who needs to do homework, but on the sets she delivers with perfection and ease." Ghai agrees: "She has a certain quality about her which is timeless and goes beyond the constraints of time and a particular era. In *Karma*, she was made to wait for 12 hours for one shot but she never once complained."

No, there wasn't any doubting her professionalism. Boney remembers telling her that she should do something about her thin arms. The very next day Madhuri joined up Dr Snehlata Pandey's (Chunky's mother) fitness classes, to work with weights. With this kind of single-mindedness, Dixit just had to succeed. Testifies distributor-producer Gulshan Rai: "The most outstanding thing about her is her desire and willingness to

The rivals

Whom Madhuri should watch out for

MEENAKSHI SESHADRI

• Long dubbed the jinxed actress, what with every second release of hers coming a cropper at the box-office, Meenakshi came back into the reckoning with the runaway success of *Ghar Ho To Aisa*, co-starring Anil Kapoor. Even before the shamefaced look was off the visages of her critics, Seshadri delivered yet another hit: *Ghayal*, this time with Sunny Deol in the male lead.

Meenakshi, however, seems to have gone a little overboard with her recent run of successes, insisting in interview after interview that she deserves *all* the credit for the box-office magic her films have worked. And this attitude will go down ill with her producers, directors and co-stars.

Right, Sunny?



JAYANT DAS

DIMPLE KAPADIA

• Despite her *Bobby* charisma and the success of *Saagar*, Dimple never really made it to the big time. Now, on the wrong side of 30, she seems to have missed the bus as far as the race to the coveted number one (or even number two) slot is concerned. But in showbiz, anything is possible.

What Kapadia has going for her is her classical beauty, and her ability to portray raw emotion on celluloid: witness her moving performance in *Kaash*. But there's no getting around the fact that she can't pair up romantically with the likes of Aamir Khan and Salman Khan without stretching credibility somewhat.



JAGDISH MALI

And the likes of Anil Kapoor prefer Madhuri, while paramour Sunny Deol is bashful about signing too many films with his auburn-haired lover.

JUHI CHAWLA

• When it comes to public relations there's no beating this baby-faced charmer. But conquering the box-office is another matter.

And Juhi hasn't displayed any great expertise in this field. True, she did come up with a *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, but that success was followed by a spate of indifferent films, all of which bombed, while hits like *Chandni* did more for Sridevi than for Chawla (and, with good reason).

Perhaps, it was this experience which made Juhi turn down the second lead in Randhir Kapoor's *Henna*, despite her avowed fondness for his younger brother Rishi.



GAUTAM PATOLE

LOOKING UP *How much further is the top rung?*

learn. She certainly brings more to even the smallest role."

That, with her level-headedness, makes for an unbeatable combination. She started work on Indra Kumar's *Dil* when she was a nobody. But by the time three-four reels were in the can, *Tezaab* came along to make her a star. Says director Indra Kumar: "We thought, it's such a big hit. She will have hang-ups But she proved to be a thorough professional."

And professionalism to Madhuri doesn't just mean reporting on the sets on time. It also means putting her heart and soul into her performance when the cameras finally begin rolling. Once, when the shooting of *Kishen Kanhaiya* was in progress at Lala Lajpat Rai College in Haji Ali, Madhuri arrived a couple of hours late. Very apologetic indeed, she all but crawled on all fours to let director Rakesh Roshan know how contrite she was about the delay. But the moment the shot was ready, the shamefaced Madhuri had disappeared. And in her place stood a boisterous teenager, exhorting the audience (she was supposedly watching a film) to beat the on-screen villains. The transformation was nothing short of miraculous.

But despite her undisputed flair for comedy, says Shekhar Kapur, Madhuri has "the expression of classic tragic passion". Says the director: "She has the ability to portray a woman completely and entirely in love. I think one of the reasons she has been so successful is because of her ability to underscore passion and personal tragedy She may not have the high energy pattern oomph which belongs to Sri but she has a classical dimension that Sridevi lacks."



KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY





DURGAPRASAD

If this means that Chawla has learnt her lesson, there could be hope for her yet.

AMRITA SINGH

• Ever since she performed her bouncy teenager number in *Betaab*, Amrita concentrated more on her love life (Sunny Deol, Ravi Shastri, Vinod Khanna) than on her career. What's more she didn't pay much attention to her figure (what figure?) either, leading to unkind cracks about her looking like a truck driver in drag.

But that's all in the past. Now, the film industry is watching—and wondering at—the new, improved Amrita. She's on a new diet (mainly *lassi*) and her waistline is beginning to feel, and show, the difference. If her two major forthcoming releases, *Akela* with Amitabh Bachchan and *Karishma Kaali Ka*, succeed at the box-office, she could give Dixit a run for her money.

MANISHA KOIRALA

• Her biggest advantage is not her innocent smile, or her peaches and cream complexion. In the film industry, there are pretty faces by the dozen.

What Koirala does have going for her is mentor Subhash Ghai. After complaining about the portly director's "advances" Manisha decided that he wasn't such a bad sort, after all, and, apparently, told close friends that she was in love with him.

Under the circumstances, it was the smartest move to have made. Now, Ghai is trying special interest in his protégé's career. Trade gossip has it that he'll turn her into another Madhuri Dixit before he's through.

And, where do you think that will leave the original?

But when you meet Madhuri face-to-face, she doesn't come across as a great actress, tragic or otherwise. Instead, she seems just another girl—though undeniably pretty—in her mid-twenties with a satisfying career. There aren't the *nakhras* usually associated with stars; in their place are myriad interests, ranging from classical dancing to sketching. For, as Madhuri discloses with pride, she doesn't come from a *filmi* background. Hers is a family of true culture and breeding, which never lets her get ideas above her station.

But they do insist on excellence. Says Dixit: "I was taught never to give up. I always competed in elocution and dance and song competitions. And when I never won a prize, I would get really upset. But my mother used to say, 'Keep competing and you will win'. And sure enough, I did."

That lesson in perseverence once learnt was never forgotten. Even today, Madhuri's routine is killing. The entire week is spent rushing from one studio to another, and on Sundays Dixit is up early to put in three hours

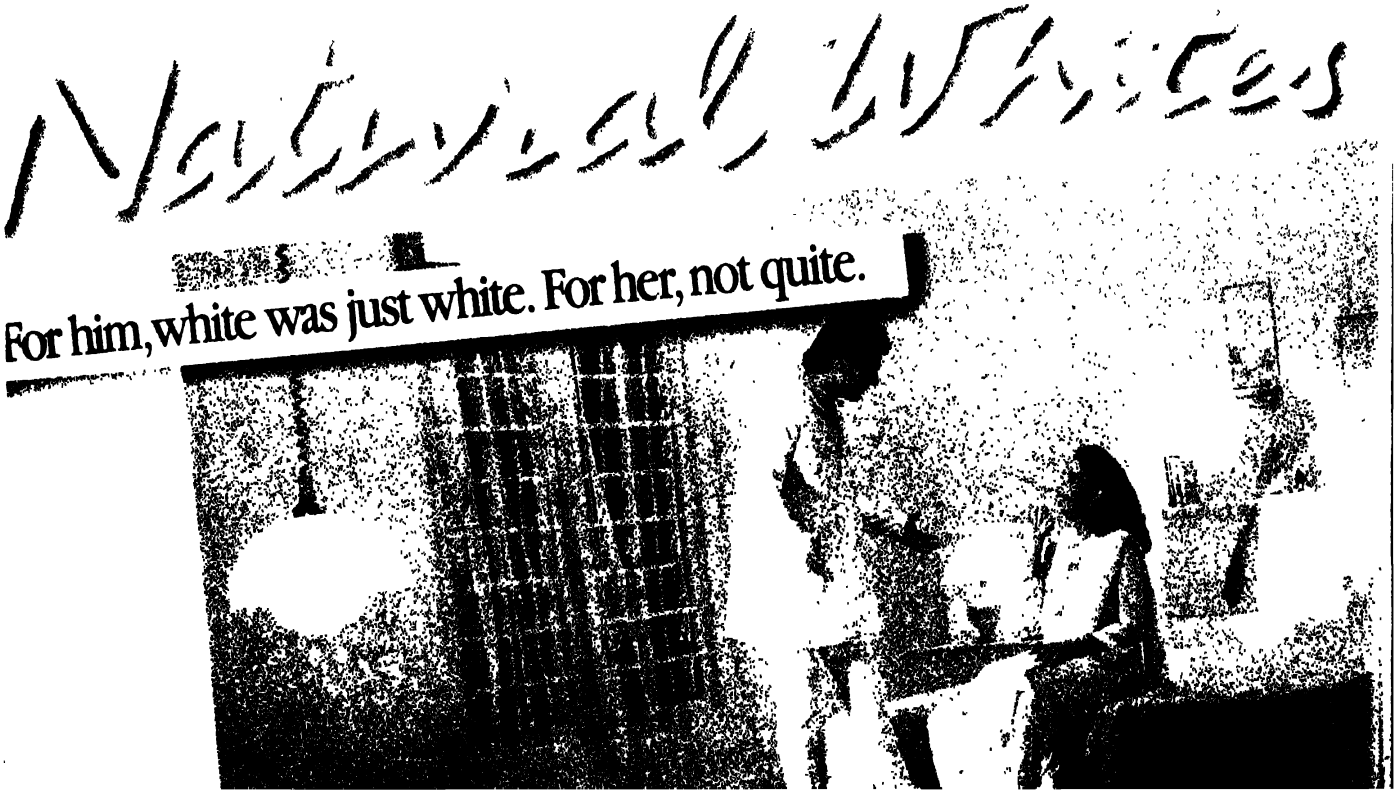
GAUTAM PATOLE



ON THE SETS *Striking suggestive poses is part of the game*

of Kathak practice with Guru Hazari Lal Jaipurwala. Her face totally devoid of make-up, hair tied back in a pony tail, Madhuri goes through her paces, sticking her tongue out and glancing apologetically at her guru everytime she misses her step.

But call a photo session, and she is every inch a star. Casually dressed in trousers and a bright green shirt, she



GAUTAM PATOLE



KATHAK AT HOME *A far cry from the bump and grind routine*

exudes self-confidence in front of the camera. Says photographer Gautam Rajadhyaksha: "She looks like Michaelangelo's Madonna, serene face, large eyes, chiselled lipline, aristocratic expression. Somewhere along the line she begins to enjoy her work; that's what makes her different."

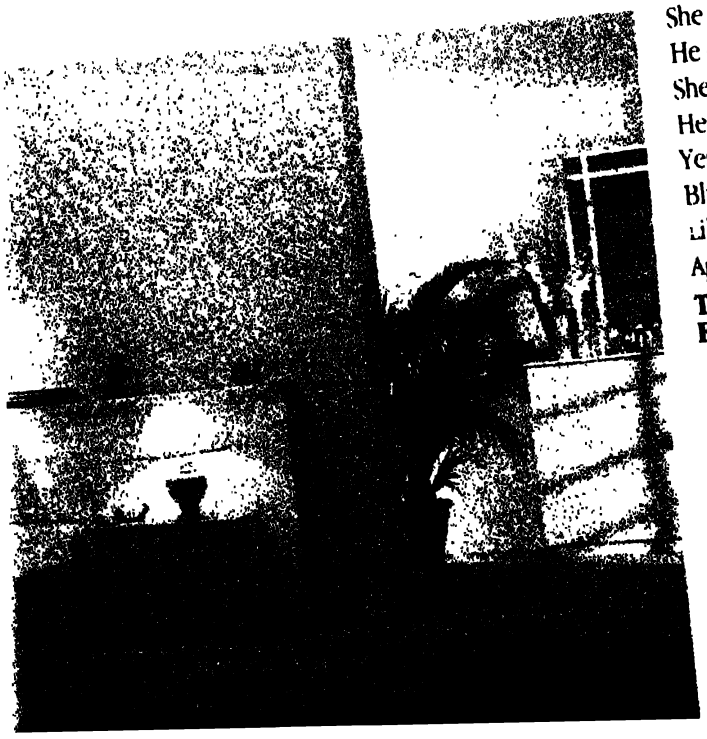
Rajadhyaksha talks about the time Madhuri walked into his studio at 7.30 pm after a hard day's work: "She had to pose with a backdrop of ice with the air-conditioning on. When she got up after a couple of hours we realised that her jeans were soaking wet. But the next day she called me to say that she's had great fun at the shoot."

Dixit maintains it is her family that has shaped her attitude to work. "We have imbibed discipline so that it is not even possible for us to do something wrong. We were always told to take our careers very seriously. My siblings are all architects and engineers."

Initially, of course, her engineer father was dubious about letting his youngest child enter the big bad world of Hindi films. Says Mr Dixit: "We had heard that the industry was a bad place. But if you keep yourself above board nobody can touch you." And now that Madhuri has done just that, her parents, two sisters and her brother are in this with her. One of her parents always accompanies her to the sets, and though that has led to unkind cracks about her Sridevi-like Mummy-knows-best syndrome, Dixit would much rather have it this way.

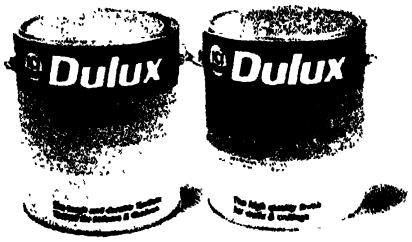
Off the sets, she spends her time

(Continued on page 49)



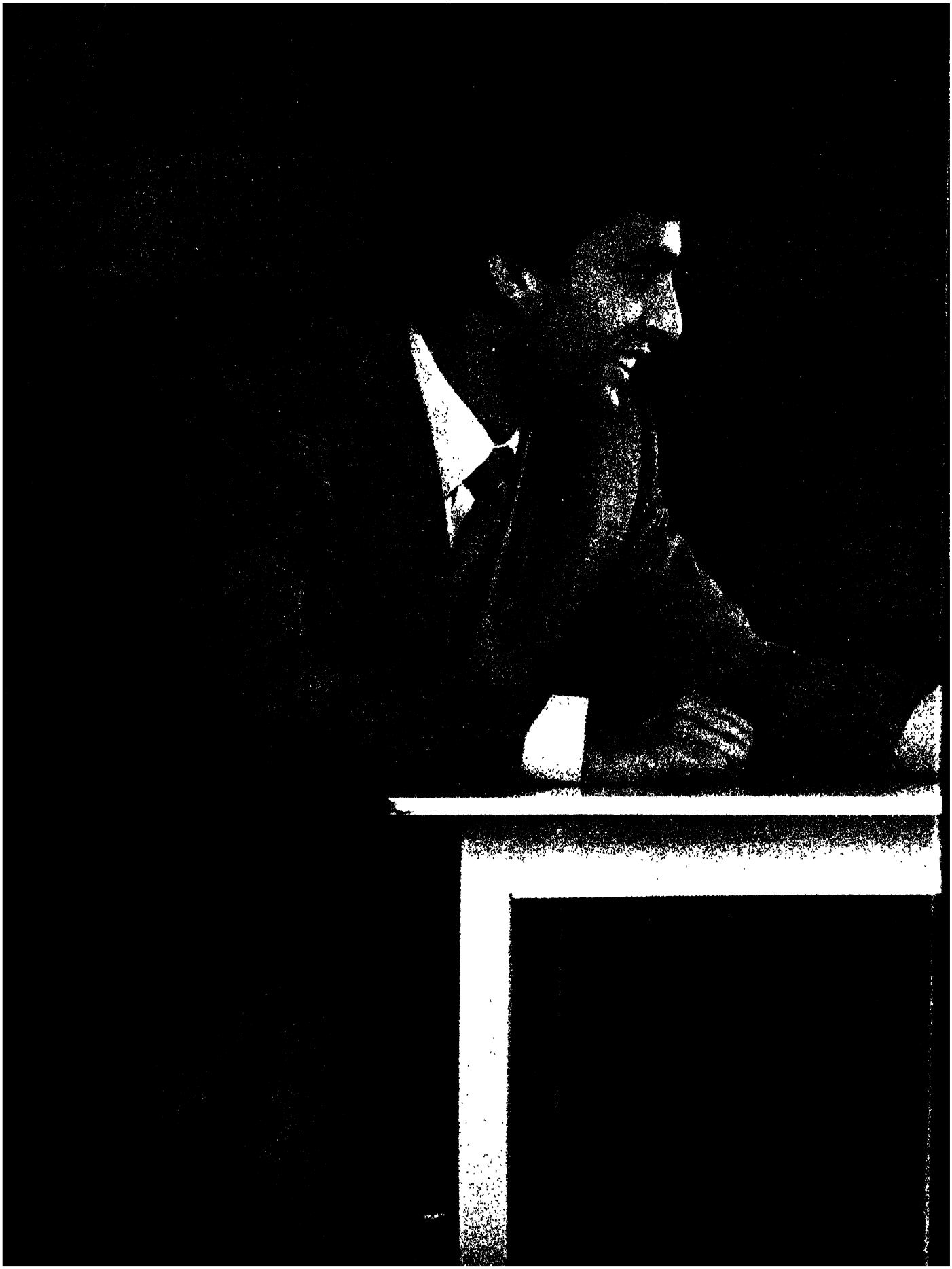
She was tired of plain white.
He didn't want anything bright.
She had an idea. Shades of white!
He was puzzled. Does white have shades?
Yes. The new Dulux Natural Whites Collection.
Bluebell for coolness. Barley for warmth.
Lily adds a glow. Softness of Rose.
Apple to refresh. Orchid for elegance.

The whiter shades of pale.
Fresh from Dulux.



ICI Dulux
Perfect Partners

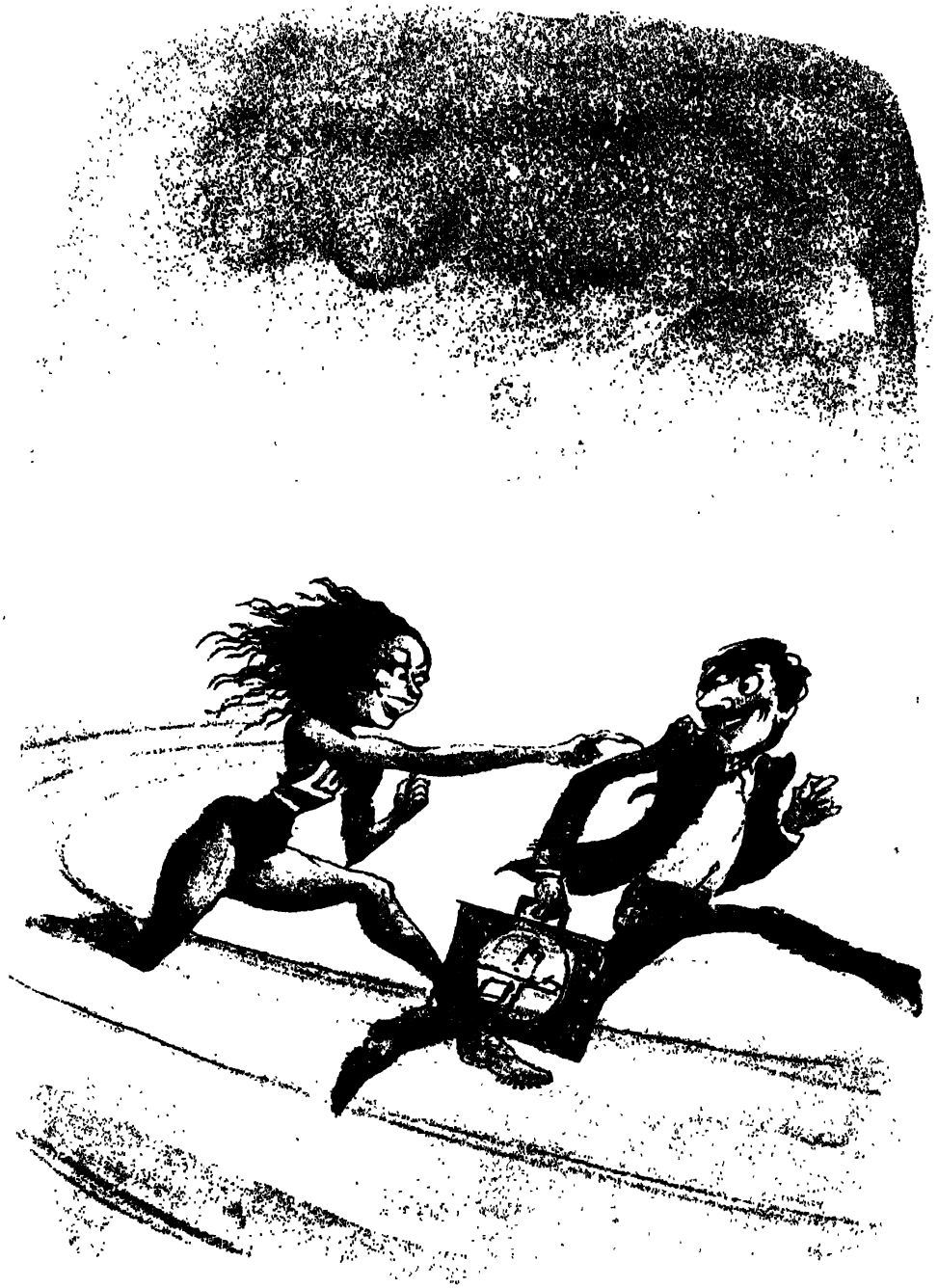




OCM
SUITINGS
THE PERFECT FABRIC
A Product of VXL India Ltd.

What did Flo Jo of the U.S. say to the Skypak Man?

"And you thought, you were the only one who could smile while moving at record-breaking speed?"



We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

Avenues SC 566 90

(Continued from page 45)

listening to music ("anything from pop to classical"), dancing (Kathak) and reading ("science fiction; I can't take heavy reading after a hard day's work"). Occasionally, when she watches a science programme on TV, she does feel a twinge of regret about having to give up a career in microbiology for films. But shakes it off in her usual no-nonsense manner.

But, obviously, the interest remains, for even her similies are related to the subject. The relation between the press and the stars, she says is like that between "the root nodules and bacteria. They both need each other". The relationship between Madhuri and the film industry is just as symbiotic. While the industry needs a heroine who can draw the crowds—as Dixit undoubtedly can—Madhuri is unlikely to excel in any other sphere as she has in films. Small wonder then, that the actress is all too willing to make the compromises asked of her. "Sometimes when I am dancing," she says, a trifle ruefully, "I have to strike suggestive poses, as in that *Sailaab* number. But instead of making the dance cheap by tossing my face and body aggressively, I deliberately brought innocence, laughter and sweetness into my eyes and face so that people would notice my facial expression more than my body. I try to make the best of every situation."

But the dissatisfaction remains. Says Madhuri: "Whenever I see my dances I feel there is something wrong there, something missing. Then again, sometimes at the end of the week I am so tired I feel like giving it all up. But then I think if I want to do well in any other profession, I would have to be just as dedicated."

And having come this far, it does seem stupid to give it up for a momentary whim.

For, Madhuri *has* come a long way. Only a couple of years back Anil Kapoor would turn up his nose at the mention of her name, admitting that he signed films with her only on Boney's say-so. "I thought," recounts the now-wiser Kapoor, *"ek do films kar sakta hoon.* Then at one point I got a lot of films so I did not want a big star who would have date problems. So I signed *Parinda, Tezaab* and *Beta* with Madhuri also."

When *Hifazat* flopped, everyone told Kapoor that Dixit was a flop actress, good only for "sister roles". He was mad, they said, for having signed

Milestones

The films that made Dixit a star

TEZAAB

• Madhuri's first major hit after a series of flops. The film revolved around Munna, the good-hearted ruffian (played by Anil Kapoor), but Dixit managed to steal the show with her foot-tapping dance number *Ek do teen.* As the entire nation swayed to her beat, Madhuri announced that she had arrived. So what if there was still a long way to go.

RAM LAKHAN

• Even though the film had such stars as Anil Kapoor (yes, again), Jackie Shroff, Dimple Kapadia and Raakhee, Madhuri's mentor Subhash Ghai ensured that she had plenty to do. And that her bits didn't get chopped off at the editing table either. For her part, Madhuri was properly grateful and put in a sterling performance. The strategy paid off: it was Dixit's pout



that was remembered long after Kapoor's shenanigans as the spoilt younger brother had been forgotten.

KISHEN KANHAIYA

• Her comic flair came to the fore in this film about two movie buffs (Anil Kapoor being the other) who spend half their lives in darkened movie halls and the other half imitating their favourite stars. Madhuri's take-offs on such established greats as Raj Kapoor were quite stupendous and she managed to overshadow Anil with what looked like effortless ease. The one grouse that critics had against her—that she couldn't handle comedy the way Sridevi did—died a quiet death.

TRIDEV

• This Rajiv Rai-directed multi-starrer didn't have much use for the heroines except as decoration. On



Madhuri's own admission, all she had to do was "dance and disappear". But despite these constraints, she didn't do too badly. While *Tridev* certainly wasn't her hit, her slithering and swerving in the *Oye oye* number undoubtedly contributed to the film's repeat value. And she managed to make Sonam and Sangeeta Bijlani look quite flat-footed by comparison.

DIL

• She portrays the entire gamut of emotions in this film: the ebullience of a college kid, the passion of a young woman in love and the anguish of a wife who is forced by circumstances to leave her husband. What's more, she portrays them well.

If *Tezaab* signalled Madhuri's arrival as a star, *Dil* established her as an actress.



And, if Dixit's professionalism and hard work doesn't flag—and nobody who knows her well thinks it will—she can only get better and better.

The Dancing Dixit

It's Madhuri's twinkle-toes that have got her where she is

Success to Madhuri Dixit didn't come easily. And nor did the ability to pull of the *lachak-matak* numbers that pass off as dances in Hindi cinema. Trained in the classical mode, Madhuri found the unconventional (to say the least) movements of *filmi* dances near impossible to execute.

And then she found herself under the wing of Saroj Khan the rotund dance director of *Tezaab*. But despite the excess flesh, Khan could dance up a proverbial storm and Dixit couldn't have had anyone better to initiate her into the intricacies of the bump and grind routine, as executed in *Ek do teen*.

Says Madhuri: "I practised for a week continuously for that song. These kind of steps were strange and unfamiliar to me and I really had to work hard. You can say I learnt all the ropes in those seven days."

Concurs Saroj Khan: "She did not know anything about commercial dancing. I had to teach her everything, from camera angles to dancing, the frame, etc. But I must say she gave it all she had. At times I would ask her to go home, and tell her there was no need to come the next morning. But come next day she would be there, asking me to execute the steps just once more."

The hard work paid off, and the magic *Ek do teen* created on the silver screen has now become part of film lore. But not before Dixit had been pushed to the brink. Shooting for the dance sequence commenced one morning at nine and continued till ten the next day. Madhuri never once complained, only saying, towards the end: "I think I will faint if we don't pack up now."

They did pack up, and Madhuri lived to tell the tale.

And savour her success, which got even bigger with *Ram Lakhan* and the *Bada dukh deena* number. Says Saroj Khan: "I think she really improved in that film. The expressions she brought to her face in the *Bada dukh deena* song were really exquisite."

Then came *Tridev* and *Oye oye*, the song which captured the imagination of the entire nation. The number was originally supposed to be picturised on Naseeruddin Shah and Sonam, but once Rajiv Rai realised he had a hit on his hands, he decided to build the climax of his film around the song. This time, Sangeeta Bijlani and Madhuri Dixit were added to the list of performers. And Dixit danced circles around both Sonam and Sangeeta.

Says Madhuri: "By the time *Tridev* came along, I was more confident about my ability to dance to

BODY TALK *It is her dancing that accounts for much of Madhuri's popularity*





raunchy beats. Since the song was picturised in a particular situation I could create a particular atmosphere while I danced. This way I felt I was both acting and dancing."

It proved to be an explosive mixture.

The latest craze among cine audiences is her *Sailaab* number. This, according to choreographer Saroj Khan, is different in several ways. "First of all," she says, "Madhuri is brought on camera when she isn't singing so she can concentrate on her facial expression. I asked Bappida (Lahiri) to bring the rhythm down so that the pace became slower and she had more time to emote."

But it was the *Thaanedaar* song, *Tama tama* (better known as the *Jumma chumma* clone) that proved Dixit's dedication. Saroj Khan recounts: "She had to dance on a chair, get down and pick the chair up all in one move. The shot was only okayed on the 40th take. By the end of it she had bleeding knees, but not once did she protest or complain."

For, Madhuri Dixit means to be the best, even if she has to sweat blood for it.

as many as five films with her. "The jinxed star has come a long way," says Kapoor. "She is a lovely dancer, has a great screen presence and has been fortunate to be surrounded by all the right people."

Rikku (Rakeshnath Sharma), her secretary, comes within this category without a doubt. The film industry may have its own view on him, labelling him anything from manipulative to devious, but he has handled her career extremely well, ensuring that at any time Madhuri has a requisite number of big banners in hand, with big co-stars and good roles. This way, even if one or two movies flop, the others do well in accordance with the law of averages and the damage to Dixit's career is minimised. When he joined her in 1984-85, on Subhash Ghai and Boney Kapoor's insistence, Madhuri was a B-grade actress. Today, she is in the top bracket.

But Rikku is far from complacent: "Why only Sridevi? Everyone is competition for her. But I am confident that she can handle it, being a sincere, non-interfering professional."

Her forthcoming releases feature her in a wide variety of roles. In *Jamai Raja*, she plays a daughter caught in the cross-fire between her mother (Hema Malini) and husband (Anil Kapoor). In *Beta*, she is the gutsy daughter-in-law who tries to break her mother-in-law's (Aruna Irani) hold on her husband (Anil Kapoor, again). In Subhash Ghai's next film she is cast opposite Jackie Shroff (so much, she says, for her being a Anil Kapoor *campwalli*). She stars with Jackie in the Hindi remake of *The Eyes Of Laura Mars* as well, while in the Gulshan Kumar-produced *Sangeet*, she plays a blind dancer. *Sajan* has her as the female lead in a romantic triangle with Sunjay Dutt and Salman Khan.

But, according to industry observers, it is *Khel*, in which Dixit plays a street-smart con girl who falls in love with a small-time crook, Anil Kapoor, which will catapult her "into the Sridevi league". The role gives her ample scope to display both her comic flair and histrionic skill and Madhuri has excelled at both.

It is, however, the explosive mixture of sensuality and innocence which Madhuri projects so effortlessly, that has set cinema screens on fire all over the country. And to the Indian male, with his obsession with baby-faced charmers, with the body of a sex symbol, she is just what the psychiatrist ordered.

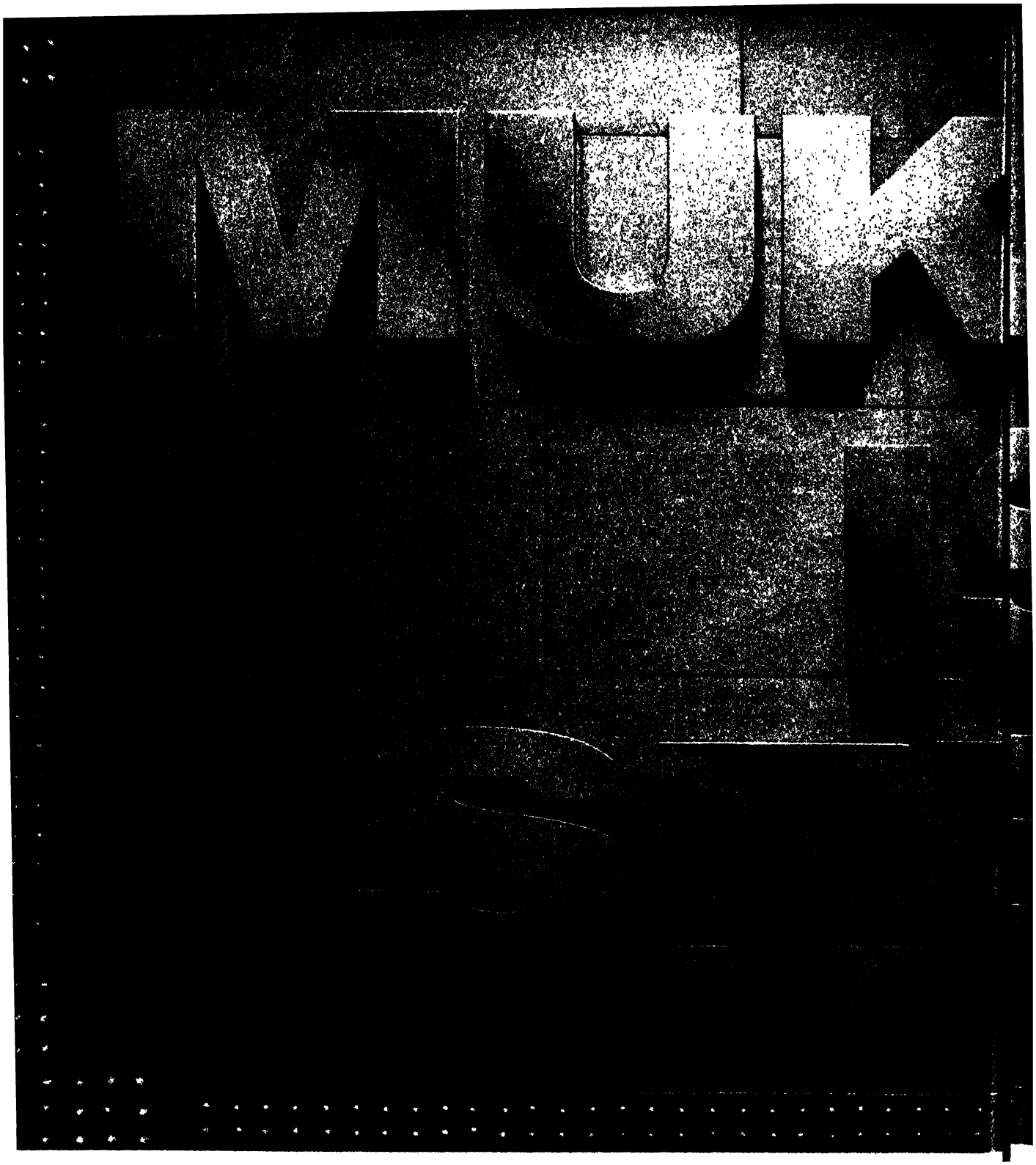
And that is the best measure of Madhuri Dixit's success, and never mind box-office takings. ●

Devina Dutt/Bombay



Madhuri remains a trifle apologetic about her dancing. "Whenever I see my dances on screen," she says, "I feel there is something wrong, something missing"

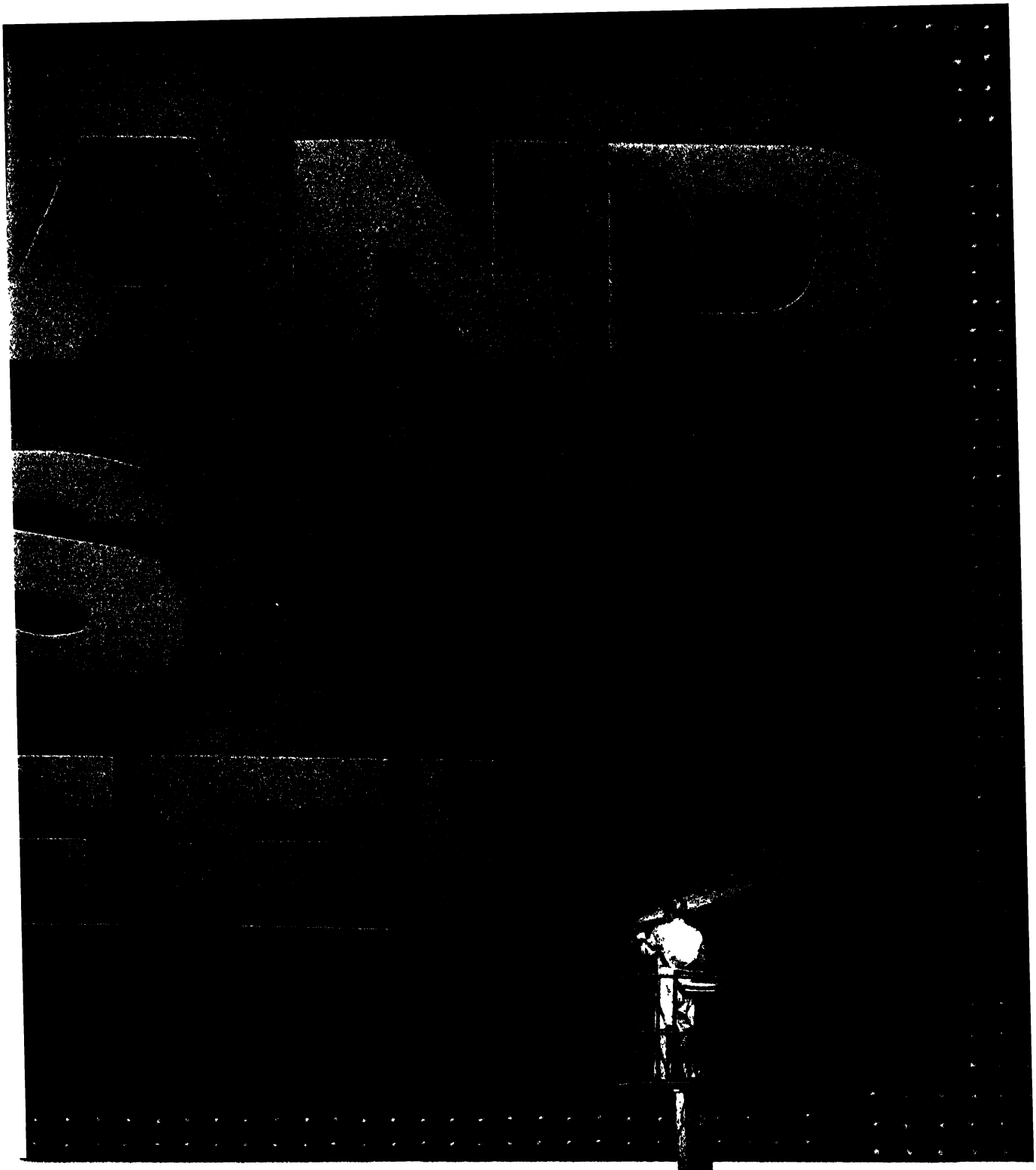
SAILAAB *Madhuri brought a sweet innocence to even as raunchy a number as this*



For over five decades, Mukand has been synonymous with steel.

Mukand is India's largest producer of the widest range of stainless and speciality steels; leads in exports of alloy steel castings; designs and builds some of India's biggest, most complex cranes and machines; helps launch her rockets; and undertakes execution of turnkey engineering projects. Making it a multi-product, multi-division, Rs. 500-crore conglomerate.

The commitment of Mukand's people to technology.



innovation, research and development has given them a rare insight into steel and its applications. Mukand knows how to make steel, engineer it and use it effectively.

In 50 years, Mukand has truly become a mastermind .n steel.

MUKAND LTD.

(Formerly Mukand Iron & Steel Works Ltd.)

ECONOMY/ TERRORISM

The living daylights

The ULFA is scaring business away from Assam—and destroying the state's economy

• *Rajan Kejriwal, an engineering goods dealer, has become an infrequent visitor to his downtown Guwahati shop. And for the brief moments that he does come in, he sits alone in a corner and flips listlessly through his firm's order register. Sales have dropped alarmingly, and the young Marwari businessman—born and brought up in Assam—has no clue how long things will remain this way.*

• *Jagat Narain knows that he will never forget how to drive, but may well have to give it up. Narain, who drives his own truck, spends his days in front of the Dibrugarh Truck Owners' Association office, waiting, endlessly, for custom. Every morning, he climbs religiously onto the driver's seat of his TELCO carrier, starts the engine, and checks if the truck is ready for a long haul. Then, the waiting starts.*

• *For engineers of the Oil & Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) at Sibsagar, 70 kms south-west of Dibrugarh, it is a long spell of unscheduled holiday. ONGC's oil wells in the area are dry and production is non-existent, as young Assamese nationalists impose a blockade on the extraction of crude oil.*



MANJIT MAHANTA

An ULFA militant *His vision of a future Assam has wrecked the present*

Good times have yielded to bad times—with the worst yet to come, but looming frighteningly close. Any businessman in Assam will testify to this, as would officials of public sector undertakings, and tea garden managers. If Kejriwal's plummeting sales charts and Narain's forced idleness are indications of a general apprehension clouding the state's business climate, the ONGC's stalled wells and panic in tea gardens are testimony to helplessness in the face of burgeoning belligerence.

Almost daily, there are reports of businessmen and executives being held at gunpoint, and money extorted. Often, just a letter signed by a 'militant' suffices. Tea companies—though they all deny it publicly—have paid ten of lakhs of rupees to the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the state's undisputed terror kings, to stave off trouble—and death—at tea gardens. Assam Frontier tea company chairman Surrendra Paul was gunned down by ULFA cadres in April, ostensibly for failing to pay up; this is too chilling a reminder for anyone wanting to fight back.

Roads are blocked regularly, train tracks and bridges are blown up, severing the crucial communication and transportation links that trade—anywhere—survives on.

Everytime the ULFA goes on the rampage, the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)—which stands accused of sympathising with the militants—stirs in mock concern. Despite its repeated assurances—"We have everyone's welfare at heart," "the ULFA is a menace", etc.—chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's government has done precious little to end the fear psychosis that has gripped the state's business community. And the Marwaris, in particular. For decades, they have monopolised trading activities from Tezpur in the far south of Assam to Tinsukia in north, but have come under special attention from the ULFA and assorted militant organisations which sprout in the North-East faster than profits.

Inevitably, the flight has begun. In May, union law minister Dinesh Goswami, a member of the AGP, declared publicly that Rs 1,200 crores have been moved out of the state by nervous entrepreneurs. Five months later, local businessmen say the figure could have easily trebled, and the trend, they say, is only getting more

pronounced.

According to business circles in Guwahati, about 400 Marwari businessmen have closed shop. In Tinsukia, Assam's commercial hub, 35 prominent traders quit the township between August and September, two particularly treacherous months. ("I am not talking about floods, either," says a Calcutta-based trader with interests in Assam.) In Dibrugarh, the Diaspora is only beginning, but in a month, could turn into a flood

Credit transactions have virtually ceased, with all business conducted strictly on cash terms. The result: a drastic fall in the volume of godown stocks, especially of foodstuff. In Guwahati, wholesalers of consumer items say that business is not as brisk as it used to be even six months ago, as buyers from districts have stopped making regular buying trips to the city, too scared to move. "The wholesalers are keeping only a week's stock so as not to block up capital," says a manager, who declines to be identified, at the State Bank of India's Guwahati regional office. "Earlier, they used to have supplies for at least two months."

Banking sources in the state say that commercial and industrial deposits in the state have dropped by Rs 13.07 crores to Rs 187.93 crores between March 1989 and 1990. In SBI's Guwahati circle, institutional advances for foodstuffs have shrunk from Rs 15.78 crores to Rs 10.31 crores during the same period. And, according to the bank officials, the fall in deposits and advances since, could be even more precipitous.

Bankers say that the magnitude of the flight of finance capital from Assam has not been adequately reflected in the books. For instance, though two major public sector banks in Dibrugarh town, admit that their deposits have dropped alarmingly since tea baron Paul's death, the amounts seem like the tip of the iceberg. The explanation offered by bankers is that the major chunk of money being spirited away is 'black' or unaccounted for.

However, they add that the flight of capital from Assam in not really a new phenomenon. "Profits earned here were always remitted elsewhere," says a Dibrugarh banker, who declines to be identified. " The difference now is that even the base capital is being eroded."

The first assertion is precisely what gives the ULFA its justification, a twisted moral alibi to extort money from businessmen. It also serves to lend the militants a noble touch, modern day Robin Hoods who preach secession, operate clandestinely, and take money from the better off, non-ethnic Assamese traders to finance both their organisation and the numerous villages they run as virtual fiefdoms. The ULFA, the Assam Jatiya Yuba Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP), the Assam Jatiya Unnayan Parishad (AJUP), the AASU— all strong political groups, totally committed to Assamese chauvinism, economic independence, and aggression. These groups range from the doctrine-spouting varieties to those who will kill gladly for their vision of a future Assam. But money, always, comes first. Very simply: no money, no movement, no future.

"The traders seem to have enough black money to pay up," smirks a cynical AJYCP activist. "They had evaded taxes and fooled the government. Now, someone else is robbing them for the sake of the people." Not a bad thing, either, going by the militants' argument. They say that the profit margins in Assam are disproportionately high compared to the rest of India—a view that even bankers endorse. For example, the profit margin on industrial products in the state are five times more than the 15-20 per cent elsewhere in the country. Grain and pulses rake off a margin which is 20 per cent more than, say, in Calcutta. Traders offer the explanation that as the area is relatively inaccessible, transport costs are very high, and hence a higher mark up. What they do *not* talk about—and this is where the militant logic wins out—is the fact that the government subsidises transportation.

"The traders seem to have enough black money to pay up," smirks a AJYCP activist. "Now, someone else is robbing them for the sake of the people"

There is so much money to be made in Assam, say militants, that the non-Assamese business exodus will never take off. Look at the plywood industry, they say, where—despite the ULFA, a medium-sized business still clears a half crore profit a year by evading excise dues. "Those who are leaving," says Suresh Phukan, AJUP's Sibsagar district president, "have their personal reasons to feel scared."

The AJUP professes to be a voluntary organisation that aims at rejuvenating the state's lagging economy through development programmes at the village level. But despite its avowed goals, the organisation has been dubbed as a ULFA front by national media as well as the generally ULFA-struck local press. Phukan, a lecturer of English at the Sibsagar Girls College and a filmmaker, vehemently denies that his organisation has links with the ULFA, or that any businessmen—and their money—are leaving the state. Or, that business is ebbing at all. "This issue," he says, "is being blown out of proportion to give Assam a bad name."

That, however, is a difficult claim to substantiate, especially as it *is* happening. Assam imports most of its com-

THE AGP PLAYERS



PRAFULLA MAHANTA



BHRIGU PHUKAN



DINESH GOSWAMI

Running scared, running dry

Agitators forcibly cut oil drilling and refining in Assam, and precipitate an instant crisis

In August, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) adopted a simple strategy: they would not allow Oil & Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) personnel to approach oil wells the agency runs in Assam. The state government looked the other way.

ONGC's oil fields in Sibsagar district went dry, as it was forced to stop pumping operations. Production of crude oil dropped from 9,000 tonnes per day to about 1,800 tonnes. The agitators shrewdly permitted only one well to stay open, so that natural gas supplies to Sibsagar town—the main domestic fuel stock—remained uninterrupted.

And, as if this was not enough, the Assam Jatiya Yuba Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP) began an indefinite blockade at the Bongaigaon pumping station, preventing oil flow to Indian Oil Corp.'s 3.3 million tonne refinery at Barauni, in north Bihar.

The Centre, expectedly, panicked. The twin shocks of rising international prices thanks to the Gulf crisis, and trouble with domestic production proved too much to handle. Union petroleum minister S. Gurupadaswamy made frantic requests to the agitators to lift the blockade. No response. And the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) washed its hands of the whole affair, after saying the movement was "politically motivated". Period.

The result: Indian Oil's Barauni refinery shut down on 14 September. The ONGC, for its part, lost Rs 1 crore a day, at Rs 1,700 per tonne. (One tonne is equivalent to about seven barrels of oil—a barrel is the internationally accepted unit for measuring both production and purchase.) And the Assam government, mums-the-word attitude and all, has lost Rs 10 crores in royalty payments in just one month. Besides, refinery equipment is lying idle, unserviced, the damage bill as yet uncalculated.

All for a cause, say the AASU and the AJYCP, the Assamese people have legitimate demands. Some examples:

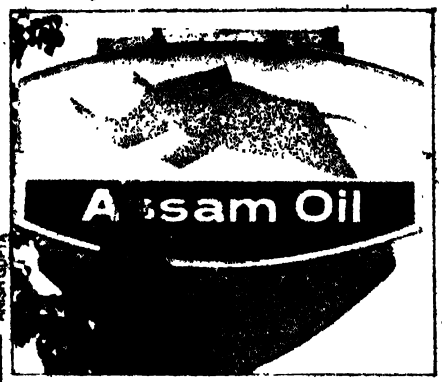
- Eighty per cent of all Class I jobs are to be reserved for Assamese.
- All Class III and IV placements are to be set aside for locals.
- A three million tonne refinery is to be set up.
- The flaring of gas should be stopped.
- The ONGC should shell out more money to maintain roads in the area.

"Ours is an all-India service," says a top ONGC official who declines to be identified, "and the question of reservation does not arise." For Class III and IV jobs, say oil industry officials, good local recruits are not easy to come by. "Moreover," adds the official, "the AASU's concept of 'sons of the soil' includes only people from Sibsagar and the adjoining areas. This we find very confusing."

The ONGC is bound by an agreement with the state government to make funds available for development. But the Commission complains that the money it gives is not being properly utilised, perhaps a thinly-veiled reference to the usual fund scam that accompanies virtually every development effort in the country. ONGC chips in 60 per cent of the cost for maintaining roads in Sibsagar district, but the remaining 40 per cent which is the state public works department's responsibility, is usually not provided.

Last year, the ONGC provided a revolving fund of Rs 60 lakhs to a special committee comprising representatives of the government, local MLAs, the AASU and the Commission, for development work. But the committee spent only half that amount. So, when the ONGC topped up the fund with Rs 30 lakhs this year, the AASU promptly screamed murder.

As for flaring gas, the ONGC says that its clients—the state elec-





ANISH GUPTA

Assam Oil emblem (inset); and, stalled cars: no oil, no fares, no respite

Paper Board, Hindustan Fertilizer Corp., Nagaon mgf. Nagaland Pulp & Paper Co., and ten gas-based units will take the quantity of gas they have contracted for. "We have to produce the quantity these companies together need," says the ONGC official. "And when they don't use the full amount, we have to burn it up." Rs 11.35 lakhs a day worth.

Realisation that hurting the ONGC and Indian Oil will hurt Assam, is slowly creeping in. While the AASU is still adamant about its stand, the AJYCP has backtracked, saying they never endorsed a blockade. "We don't intend to stop oil production," says Kamaleshwar Bharali, general secretary of the AJYCP's Dibrugarh unit, "but we are going to ensure that it is not taken out of Assam. Stopping production means a loss for the state."

But what if Maharashtrians were to say the same thing about the crude oil and gas from Bombay High? "Consider the number of industries that have mushroomed because of the Bombay High in that state, and see what we have got despite supplying 70 per cent of the country's on-shore oil," retorts Bharali. He has a point. But Assam cannot consume all that it produces. And, if there is no drilling, there is nothing to consume anyway. Scaring people, the agitators do not realise, means ruining the economy. Remember Kashmir?



AJYCP official Suresh Phukan (left): adamant

modities from other states, and trucking is the usual way. But goods movements have slowed down drastically in the past four months. For example, the Dibrugarh Truck Owners Association operated 500 trucks a day. Now, if 50 of them are on the road, the Association is elated.

This is the crucial point that Assamese chauvinists miss. While they gun for the big traders, businessmen and various tea gardens, they do not realise that in effect, they are setting off a chain reaction that is percolating down to the lowermost levels of Assam's economy. It has to, by commercial logic: when the big fish are snared, small fry are swept along, anywhere.

Occupancy rates at hotels are down. In some of Guwahati's better hotels which cater mainly to the business crowd, occupancy is lower by as much as 20 per cent. Says M.K. Chakravarty, general manager of Guwahati's Nandan Hotel: "Business executives from Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta are not coming as frequently as they used to." The hotels' restaurants go empty as regulars—all local residents—hardly spend their evenings out. And some hotels, such as Kuber in central Guwahati, are up for sale. (The industry grapevine has it that a close relative of Union law minister Goswami is picking it up at a throwaway price.).

Businessmen may be able to run away, but one group that is well and truly stuck is the tea industry. With 760 tea gardens in Assam, they cannot simply up and move out. The ULFA knows this, has imposed levies as high as Rs 10 lakhs per garden, and expects to clean up more than Rs 75 crores once the exercise is completed. According to industry sources, most tea companies have paid up varying sums of money already, and are expected to comply whenever a demand is made. There is simply too much at stake for tea companies to get tough: insiders believe that if tea garden owners refuse to pay up, besides their lives being in danger, the ULFA might impose a tea blockade on the lines of the oil blockade *(see box: Running scared, running dry)* which is giving the Union finance ministry nightmares.

The surprising thing is, nobody seems to know precisely what the ULFA will do with all the money it is picking off. There are enough theories, however, and some are very disturbing.

One theory has it that the AGP government is raising funds through the ULFA to fight the forthcoming Assembly elections, scheduled for December this year. The other, obvious line is that the militants are buying up AK-47 automatic rifles (the scourge of security forces in both Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir) from Karen rebels in north Burma, stockpiling arms and ammunition for Fortress Assam, a near-future scenario that has been irrationally underplayed by India's internal security bosses.

Plus, for financing cadre operations—recruitment, training and propaganda, as well as villages which the ULFA have reportedly taken under its wing. Some of the ULFA's demands, such as the one which calls for employing more Assamese managers and labour at tea estates, make sense. Importing labour in a fractious country like India is a time-tested recipe for trouble, and supplanting say labour from Bihar with locals, would go a long way in assuaging sentiments. "We are going to insist," says AJUP's Phukan, "that the gardens employ more Assamese managers and that they share their profits with workers." But as the ULFA and other organisations mix sensibilities with extortionist tactics, their rationale falls a little flat.

Besides, there is absolutely no guarantee that paying off the militants would buy the tea industry—and in fact, all businesses—peace. For one thing, levies (keeping in tune with inflation, joke traders) might increase



ANISH GUPTA

A queue for kerosene: goods are in short supply—and the economy ruined

in the next couple of months. For another, other groups may already be lying in wait to extract their pound of flesh; with the precedent the ULFA has set it is very easy for like-minded people to cash in on the fear psychosis.

In Assam, it is very difficult to say whose writ will run next. Right now, the AGP is functioning like a dumb waiter, say political analysts, serving anything the ULFA orders. In fact, say Assam observers, it is very likely that the ULFA will field candidates for state elections, if not directly, then through front organisations such as the AJUP or even, AGP loyalists. Whatever the electoral outcome, one thing is certain: nothing in Assam will be smooth for a long time. And if current trends persist, perhaps never.

Anish Gupta/Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar and Jorhat

AIR TAXI

Cleared to taxi

But a legal point could wreck the government's plans to privatise India's skies

Indian policy makers are notoriously shy of calling a spade a spade, and this reluctance could easily lead to a problem. Take the move to end the nerve-wracking monopoly of the country's two government-run domestic carriers, Indian Airlines and Vayudoot. Instead of admitting that the civil aviation ministry's latest guidelines allow for the introduction of private airlines, the government continues to refer to the whole move as an 'air taxi' scheme. However, the guidelines, issued in end-May this year, suggest that private air operators will soon be running scheduled flights. By sometime next year, domestic air travellers will for the first time have the option of *choosing* which airline they want to travel on.

A total of 19 applications for private airlines have been filed with the civil aviation ministry, and many more are queueing up. Three operators have been given licences to operate. One of them, non-resident tycoon Vijay Mallya's UB Air is already in the skies with a 16-seater Dornier and the Bangalore-based airline has plans to introduce at least seven more aircraft. Air Asiatic Ltd. has got hold of a 130-seater Boeing 737 which will run on trunk routes connecting the metros, from this year, and is trying to lease three more 737s. The third company, India International Airways, is currently offering charters on its 8-seater Hawker Siddley executive jet and plans to pick up more aircraft in the near future for regular flights.

The term 'air taxis' is, in the circumstances, a complete misnomer. For, the private operations will be no different from that of Indian Airlines (IA). Originally, the air taxi concept entailed the hiring of an entire aircraft for a specific trip. In fact, the guidelines issued by the previous government also laid down that private operators could not use aircraft with more than 15 seats. On the whole, it was a modest scheme. There was no intention of opening up the Indian skies to a variety of private airlines. But that changed when, in April this year, civil aviation minister Arif Mohammad Khan told Parliament that virtually all restrictions on air taxi operations have been lifted. Henceforth, he said, private air operators could:

- Use all airports in the country after getting the requisite clearances.
- Operate aircraft of any capacity
- Operate flights at any time.

Arif Mohammad Khan: no homework



RAJIV BASU



Vijay Mallya: dreams to bust?

- Prepare flight schedules in advance.
- Decide on their own fare structures.

A month later, Khan's ministry issued detailed guidelines for 'air taxi' operations, which clearly laid down what companies or individuals had to do to start their own little airlines. No wonder there was a stampede to get clearances.

But there was a catch. The minister had jumped the gun. He had not read the laws. For, the Air Corporation Act, 1953, clearly bans the operation of any regular, private air services. Clause 18 of the Act states: "...It shall not be lawful for any person other than the corporations (public sector airlines) or their associates to operate any scheduled air transport service from, to, in or across India." The only air services permitted by the Act are:

- Air transport undertakings based outside India and operating under bilateral agreements.
- For flight training, air ambulance work, joy rides, aerial survey, fire fighting, crop dusting, locust control etc.
- Those that operate with the prior permission of the central government and do not compete with scheduled services provided by the corporations or their associates.

This means that Arif's assurances could add up to nothing as technically, the new scheme is in a sense illegal till Parliament amends the Air Corporation Act's relevant clauses.

On the other hand, 'air taxis' are inevitable and will ultimately end up competing with the public sector carriers. This is precisely why IA staff held a one-day strike against the move to introduce private airlines: they know that once private operators get into the act, their future will be threatened. UB Air, for instance, is running flights that are packed to capacity despite the fact that its fares are about 30 per cent higher than that of Indian Airlines.

Sensing a kill, non-resident Indians with money to spare are rushing to lease or buy big aircraft for operating in India even though they will not be able to repatriate earnings for the first five years of their operations. And despite the fact that they will not be able to service their loans on aircraft lease or purchase from their Indian earnings. What the private entrepreneurs *are* sure about is the vast, growing air travel market in India and how inadequate Indian Airlines or Vayudoot is to meet the challenge.

The only problem is that the civil aviation ministry's bold new scheme could get wrecked if the matter is taken to the courts. In that event, the worst hit would be the private operators who dream of an airline boom in India. If only Arif had done his homework.●

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi

AVIATION/EVACUATION

Air lifted

Air India's reputation soars with its Gulf evacuation effort, but expenses could cripple the airline

Not since the great Berlin airlift after the Second World War has such a massive evacuation been organised. More than 50,000 Indian nationals—out of an estimated 1,70,000 stranded in the Gulf—have been flown back to India since 13 August, a week after Iraq invaded Kuwait. And the national carrier, which has recently tried to shed its *desi* Maharaja image for a swankier international one, is right in the middle of it, involved in a human airlift of a magnitude unprecedented in civil aviation history.

The operation has won for Air India (AI) both complimentary and adverse publicity. Bouquets, because the air-



Air India: the evacuation workhorse

line has pulled out all the stops to create additional capacity to airlift approximately 3,500 Indians per day. And has, by any standard, responded admirably to a human tragedy, brushing aside considerations such as profits.

And brickbats, because once again, the airline's image has taken a considerable battering, especially internationally, with weary victims of rescheduled and cancelled flights swearing never to trust the airline again. "Evacuation became our first priority," explains a harried AI official. "We *had* to divert capacity to the Gulf to help stem the panic there."

As the exodus from Kuwait to Jordan began, India's ministry of external affairs called upon AI to make special arrangements for the evacuation. Commencing the gargantuan task with one special flight per day (there were no operations from Amman, Jordan's capital, previously), the airline deputed staff from its offices in neighbouring Gulf nations to the trouble-stricken region. By 2 September, AI had increased its capacity in a phased manner to operate five, even six flights per day, corresponding to the increasing influx of refugees to Jordan. Two Airbus Industrie A310s, inducted only a month ago, were pressed into service, and domestic carrier Indian Airlines' aircraft were leased to cope with the burgeoning demand. AI also chartered wide-bodied IL-62 aircraft from the Soviet airline Aeroflot, and were also given two giant IL-76 transport aircraft by the Indian Air Force.

The mammoth operation was monitored from AI's Nariman Point headquarters in Bombay, where ticketing for Amman passengers was also undertaken, so that the staff in Amman could concentrate on the needs of the evacuees. With the increasing frequency of flights, AI posted a staff of about 50 in Amman to run three full eight-hour shifts, round the clock. The Dubai office pitched in, and helped evacuate nearly 10,000 Indians via this city "If it hadn't been for Air India's efforts, we would have been dying in the desert," exclaims Joe Mascarenhas, an electrician who managed to make it onto a flight after four days of uncertainty

Sitting forlorn at Bombay airport, Amina Bi and her sister Razia—waiting to catch a connecting flight to their home near Trivandrum—testify that the airline staff were extremely cooperative, but were hardpressed to handle the rush. "Some of us who could not pay," says Amina "were taken on with the express understanding that we would repay the Indian government when we returned. Others, who had managed to run away with some money were busy cleaning out the airline's on-board duty-free stock and attacking the liquor. "It was a pathetic sight," says a stewardess who experienced the evacuation "first-hand." "Sometimes the passengers were so filthy there was a stink emanating from them." She adds: "But it's just not true that we treated them badly."



Subhash R. Gupte

"We will ultimately lose money," admits Gupte. "(But) we'll keep operating flights until the last Indian is safely home"

Air India has so far incurred an expenditure of almost Rs 80 crores on the evacuation. The ministry of external affairs, at whose behest the operations are being conducted, is meant to reimburse the airline on a no profit no loss basis, so the airline does not lose out badly on the evacuation. We don't have the commercial muscle to forego our costs, claims Subhash R. Gupte, who has recently taken over as AI's acting chairman, only to be confronted with an acid test. But there are certain situations when you don't look at the figures alone. The empty flights headed for the Gulf were loaded with foodgrains. Oil, blankets, and even a consignment of 12,000 bottles of Bisleri mineral water for Indian refugees, to help tide over the shortages in Jordan.

Notwithstanding the Good Samaritan act, AI is likely to be hit very hard financially, at a time when profits are the highest ever in its history. "We will ultimately lose money because of the Gulf situation," admits Gupte. Already, the rise in oil prices, insurance premia, and the suspension of flights on some Gulf routes has affected the airline; the oil hike alone would take a toll of Rs 140 crore. Besides, the Union government has slashed the bulk fuel discount rate from 30 per cent to half that amount, adding to the fuel cost burden substantially.

The airline's insurers in London have hiked insurance costs for airlines operating in a war zone, even though both AI and the General Insurance Company had assured them that the airline did not face the same risks as other carriers operating in the zone, citing India's friendly ties with Gulf countries, especially Iraq. Revenue will also suffer as a result of the cancellation of flights to certain West Asian destinations. The Kuwait services, for instance, yielded a profit of around Rs 25 crores a year, according to Gupte.

The Gulf evacuation has cost the government exchequer a staggering Rs 5000 crore so far, according to preliminary official estimates. This excludes the cost of rehabilitating them in India, and covers only their transportation (about Rs 20,000 per person), food, medical care, and airport or port charges. And efforts are on to evacuate another 65,000-odd Kuwait-based Indians, which will only add to the country's—and AI's—bill.

Right now, however, not many people are thinking about financial deterrents. "We'll keep operating our flights until the last Indian who wants to leave is safely home," says AI's Gupte. And the government, if not irate passengers, is backing the airline to the hilt. •

Shiraz Sidhva/Bombay and New Delhi

■ Stay cola

Getting into India was the easy part. Staying on shopshelves is considerably more difficult. Ask Pepsi Food Pvt. The purveyors of Lehar Pepsi and Lehar . Up, the Indianised versions of US consumer food giant PepsiCo Inc's top-selling brands, are facing a bit of a hitch. At least for its Calcutta launch, scheduled for August. Pepsi Foods plastered the city with wall-ads and hoardings in anticipation of the launch, but more than a month later, all one can see are the ads. The reason: a series of petitions in Calcutta courts which claim that the Pepsi name is already registered in the area—through unheard of companies which manufacture "Pepsi" drink sticks, most definitely *not* Pepsi products, and other bizarre variations. The perpetrator Parle Ltd chairman Ramesh Chauhan, maintain Pepsi officials, who is using fronts to get stay orders against the Pepsi drinks launch in the city. Parle, expectedly, denies it categorically. But whatever the case, the ploy is working. The moment Pepsi successfully argues a stay order, another petition slaps it back on. After splashy launches in the north and the south, failure at the eastern front must be especially galling for the international soft drink supremo.

■ G' bye, mate

The move was typical of a an age when corporate supremacy is what counts, and to hell with family ties. Satish Malhotra, chairman of the Empire Group of companies, staked a claim to in-law Keshub Mahindra's flagship company Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) in July, saying he had an overwhelming 13.5 per cent shareholding clout to run the company. That brought out acrimonious scenes—private and public—with Keshub fighting back with everything he had, and finally managing to stall Satish's takeover plans in August. A bitter ending, considering the fact that Keshub invited Satish to join M&M's board, and even sold him shares of the company to prevent possible takeover attempts by some Bombay big fish (Satish's son is married to Keshub's eldest daughter). Then, friend turned foe, laid on the pressure, forcing Keshub to battle. Keshub won, and Satish, embittered and angry, has decided to sell off 4.2 per cent of his M&M holdings. Keshub couldn't be happier—or more satisifed. He has saved his company and his corporate existence. If there is love lost with a relative, no matter. So long, Satish, he might be saying. And thanks for the company.

STOCK QUOTE

"The way things are going, we'll soon have to live on taxes and fresh air."

A Bombay businessman, commenting on the government's slowed moves on liberalisation and the possibility of an oil crunch stalling industry.



Keshub Mahindra: thanks for the company

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

K.P. Unnikrishnan

Union minister for surface transport



● Heard of him recently? Possibly not Unnikrishnan, ever since that momentous battle for the telecom turf with Sam Pitroda, is lying low, very low He lost his communications portfolio, and perhaps doesn't want to risk losing his surface transport seat, either. Not that he's doing much: Indian shipping is in its biggest mess ever, with dropping tonnage, dropping revenues and dropping morale. Ports are a mess; nobody even remembers Nhava Sheva much. But people do remember what the minister says, everytime, he drops in at a function and promises the sky for development. All in all, however, life is dull, very dull, unless you want to count the time he was almost beaten up by enraged Keralites in the Gulf. Unnikrishnan must be rueing the day he got off the telecom bus: the portfolio may have been acrimonious, but at least it was interesting.

■ Sing alonga Amit

How do you find a holidaying Indian in London? Answer: you go to the Marks & Spencer's lingerie department. But more to the point: how do you find an Indian industrialist in London?

Answer: you go to the Amitabh Bachchan concert.

Among those who attended the lanky star's Wembley show recently, were: the Hindujas, *and*



Bachchan: same key

Swraj Paul (though not, naturally, in the same row), Nirmal Sethia, Mike Murjani, Chakor Doshi, Surinder Kapur, Manu Chhabria, Naznu Virani, Lakshmi (Inlaks) Shivdasani, Mrs Vijay Mallya (Mr was out of town), R.P. Goenka, and Lalit Suri. All together.

Hope they enjoyed singing along to *Jumma chumma*. And that, for once, they sang in the same key.

MAHESH JETHMALANI

Ayodhya revisited

When liberalism and ritualistic Hinduism clash



While the nation seems to be heading inexorably towards a conflagrationon30 October when the VHP and the BJP propose to execute their design of constructing a temple on the site of the Babri Masjid, in the face of Mulayam Singh Yadav's proclaimed determination to uphold "secularism and law and order", a liberal Hindu must find himself uncomfortably placed on the horns of a dilemma. To be sure, Hinduism has a different meaning for different people; but, there is much about the Ayodhya movement that is surely repugnant to the liberal Hindu's secular instincts.

Firstly, the movement is ritualistic in the extreme. While, therefore, it may have tremendous appeal among the masses, to whom Hinduism undoubtedly has significance predominantly through ritual, it can hardly arouse a Hindu mind cognisant of the great philosophical and metaphysical tradition of the Hindu religion. Secondly, the bellicose nature of the movement is bound to cause trepidation in educated Hindu minds whose knowledge of Hinduism is gleaned at least from the more latter-day expositions of Swami Vivekanand, Gandhi, and Dr Radhakrishnan, if not from original sources, such as the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. All these sources reveal that the essence of Hinduism is tolerance, which essence is itself based on the fact that Hinduism is not a revealed religion: there are no prescribed doctrines about how man should grapple with the external universe; on the contrary, religion is a private matter, the Absolute Truth, capable of being contemplated by the individual mind. Hence the adage: "That which exists is one; Sages called it by various names." A movement which threatens to demolish a religious shrine of another community surely cuts at the foundation of the catholicity and "secularism" of the Hindu religion, and hence, at its very essence.

Moreover, it is not just the secular foundations of the Hindu religion which the Ayodhya movement threatens; it threatens, in addition, the secular foundations of the Indian state, which the liberal Hindu spares no efforts to proclaim is only possible because of the secular nature of his religion. These secular foundations have been given expression to in the Indian Constitution and the ordinary laws of this land. A liberal Hindu cannot fail to notice that the movement threatens to violate the constitutional rights of the Muslim minority and also the violation of provisions of various statutes—including the Indian Penal Code—designed to preserve communal harmony and punish those seeking to spread communal hatred. The movement also has grave law and order, as well as, public order ramifications. Further, if the Allahabad High Court, which is seised of the matter,delivers judgement before 30 October, the threatened disobedience of that judgement by Hindus will not only constitute contempt of court but will surely undermine the dignity of the judiciary and the majesty of the law. Depending upon whom the land

The Ayodhya movement doesn't just threaten the secular foundations of the Hindu religion. It threatens the secular foundations of the Indian state as well



belongs to, there is also the trivial matter of minor offences concerned with property, such as trespass and mischief. In a word, it cannot but strike the liberal Hindu that apart from being at odds with the Hindu religion as he understands it, the Ayodhya movement constitutes a threat to the Indian social fabric and the cohesion of the Indian state.

Then, there is the ticklish matter of the legitimacy of the issues with which the movement is concerned. Several doubts, no doubt, arise in the liberal Hindu's mind. Was Lord Ram a mythological deity or a historical figure? Is the Ayodhya of Valmiki's *Ramayan* the very Ayodhya where the controversy rages today? Was the Babri Masjid built either by demolishing or converting a temple erected to commemorate the birth place of Lord Ram? And lastly, is there any evidence to suggest that the Babri Masjid is situated at the precise site of the birth place of Lord Ram?

The answer of those in the vanguard of the Ayodhya movement to the intellectual doubts and moral reluctance of the liberal Hindu is simple and com-



***Shilanyas* at Ayodhya: emotive appeal**

pelling: Ram Janmabhoomi is an issue which affects the deepest religious sentiments of the Hindu population in the country; hence, the issue outweighs in importance all moral and legal questions. In other words, the religious sentiments of the Hindu majority must prevail over existing law and morality. On the evidentiary aspect regarding the fact of Lord Ram's birth at the very site where the Babri Masjid is presently situated, the answer of those spearheading the Ayodhya movement is that the question of evidence is irrelevant. *What is more important is the belief of the majority of Hindus*—that is to say, the fact that the majority of Hindus believe that the birth place of Lord Ram is the very site of the Babri Masjid is sufficient grounds for constructing a temple at that site even if it means the existing mosque is to be demolished.

It is impossible to join issue with the arguments advanced by the VHP and the BJP leaders. To do so would be to reject the significance of popular belief and popular religious sentiment. The morals of a society are ultimately sustained by a broad consensus in society that believes in those morals. Moreover, religious belief is hardly a matter which can be tested on the touchstone of quantum of evidence. The point, however, is that if the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and the demolition of Babri Masjid has to be justified in the final analysis on the basis of popular sentiment and popular belief, then surely, the liberal Hindu is entitled to raise two questions: why has the movement reached a crescendo in circa 1990? And secondly, if the long-standing belief of Hindus is simply an association of Ayodhya with Lord Ram, as it must be, then, why does a temple necessarily have to be built on the site of the Babri Masjid itself and not anywhere else in Ayodhya?

The answer is that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement has become inextricably inter-woven with the Chanakyan brand of politics. We are living in an era when the Indian polity is witnessing the rise of the Chanakyan tradition in politics and a corresponding decline in the Gandhian tradition. The two are almost inevitably competing traditions—the one emphasises the sanctity of means and envisages the honesty of politicians, the purity of the political process, and the superiority of ends over means; the other is concerned essentially with the attainment of power and its preservation. The Gandhian tradition attaches a higher value to morality than power; the central theme of the Chanakyan tradition is power at all costs. In India, as a rule, the Opposition parties have espoused the Gandhian tradition; the Congress since Mrs Gandhi's ascendency to power, the Chanakyan one. The concern of the Congress under the stewardship of both Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv has been the retention of power, and the tool for this end has been statecraft. On the other hand, on two occasions, the Opposition has employed the Gandhian tradition to good effect—in 1977, when it captured power by exposing the immorality and rigours of the political process during Emergency, and the last elections when Bofors and other corrupt deals of the Rajiv regime became successful moral tools in the hands of the Opposition.

In other words, the Hindu belief that Ram Janmabhoomi *sthan* is situated at the very site of the Babri Masjid has been promoted and fuelled by the rhetoric of religious and political leaders.

Does this mean that the Ayodhya movement is, in effect, no more than a cynical bid for power by the BJP on the basis of a highly emotive religious issue? Is Devi Lal correct when he suggests that Ram Janmabhoomi is, in effect, a cloak for Raj Janmabhoomi?

The answer is a resounding "yes". This, however, is not to suggest that the political strategy of the BJP deserves to be roundly condemned, or, is in any way immoral. On the contrary, the BJP, if anything, is merely responding to the new political milieu in India. Indeed, its strategy on Ram Janmabhoomi is symptomatic of the New Morality in the political domain in which the spirit of Chanakya is ubiquitous.

It was impossible for the BJP to capture the moral ground from V.P. Singh. Here was after all an individual who renounced power on patently moral grounds and thus became a symbol of the Gandhian tradition at its very highest. The only solution, therefore, was to seize upon an issue which provided a platform to bid for power. Rajiv's cynical volte-face on a uniform civil code, in spite of the Supreme Court judgement in the Shah Bano case, furnished the moral impetus. It is in this context that the BJP's role in the Ram Janmabhoomi issue must be appraised. Political survival for the BJP demanded a Chanakyan response; besides the strategy could be defended morally on the ground that if a majority of the people are in favour of an issue then it must be moral.

Contemporary developments merit explanation. The Gandhian tradition appealed to the Indian masses as an instrument for removing unwanted rulers—the British Raj, Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1977 and Rajiv in the last elections. Since neither the BJP nor V.P. Singh's Janata Dal is plagued by corruption, neither party is likely to avail of the Gandhian tradition against the other. So far as the Congress is concerned, a party whose leadership shudders at the very mention of Bofors, is obviously ill at ease with the Gandhian tradition. •

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Bharatiya Janata Party

RAVI SHANKAR



The Indian Post-poned

Post *staffers go on hunger strike to demand resumption of publication*

In the end, they resorted to that time-honoured Indian pressure tactic. Fed up with being handed out empty reassurances, the Indian Post Staff Welfare Association went on relay hunger strike in Bombay, demanding that the publication of the newspaper be resumed. The Bombay Union of Journalists joined them, and the case showed all symptoms of turning a *cause celebre*, with such protagonists as Sharad Pawar, Vijaypat Singhania and Shreyans Shah being the main players.

The trouble began ever since *The Indian Post* changed hands in 1986, when industrialist Vijaypat Singhania sold the paper to Shreyans Shah and Bahubali Shah of the Gujarat Samachar Group. With the change of management, some 180 of the employees found themselves without a job. Those who remained on the paper alleged that they were mistreated: no proper equipment was provided to them, there were no toilet facilities, while watchmen were given the right to browbeat members of the staff.

Relations between management and staff steadily worsened with 54 employees being arrested on charges of arson and looting. Members of the staff struck back by organising *dharnas*, processions and other agitations against the management. Such stalwarts as Justice Krishna Iyer, S.R. Kulkarni, Mrinal Gore and trade union leader Datta Samant were roped into the battle, on the side of the employees, and each in their own way tried to ensure that justice was meted out to them.

Even Union labour minister Ram Vilas Paswan was brought on but he pleaded off on the grounds that this was a matter which involved the Singhanias, so the decision lay with V.P. Singh.

What worked in the favour of the *Post's* staff was the Maharashtra government rule that any organisation employing more than 100 people requires state permission before it can close shop. Neither Singhania nor Shreyans Shah had applied for such approval. Instead, says one of the employees: "They relied on underhand tactics, and began browbeating the employees in an attempt to intimidate them."

The aggrieved employees, therefore, met Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar to acquaint him with their grievances. And Pawar, evidently, made them certain promises of help. But nothing came of them, and *The Indian Post* staffers were back to square one.

Hence the relay hunger strike. And the threat of going on indefinite hunger strike if something wasn't done for them, and soon.

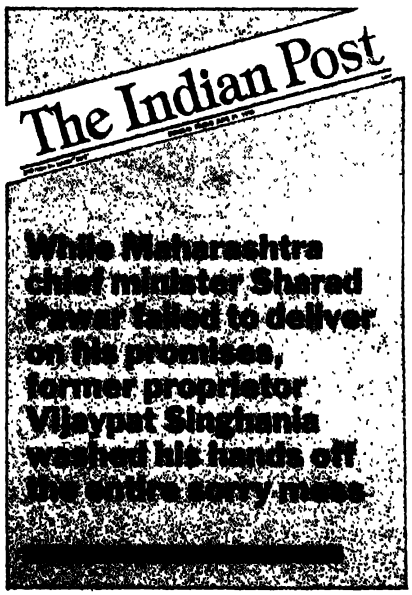
Says Sanjay Sindhayash, president of the union: "When we shifted out of the *Post's* premises to the Samachar office, we were provided a mere 750 square feet of area. The office didn't have PTI and UNI lines, no tables,



Vijaypat Singhania



Sharad Pawar



chairs or proper ventilation."

Sindhayash is convinced that Shah wanted to sell the paper but was unable to do so because Singhania has delayed the transfer of the company shares to him. Singhania's attitude, though, seems to be that with the sale of the paper he was absolved of all responsibility in this regard.

And it is this attitude that the *Post's* employees find offensive. Says Sindhayash: "This is not just a struggle to save jobs. It involves wider principles. Do industrialists have the right to start and close newspapers at their whims? Today the *Post* has been closed, tomorrow it may happen to other publications on political or other grounds. Where will it stop?

There's no easy answer to that one.

Or to the problems of the *Post's* staffers, either.●

Cyrus Merchant/Bombay

Watch your step

The BJP high command cautions Sunderlal Patwa

While the media speculates about the imminent demise of the Raja's regime, it is the Sunderlal Patwa government which might actually be the first to go The Madhya Pradesh chief minister may pretend that all is well, but with most of his party MLAs joining the dissident camp, the going will be increasingly difficult for him in the coming months. True, the discipline the BJP imposes on all its members will ensure that nobody comes out openly against Patwa. But the patience of the party high command can't be expected to last forever. And once that gives out, it may well be all over for the hapless CM.

In a way, Patwa had brought this upon himself. The party high command's choice as chief minister—he was chosen over Kailash Joshi, who thereupon refused to join the government in a huff—Patwa had effectively left the task of government to BJP leader and close confidant of Vijayaraje Scindia, Sardar Angre, known as the proxy CM of Madhya Pradesh. If he had left it at that, it would have been fine. But Patwa managed to alienate everyone with his style of functioning. And soon things came to such a pass that as many as 20 BJP MPs from Madhya Pradesh out of 27, including Uma Bharti, Phool Chandra Verma, Pyarelal Khandelwal, Amrit Tarwaala and Sushil Verma, turned against him. The chief minister came to be known as "arrogant Patwa", and complaints against him were lodged with party president L.K. Advani.

The central leadership didn't ignore the allegations, and it was left to party elder Atal Behari Vajpayee to administer the much-needed snub to the chief minister. The occasion he chose was the meeting of the party national council in Bhopal. Patwa and his supporters insisted on referring to the state government's loan-waiving scheme as the "Patwa formula". Irritated beyond measure, Vajpayee snapped back: "What is this 'Patwa formula'? In our party everything is referred to as the BJP formula. No-

"The BJP is behind me"

Patwa defends himself

SUNDAY: Among all the BJP chief ministers, you are being criticised the most. Why?
Sunderlal Patwa: Where there is more work, there is more criticism also. I am doing something, which is why I am being criticised.

Q: Has a section of the BJP launched a campaign against you?
A: Why should the members of the BJP criticise me? Such criticism will not harm me, but the party itself. I am sure they would not want to do that.

Q: Maybe they think your removal will strengthen the party.
A: I do not think so. The BJP is squarely behind me. My government is doing good work. We have got a very mature Opposition in the state, with as many as three former chief ministers in its ranks. But even then not a single charge of corruption could be levelled against me during the last two Assembly sessions.

Q: But some of your decisions have been criticised.
A: No decision of mine has been criticised so far on the floor of the House. Some members of the Bhopal press have written something. But I do not take that seriously.

Q: What about the criticisms of the BJP newspaper *Sandesh*?
A: I want to make it clear that there are no factions in the BJP. The party is united. Those who indulge in the politics of factionalism cannot survive in the BJP. Please do not compare the BJP with the other parties. Anyone who deviates even a single inch from the BJP line will be thrown out of the party.

Q: Does Kailash Joshi support you?
A: The question is ridiculous. Kailash Joshi is a committed supporter of mine. We have even addressed a press conference together. Just because he didn't join my government doesn't mean that he is not a supporter.

Q: The allegations against you are that Sardar Angre is running your government; the BJP high command is unhappy with your performance; and that you are carrying on a vendetta against Madhavrao Scindia.
A: Sardar Angre is very junior to me in the BJP. I have been in the party ever since its formation. How can he run my government?

I have heard that Madhavrao Scindia has been saying in Gwalior that Angre is the proxy chief minister. That he is an extra-constitutional authority. This is all wrong.

Q: What about the charges about your "understanding" with Arjun Singh?
A: You should ask Arjun Singh this question. My understanding is only with the BJP, with no one else. If Arjun Singh is not opposing me, that is his outlook. I have never asked him not to oppose me.

As far as relationships go, I believe that personal relations are more important than politics. Why should a political rival be an enemy? Nobody in the Congress is my enemy.

Q: There are also some allegations



Sunderlal Patwa: are matters going out of hand?

against the administration.
A: I have provided the cleanest government, ever. For the last 20 years all the regimes were corrupt. Everyone from the ministers to the peons used to take bribes. Briefcases full of money were used to influence the decisions of the government. Everybody was a saleable commodity; taking money for transfer and postings.

But today people are going around with money bags and nobody is accepting it. There is no corruption in my government.

Q: It is alleged that you allotted land to Dr J.K. Jain in the journalist quota by breaching the rules and regulations.

thing is the creation of any individual."

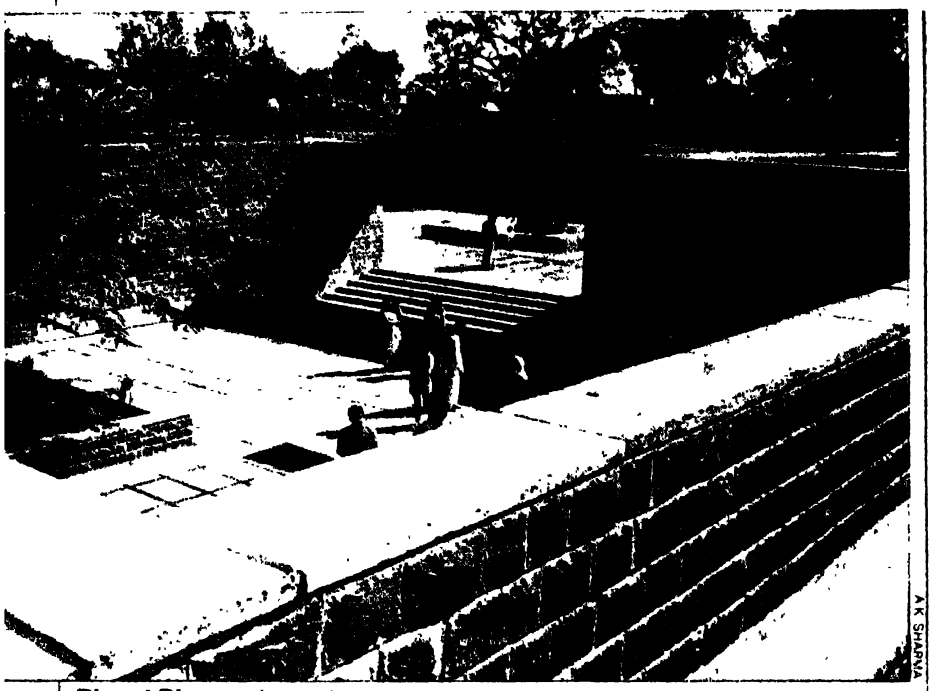
Patwa's decision to reverse all the decisions of the previous government also placed the party in an embarrassing position. The Congress regime had made a provision that local MPs would be made president of the district planning board in every district, and that the government would provide them with some money to carry out developmental work and a vehicle to visit their constituencies. Patwa discontinued this practice and all the beneficiaries—especially those belonging to the BJP—were livid. If he didn't restore *status quo*, they threatened the chief minister, he may well be forced to quit.

Even where the previous regime's *tendu* leaf policy was concerned, Patwa was criticised for failing to implement it. This provided that a higher dividend be paid to the labour, but Patwa, it was alleged, was not acting on this, because it would go against the interests of state party president Lakhi Ram Agarwal, who was one of the biggest *tendu* leaf contracters.

A: If the media is criticising its own people then what can I do? Dr Jain is a well-known media person. He has got every right to the plot. Several persons who are not even proper journalists have taken the land in some press complex or the other.

Q: Do you think he is a journalist?
A: He is an editor, a well-known journalist. I don't know why a reputed magazine like *India Today* has published a baseless and bogus report, and made this a scandal.

Q: Your nephew Hemant Patwa, it is said, is quite influential in the government and has managed to get several agencies.
A: I can only feel sorry for the media. They have got nothing better to do than talk about corruption and scandals. All this talk about Hemant Patwa is nonsense. My nephew has been educated in America. He has been doing his work for the last eight years. People should know their facts before asking me this question. All my nephews are very intelligent and competent. No member of my family has ever taken any advantage of my being chief minister. •



Bharat Bhavan: lost autonomy

But the controversies began with the mass transfer of state officials that the Patwa government resorted to. With around 50,000 government servants being shunted around in the course of a few days, the move took on the proportions of a major scandal. And what made matters worse was the fact that several of the officers served with transfer orders were long dead. At the Madras convention of the BJP, the Madhya Pradesh CM was reprimanded for making the party an object of ridicule by his actions.

The treatment meted out to the director-general of police, P.D. Malviya, also tarnished the image of the MP government. Malviya had suspended three police inspectors because their role in the Indore communal riots was considered suspect. When Patwa took over, these offenders, passing themselves off as RSS (Rashtria Swayamsevak Sangh) men, met the chief minister to ask for mercy. Patwa promptly asked Malviya to revoke their suspension. The director-general refused pointblank. At this he was summarily removed and Surendra Vikram Singh (an old RSS supporter, apparently) was appointed in his place. This, despite the fact that Singh was due for retirement, and giving him an extension went against the state government's regulations.

Then, Patwa began interfering in the affairs of Bhopal's Bharat Bhavan. The organisation has been run by Ashok Bajpai, its cultural secretary, for years now. And no chief minister from Shyama Charan Shukla to Motilal Vora ever managed to dislodge him from his position of preeminence. Nevertheless Patwa began meddling in the affairs of the Bharat Bhavan Trust and with his arrogant attitude, managed to put the backs up of the other members. All the life members of the trust, including former chief minister Arjun Singh and the eminent artist Swaminathan, resigned.

In an attempt to redeem himself somewhat—and establish an image as a man of action, in the bargain—Patwa launched a drive to prevent encroachment in urban areas. But he managed to bungle this as well. After a number of innocent people were evicted from their homes, while the real offenders continued to cling on to their illegally-acquired land, the party MLAs decided that enough was enough. They complained to the central leadership and Patwa was asked to give his scheme a quick and quiet burial.

Patwa erected a statue of his father. The PM was invited to unveil it. The state met all expenses

The chief minister's run of bad luck continued. He allotted 9,600 square feet of prime land in the Bhopal press complex to the BJP's video doctor J.K. Jain. The state media were against the fact that a non-journalist had been given land in the 'journalist quota', and much was made of the allotment in the local papers. When the protests gathered strength, Patwa promised that he would reconsider his decision. And then proceeded to forget all about his assurance, with the result that the land worth crores, which should by right have gone to some state government corporation, still belongs to Dr Jain. It seems that Patwa will get away with this, for such BJP higher-ups as Vijayaraje Scindia and Sardar Angre are also promoting Dr Jain in a big way.

But he certainly won't be allowed to get away with keeping all the important portfolios with himself. When he had first constituted his ministry, he had given the major portfolios to such ministers as Babulal Gaur, Lakshmi Narayan Sharma, Ramhit Gupta and Sheetal Sahai (he deliberately ignored the claims of those MLAs belonging to his rival Kailash Joshi's group). After three months, however, he reshuffled the ministry to take charge of all the important departments, with junior ministers to help him. Naturally, this move went down ill with his Cabinet, and they said as much to the BJP leadership. Predictably enough, L.K. Advani visited Bhopal to review the working of the state government and instructed Patwa to distribute portfolios more equitably.

Patwa's excessive love of family also landed him in trouble. Soon after taking over as chief minister, he decided to organise a function to honour the memory of his dead father in his village Kukadeshwar in Mandasore district. A statue of Patwa senior was erected and Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh was invited over to unveil it. All expenses were, of course, met by the Madhya Pradesh government.

Nobody would, perhaps, have made very much of it, if Patwa hadn't insisted on projecting his father as an

eminent freedom fighter. As everyone knew, he'd only been a small-time businessman and had even been accused of illegally occupying land belonging to the Harijans of the village. His being described as a prominent member of the freedom movement provoked an immediate outcry, with the Raja coming in for his share of criticism for being party to such a fraud. The director-general of All India Radio (AIR) was made to apologise for the fact that Patwa's father had been described as a freedom fighter in the radio news bulletin.

The BJP came out openly against Patwa on this one. While party MLAs berated him, the BJP newspaper *Swadesh* began a campaign against the chief minister on this issue.

Patwa's family problems continue. More recently, his nephew, Hemant Patwa, managed to become the agent of such companies as HMT Tractors, LML Vespa (among others), and allegations made the rounds that he had resorted to corrupt means to wangle them. A case is also pending against him for the alleged illegal occupation of a showroom. The chief minister's brother was accused of quarrying stones from near Mandasore and selling them without the necessary permission.

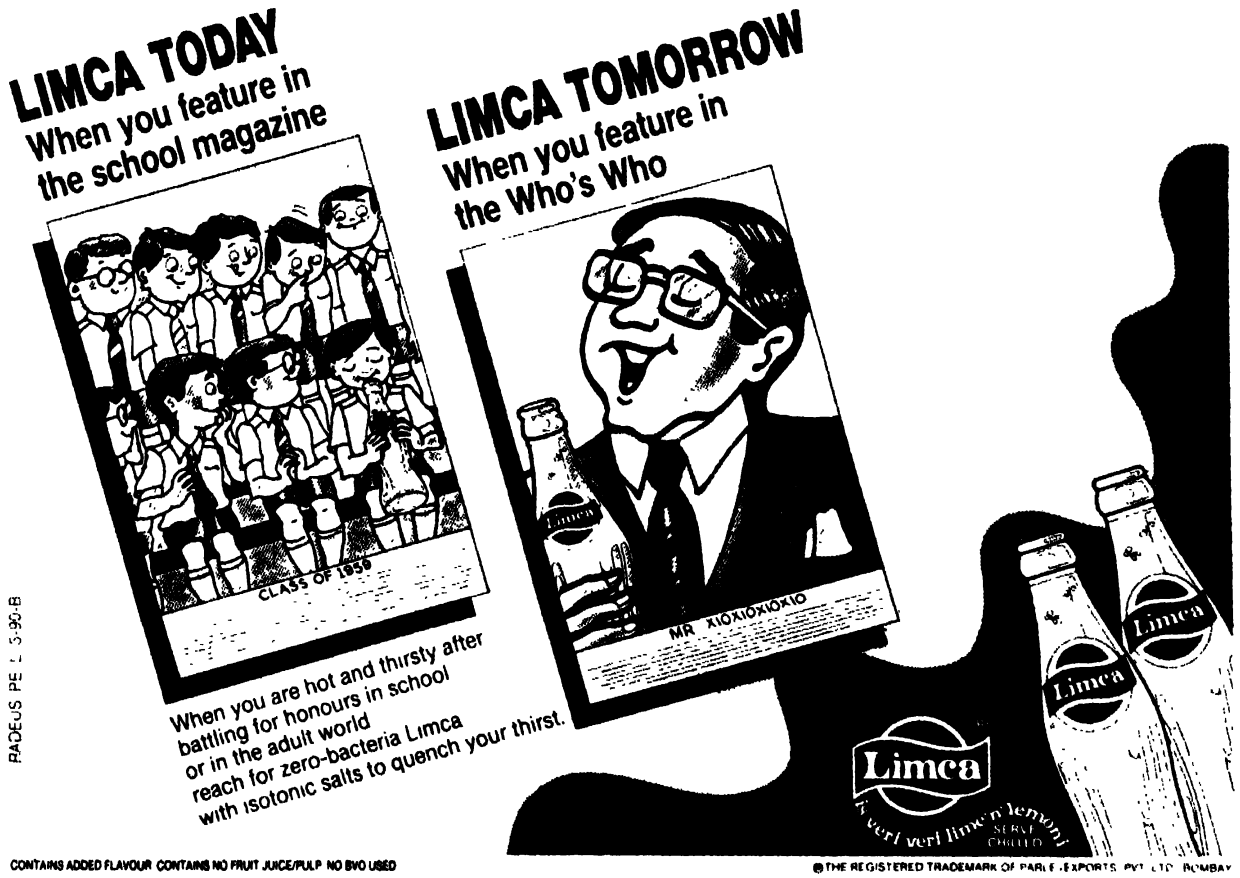


Party workers have complained against Patwa to party president **Advani** (left); **Angre** (middle) is known as the "proxy CM", and BJP elder **Vajpayee** (right) has reprimanded Patwa

The BJP, tired of the chief minister's shenanigans, has now decided to clip his wings. A high level committee has been constituted in the state comprising Kushabhau Thakare, Kailash Sarang, Pyarelal Khandelwal and Ramhit Gupta, which will take all the important policy decisions on behalf of the Madhya Pradesh government.

A strong faction within the party has already begun lobbying for his removal, with Pyarelal Khandelwal and Lakshmi Narayan Pandey being held out as attractive alternatives. Patwa, for his part, is clinging on to his chair for dear life, trying every conceivable trick to get back in favour with the party high command. Unfortunately for him, none of them seem to work.●

Rajiv Shukla/Bhopal



When the roles didn't materialise after her stunning performance in *Pratighaat*, Sujata Mehta, until then the archetypal sedate Gujjuben, turned glamorous with a vengeance. Photo-session after photo-session followed as Mehta pulled out all stops in an attempt to establish a new image.

But she seems to have gone totally overboard of late, if B.R. Chopra's *Dharam Shakti* is anything to go by. *A la* Mandakini, Mehta wears a sheer white sari and gets soaking wet for the benefit of the camera, which lingers lovingly around her bosom.

The only difference being that while Mandakini got drenched under a waterfall, Mehta makes do with the humble bathroom shower.



INDRAJEET AURANGBADKAR

Sujata: look out, your desperation is showing!



PRADEEP BANDEKAR

Sonam: no celluloid recreation

Sangeeta Bijlani: is it all over?



Trouble seems to be brewing on the Sangeeta Bijlani-Salman Khan front.

Or why would Bijli be spotted at the Piano Bar, night after night, boogeying away her boredom with her model friends (Lubna Adam among others)? This, while Salman spends his time throwing tantrums on the sets, and in more amenable moments flirting with his co-stars (such newcomers as Chandni, Nagma, and even the Randhir Kapoor discovery, Zeba).

So is it all over for Khan and his Bijli?

Success hasn't blunted Rajiv Rai's bitchy tongue one bit.

Recently the director was asked whether he was planning to make a film based on his love story with Sonam.

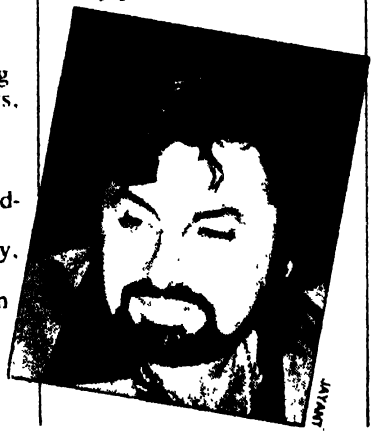
No, replied Rai, "That's Mahesh Bhatt's territory and I don't want to encroach on it."

There's bad news for all those teenyboppers who have lost their hearts to the *Aashiqui* hero, Rahul Roy.

Roy already has a girlfriend: Rachel Reubens, one of the top models of Bombay.

And what's more, unlike most industry men, he's the faithful kind.

Sanjay Khan: back in action



JAYANT

Seen outside a cinema hall. On a poster of *Jawani Zindabad*, which said "Youthful, Truthful, Powerful", some wit had scribbled "Awful".

Finally, Sanjay Khan is back on the sets of *Tipu Sultan*. And what's more, he's even facing the cameras.

The first shot Khan gave after his accident had him riding a white horse in the thick of the battlefield.

Later asked how it felt to be back, Sanjay was too choked with emotion to give an intelligible reply. •

INDRAJEET AURANGBADKAR

This is how crowded it can get at Binsar during peak tourist season



Binsar. A tiny, half-forgotten, out-of-the-way place where hardly anyone goes. Where life moves on at an unhurried pace and people still have the time to stop and chat. Nestled in thick oak and rhododendron woods, Binsar is just 30 kms from Almora, which is about 9 hrs run from Delhi by road. The nearest rail-head is Kathgodam. From Almora you could take a bus or even trek up to Binsar and stay at the comfortable 40-bedded tourist bungalow, with a-la-carte restaurant service. Surrounded by the views of the snowy peaks, Binsar offers a feast for the eyes.

Close by is Kausani, a scenic spot eulogised by poets and philosophers — so close to the Trishul-Nanda Devi range that you feel you could touch the snows.

Jageshwar, one of the 12 Jyotir Lingas of Shiva; Baijnath, a picturesque town dotted with Shikhar style temples; Katarmal, a celebrated picnic spot with a unique sun temple and Bageshwar, famous for the Bagnath temple and old sculptures, are some of the places to visit during your stay at Binsar.

So for your next holiday, get off the beaten track -- head for Binsar. And discover the U.P. hardly anyone knows about.

U.P. Tourism
Chandralok Building, 36 Janpath
New Delhi-110 001. Ph.: 3322251

Also at:
Ahmedabad: Ph: 464318, Bombay: Ph: 215497
Calcutta: Ph: 207855, Chandigarh: Ph: 41649
Lucknow: Ph: 246205, Madras: Ph: 479726



WONDERLAND

4 N/XIII 829



NO BIDDERS

Publicity hype had it that the latest Husain auction, held on the occasion of the painter's 75th birthday, would be an event to remember.

Well, it certainly will be remembered for a long time to come. But not for quite the right reasons.

All seemed well when Pritish Nandy, editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Independent,* initiated proceedings. But for four embarrassing minutes there appeared to be no takers for the latest offering from the master, until Parmeshwar Godrej gamely put up a bid for Rs 6.50 lakhs. A few desultory bids followed, but despite Nandy's persuasive talk, the going price wasn't much higher by the end of it.

A piqued Husain left the stage in disgust.

Perhaps, he should have waited. For Parmeshwar Godrej was coming to the rescue, bidding a steep Rs 12.5 lakhs and walking away with the canvas.

Explained the gallant Godrej after the event: "It was decided that the money would go for the Gulf refugees and that's why I decided to bid at the auction. Otherwise Husain is a close friend. Why should I have to buy his painting at an auction?"

(Top) M.F. Husain: no high bidders at the Pritish Nandy-conducted auction, until Parmeshwar Godrej stepped in





MUKESH

STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM FOREVER

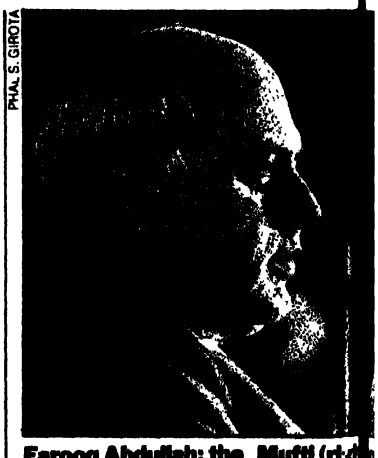
He came, he talked and then, he went right back to England. And at the end of Dr Farooq Abdullah's month-long sojourn in India, with regular meetings with representatives of the Dal regime, the Kashmir problem was no nearer solution.

True, nobody expected the good doctor to come back and wave the Valley's troubles away with his magic wand. But, most people had thought that his involvement in the sorry mess that is Kashmir today, would lead to the evolution of some new initiatives.

Such optimists, however, had not reckoned with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. For, the redoubtable home minister of India stymied all Abdullah's efforts to renew the political process in the Valley. Farooq's suggestion that the government redress some of the grievances of the state's people, in order to regain their confidence was shot down by the Mufti on the grounds that leniency would get them nowhere.

Instead, said Sayeed, the Prime Minister should follow his lead and address public meetings in the state to get the government's view across.

And, no doubt, Doordarshan should cover these jamborees and telecast its reports on prime time.



PHIL S. GIROTA

Farooq Abdullah: the Mufti (r)





NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA

Leander Paes: Is Vijay Amritraj (right) ruining his career ?

SLOWING DOWN PAES

The feud between AITA (All India Tennis Association) secretary R.K. Khanna and Vijay Amritraj now has a new focus. And it's called Leander Paes.

Recently, Khanna told the press that the current Wimbledon junior champion's career prospects were being damaged beyond repair by the Amritraj-run coaching organisation, BAT. According to Khanna, Vijay had decided that Paes was not to be fielded in any junior tournament. Instead, he would play the senior circuit, as befitted his superior talent.

This, said Khanna, was guaranteed to destroy Paes's chances, for he would find it difficult to keep up with the superior talent on the senior circuit. If, on the other hand, he played his level of tennis, not only would he register some morale-boosting wins, he could also garner much-needed experience.

The argument made sense.

But Vijay wasn't listening, leading to rumours that Leander may well terminate his contract with BAT prematurely.

KISSA KURSI KA

Obviously, all this talk of reservations has got to the Assam chief minister. For, even when Indian Airlines announced free seating on IC 479, its flight from Guwahati to Delhi, Prafulla Mahanta decided he could "reserve" a seat for himself.

Only to come up against Delhi-based businessman Ravikant Ery, who took a fancy to the chief minister's pre ferred seat. And insisted to the securitymen standing guard over it that he would occupy it, chief minister or no chief minister.



KALYAN CHAKRABORTY



KALYAN CHAKRABORTY

Prafulla Mahanta and Brighu Phukan: reservations are the name of the game

The securitymen were having none of that, and asked Ery to go elsewhere. Ery refused to see reason. And the men, said to be Assam home minister Brighu Phukan's bodyguards, beat him up soundly for his temerity.

This, while Phukan looked on from elsewhere in the craft.

The row would have taken an even more ugly turn if the pilot hadn't refused to take off while "violence" continued on the plane.

Phukan left the aircraft in a huff. And later claimed that his guards had only thrown their fists around because they couldn't bear to hear Ery abuse the CM.

Unfortunately, not too many people bought this story.



ASHOK VAIDE

e him back to England

While Abdullah gorges on strawberries and cream back in England.

HONOURED

It began with his wife's death from cancer. A shattered Sunil Dutt couldn't think of any better way to honour Nargis' memory than to establish a foundation in her name, which would fund research into cancer and help fight and detect the disease.

Today, the Nargis Dutt Foundation has chapters all over the world, which donate equipment and money to hospitals in India to help patients—and not just those suffering from cancer.

The US Congress was sufficiently impressed by Dutt's work to bestow on him a citation recognising his concern with humanitarian causes. The citation, presented by Congressman Mervyn Dymally, is to be entered into the congressional records, a rare honour.

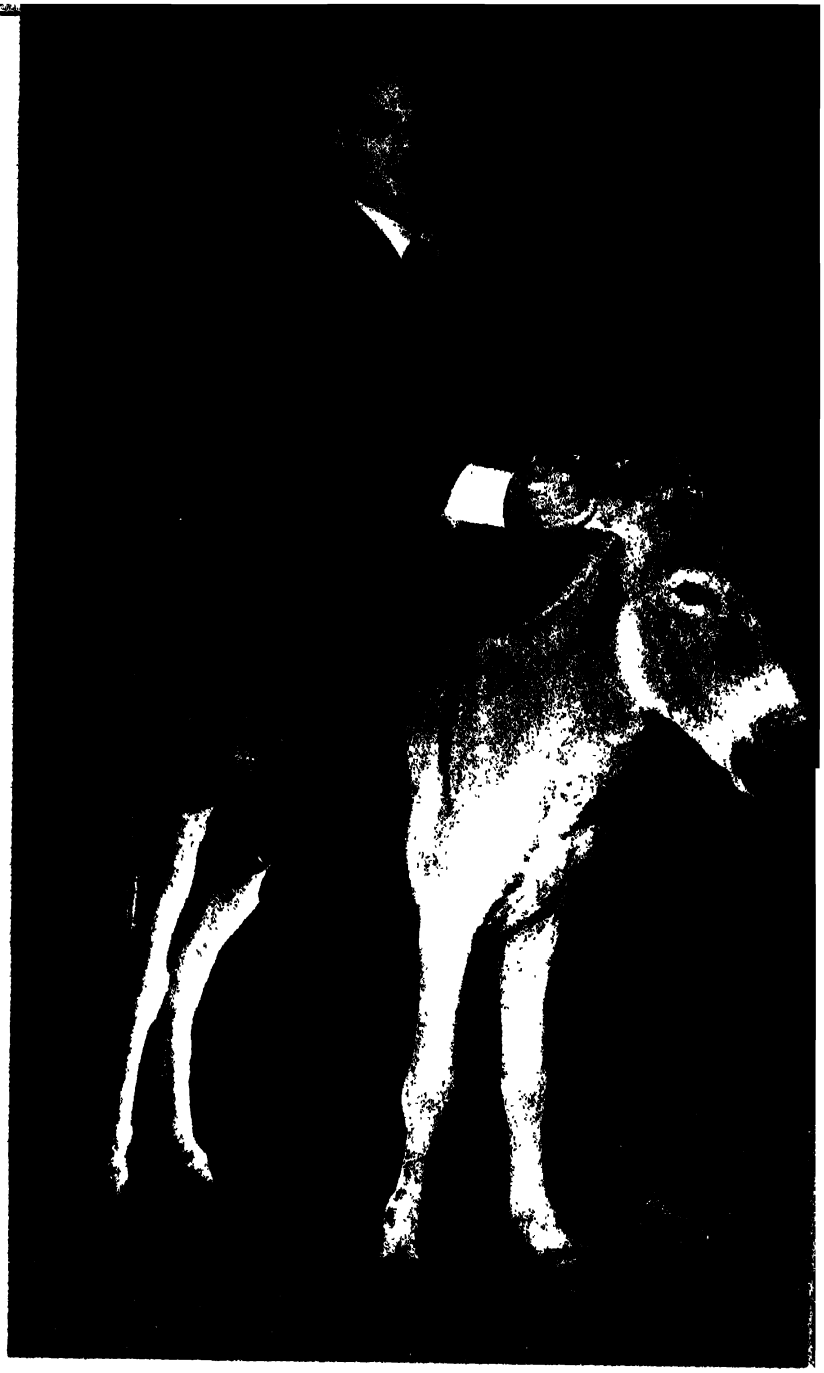
Sunil Dutt: a rare accolade



PHALS GHOTA

Later, a touched Dutt paid moving accolades to all those who made the Foundation possible: "The tears which any person sheds in any part of the world are the same. Many of the poor people in India will not know the name of the donor who saved his life. But his prayers will definitely reach and help you at some stage of your life." ●

THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP IS OFTEN NOTHING BUT SHEER CUSSEDNESS.



Tell Kirloskar Electric a job can't be done and it's like showing a red rag to a bull. We can't resist it. But all the engineering genius in the world can come to nought without sheer staying power Once we take on a job, we never give up.

Take just one instance. The 125 KW DC roller table motors for the blooming and slabbing mill at the Bokaro Steel Plant. The original motors, imported from Russia over twenty years ago needed to be replaced. What made the job really difficult was the fact that the new replacements had to be interchangeable, both mechanically and electrically, with the originals. And yet perform better.

As they say in electrical circles, when everybody else shies away, get Kirloskar Electric. The Bokaro people called us. Picture the scene. 35 tonnes of red hot iron billets, each following on the heels of the previous one, at a temperature of 1000°C, crashing on rollers and then travelling at murderous speeds to be sprayed by jets of water.

We watched and studied the drives for weeks, then got back and made a detailed proposal with designs. Go back, they said. They had raised the ante. The motors had now to work for at least 8 hours at a time even if the supply of cooling air was stopped. We had to raise the output without changing the physical dimensions an iota. We re-designed the whole motor with a far superior insulation scheme and excellent heat transfer capability.

End of story? Hardly. Our prototype failed. One of the windings overheated by 30° Kelvin and the commutation ability of the machine was poor.

Throw in the towel, everyone told us. No way, we said. We went back to work with a vengeance. Now listen to this. In 10 days, yes 10 days flat, we re-designed the windings. We have after all, perhaps the finest electrical design engineers in the country.

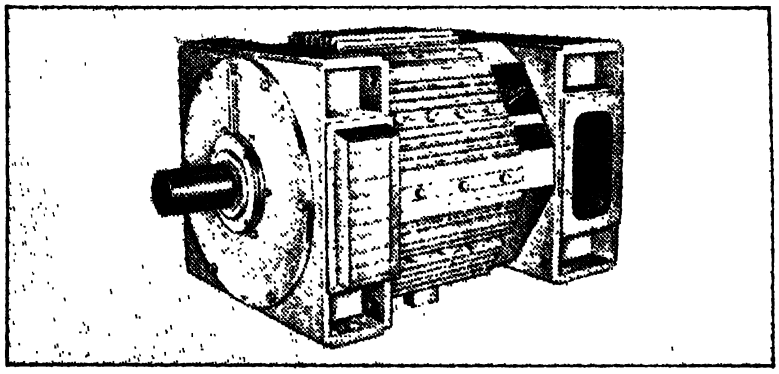
Those motors are working just fine. And they saved a substantial amount of foreign exchange.

But Kirloskar Electric is more than the sum of all the firsts it has earned over the years. We are India's leading industrial electrics and electronics company in the private sector. We make some of the finest standard AC and DC drives, transformers, welding equipment and systems, motorised gear units, equipment for defence, electronic control equipment, CNCs etc. But the one single reason why we are the prime movers in our field is because the centre of gravity at Kirloskar Electric is the customer. Our hi-tech, engineering expertise, superior quality and reliability are all geared to anticipate and respond to his needs.

KIRLOSKAR ELECTRIC CO. LTD.

INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICS AND ELECTRONICS

Regd. Office : Industrial Suburb, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560 010.



When nobody else can do the job, Kirloskar Electric will.

In flames

Delhi students attempt self-immolation to protest the Centre's reservation policy



DELHI

The police may have doused the flames, but the damage had already been done. Self-immolation attempts by students to protest against the Mandal report added to the anti-reservation frenzy sweeping Delhi. And the battle is still on.

It was madness. On 19 September two students of the Delhi University set themselves on fire in front of Deshbandhu College—in full view of the police, presspersons and a large crowd of hangers-on.

One of them was fortunate. He was rescued in time and escaped with minor injuries. The other, Rajeev Goswami, became the first 'martyr' of the cause, and lay battling for his life in Safdarjung Hospital, with 55 per cent burns.

What the students had originally planned may have been merely symbolic. Three wooden pyres had been neatly placed outside the college and 45 students were to "burn" themselves. And a large crowd waited for a ringside view. No one noticed a boy at the back, Rajeev, casually pick up a can of kerosene, douse himself with it and set himself aflame.

As the crowd, stunned by what it was witnessing, was slow to react, another student, Laxman, followed suit. While he was rescued in time by the police, Rajeev was not so fortunate, and was severely burnt on his right leg and abdomen. In the hysteric moments that followed, other students also tried to emulate Goswami. But, by this time, the police had cordoned off the pyres, effectively preventing further suicide bids.

And, even in that intensely tragic situation, Rajeev Goswami's grieving mother insisted that the cause for which her son fought was "correct and just". And she maintained her stand hours later, as she stood outside the burns ward, praying for her son's recovery.

A blistered and barely conscious Rajeev Goswami added fillip to the anti-reservation movement, egging the students to go right ahead and fight. Also inciting them were the instances of police brutality—the teargassing, the lathicharges and the manhandling of unarmed students, including women. Newspaper pictures, day after day, graphically portrayed the police "atrocities", sparking off public debates and exciting the students.

The fury, following the incidents on 19 September, raged through the city. Even the sympathetic BJP leaders, Madan Lal Khurana and L.K. Advani, who went to see Goswami in hospital two days later, felt the heat. Confronted by a mob of enraged students, who formed a human chain outside the hospital and demanded that the BJP withdraw its support to the National Front government, the two were forced to retreat. Khurana was chased by the crowd, pummelled and shoved around, and finally managed

Advani mobbed by students: beating a retreat





to escape with a broken tooth and a torn shirt by taking refuge in a police bus. Advani was luckier. He made his getaway in an Ambassador car, albeit with a caved-in ceiling.

Simultaneously, students of the ITI (Industrial Training Institute) at Nizamuddin blocked roads, deflated bus tyres and stopped traffic. And, at the Tis Hazari courts, hundreds of students gathered in the pouring rain, waiting to receive 86 others who had been arrested following a confrontation with the police and were to appear before the magistrate for bail. As tension mounted, a paranoid administration, eager to avoid fresh trouble, decided to take the easier way out by releasing the 86 students, including women, on personal bond at the police station itself.

That the agitation would snowball was apparent from the widespread support the students got from various quarters. Soon after the police lathicharged students outside Safdarjung Hospital on 20 September, doctors at the hospital went on a lightning strike till 9.00 am the next day. To further boost the movement, the Junior Doctors' Association, including doctors from Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, decided to go on a day's token strike on 24 September. And, when the police had earlier barricaded the entrance at Tis Hazari, the lawyers sprang to the students' defence, arguing that everybody had a right to enter a court room. Later, all the Tis Hazari lawyers pitched in, buying fruits for the students on a day-long vigil outside the courts. And, notwithstanding the wrath it had faced, the BJP went all out to support the students. Addressing a crowd, out-



Rajeev Goswami: a living torch

side Parliament House. Khurana made his stand clear, "We'll fight for the students of Delhi University. This decision to implement the Mandal Commission was taken without consulting us."

The final show of solidarity came from the Sarv Khap Panchayat, representing farmers of Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana and UP. They declared that they would *gherao* the capital from 27 September onwards and stop all supply of milk, vegetables and other essential items. They also announced their decision to participate in "full strength" in the proposed 2 October rally at the Boat Club.

As the anti-reservation agitation rocked the city, its resources were badly strained. The DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation) registered a loss of a staggering Rs three crore in the one month of the agitation. And the Delhi police found itself busier than ever before, banking heavily on force from outside the city. In fact, the Delhi police was even compelled to recruit constables from its training school well before their passing out parade.

"My mother saw my photograph on the cover of a magazine and asked me what I was up to. I just wrote back that I was taking the risks associated with an agitation. And, I am prepared for anything that might happen," said a young Delhi University student with a fractured arm. And, with that grit, whether right or wrong, one thing is clear: the agitation will intensify. Classrooms and exams have obviously taken a back seat. ●

Minu Jain/New Delhi

"A constitutional obligation"

The grandson of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Prakash Ambedkar, 35, has just been nominated to the Rajya Sabha. He is a lawyer by profession and had formed the Bharatiya Republican Party in 1984. Although not represented in the state Assembly, the party is an important political force and for years Prakash has been wooed by both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal. Recently, he has joined the latter. In the backdrop of the anti-Mandal movement, SUNDAY*'s* **Olga Tellis** *spoke to him. Like his grandfather, the father of the Indian Constitution, this Ambedkar, too, gives top priority to the backward castes. Excerpts from the interview:*

SUNDAY: Was your nomination to the Rajya Sabha, at this point of time, part of V.P. Singh's policy of winning over the Scheduled Castes and other backward classes?

Prakash Ambedkar: I do not think so, nor do I think it had anything to do with the anti-Mandal Commission agitations. Perhaps they require my services at the Centre. I had been restricting myself to the south, now they would like to use me for organisation work in the north, I suppose.

Q: Okay, but I am talking about the timing...

A: The Prime Minister talked to me about this several months ago. It was only now that there were vacancies and he suggested my name to the President.

Ambedkar: yes, Mandal



Q: Why do you think Maharashtra has been relatively free from the violent protests the Mandal Commission report gave rise to in northern India?

A: In Maharashtra, the dominant caste is that of the Marathas, who have always been in power. They are also well off. From 1920-47 they have been in the forefront of the anti-Brahmin movement, which was part of a social reform movement. So, they are aware of the problems of other castes. That is why the anti-reservation movement has not picked up here.

Q: Have you read the Mandal Commission report? Do you think it is flawed?

A: It is a Constitutional obligation that had to be fulfilled. When the Constitution was being drafted, there was no time to prepare a comprehensive list of backward castes and it was agreed that it would be completed later. But for 40 years of Congress rule nothing was done about it. In fact, the Punjab unrest is also part of this neglect. Most of the so-called extremists belong to the backward castes among the Sikhs.

The government will now have to make a provision in the Constitution for the castes common to the states and the Centre, which have been included in the Mandal report. While one can decide the percentage of reservation by administrative orders, the reservation can be provided for only by an amendment to the Constitution. For this, V.P. Singh will need a three-fourths majority. I see a vertical split in the BJP and the Congress parties on this issue. Already the southern Congressmen have sent a warning to Rajiv Gandhi, and the BJP in Maharashtra has been supporting the Mandal Commission report. Since V.P. Singh will have to introduce a Bill, perhaps he will go for a mid-term poll. ●

Matters private

The BJP government's privatisation efforts trigger off tribal unrest



MADHYA PRADESH

The moves are characteristic of the BJP. The Madhya Pradesh government, advertised as a model of sorts, is showing a lot of interest in privatisation. And the ever-vocal Congress(I) is mysteriously silent on the issue.

The state has decided to allow private companies to handle power houses, road transport and the liquor trade in tribal areas. The first step was the replacing of government outlets selling liquor in tribal belts with private shops. A major problem in this process is the retrenchment involved. Already, 900 government employees working in these liquor vends have been sacked. This utterly unexpected move has bewildered and shocked quite a few. Unable to cope, a young man in Raigarh recently committed suicide.

And the largest tribal district, Bastar, has come alive with protests. A few years ago, the Congress(I) had abolished private trade in liquor following vehement tribal protest against the activities of the liquor mafia. And with the new policy, the old evil is back. The district president of the BJP youth wing, the Bharatiya Janta Yuva Morcha, was hospitalised after a murderous attack on him by the liquor contractors, for demanding curbs on the latter. And although the street attack was carried out openly, the police did not arrest the culprits till thousands of locals *gheraoed* the police station and higher officials intervened.

Maybe the fact that the liquor lobby in Madhya Pradesh is rich and resourceful is relevant in this context. It is known to be a liberal donor, with no overt political bias. And once upon a time, these contractors were branded the biggest tax evaders in the state.

The government is also planning to privatise road transport in a big way. The transfer of some nationalised routes to the private sector, which is already under way, will undoubtedly leave thousands jobless. But then, the State Road Transport Corporation has been a pretty corrupt white elephant. It incurs a loss of about Rs 30 to 50 crores every year. And it also does not pay taxes. And private companies, which can be needled into paying up, might be an attractive alternative. The state has started issuing permits to private transport companies for distances up to 50 km, even on nationalised routes. And liberal deals for longer routes are being considered.

The state government's decision to encourage the private sector has been prompted by a shortage of funds, and one area where the businessman is needed most is the power sector

Another area where the state has decided to allow the private sector in as an experiment is power. Scarcity of funds led to this decision, admitted the chairman of the state electricity board. In fact, the government's privatisation plans speak of its financial problems. Strangely, the self-proclaimed saviour of the public sector, the Congress(I), has been silent all along. There hasn't been a murmur even from PCC(I) chief Arjun Singh and Opposition leader Shyama Charan Shukla. Incidentally, as chief minister in December 1989, Shukla had himself brought back the private liquor contractors in Durg district. This only shows how resourceful and wise the private businessmen are. And how similar the politicians, whether from the Congress or the BJP. •

M.V. Kher/Raipur

Came, saw and captured

The PWG goes on an abduction spree in six districts



ANDHRA PRADESH

Kidnapping has become child's play for the Naxalites of Andhra Pradesh. The activists of the People's War Group (PWG) are taking hostages at will and the Congress(I) regime, like the previous Telugu Desam government, does not quite know how to tackle them.

On the 10th of last month, the PWG displayed its striking power by abducting 16 people from six districts where it holds sway. Among those whisked away were a former minister of the Telugu Desam Party, Rama Rao, and a Youth Congress leader. The Naxalites declared that the abductions were in protest against the detention of vehicles bringing PWG supporters to a massive rally in Hyderabad, organised by the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Coolie Sangham (APRCS) on 10 September.



Kannabiran: critical

The police say former minister and sitting MLA G. Rama Rao was on his way to Adilabad from his constituency, Boath, when his car was waylaid and he was taken hostage. Sarath Babu, the youth Congress leader, was kidnapped from his residence in

Narkekal *taluk* in Nalagandan district. The PWG held a *mandal* revenue officer, an engineer, a college principal, a manager of the Andhra Bank and a school teacher.

Later, the Naxalites used one of the hostages to establish contact with the administration. The kidnapped man, a *gram sevak*, was released by them with a list of their demands. Among the things they pressed for were the release of the PWG supporters held on 10 September, the removal of all police camps from their areas of influence, and the "cessation of hostilities by the police".

The director general of police, Prabhakar Rao, however, denies that the police intended to foil the APRCS meeting by preventing the organisation's supporters from reaching Hyderabad. The police, he claims, had merely tried to stop use of force by the PWG, whose activists had, apparently, commandeered the trucks. The police also say that they had information that some of the PWG men were trying to smuggle



Reddy: taking a soft line

arms into the public meeting.

Two days later, after having gained from a publicity hype, the Naxalites freed the hostages, as the police agreed to release the seized trucks. But what may have been a happy ending to a tense drama was marred by the assassination of N. Narsa Reddy, *sarpanch* of Mursa village, in a separate incident, in Nizamabad district. The PWG suspected him to be a police informer.

One of the released hostages, Koteswara Rao, a manager of the Andhra Bank, said that he was well looked after by the extremists while he was being held. The others, too, seemed to have little to complain about.

While the government watched helplessly with no control over the course of events, the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) accused it of being insincere about solving the Naxalite problem. The APCLC's president, Kannabiran, and general secretary, Dr Balagopal, demanded the setting up of special courts to enquire into the excesses committed by the police.

The critics of chief minister Chenna Reddy say that his policies have emboldened the Naxalites, who are openly holding "peoples courts" in most villages. A senior minister in the state Cabinet, however, feels that the government allowed the PWG a long rope in the hope that the Naxalites would hang themselves. Chenna Reddy had, evidently, taken a calculated risk, hoping that the extremists would come overground and abjure violence.

His policy of "live and let live" has backfired. Instead of joining the mainstream, the Naxalites are now moving about more freely, collecting



Sitharamaiah: covert links?

money from businessmen in villages.

But are there any covert reasons for the Congress(I) to pamper the Naxalites? Rumours doing the rounds in Hyderabad suggest that Kondapalli Sitharamaiah, the PWG chief, was in the state capital recently and spent a few days in a five-star hotel as a guest of one of the leading lights of the Chenna Reddy Cabinet.

Whether there is any grain of truth in that remains unknown. What is evident is that the Congress(I) government has been outplayed by the Naxalites. •

Jagadish Prasad/Hyderabad

Please take notice

Tenants in government buildings feel threatened following an SC verdict



MAHARASHTRA

"All this is in danger" says Rajanjit Madhavji, the art collector, gliding his eyes over the rare paintings, photographs and curios. "Where will I keep these if I have to quit?" Madhavji is the owner of the world-renowned Hamilton Studios, which, he claims, hosts the largest private collection of paintings and photographs in India. And by a recent Supreme Court (SC) judgment, the collector can be evicted from the building the studio is located in, with just seven days' notice.

Hamilton Studios is in what is now the NTC House at Ballard Estate. When the Seasoons-owned Indu United Mills went sick and was nationalised, this building was taken over by the National Textile Corporation (NTC) and all the tenants of the building automatically became tenants of the NTC. The SC judgment takes away the protection offered by the Rent Act to tenants like Madhavji. That is to rent-paying tenants of government or semi-government institutions, including the railways, port trusts, banks and corporations like the LIC.

Upset by this development, Madhavji and other affected tenants have promoted the Public Premises Tenants Association (PPTA). The government is one of the largest property owners in the metros. In Bombay's business district—Fort Area—alone, about 99 per cent of the buildings are owned by the LIC (Life Insurance Corporation) and the banks. So, thousands of tenants, whether commercial companies or families, are panic-stricken. "Any state-controlled corporation could henceforth buy an apartment or commercial block, declare some occupants unauthorised and evict them," says Marizi Chinoy, lawyer and chairman of the PPTA.

An LIC spokesman, however, dismisses this as "imaginary fears". Investment policies are controlled by the government. "We can't just purchase encumbered property and evict people wholesale," he says. "Besides, it is not easy to start legal proceedings in the LIC. It is a long and cumbersome procedure." Another government spokesperson feels that the rich businessmen, who have enough money to buy new premises, seem to be making the most noise.

In the public sector, the railways alone have 68,000 tenements under litigation, of which 33,000 are in Bombay

The SC judgment was in answer to questions raised by three public sector organisations. In 1977 the Punjab National Bank, the Allahabad Bank and the LIC had asked three private sector companies to vacate the premises they occupied in Delhi. The latter filed writ petitions in the Bombay High Court. The judgment went in favour of the companies. So the public sector organisations questioned, in the SC, whether someone, inducted as a tenant in public premises and whose tenancy has expired, can be evicted as an unauthorised occupant under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act (PPA), 1971. And, whether the person is protected by the Delhi Rent Control Act, 1958. This time the judgment went in favour of the public sector companies.

"I feel sorry not because of my personal loss, but because an institution like this will be closed down," says Madhavji. "I bought Hamilton Studios in 1958. Its collection is famous worldwide. The Sotheby's of London and the Rolls Royce people come over for pictures I have here. All this will be lost."

Of the public sector, says the distraught collector, the railways alone have 68,000 tenements under litigation, of which 33,000 are in Bombay. The Bombay Port Trust has 14,000. There are many more examples. And the panic is spreading. •

Olga Tellis/Bombay

United tribes of Sikkim

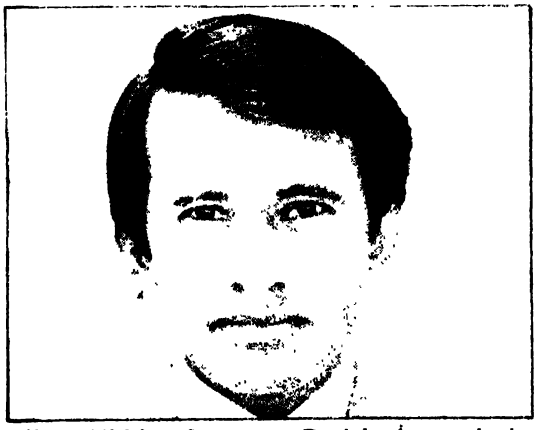
The Limbus, Bhutias and the Lepchas join hands to press for their demands



SIKKIM

The Limbus of Sikkim are slowly emerging as a new political force in the state. The revival of their age-old ties with the minority Buddhist Bhutia-Lepcha tribals, coupled with their demand for a Scheduled Tribe status and reserved constituencies, indicates that the community is all set to become increasingly assertive.

The Akhil Sikkim Kirati Limbu Chumlung (All Sikkim Kirati Limbu Association) has demanded the status of a Scheduled Tribe for the Limbus, a Nepalese hill tribe, settled in west Sikkim. The Chumlung has the support of most Limbu leaders belonging to different political parties, including the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP). The party's Limbu MLAs were signatories to a memorandum submitted to President R. Venkataraman by the Chumlung in July this year, demanding a Scheduled Tribe status for the Limbus.



The tribals have described Bhandari's stand against the Mandal report as 'an act of high-handedness'

Moreover, the tribal-dominated political party, Denzong People's Chogpa, and the Denzong Tribal Yargay Chogsa, another vocal organisation of the tribals, have lent tacit support to the Limbus. The Bhutia-Lepchas, who were declared a Scheduled Tribe in 1978, three years after Sikkim's controversial merger with the Indian Union, also support the 'Lho-Mon-Tsong-Sum' movement for unity among the Bhutias, Lepchas, and Limbus, whom historians regard as the three main communities inhabiting the state prior to the largescale Nepalese immigration into Sikkim in the latter part of the 19th century.

"In keeping with the tribal traditions, this community (Limbus) upheld and honoured the 'Lho-Mon-Tsong-Sum' agreement fully and stayed with amity with Bhutias and Lepchas. It was the forces of these three communities which fought valiantly in the 1788 war against the Gorkha invasion of Sikkim", stated the Chumlung's memorandum to the President. And, expectedly, the reaction of the chief minister, N.B. Bhandari, who champions the interests of the Nepalese, was dramatic. He threatened to quit his post as the party chief, if his two MLAs, Bir Bal Subba and Sanchaman Limbu, failed to apologise for becoming a party to the Chumlung memorandum. "Either I will resign from the post of president or the two signatories will have to resign for violating party conduct," Bhandari warned at a public gathering.

The chief minister's threat, however, did not have much effect on the Limbus. This was evident from a subsequent memorandum submitted to the chief minister himself, demanding constitutional recognition of the 'Lho-Mon-Tsong-Sum languages', i.e. Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu, which, along with Nepalese, are officially recognised in the state.

The timing of the demand irked Bhandari, as it came at a time when he was campaigning for the inclusion of

Nepali in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. Despite Bhandari's request to all that the campaign for Nepali should in no way be hindered, 51 persons representing the Bhutias, Lepchas and Limbus, urged the chief minister to raise the demand for the inclusion of their languages in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution also. This is being regarded as a major setback for Bhandari.

Another issue on which the Limbus have become vocal is regarding the Mandal Commission recommendations which list the Nepalese among the backward communities. Bhandari's refusal to implement the commission's recommendations in the state has made matters worse. In the autumn session of the Assembly Bhandari moved a resolution against the implementation of the Mandal report in Sikkim, which was unanimously passed by the House.

Bhandari feels that the report which includes a section of the Napalese in the list while excluding some others, is "discriminatory". Implementation of such recommendations, according to Bhandari, will cause disharmony among the ethnic communities in Sikkim.

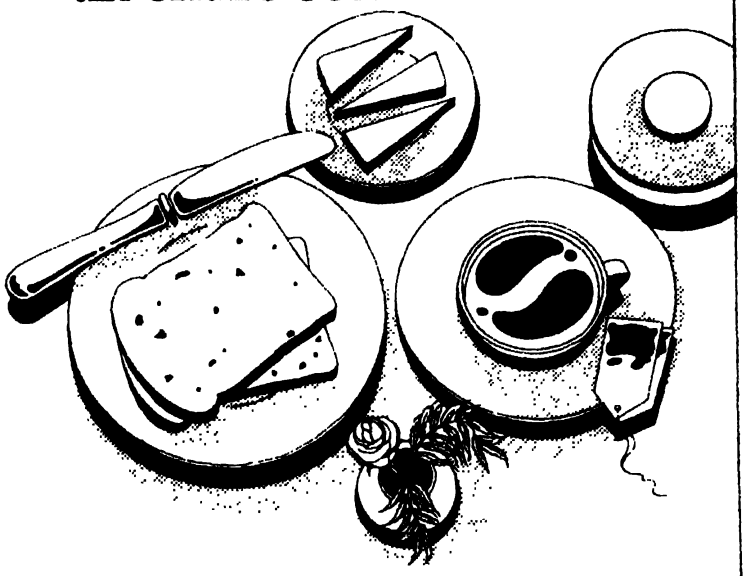
The Chumlung lost no time in reacting against the state government's stand and demanded a "review" of the decision. A press statement issued by the chief general secretary of the Chumlung, K.B. Subba, termed the Bhandari government's stand on the Mandal report as "an act of high-handedness" aimed at appeasing "a very small" section of the Nepalese in the state. This was actually an indirect reference to the upper caste Nepali Hindus in Sikkim.

Reflecting the sentiments of the Limbus, Pritvi Raj Subha, founder-president of the Chumlung and vice-president of the Denzong People's Chogpa, told newsmen here recently that inclusion of the Limbus in the list of backward classes was an act of "injustice". According to him the community deserved the status of a Scheduled Tribe like the Bhutia-Lepchas.

With the revival of the feeling of brotherhood among the tribals and the Limbus, and the unifying influence of the Mandal Commission's recommendations among all the hill tribes, the stage is now set for a new trend in the politics of this strategic Himalayan state. •

Tasi Rapden/ Gangtok

If you think you're breakfasting at Holiday Inn, Singapore, you're thinking an entire ocean too far.



Holiday Inn, Bombay, offers you the same international facilities as any Holiday Inn worldwide.

The service at the Holiday Inn, Bombay, holds a mirror to the finest Holiday Inns the world over.

We offer fine dining, superior accommodation, conference facilities, inimit .ble service, and of course, the value for money you've come to expect from any Holiday Inn worldwide...

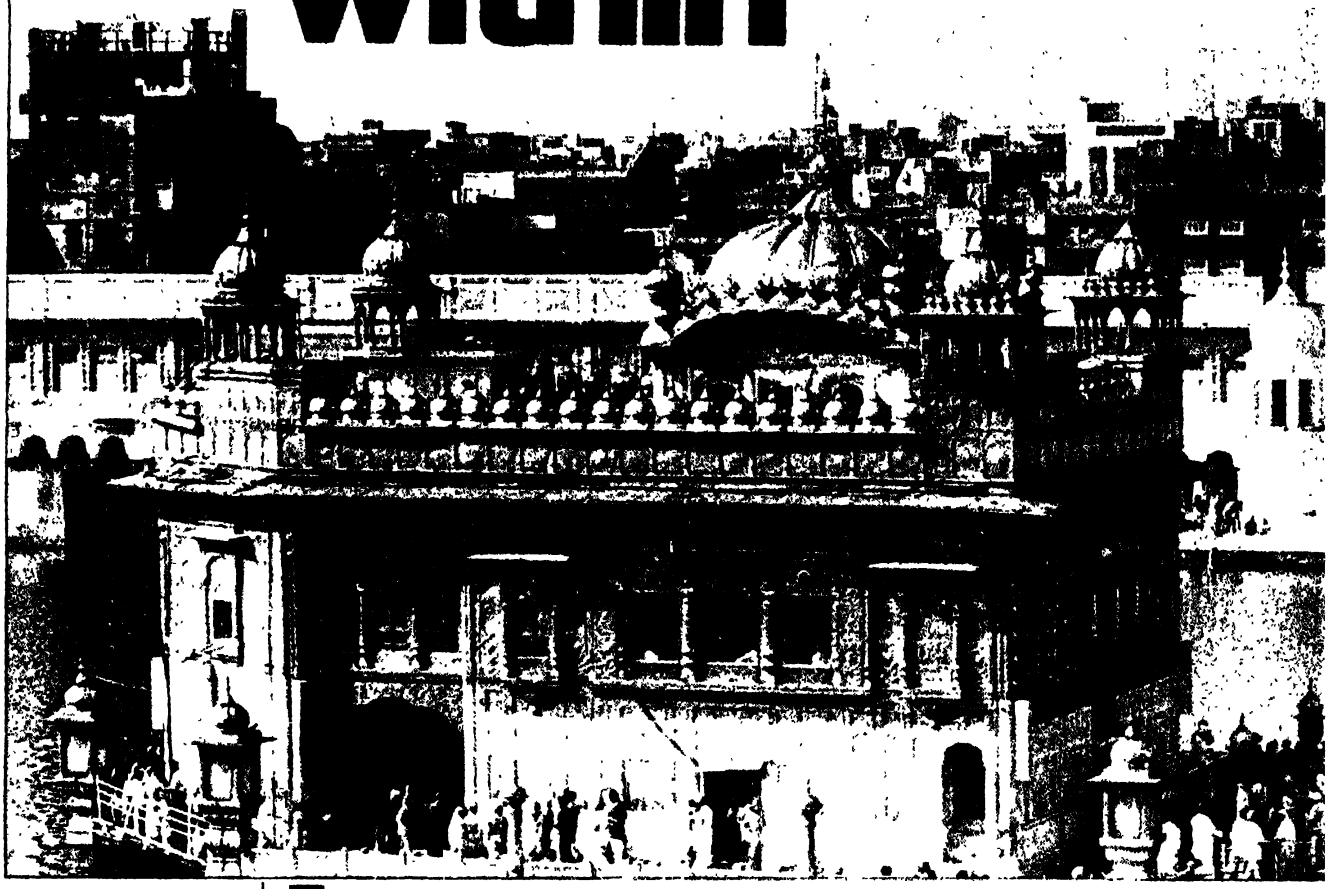
All the more reasons to choose Holiday Inn first.

Holiday Inn
Bombay
The World's First Choice

ARTIG-470-90

For information and reservation, please contact: BOMBAY. Holiday Inn, Balraj Sahani Marg, Juhu Beach, Bombay 400 049. Tel: 6204444/6202398. Tlx: 011-78411 HOLI IN/ 011-78404 HINN IN. Fax: (0091-22) 6204452 • NEW DELHI: Holiday Inn, Connaught Plaza. Tel: 3320101. Tlx: 031-61186 HIND IN. Tel: 3010211. Tlx: 031-65526 CLAR IN • BANGALORE: Tel: 77676/77931. Tlx: 845-8668/2354 MACH IN • CALCUTTA: Tel: 412009. Tlx: 021-5421 • AHMEDABAD: Tel: 448602 • PUNE: Tel: 661752.

The enemy within



Communist leader Satpal Dang on the terrorist movement in Punjab

In the earlier stages of terrorism in Punjab, the Left had to argue hard in support of its contention that behind the terrorists was the hand of imperialism operating from our own soil but mainly through the rulers of Pakistan which has a long border with Punjab as well as some neighbouring states. Today this external factor is recognized by one and all except those who deliberately do not want to see this or are interested in denying it. Evidence which has come to light already is indeed overwhelming and is too well known by now.

Imperialism does not like India's anti-imperialist role in the international arena and her refusal to go neo-colonial, notwithstanding all the concessions which are given to the multinationals by our government. Imperialism therefore wants to weaken, destabilise and even disintegrate and balkanise India. Towards that end it encourages, aids and abets such slogans as "Khalistan", and "Azad Kashmir" and also Hindu Raj in India. Not very long ago, a world conference of the Hindu Vishwa Parishad, which was held in the USA and which demanded Hindu Raj in India was patronised and attended by some from the ruling classes of that country.

Towards that end, US imperialism has been helping the Khalistani terrorists, mainly but not only through Pakistani rulers. Besides the fact that Zia was a US stooge, Pakistani rulers have their own axe to grind too. Their calculations are not difficult to see. If at a time of crisis, say another Indo-Pak war, they can occupy parts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts bordering Pakistan, Kashmir gets virtually cut off from India. This is their real



practical objective, even when they encourage the slogan of Khalistan while carrying on an anti-Sikh campaign in their own country through publications in Urdu. This is one reason why the terrorists from the very start have concentrated on these two districts, while developing the capacity to strike in any part of Punjab and even outside Punjab.

The external factor alone cannot explain the serious situation. There are internal forces, too, behind Khalistani terrorists.

Bhajan Lal's (the then chief minister of Haryana) approach to teach Sikhs a lesson by humiliating and harassing a large number of Sikh passengers travelling to Delhi by buses, cars, etc. in the name of ensuring failure of the threat of disrupting the Asian Games, rendered immense help to Bhindranwale.

Economically Sikhs are perhaps the most well-off community of India. They have a share in services (defence as well as civil) far in excess of their proportion in the population. There are many more *gurudwaras* in India per 1 lakh of Sikhs now than in 1947. Allegations of discrimination therefore are false. However, a Hindu bias is there in the leadership of the country. For instance, just when the Akali demand for declaring Amritsar as a holy city was refused, Kurukshetra was declared one. This bias helps anti-national forces and must so.

The internal factor which has perhaps helped the terrorists most is opportunism of the bourgeois parties and not only the ruling one—indulged in for short term electoral or other political considerations. Many examples can be given but only a few will suffice.

As is universally known by now, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a religious personality, was brought into politics by Congress with the aim of weakening the Akali party, its rival in the matter of power in the state of Punjab. The Akalis thought that they could play the Bhindranwale card better than the Congress. They first allowed him to stay in the Guru Nanak Niwas. Then they allowed him to stay in the holy Akal Takht, where even no Guru had ever stayed, and to convert the Golden Temple complex proper including the Akal Takht itself into an armed fortress and a big training camp for terrorists.

A very prominent general secretary of the Congress(I) certified that Bhindranwale was only a religious personality even when he had already become the leader of the terrorist killers and when he had already been calling for killings. Almost at the same time not one but three much respected opposition stalwarts visited the Golden Temple and issued certificates to the effect that they did not find any arms inside the Golden Temple complex when one even from outside could see many installed inside the complex and even on its outer walls.

Assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was the most despicable act masterminded by the terrorists and their patrons, imperialists. Those who celebrated the assassination deserved to be strongly criticised. Notwithstanding all this, the anti-Sikh riots resulting in killings of about 3,000 innocent Sikhs in the capital alone were totally unjustifiable. They constitute one of the blackest spots of India's fair name. They were not altogether spontaneous. Some VIPs played a big part in organising these even though in not a few places old Congressmen too like the communists and others helped save many Sikhs, even at the risk of their own lives. For narrow party considerations, there has been a persistent refusal to prosecute the guilty. This grave injustice has been fully exploited by the

The Akalis thought that they could play the Bhindranwale card better than the Congress. They first allowed him to stay in the Guru Nanak Niwas. Then they allowed him to stay in the holy Akal Takht and to convert the Golden Temple into an armed fortress



Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale; (right) the 1984 anti-Sikh riots: an alienated community

The internal factor which has, perhaps, helped the terrorists most is the opportunism the bourgeois parties indulged in for short-term electoral or other considerations

extremists in Punjab and has done them very great service indeed.

Again and again there have been attempts on the part of the Congress(I) high command to make a deal with a section of the terrorists sometimes with the help of Sunil Muni Jain and Darshan Singh Ragi, sometimes with the help of Badal (even though a novice in Punjab politics could tell that Badal would not oblige) and sometimes through Jasbir Singh Rode. Every such effort has proved counter-productive. It has only demoralised the security forces and has strengthened the terrorists.

And yet this is not being given up for the sake of electoral considerations. Not more than 50 in the Jodhpur Jail are terrorist killers or their organisers. Yet many more are still there to be used as a bargaining counter. Non-Left opposition parties too do not seem averse to making an unprincipled deal. Some top opposition leaders have been maintaining a strange silence on Punjab. Some have been saying that the Punjab problem would get resolved only when the Opposition comes to power in New Delhi. Some have started providing alibis for the terrorists by saying that all the killings are being done by the government agents.

The ordinance which the government issued to prevent places of worship from being used for storing weapons and from being used for political purposes was half-hearted. The Akalis opposed it. Other bourgeois opposition parties instead of demanding it being made more effective, at best expressed only lukewarm support for it.

The terrorists have made full use of this opportunism of bourgeois parties. Bhindranwale had even boasted that some thought that the Congress was using him, but actually it was he who was using the Congress (and also the Akalis).

The terrorists are not concerned with the territorial disputes and the dispute regarding surplus river waters. They have often said so. But they have not failed to exploit the fact that these disputes (given communal colourings by the Akalis) remain unresolved. One of the main reasons for the disputes not getting resolved is the opportunism of the bourgeois parties. While communists take one and the same stand and put forward the same in the concerned states, every bourgeois party takes one stand in the parliament while giving full freedom to its state units to take different and mutually contradictory stands. It is not necessary to give more examples. The fact that the type of employment avenues desired by the youth are not there, and coupled with lure of weapons and money, it has played a part in spread of terrorism, though this is only a secondary factor.

Main sources of fund collections by the Punjab terrorists have been as under:

i) Huge amounts have come from abroad from those who are sympathetic to the 'cause' including from millionaire non-Indian Sikhs. Collections in such *gurudwaras* in foreign countries as are controlled by extremists have



also been utilised for the purpose.

ii) Big amounts have also come from cities like Bombay and Calcutta contributed and collected by supporters of the 'cause'.

iii) Collections of *gurudwaras* in Punjab when controlled by terrorists or their friends have also been used.

iv) Banks dacoities, robberies, etc. In some cases of robberies, the victims happened to be Sikhs. They pleaded for being spared. They were told that they might fulfil the demand out of sympathy or at the point of gun—the choice was theirs.

v) Extortions through threats. First, Hindu businessmen and professionals were the targets. Then the operation was extended to Sikh businessmen and professionals and thereafter also to comparatively well-off landowners.

An interesting aspect of this operation has been bargaining indulged in to decide the exact amount to be given with the help of mediators. In some cases terrorists known to be the targets have also helped to lower the demands. Of course at the time of the negotiations AK 47 Chinese Assault Rifles and other sophisticated weapons would be on display.

Groups like teachers of a particular school have been made to pay fixed monthly contributions.

vi) Ransom on the basis of kidnappings. This method has been adopted in a big way only recently in the sub-division Patti in Amritsar district. Main targets are shellac and brick kiln owners and their children, well-off shopkeepers, etc. Amounts demanded are quite big. In some cases the mediators would get the demand lowered. In some other cases hostages have been shot dead too. Targets are Hindus as well as Sikhs. On a smaller scale this has been happening since long and also in the districts of Gurdaspur and Ferozpur.

vii) Another method adopted from the days of Bhindranwale and which continues till today—though exact procedure has been varying at different times. On the basis of some complaint of someone, the complainant and the opposite party would be summoned. Decision would then be given and its implementation would be demanded under threat of liquidation. The beneficiary party or both would also be ordered to make handsome contributions.

viii) In the days of the so-called social reform movement, liquor vendors and others would be spared for considerations.

The above may not be an exhaustive list of the methods used.

It may be mentioned that not all the money goes to the 'cause'— for purchasing weapons, for paying to the recruits, etc. A number of terrorists, though not all, have used a part of the collections for themselves—for acquiring luxury items as well as for immovable properties.

A few words about the methods of recruitment.

There is the appeal of the religiosity. Also the promise of a Khalistan in which will flow rivers of milk and honey, in which nobody would be unemployed, there is also the pull of weapons and of money. Youths whose fathers do not have big landholdings get attracted easily. There are also many anti-social elements turned terrorists because that makes their job easier and also 'respectable'.

Despite all this, there is the significant fact that the number of terrorists from families of Sikh agricultural labourers, who are the poorest in the Sikh community has been negligible. Their reactions even to events like Bluestar Operation and killing of Bhindranwale were quite different from those of the landowning peasantry. I wonder where is the ground to speak of a common 'Sikh psyche'. In fact some who do, themselves make clear that by 'Sikh psyche' they mean "Jat Sikh psyche" which proposition itself can be debated.

There is also the fact that quite a number of terrorists have come from families of the rich and quite a few had even good decent jobs. The financiers and willing providers of shelter and stores for weapons and the members of the brain trust include big landlords and even some IAS, IPS, and other top officers coming from landlord families. Generally these officers are retired but the possibility of some serving ones being their comrades-in-arms cannot be ruled out. Some caught too badly

Pakistani rulers have their own axe to grind. If another Indo-Pak war takes place they can occupy parts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts bordering Pakistan. This way, Kashmir gets virtually cut off from India

had to be dismissed.

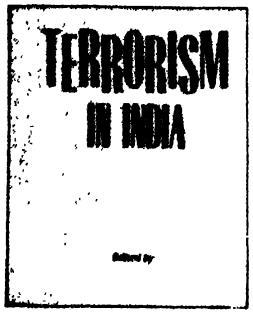
When the terrorists are at the receiving end, recruitment goes down. When they are on top or when the security forces get orders to stay their hands, recruitment goes up. Such has been the experience at least in Amritsar district.

I know also of more than one case in which a youth got attracted, joined them, got disgusted and left them. He had to rejoin after he was told: "If you don't rejoin us, we will liquidate you as well as your family."

It is rightly said by some that one of the causes for the trouble in Punjab is the fact that at one time big majority of Punjabi Hindus flying in the face of truth denied that Punjabi was their mother tongue and instead recorded Hindi as such. This was the result of bad advice given by the then Jana Sangh as well as the Hindu Congress leaders. All this however is a part of the truth. The other part, equally

Indira Gandhi's funeral: her assassination was master-minded by the terrorists





Terrorism in India edited by S.C. Tiwari. Published by South Asian Publishers, New Delhi. Price: Rs 150

wrong and damaging, is the fact that the Akali Party championed the cause of Punjabi language as if it was a part of Sikh religion and as if its development was linked with their original demand for a Sikh state and then for a Punjabi-speaking state in which Sikhs would be at least sixty per cent.

Communalists of both hues have contributed a lot towards disruption of development of common Punjabi consciousness, of the Punjabi nationality within the great Indian nation. To reverse the process is a hard and long term job. It requires a prolonged fight not only for separation of religion and politics, or religion and state but also of religion and language, i.e. Punjabi language. Some intellectuals including a few who claim to be Left refuse to see the need of this fight or are not ready for it. They are putting forward the dangerous thesis that today Sikhs alone are true Punjabis, that Sikhs are fighting the battle of Punjabi nationality, etc.

Those who say that the Punjab problem is only a law and order problem are wrong. Equally wrong are those who consider it only as a political problem. It is both and must be tackled simultaneously at both the fronts.

Immediately following steps are needed:

1. An offensive against terrorists must be a continuous offensive without any let up till their backbone is broken. Excesses must be avoided.

2. All except the killers and their organisers out of the Jodhpur detenus must be released unconditionally.

3. Those responsible for organising anti-Sikh riots of November 1984 must be prosecuted.

4. All states including Punjab must be given more powers but no special status of any kind to it because the same will lead to a theocratic state.

5. An all party national level meeting to evolve the broadest possible consensus regarding territorial and river waters disputes. Prior to that or at the meeting all national parties must pledge that their state units will not be allowed to take contradictory stands and will be bound by the consensus. All must then go to the people of the concerned states and appeal to them to accept the same. Such a consensus will of course be arrived at keeping in view the national interests, in the spirit of give and take and without doing gross injustice to any state. This is the only way the spirit of Rajiv-Longowal Accord can be saved.

Secular and patriotic parties and groups must jointly as well as individually launch a new and powerful mass compaign at the grass root level to isolate separatist terrorists, against killings, against excesses, against the slogan of Khalistan and of Hindu Raj, for the above demands; against the misuse of religious places, against the slogan of revenge and retaliation, for separation of religion and politics, religion and state.

Of course, from joint platforms only jointly agreed issues must be taken up. There must be no attempt by anyone to exploit the joint platform against each other because that will make any joint campaign impossible.

The experience so far has shown that the organised working class, and the agricultural labourers have not only not fallen prey to separatism, extremism and even communalism. These two have actively intervened in a big way at various critical junctures and have saved the situation. Narration of that is being avoided for reasons of space. Lesson is that everything possible must be done to enhance the weight of these sections in the public and political life of the state. ●

ODDS AND TRENDS



Little wonder

■ At 58.15 cms, Gul Mohammad of Delhi is a world record holder. He has been recognised as the shortest man in the world by the *Guinness Book Of World Records*.

Thirty three-year-old Mohammad, who weighs only 17 kgs, will be listed in the 1991 edition of the book as the shortest living man on earth. However, for Gul, this recognition will be of little help if it does not solve his financial problems. He has recently sought financial assistance from the Government of India after trying to earn a living by selling biscuits and toffees in front of his house. The death of his father, within a few days of his birth and the subsequent remarriage of his mother, made life so difficult for Gul that he couldn't even afford to get himself educated.

Gul's tastes are simple, to say the least. He is fond of *qawalis*, particularly by Habid Painter and Ghulam Farid, and likes to watch cine star Amitabh Bachchan on screen.

The publishers of *The Guinness Book Of World Records* hope that the publicity will help to end Mohammad's monetary miseries. "We trust that his claim to fame will help in his financial dilemma and that the Indian government will help," they wrote.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Moonmoon Sen



Sharon Prabhakar

The whizkid and his robot

■ Making robots for him is child's play. Ashish Panwar, a 16-year-old student of City Montessori School, Lucknow, has invented a multi-purpose electro-mechanical robot which gained him the honour of representing India at the Robot Olympics Competition held in Glasgow from 27 September

Young Panwar has been working on his pet project for the past one year. His dedication has paid off—his robot weighs just 60 kgs and can perform various functions such as radioactive experiments, drilling, welding and cleaning. It can also run a fast food restaurant, prepare horoscopes, solve quiz games and, what's more, is capable of listening.

For Ashish, the youngest participant in the competition, it is an achievement to be proud of.

THIS INDIA

PUNE: A group of freedom fighters *gheraoed* the Pune municipal commissioner, Mr Dua, after the tricolour was hoisted upside down at a corporation function on Independence Day. The city mayor, Mr D.G. Khilare, who unfurled the tricolour, had pulled the wrong string. The agitated veterans were pacified by an apology and a second flag hoisting after three runs—*The Telegraph*, B.N. Bose, Calcutta (West Bengal)



HYDERABAD: Snake charmers may soon be employed in a nationalised bank in the heart of Hyderabad. The bank staff recoiled in horror when snake charmers, who were summoned to catch a cobra spotted in the bank's record room, found not one but two snakes. Four snakes were caught or killed in the bank in the past one month, according to the bank manager. Fearing for their lives, the staff have decided to work outside the bank premises—*The Times of India*, A.K. Deka, Nasik (Maharashtra)

BHOPAL: The Madhya Pradesh police have arrested a 50-year-old man who murdered a dozen persons without any reason. "I committed murders because I like killing people," Mangalia confessed to the police. His murders have never been pre-planned. A firm believer in God he doesn't remember how many murders were committed by him in Guna and Shivpuri districts in northern Madhya Pradesh. He however confessed to having committed a dozen murders since December last—*The Hindustan Times*, Janak Raj Laroiya, Noida (Uttar Pradesh)

BANGALORE: The Karnataka government, which has reserved seats for women in the *zilla parishads* and *mandal panchayats* might have to make arrangements for looking after their children, atleast on the days of the meetings, since the women members find it difficult to look after their families and discharge their responsibilities (as members of the decentralised bodies) at the same time. A woman member of the Bangalore rural *zilla parishad*, Mrs Kalpana, brought her four-year-old son to a meeting of the *parishad*. The child was playing and running about in the *parishad* hall even as the meeting was going on. However, the members seemed to enjoy the presence of the child—*The Hindu*, S. Bhanumathy, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

BEGINNING 7 OCTOBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



For businessmen, the time is ripe to strike new deals. Initiatives will be rewarded. Try and check extravagance. A favourable week for filmstars. Their new releases may fare well at the box-office.

Good dates: 7, 10 and 13
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



A favourable week for company executives. You drive and zeal may be appreciated, but do not go overboard. Astrologers may do well; their predictions may come true. Students will do well in their exams.

Good dates: 8, 9 and 12
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: South

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



You will be able to spend a lot this week. You can take your friends out for lunch or dinner. Filmstars can sign new assignments. But they should be careful. Mediapersons should be tactful and discreet.

Good dates: 10, 11 and 13
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. On the professional front, there might be a few problems. Romance is in the offing. Some of you may inherit property. Do not overstrain yourself. Artists and craftsmen will do well.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 12
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

LEO (21 July—20 August)



Success is in store for you this week. Businessmen and professionals are likely to do well. Financial prospects look bright but avoid any risks. A favourable week for romance.

Good dates: 7, 9 and 10
Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: East

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



This is a good week for you. Your domestic life presents a happy scenario. Businessmen will do well. A good week for romance. Your children will be a source of joy to you. A favourable week for doctors and scientists.

Good dates: 8, 12 and 13
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This is a favourable week for most of you. Financially, the week looks promising. Professionals will do well. Artists will be rewarded. Postpone any changes for the moment.

Good dates: 10, 11 and 12
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: West

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



This is a favourable week for you. Professionals will fare well. Affairs relating to the heart are not well indicated. Married persons should be careful. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 13
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 7
Favourable direction: South

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is an excellent week for you. On the professional front, you will be praised and admired by your colleagues and seniors. A journey to a hill station is on the cards. A favourable week for sportsmen.

Good dates: 7, 8 and 9
Lucky numbers: 1, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: East

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This is an excellent week for businessmen. Financial gains are in the offing. A favourable week for gambling and speculation. Letters will bring good tidings. Watch your health.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 13
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: North

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



This is a favourable week for you. Professionals will do well. Businessmen are likely to rake in profits. Children will do well in their studies. Executives may go out of town. The time is ripe for matrimony.

Good dates: 8, 10 and 11
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



A favourable week for those in the media. Professionals may get a raise in their salaries. Debts and loans can be cleared. Marriage is in the offing. Keep an eye on the health of an elderly female relative.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 13
Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: North

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—AQUARIUS

Tense moments will be eased when the Scorpio woman realises that the Aquarius man regards her as a good friend as well as his lover. This will make their relationship stronger.

At your service, sir

You can't fault Chimanbhai Patel on his shrewd political sense. Well aware that his survival—and that of his government—depends on his coalition partner, the BJP, the Gujarat chief minister has decided on keeping the party in good humour.



Chimanbhai Patel: placating the BJP

So, it came as no surprise when the CM capitulated to the BJP in the small matter of the *bandh* it was threatening to call, if some party sympathisers held during communal rioting were not freed within 24 hours.

Well before the deadline expired, all the accused were let off.

That's not all. After the cars of a few BJP ministers were involved in road accidents, they asked Patel to ensure that their vehicles were fitted with wireless sets (though it isn't terribly clear how that would help).

The ever-obliging chief minister immediately complied with the request.

One good turn...?

Whatever else the Konkan Railway project may achieve, it has certainly brought Sharad Pawar and Abdul Rehman Antulay much closer.

Apparently, George Fernandes had omitted to invite Antulay to the function that marked the beginning of work on the project, on Madhu Dandavate's request. The finance minister, an MP from the Konkan like Antulay, had made it clear that he would not participate in any event, which the former Maharashtra chief minister was associated with.

But Antulay was not to be put off so easily. He approached chief minister Pawar to ask him a favour: could he please have him invited to the do?

A few quiet words with George Fernandes later, Pawar managed just that.

And a grateful Antulay took the mike at the function to inform the CM that he would work with him to strengthen Rajiv Gandhi's hands, while the Dal ministers, Dandavate (yes, he was persuaded to attend) and Fernandes looked on utterly bemused.

But the event set off rumours which had nothing to do with their pique.

Instead, the gossip mill had it that Pawar and Antulay had arrived at a quid pro quo arrangement. According to this, Antulay would withdraw his demand—now pending with the state Governor—for the prosecution of Pawar for his alleged involvement in the Vasai-Virar land scandal.

In turn, the CM would go slow on the corruption case the government had instituted against Antulay.

> HEARD AT THE AICC(I) OFFICE
>
> **The only reason the Congress is supporting Mulayam Singh Yadav on Ram Janmabhoomi is because Rajiv Gandhi saw him on television and mistook him for Mani Shankar Aiyar.**
>
> A SENIOR PARTY MP

BAROMETER

How they rate at the Tau's court in exile

Ranjit Singh: His stock has been rising steadily ever since the Chaudhary realised that Chautala had become a liability. Devi Lal even called up L.K. Advani to ask that the BJP support his second-born for election to the Rajya Sabha. And now that Singh is an MP, his rating has improved even further.

Om Prakash Chautala: His importance has declined at the same rate as Ranjit Singh's has increased. Though Devi Lal is still very fond of him on a personal level, he no longer relies on him as far asis party politics go.

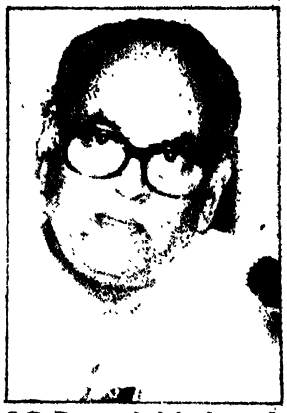
Jagdeep Dhankad: He was the only minister to quit the government to protest the sacking of Lal. Of course, the Raja didn't accept his resignation, but his credentials in the Tau's camp were established. These days, he occupies himself by giving interviews abusing V.P. Singh and praising the Chaudhary, and Lal is properly grateful.

Nuksum Singh: His place in the Tau's camp is secure: he obeys all instructions (of Devi Lal, Om Prakash Chautala, Ranjit Singh and whoever else who sees fit to issue writs). Small wonder then that Lal went out of his way to ensure the survival of his government.

K.K. Deepak: Lost both the Rajya Sabha seat and the ambassador's post in Seychelles. Is now back to playing the loyal assistant of Devi Lal, his political ambitions having died a premature death.

Deputy PM? Why not!

Obviously, the brief spell of glory he enjoyed while the Janata Dal crisis was at its height, has gone to S.R. Bommai's head. For, the Dal president has begun entertaining



S.R. Bommai: delusions of grandeur

notions above his station.

At a recent press conference in Bangalore, Bommai was asked, half in jest, whether he was slated to be the next deputy prime minister.

But, no, the party president didn't dismiss the suggestion out of hand.

Instead, he announced in his grandest manner: "That is for the Prime Minister to decide."

The hacks are still trying to work out that one. ●

Halt! Who goes there?

It's one thing when the *hoi polloi* is held up by the progress of the Prime Minister's cavalcade. And yet another when a minister is similarly inconvenienced.

Recently, minister of state for home affairs, Subodh Kant Sahay, left his North Block office to drive to an urgent meeting. But even before he had journeyed half a kilometre, his car was stopped by a traffic constable. An indignant Sahay popped his head out of the window to ask what the hell he thought he was doing.

The Prime Minister was to come this way in a short while, he was informed, and he would have to wait until VP had driven past.

A fuming Sahay had no alternative but to comply.

But he didn't let the matter be, lodging an official protest with senior police officers. The erring constable was summoned by the higher-ups, who berated him for holding up Sahay.

But what could I do, asked the unfortunate man. Given a choice between the Prime Minister and an ordinary minister, whom should I have given preference to?

The officers saw the point.

Tikait means trouble

Devi Lal may have been marginalised for the moment, but that does not mean that Ajit Singh can pass himself off as the new Jat messiah. For, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader, Mahendra Singh Tikait, has announced his intentions of competing for the post.

Tikait has taken to organising meetings in Ajit Singh's constituency, criticising the industry minister and asking that the Mandal recommendations be rejected out of hand by the Dal government.

If that is not done, Tikait threatens he will stop the supply of milk and vegetables to Delhi, and starve V.P. Singh into seeing sense.

But Ajit Singh is the immediate target. The BKU leader has announced that in the next parliamentary poll (which shouldn't be too far off) he intends to field Vishwendra Singh, the Janata Dal MP who resigned after the Mandal recommendations were implemented, against Singh in Baghpat.

If Tikait does pit his forces against Ajit Singh, the industry minister may well find the going tough.

HEARD AT THE JANATA DAL OFFICE

Who says V.P. Singh doesn't keep his word. He told us that he'd be a disaster as Prime Minister and now he's proved it.

A PARTY WORKER



Ajit Singh: up against Tikait (right)

THERMOMETER

The Ayodhya issue, and the BJP leadership

■ **A.B. Vajpayee:** Is keen to avoid a confrontation with the government on this issue, even though he is all for the construction of the temple. Hence, he adopted a soft line at the meeting of the Committee on Promotion of Communal Harmony. (*See item : above.*)

■ **M.M. Joshi:** Tipped as the next president of the BJP, Joshi is an old Allahabad crony of V.P. Singh (and had even taught him briefly), and is, therefore, loath to provoke the Raja on this issue—or any other, for that matter.

■ **L.K. Advani:** Leads the hardliner brigade. Has been insisting from the very beginning that no court decision can solve the dispute. The temple will be built on schedule, come what may.

■ **Vijayaraje Scindia:** Begins every meeting with a *chaupal* from the *Ramayan*, convinced as she is that everyone must, as a matter of course, be a Ram bhakt. Is one of the most voluble supporters of the Ayodhya temple, and even exhorts Muslims to join her cause. After all, wasn't Babar just another Mughal aggressor.

No harmony here

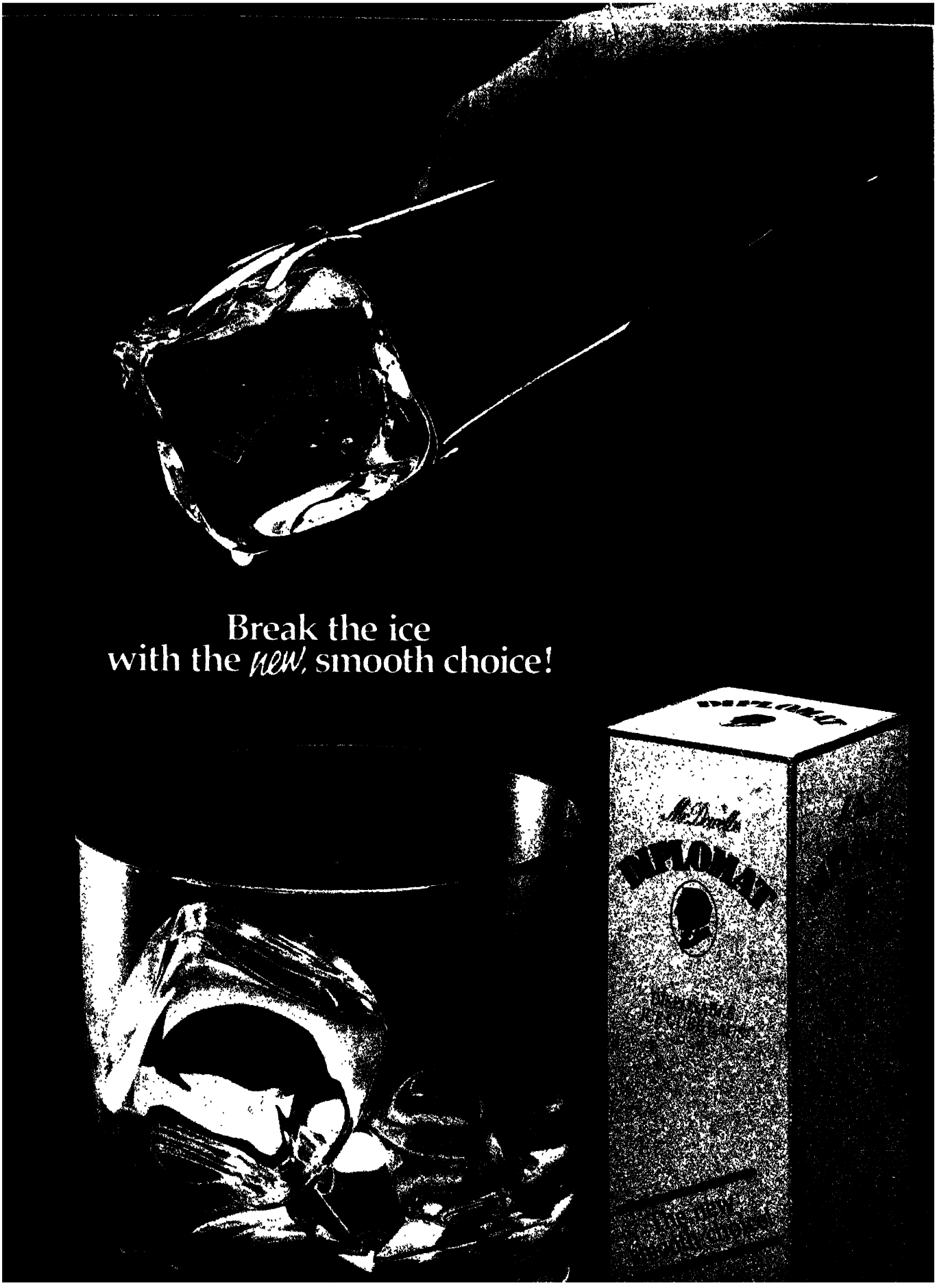
While the government has turned very coy about revealing the names of those who leaked the proceedings of the Committee on Promotion of Communal Harmony, and misrepresented the view of the Bharatiya Janata Party, leading to Atal Behari Vajpayee's resignation, the BJP is far from being equally circumspect.



A.B. Vajpayee: resigning in protest

According to the party the culprits are none other than Rafiq Zakaria, Kishore Kunal and Ram Mohan Rao.

And the BJP is not going to forgive them in a hurry.

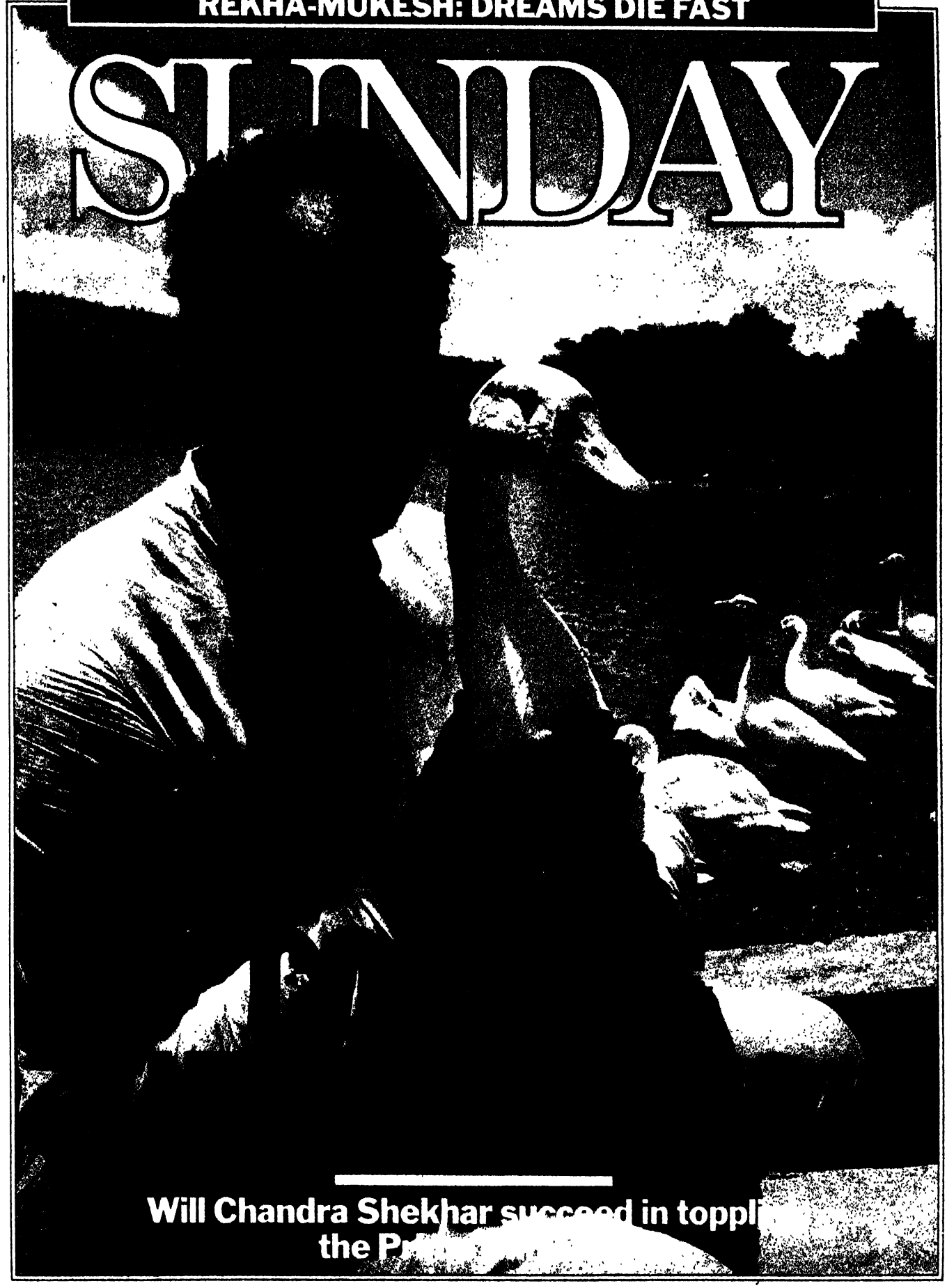

Break the ice
with the *new*, smooth choice!
McDonald's
MILOMAT

No ban, no challenge... just a burning desire.



REKHA-MUKESH: DREAMS DIE FAST

SUNDAY



Will Chandra Shekhar succeed in toppl
the P

LIKE THE WARMTH IN YOUR HEART



TERENE/WOOL WORSTED FROM GWALIOR SUITING

40

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME [illegible] ISSUE 40 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
14—20 OCTOBER 1990



24
COVER STORY

Cooking VP's goose?

Will Chandra Shekhar succeed in toppling the Prime Minister?

12
CONTROVERSY

Anger and outrage

Did the Chief Justice receive proper medical attention?



14
NEIGHBOURS

Trying times

Nepal prepares a democratic Constitution but differences within the government hold up its promulgation. Also, an interview with the Nepalese premier, K.P. Bhattarai.

32
NEWSBEAT

The BJP's dilemma

Why the party cannot afford to bring down the V.P. Singh regime.

50
BUSINESS

Watch out!

Titan and HMT slug it out in a battle to tell—and sell—time.

68
FOCUS

Dreams die fast

Why did Mukesh Agarwal, Rekha's husband, commit suicide?



72
FILMS

Much ado about Ajooba

Shashi Kapoor defends his multi-crore venture.



84
SPORTS

Battered in Beijing

India is humbled at the 1990 Asiad.

LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
SOUTH BLOCK 9
COUNTERVIEW 10
MAN TALK 16
BODYLINE 23
SPOTLIGHT 42
NEWS 64
KHAAS BAAT 71
MEDIA MUSINGS 75
BOOK EXTRACT 76
The boxwallah's tales
INDEPTH 81
Cesspools
MILESTONES 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency:
Nitin Rai

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi, from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001 Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise North-eastern states 30 paise



Caste politics

The cover story (*Caste war!*, 16—22 September) was informative. It reflected on the unprecedented chaos following the release of the Mandal Commission Report. The caste hierarchy has been an impediment to the progress of Indian society from time immemorial. Dr Ambedkar advocated the liberty of the oppressed classes, unlike Mahatma Gandhi, who alienated them from the mainstream of the society by giving special facilities to them.

The political failure of the Prime Minister and his rift with his deputy has shaken the confidence of the former. It is very unfortunate that after 41 years of Independence, India has a Prime Minister who does not believe in a casteless society.

Harekrushna Mahanta, New Delhi

■ The write-up on the Mandal Commission Report is really commendable. The two Union ministers Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan have unleashed a caste war in the country by their provocative statements. The government which has failed to solve the Punjab and Kashmir problems, is trying to refurbish its image by advocating reservation. But it is a proven fact that by providing reservation, the lot of the backwards cannot be improved. If the government is really sincere about its reservation policy, then they should implement it along economic lines.

And, this seems to be a desperate bid by the V.P. Singh government to stay in power at all costs. And his volte-face from clean, value-based politics to a caste-based one only spoils the entire social and moral fabric of the nation.

Rajiv Varshney, New Delhi

■ The Mandal Commission Report is full of contradictions. The issue has been dragged out of cold storage only for selfish political gains and not for the betterment of the society. The major problems plaguing the country such as Punjab, Kashmir and Assam tangles have been shelved while the issue of reservation has been given the topmost priority. As a result every section of the society is suffering and there seem to be no end in sight to the caste war which has been unleashed.

R.K. Gulati, Siliguri (West Bengal)

■ The article on the Mandal Commission was a bold appraisal of the National Front's policy. It is surprising that it should have taken a decision on such a crucial issue without consulting the other parties, especially when it is a minority government. And by deciding to implement the report, the government has managed to create a rift among different sections of the people. Sadly, apart from helping a few politicians, the recommendations will not be of much help to the backward classes. So, it is time the government changed its decision.

Sanjaya Kumar Sahoo, Sambalpur (Orissa)



Anti-reservationists in Delhi: against a caste-based society

The root cause

The write-up (*The Mandal bungle*, 16—22 September) has raised an important question. If it is the anti-reservationists today, then it will be the pro-reservationists tomorrow—and the problem will never be solved. The caste war cannot be stopped simply by criticising Mandal. The targets of attack should be ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and the caste system.

A. Jacob Sahayam, Thiruvanathapuram (Kerala)

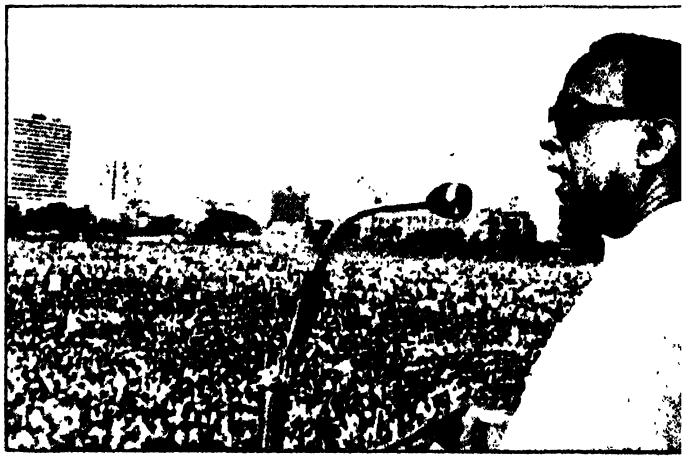
The fading red

The special report (*Basu's Bengal*, 16—22 September) was a timely assessment of the state of affairs in West Bengal. Never before since 1977, had the Congress(I) managed to mobilise such a show of strength against the Marxists as it did recently. The common man's anger against the chronic power crisis, non-availability of kerosene and cooking gas, and the sudden hike in transport fares turned the Congress' siege of the Writers' Buildings into a resounding success. Though chief minister Jyoti Basu does not attach much importance to these warning signals, it is becoming clear that the support base of the Marxists is being fast eroded.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

■ During the 13 years of Marxist rule, West Bengal has not progressed much. The crippling power crisis just doesn't seem to ease—and the government can do very little about it. The law and order situation in the state is fast deteriorating for the communists have become a law unto themselves. Besides, women are also being threatened. Instead of correcting the situation, the state government is carrying out its

Chief minister Jyoti Basu: his popularity is on the wane



dictatorial policies and is showing little regard for those who do not see eye to eye. And unless the Marxists mend their ways, Jyoti Basu may have to vacate Writers' Buildings.

L. Rohini, Trichy (Tamil Nadu)

Back to the dark ages

The assault on Mamata Banerjee (*A city stalled*, 26 August—1 September) by CPI(M) cadres, clearly depicts the style of functioning of the West Bengal government. This shameful incident which had never happened in the past, makes women feel insecure. It is really surprising that the National Front government kept mum over the incident. The spontaneous response to the *bandh* called by the Congress(I) shows that the popularity of the Marxists is on the decline

B. Nithyananda Rao, Tezpur (Assam)

Wrong facts

In the article (*Doordarshan Pvt. Ltd?*, 2—8 September), it was mentioned that "even in far away Sikkim the ruling party uses the antenna to watch foreign shows". This is absolutely incorrect and baseless. Incidentally, the ruling party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad, has no antenna to watch foreign programmes. One hopes that the reporter concerned would check and cross-check facts before making such a statement.

K.N. Pulgar, secretary, Sikkim Sangram Parishad, Gangtok (Sikkim)





Mamata Banerjee (extreme right) being assaulted: brutal

Censored!

The article (*Manch ado about nothing*, 2—8 September) seems to trivialise an issue of public importance. All educated and conscious citizens of this country can see for themselves how pre-election promises are being broken one after the other by the Dal. Now it seems ridiculous that the people used to criticise the Rajiv regime for giving no freedom to Doordarshan. The present government's track record is no better than the previous one's.

For instance, the *Khula Manch* programme, which featured George Fernandes was 'censored' and not 'edited' by Doordarshan as P. Upendra would have it. Fernandes, a seasoned campaigner, certainly knew the score and he wouldn't have said anything to embarrass the Prime Minister. People might, out of curiosity, ask questions which are technically not under the purview of his department, such as on reservation and the industrial policy. But there's no harm in that.

The fact is that though the government is raising a hue and cry over the proposed autonomy of Doordarshan, it still wields a whip over the electronic media.

Deepali Sinha, Patna (Bihar)



P. Upendra: under fire

■ The railway minister, George Fernandes, has reasons to feel upset over the attitude of his colleague P. Upendra, the minister for information, who recently censored parts of the former's interview in the *Khula Manch* programme of Doordarshan. As a Union minister Fernandes had the right to talk on subjects relating to other departments of the government as well.

K.V. Rajagopalan, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

■ The write-up on Doordarshan raises some vital questions. *Khula Manch* should retain basic parameters to make it more interesting and sharp. An open discussion with the concerned minister does give it an air of frankness. But once censorship is allowed under the camouflage of editing, the very purpose is defeated. The authorities should see to it that the name of the programme is vindicated through their actions.

Anjan Ray, Durgapur (West Bengal)

Clarification

We act for Mr Srichand Hinduja and his brothers. Our clients' attention has been drawn to the article, *Take a bow, Srichand!* (9-15 September). The article makes a number of highly defamatory allegations against the Hindujas and, in particular:

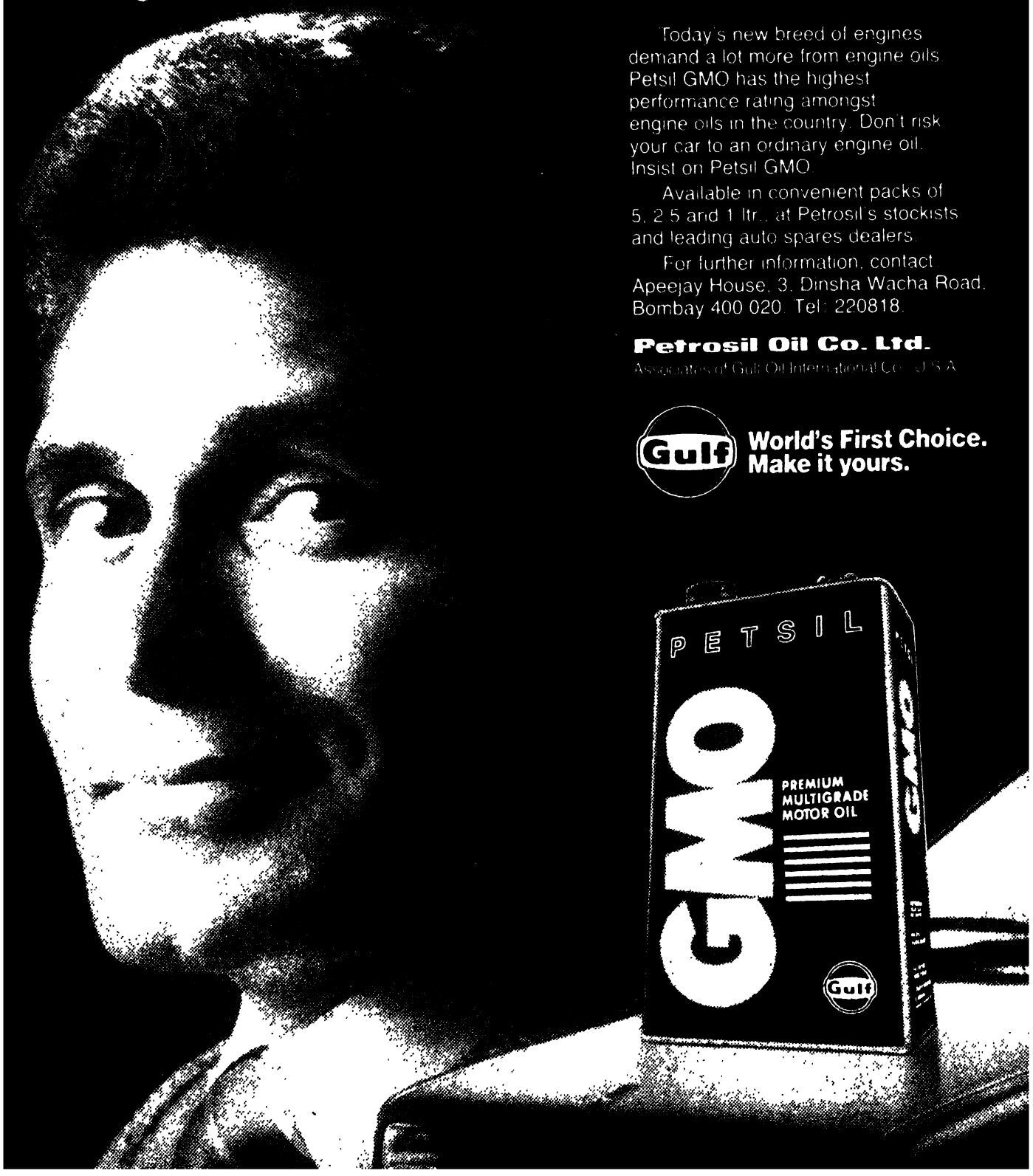
- that the Hindujas have committed criminal offences and are "struggling to keep out of jail, every stratagem is being explored" in relation to the "Bofors affair";
- that the Hindujas regularly practise intrigue, duplicity and chicanery;
- that the Hindujas regularly give and/or procure the giving of perjured evidence;
- that the Hindujas regularly bribe journalists.
- that the Hindujas have circulated to newspapers disinformation against Mr Arun Kumar Nehru.

We are instructed that these allegations are wholly untrue and unfounded in evidence. Furthermore, this publication appears calculated to cause serious injury to our clients in their personal and business reputations. We are also instructed that this article is the culmination of a series of similar articles over a period of more than two years.

Clifford Chance, Solicitors, London

Neither SUNDAY *nor Vinod Mehta intended to give any offence. Our apologies—Editor*

"My car moves on petrol. My engine runs on GMO."



Today's new breed of engines demand a lot more from engine oils. Petsil GMO has the highest performance rating amongst engine oils in the country. Don't risk your car to an ordinary engine oil. Insist on Petsil GMO.

Available in convenient packs of 5, 2.5 and 1 ltr., at Petrosil's stockists and leading auto spares dealers.

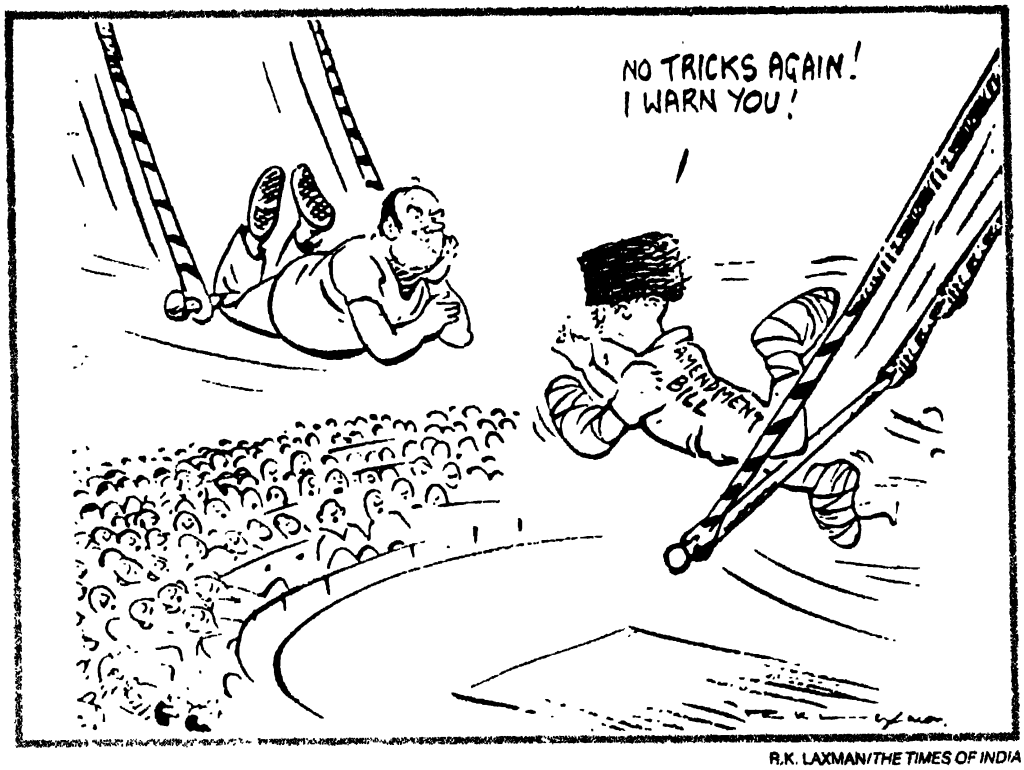
For further information, contact Apeejay House, 3, Dinsha Wacha Road, Bombay 400 020. Tel: 220818.

Petrosil Oil Co. Ltd.

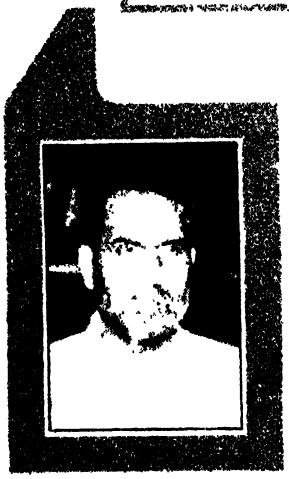
Associates of Gulf Oil International Co., U.S.A.

Gulf **World's First Choice. Make it yours.**

SIGHT AND SOUND



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ Had I been the Prime Minister the present situation would not have arisen.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Janata Dal leader, on the mess that is India*

■ Make me the Prime Minister for one day and I will solve the (Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid) problem by demolishing the Babri Masjid.

BAL THACKERAY, *Shiv Sena chief*

■ Which father's son has the guts to stop us? We will build the temple in Ayodhya.

VIJAYA RAJE SCINDIA, *BJP vice-president*

■ V.P. Singh is the first person after Lord Buddha and Mahavir to do something for the poor and downtrodden.

LALOO PRASAD YADAV, *Bihar chief minister, defending the implementation of the Mandal Commission report*

■ Nothing is going to happen, no political immolation will take place.

BIJU PATNAIK, *Orissa chief minister, on the possibility of the Prime Minister resigning*

■ I believe that the government has lost credibility, but the Opposition hasn't gained anything either.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president*

■ You can edit the "Khula Manch" (the TV programme). You cannot edit the Lok Sabha (proceedings).

RAJIV GANDHI, *Congress(I) president, to P. Upendra, information and parliamentary affairs minister*

■ The Indian economy is resilient enough to weather the storm caused by the Gulf crisis.

BIMAL JALAN, *Union finance secretary*

■ The biggest success of Vayudoot is the fact that it has survived.

HARSH VARDHAN, *former Vayudoot managing director*

■ They (the media) have made me a poor man's Flo Jo, not even Flo Jo.

ASHWINI NACHAPPA, *athlete*

■ Whenever a film has bombed I have been made the scapegoat.

MEENAKSHI SHESHADRI, *actress*



When leaving on a trip what do you remember first?

Rupa, have you taken the tickets?

Of course. But more important, have you packed the **Bisleri?**

A long-awaited holiday or a well-planned business trip can get ruined by illness. And 80% of the diseases, particularly among children, are caused by water-borne germs. Ensure that you have 100% safe, zero-bacteria drinking water when travelling. Carry Acqua Minerale Bisleri.

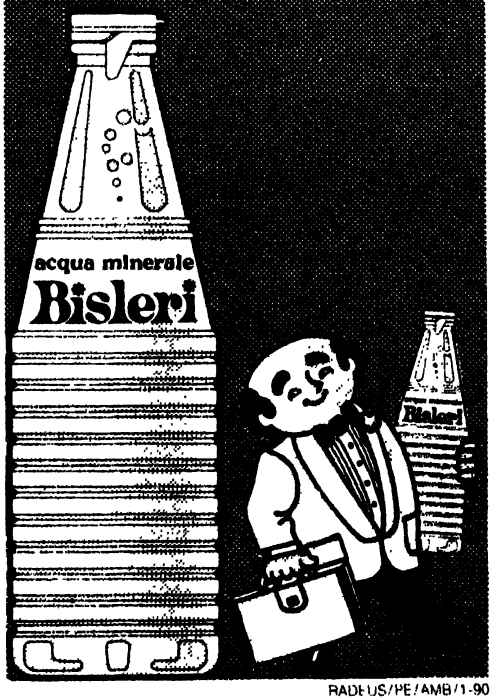
Acqua Minerale Bisleri (AMB) is purified water, passed through multiple filters and treated with the special Italian process of silver sterilization. Silver sterilization inhibits the growth of bacteria with its oligodynamic effect. Yes, AMB is 100% safe, pure drinking water.

Make AMB a family drink habit, particularly for children, and when ill or travelling. To be safest even set ice with AMB. Soon you'll realize that it makes good sense to spend a little on AMB—the safest water on earth.

ACQUA MINERALE

Bisleri

Less expensive than you think



RADEUS/PE/AMB/1-90

INDER MALHOTRA

Beyond the border

It's high time India took note of Pakistan's statements on Kashmir



Our internal woes—Mandal, *mandir*, the mess in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam and so on—are doubtless great and growing. But surely that is no reason to ignore or neglect crucial problems of foreign policy and security which, unless handled with skill and sophistication, could explode into our faces. And yet so complete is the government's preoccupation with the burning consequences of the hasty and motivated decision to Mandalise India that no one in authority in New Delhi has any time for issues of diplomacy and defence.

On the contrary, the army is being called out in aid of civil authority to quell the mounting fury of the anti-Mandal agitation from one corner of north India to the other. Obviously, secessionists and terrorists in Kashmir and Punjab, to say nothing of their Pakistani mentors, are absolutely delighted. To drag the army into political disputes and rioting in the streets is wrong even at the best of times. To do so with alarming frequency, as has sometimes been the case, is madness. But to convert the pernicious practice into an almost daily routine, as seems to be happening now, is nothing short of suicidal folly.

In this context, it is all the more regrettable that even the speech at the UN by the Pakistani foreign minister, Sahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan, on Kashmir, which was vile, vicious, venomous and ominous, has not attracted the attention it deserved. In fact, this speech was reminiscent of the fulminations at the same forum four decades earlier by Zafarullah Khan just before he belatedly admitted that regular Pakistani troops were fighting in Kashmir and that the previous talk of only tribal raids was a facade.

The Sahibzada is a cultured man. Though he has given a demonstration of his capacity for rhetorical excesses in January, the virulence of his latest performance did cause a surprise as he descended fairly close to the verbal vulgarity of the former Pakistani foreign secretary, Tanvir Ahmed, who has earned the sobriquet "Tanvir the terrible".

The BBC reported from New York on the day of the exchanges between Indian and Pakistani spokesmen at Turtle Bay, that the Indian delegation had been "taken aback" by the vehemence of the Sahibzada's attack on India. If so, the delegation and its advisers, official and non-official, must be living in a paradise of their own making. Anyone with even a modicum of understanding of Pakistan must know that the Pakistani ruling establishment—dominated by the army of which the Sahibzada has never ceased to be a part despite his retirement, in the early Seventies, as a lieutenant-general—is convinced that it has got a golden opportunity to grab from India the Valley it has lusted for so long. All Pakistani words and deeds are going to be geared to this objective until the Pakistani dream either turns into a nightmare or is abandoned. Not to base Indian policy on this stark reality is dereliction of duty. This is not a plea for war. No one should have any illusion that the problem can be solved by war. But the message needs to be delivered to the Sahibzada and his cohorts that Pakistan cannot go on with what it is doing in Kashmir.

There are other linkages with Pakistan's bellicosity, both verbal and on the ground, which should not be lost sight of. Pakistan is going to earn more American gratitude by its readiness to provide military manpower to the US-sponsored security dispensation in the Gulf. There will be no Pakistani quid without an American quo. Those in this country who were drawing much comfort from reports from Washington that Americans were twisting Pakistan's arm over free and fair elections in that country and, more significantly, over the Pakistani nuclear activity must be rather disappointed. For, sources close to George Bush have made it clear that Pakistan would get from him the annual certificate of nuclear innocence even though the US administration knows that Pakistanis have all but built the bomb.

It is regrettable that even the vile and vicious speech of the Pak foreign minister, Sahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan, at the UN on Kashmir has not attracted the attention it deserved



Let there be no mistake about it. The Sahibzada would almost certainly have gone also to the Security Council if the world was not so preoccupied with the Gulf. Immediately after spouting poison at the General Assembly, he has raised Kashmir at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) group meeting in New York. At his persuasion, the foreign ministers of Turkey and Iran included the Kashmir issue in their speeches to the General Assembly. The Turkish minister confined himself to saying that the matter should be solved by India and Pakistan in accordance with the Shimla Agreement and the relevant UN resolution. •

VINOD MEHTA

Time to talk

The Supreme Court stay on the Mandal report gives V.P. Singh a miraculous breather to begin a dialogue



"Never raise your voice," a seasoned cocktail party orator once told me, "it is the first sign that you are losing the argument." In the Mandal battle, voices have been raised to a feverish pitch and the debris of a debate that never saw the light of reasoned exchange is scattered all around.

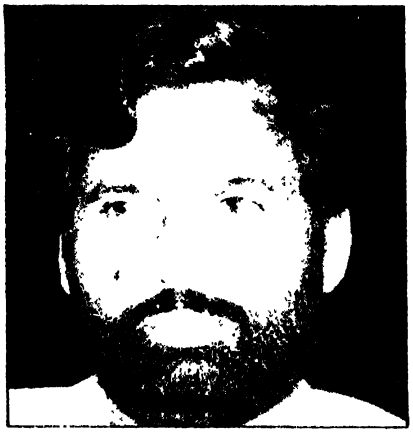
To be fair, most of the sound, fury and thunder has come from the anti-reservationists. The hostility of a wise commentator like Girilal Jain, who compares V.P. Singh to M.A. Jinnah, was to be expected. And to a certain extent, the virulence of the campaign mounted by the *Indian Express*, given the background of its editor and the political inclinations of its proprietors, should not come as a surprise. However, when newspapers such as *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*, and 'balanced' magazines like *India Today* compete with the *Express* in printing expletives aimed at the Prime Minister, it is time to sit up and ponder over the course this controversy has taken.

We must be grateful to the pro-reservationists for having kept their powder dry. Mr Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav did initially warn that they would give a 'fitting reply' if the agitators did not get off the streets, but wiser counsels seem to have prevailed. Despite huge provocations, the 'backward' leaders have not yet called out their battalions, nor has the rhetoric of Messrs Paswan and Yadav kept pace with that of M.S. Tikait and Bal Thackeray. Whatever we may think of reservations and its champions, we would be less than honest if we did not concede that those in favour have shown a maturity and restraint one did not suspect they possessed.

Is it possible, then, that amidst all this heat and dust we have lost sight of the original argument? V.P. Singh is not known to lose his temper—no instances of the Raja shouting and screaming in public are on record—but recently, aboard an Indian Air Force plane, he did flare up while talking to reporters, charging the press with deliberately and maliciously distorting his and the government's position on Mandal. The Prime Minister went to the extent of accusing his principal information officer of organising 'disasters' instead of press conference, but he soon recovered his poise and apologised to the journalist at the receiving end of his ire. Nevertheless, the uncharacteristic outburst did reveal V.P. Singh's frustration at not being able to get a debate on the specifics of Mandal off the ground. The whole issue has got so surcharged with emotion-filled hate about possible damage to the unity and integrity of the republic in the decades to come, that no one has bothered to ask if all the apprehensions are justified. Will the quotas inflict an irreparable body blow to Indian society?

Jobs and degrees obsess the youth of this country. So, in the context of Mandal let us look at the former first. There are no reliable figures from any authoritative institute, but government sources and pro-quota advocates claim that only 40,000 jobs are at stake and most of these are at the bottom of the scale. Is the figure reliable? Since the number has been bandied about for at least six weeks, and since none of the anti-Mandalites have disputed it, one must assume that it is roughly accurate. Alas, such is V.P. Singh's discomfiture over the whole Mandal business that he has been unable to focus the nation's attention on this salient statistic.

Neither has he had any success with capitalising on the significant concessions his government has made since 7 August. Sensitive and critical areas of national life—science and technology, space, atomic energy, the armed forces—have been excluded from the purview of the recommendations. Moreover, promotions will continue being decided on the basis of merit. Technically, therefore, anxieties in Malabar Hill and Golf Links about, "whose finger on the button?" should have been assuaged. They haven't, principally because this aspect of the new policy remains blurred and undiscussed, thanks largely to the antics of





Ram Vilas Paswan and **Sharad Yadav** did initially warn that they would give a 'fitting reply' if the agitators did not get off the streets. But wiser counsel seems to have prevailed. Despite provocations, they have not yet called out their battalions

goons from Haryana and western UP.

Perhaps the most crucial concession (the government prefers to call it a 'clarification') has been made in the area of admissions to educational institutions. As things stand today, the 27 per cent extra quota does not apply to admissions at all. So, why are students immolating themselves over an issue that has no direct bearing on their future? Of course, our youth are not so blinkered so as to have no vision beyond their monthly pay cheque, but their original and most pressing objection to Mandal revolved around entry into colleges and universities. I am not sure how many of those, now brandishing hockey sticks and burning buses, are aware that the new quotas play no role in their efforts to obtain a higher education.

Doubtless, it is not easy to concentrate people's minds on facts when apocalyptic visions of a divided and sick society in which caste is ranged against caste are being conjured up. The latest demand by over 60 Janata Dal MPs, including 15 ministers, pleading for the inclusion of Jats and seven other castes in the list of socially and educationally backward communities only adds fuel to fire and makes rational discussion of Mandal even more problematic. Arguably, at this rate, with the exception of the Brahmins, the whole of Hindu India will be declared backward. The Prime Minister is going to have a tough time resisting the demand as its prime mover is Ajit Singh—a minister whose support is vital for Vishwanath Pratap Singh's survival.

Fresh pressures to wriggle into the magic list notwithstanding, the Supreme Court stay on the Mandal report provides a heaven sent opportunity for all round cooling of tempers. Already, there are signs that the heat is being taken off the agitations in various states, and in a week the students should be back to their normal business. The time, therefore, to begin a dialogue is now. Quite frankly, I cannot see this, or any other, government reneging on the 27 per cent commitment. Having been offered once, it cannot be put back into cold storage. What can and should be done is to refine the recommendations so that inconsistencies are ironed out, doubts removed and ambiguities cleared.

Above all, the full, final and true facts on how implementation will affect those fortunate to be included and those unfortunate to have missed out must be presented to the nation. This task should be relatively easy since data is to be collected only in respect of direct recruitment to the central services, public sector undertakings and nationalised banks. Perhaps the government could bring out a White Paper on the rationale behind quotas for OBCs in general and their impact on the job market in particular. We might find the figure of 40,000 fraudulent, but at least ignorance on a vital aspect will have been removed and citizens can then fashion their response, reasonably certain that they are well-informed as they make up their minds.





How many students, now brandishing hockey sticks, are aware that the new quotas, passed by **V.P. Singh**, play no role in their efforts to obtain a higher education?

The Supreme Court will take at least until the end of the year before it pronounces on the proposed legislation. So, there is enough time to construct the framework of a debate that attracts the widest possible participation. V.P. Singh has only himself to blame for the horrible press he has received. The case for reservations was put together with all the skill of a novice apprentice. There have been so many clarifications/concessions since 7 August that only a handful understand exactly what the dispute is all about. A vague feeling persists on one side that reservations will destroy the nation's emotional integration. While on the other there is an equally vague feeling that 'centuries-old exploitation' will suddenly vanish. Both impressions are not only simplistic but dangerously overstated.

Instead of shouting from the rooftops that a constitutional amendment be passed in the next session of Parliament to prevent the judiciary from obstructing 'progressive legislation', V P. Singh and members of his Cabinet should concentrate on using the next three months doing what they should have done in the three months prior to the day of the momentous announcement. They must accept that the Supreme Court intervention gives the country a miraculous breather during which the government should set out to convince and agree to be convinced on the merits of the controversial proposals.

The received wisdom is that the Surpeme Court has let the PM 'off the hook'. Indeed, there are suggestions that the apex court has colluded with the executive to arrive at a verdict that saved a tottering regime. Whether the court's intervention was hasty or unwise or shameful is for the legal pundits to decide. The Prime Minister, meanwhile, should use the coming 90 days to shed the Ayatollah image he has recently acquired. The real V.P. Singh governed by consensus, not fiat. It is that V.P. Singh the nation needs.●

Anger and outrage

Did the Chief Justice receive proper medical attention?

At around 8 am on 20 September, the doctor on duty at London's Heathrow airport, Dr Jayshree Datta, received urgent summons from one of the terminals. The anxious caller informed Ms Datta that the Chief Justice of India, Sabyasachi Mukharji, who had just come in from Washington, had fallen ill. The doctor promptly reached Justice Mukharji near the VIP lounge, who by then had collapsed and was frothing at the mouth.

Dr Datta diagnosed the disease as diabetes and treated Mukharji with a couple of sugar cubes—the routine treatment given to diabetic patients. Justice Mukharji regained his vigour and left the airport with his London hosts, solicitor Anita Bose and her husband. But as it turned out later, the Heathrow doctor had made a serious mistake in detecting the illness. At the Bose's home in north-west London, Sabyasachi Mukharji collapsed once again. He was rushed to the nearby Royal Free Hospital, where the Chief Justice suffered two major heart attacks on 24 and 25 September. The second one proved to be fatal: Sabyasachi Mukharji died in the early hours of Tuesday, 25 September. Tragic though it may be, the death of a 63-year-old person from heart attack is not unusual. But what made the incident controversial was the circumstances in which the Chief Justice breathed his last, neglected by doctors, and more shockingly by the staff of the Indian High Commission. On her return from London, a grieving Ratna Mukharji, Sabyasachi Mukharji's wife, complained to Prime Minister V.P. Singh and President R. Venkataraman about the behaviour of an expatriate doctor attached to the Indian High Commission in London, who had reportedly refused to treat the Chief Justice.

The issue was also raised in Parliament, which met for a brief session in the beginning of October. Angry members of all the parties demanded that the high commissioner in London, Kuldip Nayar, be recalled and a proper enquiry into the matter ordered. Though the external affairs minister, I.K. Gujral, promptly ordered a judicial probe into the death of the Chief Justice, he turned down the proposal to sack Kuldip Nayar. The minister, also ruled out the possibility of the high commissioner being asked to go on leave while the enquiry was being conducted.

Sabyasachi Mukharji arrived in London on the morning of 20 September on his way back to India from a private lecture tour in Washington. He was received at the airport by his friends and Dhirendra Singh, a senior diplomat with the Indian High Commission. Mukharji slumped immediately after and was treated for diabetes by the airport doctor. But soon after Justice Mukharji reached his hosts' residence in Hampstead, he complained of chest pains and collapsed near the toilet

Sensing trouble, Anita Bose, a friend of the Chief Justice, immediately got in touch with Dr Amar Singh Rayan, a physician on the Indian High Commission's panel of doctors. Rayan, however, curtly told Bose that he was busy and could not attend Justice Mukharji. Bose then called her house doctor, Emma Mukherjee, who gave the ailing Chief Justice an insulin





(Above) Justice Sabyasachi Mukharji; (right) Prime Minister V.P. Singh consoling Mukharji's wife in New Delhi: she complained about the behaviour of Dr Amar Singh Rayan, the doctor who refused to treat the Chief Justice in London

injection and advised immediate hospitalisation. Justice Mukharji was rushed to the nearby Royal Free Hospital. It was only then that the Indian high commissioner, Kuldip Nayar, and his deputy, Salman Haider, came to know of Sabyasachi Mukharji's illness from Dhirendra Singh. Nayar, incidentally, was himself recovering from a hernia operation in a London clinic.

At the casualty ward of the Royal Free Hospital Mukharji was subjected to routine checks: chest X-Ray, and blood and urine tests. By now, Haider and Singh had reached the hospital. The tests over, Justice Mukharji was made to wait in the "corridor" while the India House staff, according to the Chief Justice's friends, merely looked on helplessly. In fact, Sabyasachi Mukharji's wife had to perform the duties of a nurse during this period as there was no hospital staff to attend the Chief Justice of India. "If the Chief Justice of Britain would have fallen ill in India, all the best doctors in Delhi would have been by his side," an exasperated Mukharji told his wife and friends while lying in the hospital "corridor", patiently waiting for a proper room to move in to.

At around 8 pm, Sabyasachi Mukharji was finally shifted to a cubicle upstairs, and at 9.30 pm, Dr Amar Singh Rayan, the High Commission's doctor, arrived at the hospital—a full 11 hours after being called on an emergency. What happened next was even more shocking. When the Chief Justice told the doctor that he was late, Rayan blew up in a rage and shouted back. "I am not on the High Commission's payroll." And he stormed out of the ward saying that he would not treat "rude patients". Mukharji's friends, who were all present during the incident, said that Dr Rayan's behaviour shocked the English doctors of the hospital.



The next day, 21 September, Justice Mukharji was admitted to the intensive care unit and examined by two senior cardiologists. Both recommended an operation. But on 24 September, Mukharji suffered a second heart attack—the first one was at the Heathrow airport—and yet another one the next day. And the Chief Justice finally succumbed to the third attack on 25 September.

The Indian High Commission in London was quick to react. It promptly sacked Dr Amar Singh. Said Kuldip Nayar: "I have removed Dr Rayan from the High Commission's panel of doctors and pulled up the negligent officers." But what about the allegations that a person as important as the Chief Justice of India was shabbily treated by India House? Said Nayar: "There is no truth in the charges that there had been a delay in informing the hospital that the High Commission would bear his expenses. We told them who the patient was and they gave him a bed as soon as they could. It isn't true either that Justice Mukharji was lying in the 'corridor'. It was part of the casualty ward," Nayar argued.



Said Kuldip Nayar, the Indian high commissioner: "There is no truth in the charge that there had been a delay in informing the hospital that the High Commission would bear all the expenses"

But why wasn't Justice Sabyasachi Mukharji taken to a private hospital, where it would have been fairly easy to get beds? The high commissioner said that the decision to take the Chief Justice to the Royal Free Hospital was taken by his hosts in London. "Even in private clinics it is not as if there are doctors all the time in attendance. You have to wait there as well."

Sources at India House feel that timely and proper treatment could have been given to the Chief Justice had the airport doctor correctly diagnosed the illness. But as Dr Jayshree Datta argued, "At no stage did Sabyasachi Mukharji complain of chest pain. All he told me was that he was feeling a little dizzy. And since I came to know from his wife that Mukharji had diabetes, I thought it best to treat him for that disease."

The Royal Free Hospital authorities, too, dismissed charges of negligence. Director Andrew Dillon told SUNDAY that the hospital was ready to investigate the treatment given to the Indian Chief Justice only if his family complained to him in writing. "We do not investigate for the media. If Mrs Mukharji is unhappy about the treatment given to her husband, she should say so in writing and we will look into the matter. We will be in direct touch with the family and deal with them directly," Dillon said.

It remains with the authorities in Delhi to take it up from there. ●

Shrabani Basu/London

TRYING TIMES

Nepal prepares a new democratic Constitution but differences within the government hold up its promulgation

When Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's interim government was sworn in a few months ago, it had essentially two main responsibilities. First, to oversee the preparation and promulgation of a new Constitution, which would convert Nepal from a monarchy into a multi-party democracy. And second, to hold free and fair elections under it.

But lately, it appears as if Bhattarai's coalition government—comprising the Nepali Congress and the seven communist party United Left Front (ULF)—may have its own problems in fulfilling its first duty. The preparation of the new Constitution is no longer a problem—the draft was readied after intensive deliberations and submitted for approval to King Birendra last month. But differences over (and opposition to) the draft Constitution have raised fears about its promulgation. Admits a communist party leader: "At best, these problems may cause a delay in its promulgation. At worst, they may threaten our quest for a full-fledged, multi-party democracy."

When the draft Constitution—which was prepared by the CRC, a committee comprised mainly of Nepali Congress and ULF members— was submitted to King Birendra on 10 September, there were some apprehensions that he would not approve it. Which monarch would accept a political order under which his powers are severely curtailed? the argument went In the end, Birendra neither okayed nor rejected the draft. He sent it to Prime Minister Bhattarai asking him to consult the various political parties in order to achieve a consensus on the draft's provisions.

The King's detractors believe that the move is a ploy to delay the Constitution's promulgation. Rumours that he is trying to buy time in order to unite the anti-democratic forces and stage a comeback are rife in Kathmandu. But possible opposition

MIN BAJRACHARYA



KRISHNA PRASAD BHATTARAI

"The army wants to be under the King"

SUNDAY: Is the promulgation of the new Constitution being delayed because of opposition from the army and police?

K.P. Bhattarai: Well, that is the reason...there are certain problems that have to be sorted out.

Q: Like what?

A: Like the control of the army. In the proposed Constitution,we have said that there will be a security council headed by the Prime Minister. The commander-in-chief of the army, a few defence personnel, a nominee of the King, the defence minister and the home minister will also be there. The committee will guide the operations of the army.

The army will have a lot of freedom as far as logistics and other things are concerned. But it will be under civilian control.

Q: And the army refuses to accept this?

A: Well, they have not exactly accepted or disapproved. It is not a question of non-acceptance or rejection. But they are murmuring that they do not want the security council. Rather, that they want to

from pro-Birendra parties are not the only problem that must worry Bhattarai. For, there are differences even between the Nepali Congress and its junior coalition partner, the ULF, over the draft's provisions.

The major problem concerns foreign treaties. While the ULF (which is extremely sensitive about entering into agreements which concern Nepal's security) feels that all treaties should be ratified by a two-thirds parliamentary majority, the Nepali Congress believes this will pose enormous practical difficulties. Says the NC's supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh: "If such a clause exists, then no treaties will be signed. First, it will have to be introduced into Parliament. Then, discussions will be held which may cause unnecessary delays. Treaties should be passed by a simple majority."

The ULF also has reservations over the clause which renders the basic features of the Constitution unalterable. There is a suspicion that this objection relates mainly to one 'basic' or 'unalterable' feature—that is, the clause which deems Nepal a constitutional monarchy. Privately, the ULF has always made out that it is opposed to the concept of a constitutional monarchy. And that its willingness to settle for such an order stemmed from tactical and not from ideological reasons.

Publicly, the ULF argues that it is against any framework that is rigid and not open to revision. Says the Front's president Sahana Pradhan: "We have accepted the basic structure of the Constitution. But there are times when we have to make amendments. Our opinion is that nothing is unchangeable. The very word should not be mentioned."



Ganesh Man Singh,
NC supreme leader

Believes that once differences with the ULF are sorted out, the King will have no choice but to accept the Constitution



Sahana Pradhan,
ULF president

Accepts the basic structure of the Constitution but feels that it must not be rigid but open to revision

As Prime Minister Bhattarai points out, these differences are not insurmountable and can be ironed over with consultation and compromise. One solution to the 'treaties' problem that may emerge is an agreement that some treaties—that is, those which do not relate to contentious issues such as Nepal's sovereignty—are passed by a simple parliamentary majority. Says Ganesh Man Singh: "How can we blame the King? We have to come to an understanding with our leftist friends. Once we do that, the King has no choice but to accept the Constitution."

A bigger problem, however, is likely to be the attitude of the army which has traditionally been opposed to reform. Most of its senior officers remain loyal to the King and those who represented the old political order. When the draft Constitution was being prepared, the CRC received numerous unsolicited letters from various army units stating that the force did not want to act on the directive of the Cabinet but rather that of the King. As a possible compromise, the draft Constitution placed the army under the control of the National Defence Committee—headed by the Prime Minister and comprising the home minister, a few defence personnel and a nominee of the King.

Apparently, the army is opposed to this suggestion and, according to Bhattarai, its opposition is the main reason for the delay in the promulgation of the Constitution. Given that the force commands the support of very influential people in Nepal, the Prime Minister will have to find a way of winning it over if the new Constitution is to sail through.

Sandwiched as he is between right-wing forces opposed to reform and leftists who are demanding unacceptable changes, Bhattarai has his work cut out. The introduction of the new Constitution may be the last step in the democratic movement's long and painful march towards a multi-party system. But it may not be an easy one and nobody needs to be reminded of the difference between taking it and stumbling. •

Lavina Dixit/Kathmandu

remain under the King. Hence the delay in the promulgation.

Q: What powers will the King enjoy?

A: He will enjoy certain powers no doubt. He will have every right to information. He will be apprised of all the developments in the country. He will also have certain emergency powers, which he can exercise only on the advice of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Q: Any special responsibilities?

A: Yes, of course. As the constitutional head of the country, he has to encourage the people and be informed.

Q: The new Constitution says that treaties can be entered into only if they are accepted by a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Your party (the Nepali Congress) is against this clause while the United Left Front wants it to stay. Has there been any agreement on this?

A: We are still working on it. We haven't reached any compromise yet.

Q: What is your stand on this issue?

A: I think that it is too harsh a clause. It should be either completely obliterated or, if mentioned, be restricted only to questions concerning the territorial sovereignty of the country.

If we go by what the ULF wants then for all kinds of treaties, however small, we will have to go to Parliament. It is absurd that even for, say, the construction of a bund costing a crore, we have to take permission from Parliament if the river flows through India.

But this is not a major problem. It can be sorted out.

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Fed up to the gills

The Mandal Commission consulted sociologists, not for real advice, but only to keep editorial writers and other busybodies quiet



I write this on the morrow of V.P. Singh's pathetic appeal on TV to the agitating students. Our Prime Minister wears bifocals, one discovers, because the top half of his spectacles gets so misted over with hypocrisy that the bottom half is needed to display the ineptitude. It took all of my parental authority to stop my teenagers from breaking the screen (I pleaded that our set was not an Onida: as their forward education largely consists of being steeped in Doordarshan ads, the argument worked!). There is a good chance, therefore, that by the time this column appears—close on a fortnight after it is penned—V P. Singh, like Shelley's Ozymandias, might well be an abandoned relic of a distant past. As it is the firm policy of this column never to kick a man when he is down, let me turn to another who, like Lazarus (risen, if not from the dead, at least from a relatively tranquil retirement) has been flailing his arms in the wind of late. I refer, of course, to Mr S.S. Gill, an IAS officer of considerable distinction, who served as secretary to the Mandal Commission.

Mr Gill has, in recent days, been speaking at several forums defending the methodology adopted by the Mandal Commission. As a frequent victim of misquotation by the press, I am generally reluctant to rely overmuch on quotes from reporters (who are, generally, too distracted by the apprehension that one of their colleagues will abstract the last *samosa* at the tea to follow to pay too strict an attention to the proceedings they have been sent to cover!). I was, therefore, delighted to find that Mr Gill has, in a signed article in the most recent issue of *Current* (22-28/9/90), vindicated most of what these reporters—between gulps of *gulab jamun*—have been recounting in these past few weeks as his true blue views.

Mr Gill's first contention is that in building up the data base to which "objective criteria" were applied to scientifically determine "classes" eligible to be described as "backward", the Mandal Commission began its labours by consulting two panels of experts - the first in June 1979 and the second in July 1979. There is no denying that the experts really were expert. They included not only the greatest sociologist that India has produced in the twentieth century—the redoubtable Prof. M.N. Srinivas, who



has given us the key tools ("sanskritisation" and "westernisation") to measure social progress in our country--but also one of our most distinguished anthropologists, Prof. B.K. Roy Burman, and Prof. Yogendra Singh of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, not to mention a series of lesser luminaries.

Having sought them out—and co-opted them into the exercise - one would have thought Mr Gill would have persuaded Mandal (when that zamindar was taking time off from squeezing his sharecroppers dry) to at least ask these great social scientists what they thought of the data generated, the methodology adopted to study the data, the scientific exacti-



V.P. Singh: *Does he have anything to say—or even mumble—every time a youth goes up in flames? Yes. "A bit of my heart falls off." Hanging on to the bits that remain—an intestine here, a kidney there—unmoved, he clings on to his chair*

tude of the basis for drawing conclusions, and the scientific validity of the conclusions drawn. But, no, for reasons best known to S/Shri Mandal and Gill, the sociologists were given their allotted three to five days at the start of the exercise in the scorching summer of '79—and then totally ignored. It was, it seems, convenient to get them to lend to the study the respectability of their names, inconvenient to actually seek their scientific, expert opinion on the conclusions that were being put together. Why, in short, were they not summoned again, if not in the scorching summer of '80, then at least in the autumnal calm of the same year as Mandal/Gill were coming to the end of their endeavours?

The fact is—and, if you don't believe me, just check with Humphrey Appleby's technique in the *Yes, Minister* series—the civil service always views professional scientists as a useful sop to keep academic opinion, editorial writers and other busybodies quiet. But no IAS officer worth his salt would ever dream of turning to a mere scientist for real advice. The IAS believes unabashedly in the dictum that the only opinion that counts is an IAS opinion. Gill was merely being true to his tribe in asking the Srinivases and Roy Burmans to lend respectability to his party; then leaving it to his hierarchical inferiors in the civil service (the director general of the Central Statistical Organisation--incidentally, a statistician not a sociologist—and an army of minor babus, ranging in sociological expertise from section officers on deputation to *patwaris* on transfer) to collect and collate the information that would back up the conclusions that Mandal and his colleagues had arrived at aeons before they were even appointed to the Commission. And Mr Gill—on the well-known civil service principle of "What Bobo wants, Bobo gets"—fixed the parameters so that Mandal got what he wanted to get, scientific truth, in the true civil service tradition, being banished to the farther reaches of Madangir—or wherever it is that our supercomputers are installed!

Mr Gill advised his political masters in the Commission to do the same with expert legal opinion. The Law Institute was requested to produce a comprehensive paper. The paper forms one of the bulkier appendices to the report and is completely summarised early on in the report (chapter VII). But, when it comes to conclusions, the Mandal Commission conveniently ignores all legal opinions adumbrated at such length elsewhere, to pick on three isolated quotations from Supreme Court judgments (para 12.3, Chapter XII) to lend legal verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and uninteresting narrative. The question one would wish to put to Mr Gill is this: after he drafted para 12.3, chapter XII of the report, did he go back to ask the Law Institute what it thought of it? You can bet your ninny, no. Because it is the inflexible code of the IAS that experts are to the IAS as buntings are to a procession, there to lend a touch of colour to the goings-on and generally swing about in the wind while all the actual glory is cornered by the marchers on the ground.

What, however, Mr Gill really has to answer is not snide remarks from the sidelines from uppity civil service juniors like myself, but the way the report itself damns the so-called scientific basis of the report

The report confirms (para 11.10, chapter XI) that the experts had recommended that a valid socio-educational field survey must cover at least 5,000 of our 5,00,000 villages. Without consulting any expert opinion, Mr Gill and his bureaucratic colleagues decided to cut out more than 80 per cent of the task recommended to them by the experts. Pure administrative convenience, they said. But before they took the decision, did they care to consult Srinivas, Yogendra Singh & Co.? Of course not. Because Srinivas, Yogendra Singh & Co. might then have said that a survey based on covering less than 0.20 per cent of India's villages would not be scientifically tenable. So, Mr Gill must have argued, why burden yourself with seeking a "scientific" opinion that can only stop you from getting on with what, in your bureaucratic wisdom, you are, in any case, going to do?

No wonder, then, that Mr Gill—in a fit of honesty that he must now repent—wrote in para 11.27, chapter XI of the report that his socio-educational field survey "has no pretensions (*sic!*) to being a piece of academic research", that it is simply "a rough and ready tool" and does not constitute "a technically sophisticated and academically satisfying operation".

The same questions of intellectual integrity arise over the "objective criteria" devised and the "weightage" given to the different sets of criteria. No social scientist was consulted, no expert opinion sought. Mandal or Gill—or, possibly, that composite creature called Mandgill—just pulled the criteria out of their respective hats/turbans (which may, therefore, be compositely called a turbo-hat!). It was again this duo that arbitrarily assigned a weightage of 3 to the "social" criteria, 2 to the "educational" criteria, and 1 to the "economic" criteria. Why 3:2:1? Why not 1:2:3?

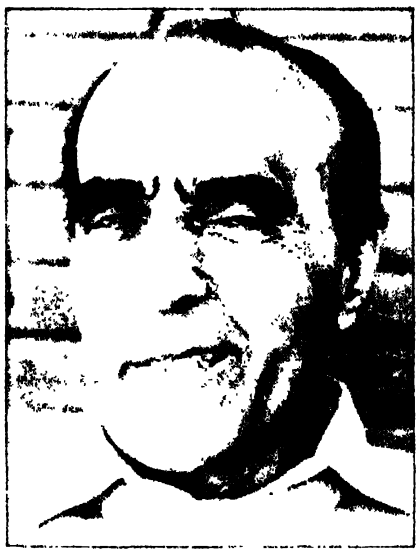
Why not, indeed, 3.6:2.4:1.3?

Because, if you please, that's the way Mandgill wants it to be. No science. No academics. Just an arbitrary fiat by the IAS—which loves nothing better than a really arbitrary fiat to show the specialists exactly where they fit in the scheme of things backed up by the self-serving interests of a politician determined to ensure his own political upward mobility by establishing the total immobility of his pretended "social backwardness" (while, betimes, getting his "forward" *munshi* to account for every single *sikka* gouged out of his—socially inferior?—tenants).

And to what, pray, was this pseudo-scientific "weighted objective criteria" applied? To three sources of information, says the report. First information provided by state governments which the report describes as "rather disappointing" (para 9.4), "scrappy and inadequate" (para 9.9) and as "too sketchy and scrappy for any meaningful inference which may be valid for the country as a whole" (para 9.14). Second, to information provided by the central government which the report says (para 9.47) was simply unavailable with the central government. Not fazed, Mandgill imposed on the central government "rough and ready criteria" (para 9.47) to force the central government to yeild up its treasures. Third, information provided by the general public, which the report says largely "belonged to the OBCs" (para 10.46), was "conditioned by their own class interests" (para 10.47) and where "class bias was the most compelling logic behind their convictions" (para 10.47).

Why, after this confession of *mea culpa*, Mr Gill goes to so much trouble to establish Mandal's claim to a Nobel Prize for Objectivity, Truth and Scientific Probity is a bit beyond me. You only have to read the report to find Mr Gill's tongue firmly wedged in his cheek when he talks now in *Current* of "how meticulously the survey was prepared", how "the Commission earnestly tried to create as large and dependable a data base as possible and "tapped the highest available expertise for this purpose". Oh yeah!—as my teenagers would say.





S.S. Gill (right) and B.P. Mandal: *At 52 per cent of the population—a figure given by B.P.S.S. Mandgill—how can we build a modern India without the participation of over half our population—the backward class?*

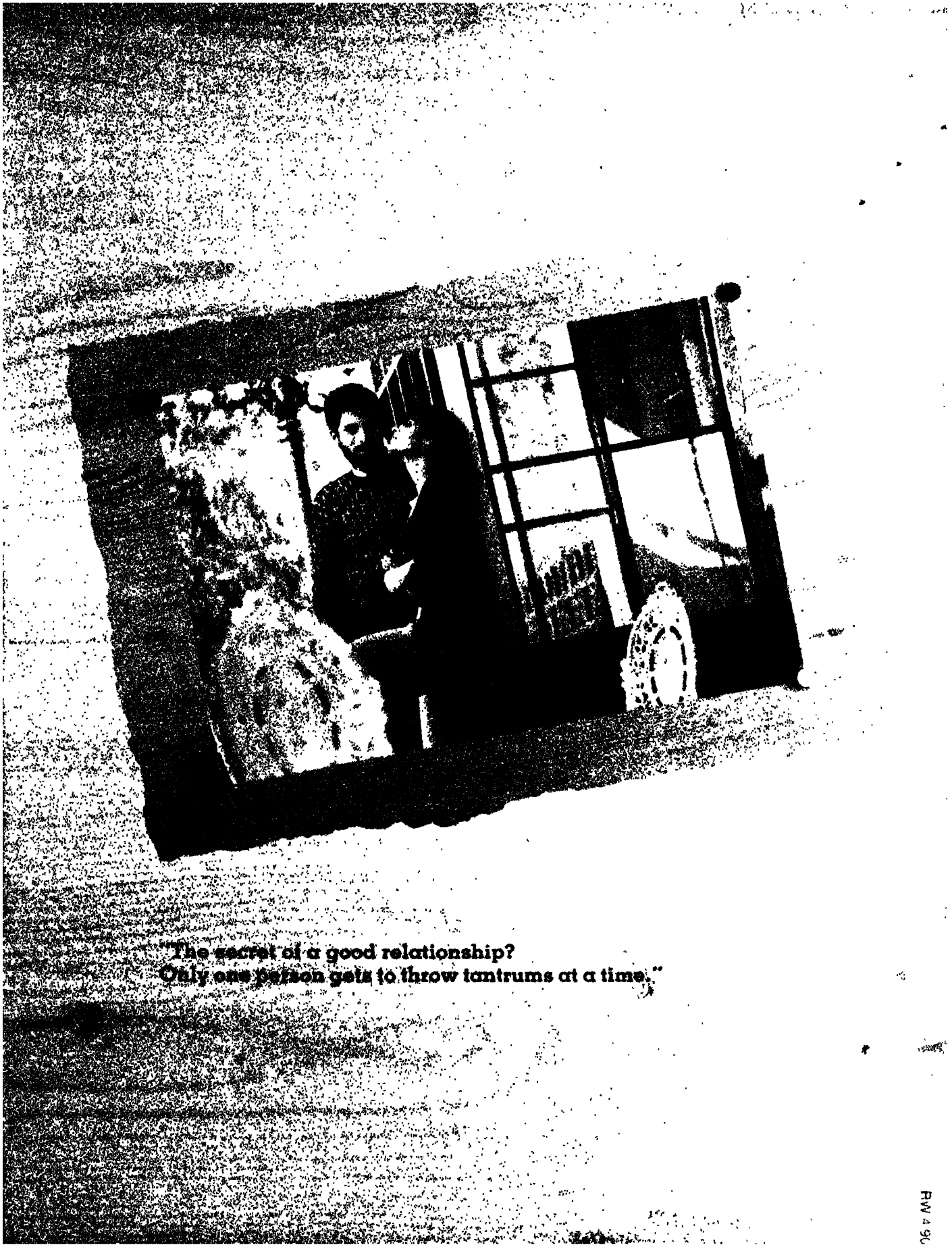
The fact is that the backward claim to a quota of government jobs is not based so much on a claim to equity of opportunity as on the perception that they must have a fair share of "governance". Fair enough. At 52 per cent of the population—a figure given by our resident expert in sociological statistics, Shri B.P.S.S. Mandgill—how can we build a modern India without the participation of over half our population—the backward classes?

To which it is for V.P. Singh to answer two questions. First, since we are a democracy—so liberal that it can accommodate even the likes of Sharad Yadav and Ram Bilas Paswan!—should "participation in governance" be limited to Class I/II jobs? Should it not extend primarily to the *political* governance of India? If so, is not 52 per cent the decisive voice in the electorate's verdict? What is it, then, that stops V.P. Singh from saying that at least 52 per cent of all National Front MLAs/MPs shall be backwards? And that at least 52 per cent of all National Front governments—in the states and at the Centre—shall comprise backwards? And that at least 52 per cent of PMO officers and the staff of all National Front CMs shall be backwards? If only V.P. Singh and his cohorts had allowed the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Bills to go through last year, constitutionally-guaranteed elective offices in India would, at one stroke, have increased from 5,000 today to upwards of 20,00,000! The vast majority of these 20,00,000 elective offices would, by rights, have been won by backwards in the very villages and *mohallas* where V.P. Singh now bleats on about his "revolutionary social engineering". The National Front vote against these Bills was the single biggest blow against increasing the "participation" of the backwards in the "governance" of the country.

The second giant step in opening educational opportunity to the backwards was the Navodaya Vidyalayas. V P. Singh has neither the conviction to close them down nor the courage to let them grow. His principled position has been to simply freeze their number at the existing number. In doing so, he has frozen the number of meritorious backward children securing access to first-class education, which is the only general route to reaching that heaven where backwards of merit succeed in worsting the forwards at their own game.

But does VP have anything at all to say—or even mumble—on these matters of substances? No. He contents himself with some rubbish about how every time a youth goes up in flames "a bit of my heart falls off." (*"mere dil ke tukde hazar huelkoi idhar gire, koi udhar gire!"*) Hanging on to the bits that remain—an intestine here, a kidney there—V.P. Singh, unmoved, clings to his chair like...an imp? A wimp? A limp? No, got it, clings there—like a limpet! ●

The views expressed in this article are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of Congress party's position



"The secret of a good relationship?
Only one person gets to throw tantrums at a time."

RW 4 90



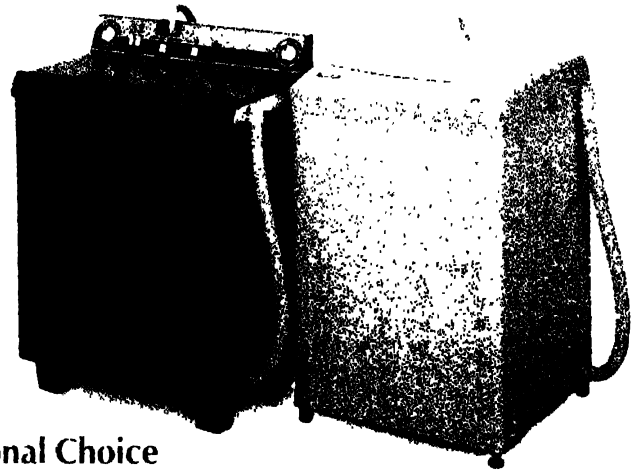

DIGJAM
Suitings for the Connoisseur
A Product of VXL India Ltd.

When it comes to choosing the best Washing Machine technology in Japan or India...





There's no difference!



The National Choice

Videocon Washing Machines are manufactured in technical collaboration with MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC INDUSTRIAL CO. JAPAN, owners of the famous 'National' brand name whose International reputation for quality and reliability spans over five continents.

This exciting collaboration with India's leading consumer electronics company, VIDEOCON, has resulted in products that have already become 'National' favourites.

Twin Tub Washing Machine With Spin Drier V-NA-200T

Features : • Wash load capacity – 3 kg of dry clothes • Tough sturdy motor with thermal fuse. • Automatic shut off for 100% safety. • Reversible motor action for better cleaning. • Spin drier to ensure fast and even drying. • Special facility of using spin drier for very efficient rinsing. • Draining possible from left or right to suit your home. • Tough on dirt and very gentle with all types of clothes, will not tear off buttons etc. • Very low power consumption. • Two year warranty. • Well established, prompt after sales service. • Available in three colours.

Micro-Computer Based Automatic Washing Machine V-NA-811

Features : • Wash load capacity : 4 kg • Needs no manual attention after initial start. • Choice of wash programmes - strong, gentle, speedy, normal. • Tough on dirt, very gentle with clothes. • Can wash blankets, rugs, carpets etc. • Facility for using fabric softener. • Special bleach inlet. • Lint filter to collect loose ends. • 100% safe. • Two year warranty. • Well established, prompt after sales service. • Available in two colours.

VIDEOCON

Washing Machines

EXCEPTIONAL • SENSATIONAL • SO NATIONAL.

Manufactured in technical collaboration with Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Japan, owners of the brand name 'National'.

SJAS 80085/1

Toppling the Raja

Chandra Shekhar sounds the battle-cry. But it won't be easy

In the end, it boils down to how you see morality. Chandra Shekhar, the veteran strongman of the Opposition, believes that he has right on his side. V.P. Singh cheated him during the election for the leader of the Janata Dal and has since sought to prolong his tenure by resorting to a series of immoral gimmicks of which the Mandal Commission is only the latest. Therefore, argues Chandra Shekhar, the Raja has to go.

But then, V. P. Singh has made a personal fetish of morality. As far as he is concerned, right resides in his corner. Not only has he never sought public office or used it for private gains, but the decision to implement the Mandal recommendations has little to do with expediency and everything to do with social justice. Thus, even though the elite and the media have been turned against him, the Raja will not be deflected from his sacred mission of helping the backwards.

As both interpretations of political morality were trotted out last week, nobody knew for certain quite what was right. V.P. Singh had won his chair through subterfuge: that much was indisputable. But now, nobody could say that he retained his position by Devi Lal's grace or because of the hysterical support of the media.

The Raja had the numbers on his side. Two weeks ago, after the urbane Yashwant Sinha, a key Chandra Shekhar lieutenant, raised the banner of revolt at a meeting of the National Front Parliamentary Party, V.P. Singh brushed the revolt aside with an impressive show of strength. The party was asked to pass a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister and as Sinha walked out in disgust, the motion was carried unanimously.

For the dissidents, it was a significant reverse. Afterwards, Sinha claimed that he had not moved a no-confidence motion, so there was no question of a vote. "What are you going to do?" he asked rhetorically. "Have a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister every time somebody criticises him?"

His point was well taken, but the vote had to be seen in the context of the kind of media build-up accorded to Sinha's little revolt. Two days before the meeting, several Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal supporters met for dinner at Sinha's residence. Afterwards, some of those present told the press that large numbers of MPs (upto 40, according to one news agency report) were planning to demand the Prime Minister's resignation.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR: waiting to make his move



After such expectations had been built up, the meeting actually ended with a vote of *confidence* in V.P Singh. It was, by any standards, a reverse.

But Sinha was not done yet. Three days after the meeting, he joined up with Harmohan Dhawan, another Chandra Shekhar lieutenant, to draft a letter to the Prime Minister demanding his resignation. This time, the figures were more impressive. Twenty-nine Janata Dal MPs signed the letter (though seven were from the Rajya Sabha) and as the list did not include the heavyweights (Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar) or the ministers (i.e. Jagdeep Dhankar) who were certain to endorse the call for the Raja's

ouster, it seemed as though Sinha and Dhawan were coming near the original figure of 40 MPs.

Of course, nothing is what it first seems in Janata Dal politics, and within hours of signing the letter, two MPs had second thoughts. Another four were paraded before the press by Sharad Yadav, the Union textiles minister. Somewhat implausibly, the MPs claimed that they had "forgotten" to read the memorandum before signing it.

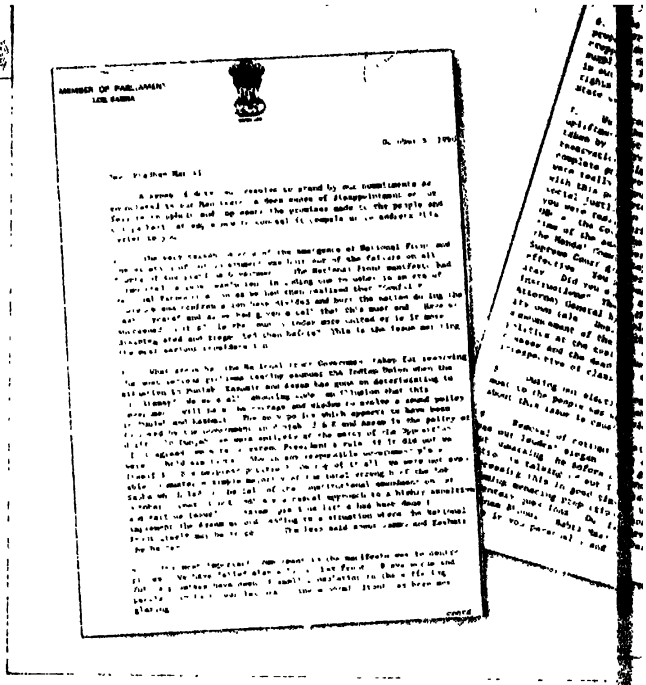
At week's end, Yadav, who has emerged as the strongman of the regime in the post-Mandal Commission era, seemed confident that he would succeed in inducing more MPs to switch sides. Nobody was prepared to reveal exactly how Yadav was winning the dissidents over, but equally, nobody believed that he was managing this operation with hefty doses of love and fresh air alone.

As the horse-trading proceeded briskly, Sinha and Dhawan fell back on that old stand-by: morality.

"We know we don't have numbers on our side," Sinha told the press as the controversies over who was on which side mounted. "We have never claimed that we are in the majority. Our claim is moral, not numerical. We believe that with the country heading for disaster under V.P. Singh's leadership, it is legitimate to ask for a change of leadership."

It was a valid position. But in Janata Dal politics, one man's morality is another man's intrigue.

Had the revolt failed? What were the dissidents up to? In Delhi's political circles, nobody was sure. The Raja's henchmen arranged for the submission of a petition by 40 Janata Dal MPs re-affirming their faith in V.P. Singh's leadership and claimed that as 40 was more than 29, the Prime Minister had more supporters than Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar.



THE DISSIDENTS' LETTER: demanding the PM's resignation

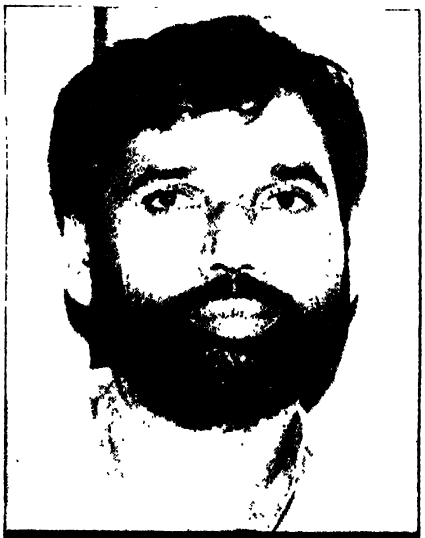
It was not a good idea. Though Santosh Bharatiya and Bhawani Shankar Hota insisted that the petition proved V.P. Singh's strength, in fact, all it showed was that of the 138 Janata Dal

ALL THE RAJA'S MEN



JAIPAL REDDY

He was cheated out of the party presidentship by the combined effort of Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar, and Reddy will not forgive them in a hurry. And what better way of getting back at them than by allying with the Raja?



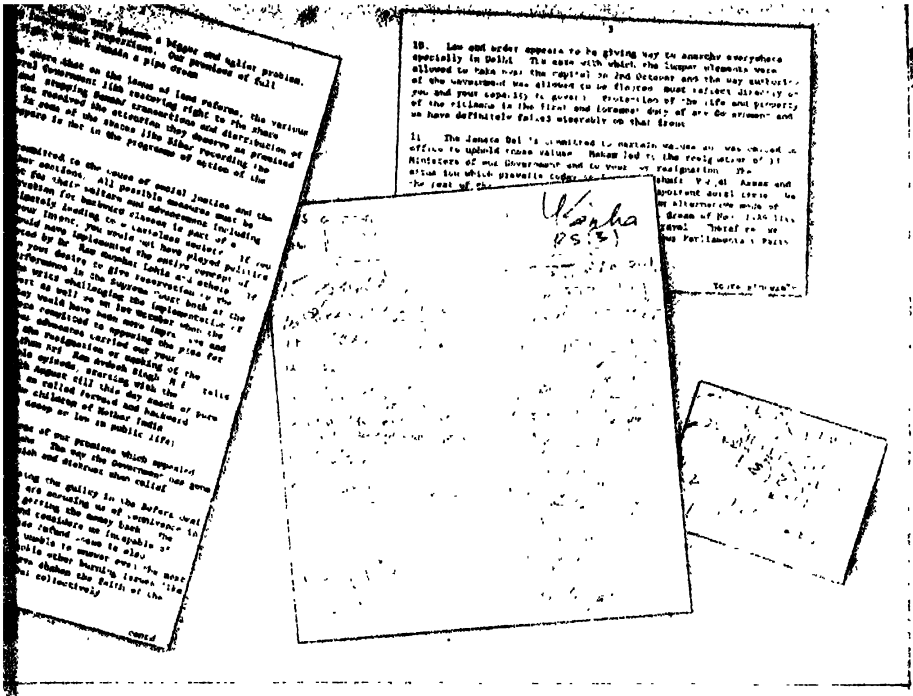
RAM VILAS PASWAN

Nothing is more important to him than his identity as a backward leader. And has thrown his lot in with V.P. Singh only because of the PM's initiative on the reservations issue. His vote-bank makes him a powerful ally



MADHU DANDAVATE

Has been reduced to a complete cipher in the finance ministry with Bimal Jalan (a Raja man) running the show. But for reasons that defy comprehension, the Professor insists on supporting VP, no matter how grave the damage to his image.



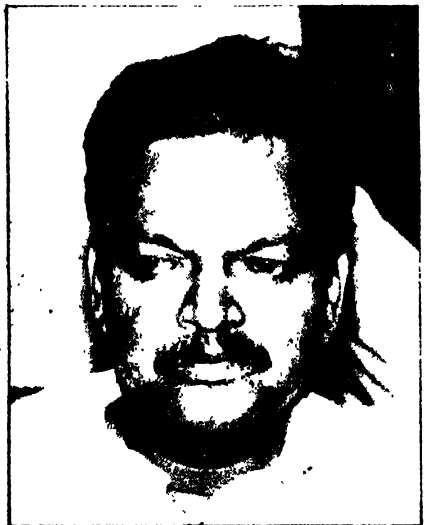
MPs, only 40 had faith in V.P. Singh.

But all the same, 40 *is* greater than 29, so did the dissidents have any hope of forcing V P. Singh out in the long run? There were three views. The first was the view advanced by V.P. Singh's supporters. They argued that Mandal had made the Raja's position unassailable No Janata Dal MP could now afford to side with the dissidents because voters in the cow belt would perceive this as an anti-backward stand

After all, they argued, V.P. Singh had turned the tables on Sinha at the meeting of the National Front Parliamentary Party by placing the Mandal report on the agenda. To have backed Sinha against Singh when Mandal was the issue would have seemed too much like letting down the backwards and so, the Raja won his vote of confidence with the utmost ease. All other attempts to unseat the Raja, predicted the Prime Minister's supporters, would meet the same fate.

The second view- favoured by most of the media—was that the dissidents had no hope of ever raising the required numbers. What they wanted to do was keep the pressure on the Raja. With the anti-Mandal agitation still raging and India's problems mounting, V.P. Singh was already being urged by the media to either recast his prime ministership or to let somebody else do the job.

All the dissidents could do was add their voices to the din and keep embarrassing the Raja Finally, they hoped, V.P. Singh's tendency to resign every time he was faced with a major crisis would assert itself and the



SUBODH KANT SAHAY

As far as the PM is concerned, Sahay is the *de facto* home minister of India, even though he is designated as minister of state. Sahay is properly grateful and has refrained from coming out openly against the Raja, even though he disagrees with his reservation policy.



LALOO PRASAD YADAV

The Bihar CM is to Sharad Yadav what the lamb was to Mary Not surprisingly then, he is a charter member of the V.P Singh camp And it does help that the Mandal report is most beneficial to his community, the Yadavs.



SHARAD YADAV

Started out as a Devi Lal protege, but switched sides soon after the election. Owes his political rise to backward support and is therefore an ardent supporter of the Mandal Commission Report And by extension, of the Raja.

Raja would willingly step down.

Both views had a certain plausibility, but they were also flawed. The Raja's supporters were overestimating the influence of the Mandal issue. Sinha was careful to state in each of his letters that he did not oppose Mandal, so it was wrong to assume that an attack on V.P. Singh would be confused with an assault on Mandal. Moreover, how long would Mandal remain the key issue? By the middle of next year, other issues will emerge. Will the Raja then still be able to count on Mandal to keep him in office?

The second view was based on a false assumption: that V.P. Singh would resign if pressure was applied. While the Raja has frequently resigned on ostensibly moral grounds, each resignation has been a carefully-worked Machiavellian move that has advanced his own prospects. Why on earth should he resign now simply to let Chandra Shekhar become Prime Minister?

The dissidents had their own explanation for their actions -a third view, as it were. Simply put, this



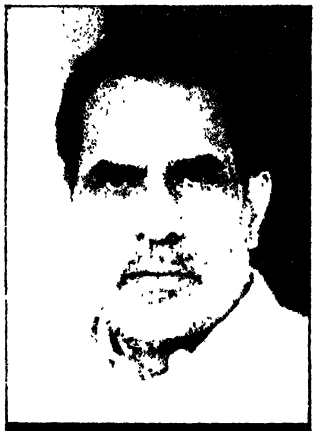
NITIN RAI

YASHWANT SINHA (left) and HARMOHAN DHAWAN: raising the banner of revolt

amounted to: we can get the numbers.

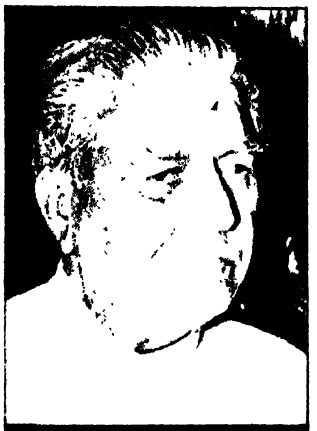
The dissidents know that in Indian politics, fortune favours the numerous. At present, V.P. Singh has a hardcore support base of around 40 MPs. Some others have been won over with Cabinet posts; still others with the promise of berths in the next reshuffle; and the rest are aligned with local chieftains (Mulayam Singh Yadav, Biju Patnaik, Ajit Singh etc.) who are neutral in the battle. This gives the Raja a majority and the support of the uncommitted who will

THE ANTI-RAJA BRIGADE



CHANDRA SHEKHAR

A sworn enemy of V.P. Singh ever since the Raja ganged up with the Chaudhary to deny him a stab at the prime ministership. Chandra Shekhar will not rest until Singh is unseated. He doesn't really want the PM's post, but if the party insists...



DEVI LAL

The Chautala episode turned the Tau completely against the Raja. And then the Mandal report—with the Jat community excluded from the benefits—came along to further worsen relations, and provoke Lal into resigning from the Lok Sabha.



YASHWANT SINHA

His first walk-out came at the swearing-in ceremony, when he realised he was to be fobbed off with a minister of state's post. Since then, Sinha has been at it with a rare consistency, his latest such effort coming at the last National Front meeting.



CHIMANBHAI PATEL

Caste configurations being what they are, the Gujarat CM is convinced that the Janata Dal can't possibly win from Gujarat after the Mandal report. And, of course, he blames the Raja for the situation he finds himself in.



V.P. SINGH: master of cow-belt intrigue

go with the winning side

So far, the dissidents have about 37 members: the 25 who signed the memorandum (and have not reneged) and another 12 (Raj Mangal Pandey, Hukumdeo Narayan Deo, Jagdeep Dhankar, Devi Lal, Hari Kewal Prasad, Maneka Gandhi, Chandra Shekhar, etc.) who will come out openly when the time is right. To be able to break away, the dissidents need another 20 members (or a third of the party's membership in the Lok Sabha).

The figure may seem daunting if you think in terms of individual MPs. But once you think of it in terms of block votes, then the picture changes dramatically. UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav alone has 15 MPs. Ajit Singh has another 15. Biju Patnaik has at least 11. And so on. So, the exercise is not to convince individuals, but win over local chieftains.

Last week, Chandra Shekhar's men were busy pointing out that—in the long run—they could count on Mulayam Singh Yadav's support.

Shekhar supported Mulayam Singh's bid for the Uttar Pradesh chief ministership, when Yadav was facing a tough challenge from Ajit Singh, who was, at least initially, backed by the Raja. Of course, VP changed sides when he realised that Mulayam Singh was a better bet. But by then, Yadav had seen through the Raja and had also understood that Shekhar was a far more reliable ally. Hence the interviews that followed, with the UP chief minister proclaiming: "Chandra Shekharji is a saint."

Shekhar followed this up by holding



MULAYAM SINGH YADAV

Somebody who refers to Chandra Shekhar as a saint can't but be against the Raja. But the UP chief minister can't afford to come out openly against V.P. Singh after Mandal, for fear of losing backward support in his state.



HARMOHAN DHAWAN

He resigned from the party post only to devote all his energies to getting Janata Dal MPs to sign a memorandum against the Prime Minister. Has been either very successful in this endeavour or an abject failure, depending on whom you are talking to.



BIJU PATNAIK

The Orissa chief minister was one of the few courageous politicians who minced no words in trashing the Mandal recommendations. That may have lost him a few votes, but it has certainly put the fear of Biju into the Raja.



RAJ MANGAL PANDEY

Had accompanied V.P. Singh out of the Congress. But the two have fallen out since then. The Raja attempted to affect a reconciliation by inviting him over for tea, but was treated to a 20-minute diatribe on his sins, instead.

"The government has done nothing to its credit"

Cho S. Ramaswamy interviews Chandra Shekhar

SUNDAY: Do you think the Ram Janmabhoomi issue can be sorted out through negotiations after all that has happened?
Chandra Shekhar: I think there is very little option other than deciding this matter through negotiations. On such issues, one should not lose heart but have patience. Only patience can pay in these circumstances. I have every hope that with the proper approach and a spirit of accommodation, you can find a solution to the problem through negotiations.

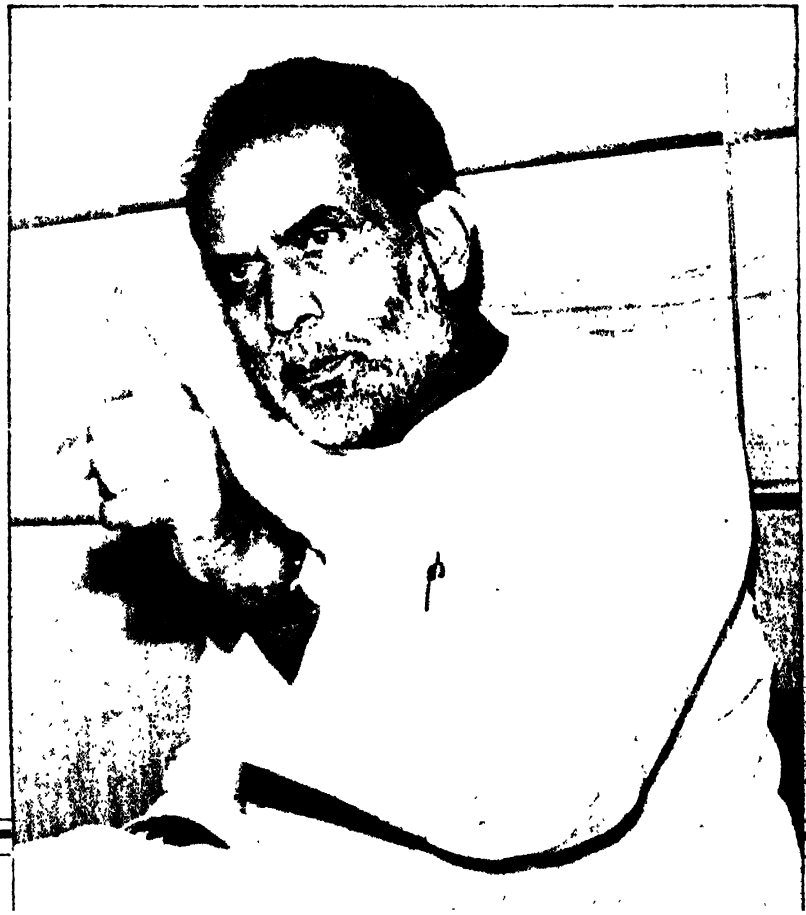
Q: Will it be right to say that politicians allowed the crisis to deepen and are now seeking the help of religious leaders to bail them out of the mess?
A: I will not say that. It is true that politicians have not played their role effectively, which has led to the present crisis. It would be wrong to say that politicians now want the religious leaders to bail them out...Religious leaders are also part of society and there is nothing wrong in taking their help for restoring normalcy and peace because, if emotions can be aroused on religious grounds and fanaticism, passions can be subsided only by appeals from religious leaders. Long back, when there was the problem of communal riots, I had requested the then Prime Minister (Indira Gandhi) that she should take the help of religious leaders.

Q: Do you think anything tangible will emerge on Bofors? Before coming to office, the Prime Minister used to set a time-frame of 15 days to expose it all.
A: I don't know on what basis the time limit was set because, even according to him (V.P. Singh), everything was in the hands of foreigners in countries like Switzerland and Sweden. As you know, the Swiss economy operates in a particular manner and I don't think the Swiss government is going to jeopardise its economic interests in order to fulfil the poll promises of the Prime Minister of India. If that was the expectation, I see no basis for it. If they think they can manipulate them (the Swiss) to their side by using the so-called populist slogans, I have not much hope.

Q: Don't you think there is a lot of hypocrisy in this case on the part of the Prime Minister?
A: Anybody claiming to expose something that is not within his capacity is guilty of hypocrisy. But then, I tell you sometimes all this becomes very attractive. Populist slogans and hypocrisy serve politicians rather well.

Q: What is your stand on the Mandal Commission Report?
A: I admit that backward classes should be given reservation. ...When the Kaka Kalelkar Commission examined the question of reservations the first time, it suggested a periodical review to see how people have benefited. There should always be a revision on the basis of economic development of certain sections of the population. We should also take into account the pauperisation of another section of society that might have been very well off. The reservation policy in today's circumstances should have been a synthesis of social and economic considerations and all the pros and cons should have been worked out before launching on this adventure.

Q: Would you say that the Mandal Commission had listed the back-



ward classes in a responsible manner?
A: I don't know how to say whether it was responsible or not, but then, the Commission in its report had admitted that there had not been any scientific analysis. Whatever he (Mandal) could gather from certain research scholars or presumptions or information gathered from the people, he had used for determining these castes to be backward. I don't think he had any pretensions about his scientific analysis for determining backwardness.

Q: What is your opinion about the way this government has been handling the Sri Lankan issue?
A: On the issue of Sri Lanka, to have hastily taken decisions without caring for consequences only for the sake of undoing whatever the previous government had done was wrong. It was not a wise decision in my opinion. You can slowly change, steadily change the apparatus that is already there, but if you take sudden decisions only to spite the previous regime, then you are bound to face certain difficulties and even put the nation in jeopardy.

Q: But what are you doing? After all, you are a part of the ruling party.
A: That is true. Whenever there is any complicated question, I give my opinion, but I cannot force my opinion on the rulers. I can just give suggestions, but if my suggestions are not accepted, in a parliamentary democracy, being a minority, you (I) will have to tolerate it.

Q: But you had fought for the removal of the previous government because it went wrong.
A: When things go beyond a point, one has to take hard decisions.

Q: Then you think things have not gone beyond that point as yet?
A: They might have gone, but whether the decision-making stage has come or not is a matter for consideration.

Q: What about reports that you are prepared to help the Congress to bring down this government?
A: What I have said already was that I was not trying to topple the V.P. Singh government with Rajiv Gandhi's help nor was I negotiating with him (Rajiv) by meeting him four times. You know my opinion about this government—I think the government has done nothing to its credit. And the way things are moving, we may soon be in great difficulty. It is for the Janata Dal and the other parties that are cooperating to seriously look into the functioning of this government.

Q: There are some people who think you could provide a change for the better. What have you to say?
A: I alone cannot provide a change. If the change comes about, I shall be happy.

Q: Have you had any occasion to regret any of your political decisions?
A: It will be very wrong of me if I say I have never regretted any of my decisions. But sometimes, I feel it is all part of the game. Life is so complicated that all the time, you cannot say all your decisions have been right.

But then, I have one consolation—that in taking political decisions, I have never contradicted myself nor have I betrayed anybody's trust. I have been betrayed many a time...



CHANDRA SHEKHAR (left) and DEVI LAL: plotting to overthrow V.P. Singh?

several meetings in the state in support of Mulayam Singh and effectively established the fact that Yadav belonged to his camp.

But V.P. Singh wasn't going to give up without a fight. And, as usual, he played dirty, threatening to topple the fledgling UP government by setting Ajit Singh's MLAs against Mulayam Singh. The Union industry minister commands the personal loyalty of at least 60 MLAs and he could well pull the plug on Yadav.

In the end, a compromise was worked out and Mulayam Singh survived. But the experience taught him a valuable lesson: to build up a vote-bank which was exclusively his and which the party couldn't do without. The Ram Janmabhoomi issue came in handy in this connection. Mulayam Singh adopted an extreme pro-Muslim stand, even arresting the Shankaracharya when he attempted *shilanyas* in Ayodhya.

The stratagem worked. Yadav came to be seen as the saviour of the Muslims. And this combined with the support he commanded among the backwards ensured that he emerged as the strongman of UP. Now the Raja could only tangle with him at the expense of losing both the backwards and the Muslims.

But V.P. Singh wasn't finished yet. He began working on Sharad Yadav and soon managed to win him over. Now the Yadav vote was effectively divided between Sharad Yadav and Mulayam Singh. Mulayam Singh, who earlier had the support of as many as

25 MPs, could now be sure of just over half that number: the rest had defected to Sharad Yadav's side.

With Sharad Yadav as an ally, the Raja was also sure of the support of Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav - a camp follower of the Union textiles minister.

In the bargain, however, he lost Mulayam Singh without any hope of a reconciliation in the near, or even forseeable, future.

While Mulayam Singh remains Shekhar's best bet in the event of a revolt, he has begun to court other local chiefs, among them Biju Patnaik. While Patnaik has wasted no time in making it clear that he disapproves heartily of the Mandal Commission, he has not actually come out against V.P. Singh either. Moreover, there is some dispute as to how many of the Orissa MPs will actually back him. V.P. Singh has appointed four of them as ministers and one as Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Will they risk their jobs for Biju? Patnaik seems to think that they will and claims to count on the support of at least eight.

Shekhar will have less success with the other state chief ministers. Laloo Yadav, once regarded as Devi Lal's man, has now defected to Sharad Yadav and therefore to V.P. Singh. The dissidents are confident that Gujarat chief minister Chimanbhai Patel will back them, but so far, the Gujarat MPs have been reluctant to join the revolt.

That leaves two local chieftains. Of them, Ajit Singh is not regarded as a major problem. The general view is that he will go with the winning side and bring his 15 MPs with him. Anybody who has around 60 MPs can count on Ajit's men joining up.

"The OBCs will not gain much"

Textiles minister Sharad Yadav feels that much more has to be done for the backward castes

SUNDAY: Do you agree with the general perception that the V.P. Singh government is under threat?
Sharad Yadav: As I see it, the government has emerged much stronger. For the first time, the issue of social justice has been tackled and the Janata Dal has gained a much stronger base in the country because of that.

Q: But the campaign mounted by the dissidents will surely have some impact.
A: I don't wish to talk about the dissidents. This government will complete its full term—for, on the basic issues and programmes all the members are together. V.P. Singh has sought the vote of confidence twice and the majority has supported him. The people want this government to complete its full term and anybody who creates an obstacle in this path will be destroyed by them.

We have completed all the promises we made in our manifesto except the right to work. The Mandal Commission was among our promises. So I don't understand what people are getting so agitated about.

Q: Do you think the Mandal recommendations are perfect?
A: No, there are several shortcomings and it can be improved a lot. But at least it signals the beginning of an initiative to uplift the weaker sections. It is not the *Bible, Gita* or *Koran*. But all the parties, including the Congress, support reservations for weaker sections. This reservation policy was made by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

Q: There are several backward castes which will not benefit by this report.
A: That is true. Backward castes such as the Badhais, Kumhars and Lohars are not going to benefit, but we can initiate a debate on this issue.

Q: Do you agree with the concept of incorporating economic criteria as well? That way, Sharad Yadav's son doesn't benefit, but some other poor Yadav does.
A: No, I don't agree with this. Because there are very few Sharad Yadavs among the backwards. I am in favour of "one family, one job".

SHARAD YADAV at a pro-Mandal rally: new strongman



Arun Nehru, however, is an entirely different matter. Nehru threatened to leave V.P. Singh's Cabinet over Devi Lal—could he now join hands with a dissident band that has the Tau as one of its leaders?

Moreover, much of what Shekhar opposes—the industrial policy, for instance—is exactly the sort of thing that Nehru regards as crucial. So, could Nehru and Shekhar ever link up?

Nevertheless, the Shekhar camp's strategy is that with Yadav and Patnaik on board, they are certain to get Ajit. Then, Nehru and his three MPs will not really matter.

The Raja's supporters overestimate the influence of the Mandal issue. By the middle of next year, other issues will emerge. Will V.P. Singh then be still able to count on Mandal to keep him in office?

Q: One view is that the government has considerably diluted the Mandal recommendations.

A: True. Not even one-tenth of what was mentioned in the Mandal report has been granted. In this first phase, the government has given them nothing. No reservation has been provided in educational institutions, which is very necessary. If the backward classes are not educated, how will they be able to get jobs?

Also, the government has not implemented the recommendation of giving loans to backward youths to enable them to complete their education. Several other recommendations regarding bank facilities have also not been implemented.

The backwards are not going to gain very much from the recent announcement of the government. While Scheduled Castes and Tribes have got reservation in educational institutions, OBCs (Other Backward Castes) have not. Even though the Constitution clearly states that educationally backward people should be helped.

Reservation for the OBCs has not been made in such fields as defence, science, technology, atomic energy and space.

Q: Why have these fields been excluded? Does the government doubt the competence of the OBCs in this regard?

A: What can I say? It is not that. How can we doubt their competence...but we wanted to take all sections of society along with us.

Q: Do you think that the government has mishandled the students agitation?

A: No, I think it was handled properly.

Q: Dissidents allege that V.P. Singh has destroyed the unity of the country.

A: That is a completely baseless statement.

But where the question of national unity was concerned, I was totally impressed by one leader: Indira Gandhi. She was fully committed towards the unity and integrity of the nation. Her foreign policy was also great. She was a true statesman. She was the most secular politician, and under her leadership the Congress did a lot for the uplift of the weaker sections of society.

Nobody but she could make tall claims in this regard.



The consequence of all this has been a sudden jockeying for favour in the upper echelons of the Janata Dal. V.P. Singh began it by hoping to woo Ranjit Singh, Devi Lal's younger son away from his father. Ranjit was offered a Cabinet berth and told that as long as Om Prakash Chautala ruled the roost, there would be no place for him in the Tau's camp. But Shekhar tried a little of his own persuasion and succeeded in getting Ranjit to join Yashwant Sinha's dissident band.

Nevertheless, this cannot go on forever. At some stage, battle lines will be clearly drawn and this will depend on much more than a doling out of favours. V.P. Singh has pinned everything on the Mandal report. He reckons it will help in two ways. One: if an election is called then he will have a solid vote-bank. And two: it makes all dissidence against him seem directed at the Mandal proposals.

Of these two grounds, it is now clear that the first will not work. President R. Venkataraman is believed to have told the Raja that as head of a minority government he cannot ask for the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. Moreover, Janata Dal MPs are so apprehensive of facing the people that were an election to be called, the party would almost certainly split. That could hardly advance V.P. Singh's prospects.

It is on the second ground that the Mandal issue has helped the Raja. While the media and the urban elite are bitterly opposed to the recommendations, no major political party has dared attack the concept of increased reservations. Even Mulayam Singh is said to have told Chandra Shekhar that he cannot openly oppose V.P. Singh while Mandal is the issue.

But at best, this *delays* the denouement. To prolong the stay of execution, V.P. Singh will have to find a new gimmick—Mandal cannot last forever.

Chandra Shekhar will probably wait till the Mandal euphoria has died down. Then he will make his move. Till then, his men will keep up the pressure, hoping to portray V.P. Singh as a lame-duck Prime Minister. Once that image sticks, they will seek to cook his goose.

Unless Vishwanath Pratap Singh, that master of cow-belt intrigue, has another surprise up his sleeve. ●

Seema Goswami and Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

The BJP's dilemma

Why the party cannot afford to bring down the V.P. Singh regime

If the BJP is to be believed, it was at one time on the verge of bringing down the National Front government. For over a month, senior BJP leaders had been hinting at withdrawing support to Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's minority government. Disparaging BJP statements were hitting the frontpages and everything suggested that the party's honeymoon with V.P. Singh was well and truly over. For all the bluster, however, there was not a peep from the BJP when it came to the crunch. In Parliament and in closed-door meetings, the BJP leadership demonstrated its readiness to compromise and go along with the government. In short, the BJP might bark but it was clearly not prepared to bite.

In fact, looking back, the BJP has in one way or the other back-tracked from every extreme position. A few recent examples are telling:

Ram Janmabhoomi: The BJP leadership had sworn that nothing would deter it from going ahead with the destruction of the Babri Masjid and the building of a Ram Mandir at the disputed Ayodhya site. Party president L.K. Advani had gone a step further by declaring that the courts had no jurisdiction over the Ram Janmabhoomi issue and that his party would go ahead with its plans irrespective of any court judgement. Yet, when they came to the Committee on Communal Harmony meeting, BJP leaders, including Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee, virtually ratified the committee's resolution that "the decision of the courts should be respected". Vajpayee even expressed the hope that an amicable settlement to the contentious issue could be found before the 30 October deadline (that is, the day the construction of the Ram Temple is to begin). When the government's Press Information Bureau issued a statement, detailing the BJP's stand at the meeting and all newspapers prominently carried the story, a red-faced BJP leadership was forced to issue a denial.

Advani offered a weak explanation the next day, denying that his party had softened its stance on the Temple issue. He said that the BJP at the meeting had merely stressed that the court proceedings should be expedited and that his party did not in any way mean to lower the dignity of the courts. Advani, however, added that he did not believe the judiciary could resolve the tangle. He said that the courts could only decide on issues relating to title and trespass but not on the historical dispute or on what should be done to redress the historical injustice. Subsequently, Vajpayee resigned from the National Integration Council (NIC) in protest against the government's breach of agreement. Announcing his resignation, Vajpayee said that the government had deliberately publicised the deliberations of the committee even though the tacit understanding was that it would not do so. In all, everything suggested that the BJP was prepared to relent on the Ram Mandir issue but it was not prepared to publicly shed its strident, pro-Hindu mantle.

Withdrawal of support: Ever since late August this year, several BJP leaders have been hinting that their disenchantment with the National Front government had got to a point of no return. On 21 September, for instance, several BJP leaders, includ-

THE GROWING CONFUSION



Ram Janmabhoomi: The BJP leadership had sworn that nothing could deter it from going ahead with the Ram Temple project in Ayodhya. But at the meeting of the Committee on Communal Harmony, the party virtually ratified the resolution that "the verdict of the courts would be respected"



Withdrawal of support: Since August this year, several BJP leaders have been hinting at the possibility of the party withdrawing support to the V.P. Singh regime. Yet in Parliament, BJP members continue to support the government

ing Madan Lal Khurana, MP, warned that their party would be forced to consider withdrawing support to the government if it did not stop the repression of the anti-Mandal student agitation.

Earlier, at the BJP's Bhopal meet held in mid-September, Advani and others had issued highly critical statements against the V.P. Singh government and had warned that their support should not be taken for granted.

Yet, every time the BJP leadership has been specifically asked to comment on the question of withdrawing support to the government, it has demurred. In fact, the very next day after Sharma's disquieting announcements, Advani sidestepped the issue, saying that he would not like to comment on the party's poll strategy. More recently, the BJP leadership has taken pains to emphasise that it will not do anything to cause the collapse of the National Front government. In Parliament, BJP members continue to be the government's most vocal supporters on critical issues. When the Punjab Bill failed in Parliament on 1 October, the BJP virtually apologised to the government and issued a whip ordering all its MPs to be present when the Bill came up for a vote again on 4 October

Mandal Commission: Initial BJP statements on the National Front government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission report suggested that the BJP was fundamentally opposed to the idea. Several BJP leaders, including Advani, had spoken about how economic criteria and not caste should have been the basis for job reservations. Advani, in early September, had expressed scepticism over V.P. Singh's move to call an all-party meeting to discuss the reservation issue. He said the meeting would in no way end the nation-wide turmoil caused by the Mandal report since it was meant only for discussing ways to implement the report. Of late, however, the BJP is saying that its objections stem from the fact that the decision to implement the report was made in a hurry without consulting friendly parties and that the government had made no serious attempts to talk to the agitating students.

By deciding to implement the Mandal report, V.P. Singh has changed the rules of the game. It might cost him his job, but the BJP won't be the beneficiary either

All this speaks of a dilemma gripping the BJP leadership. The manifestation is the series of choleric press statements being issued almost daily by the party leadership. In the past, the BJP had tried its best to appear as a disciplined, responsible and sober political party. It spoke little, and that too mainly on matters of political principles, and tried to give the impression that it was a notch above the rest. That image today is fast crumbling. The BJP is snarling in annoyance. Something obviously has gone wrong.

The BJP's entire political strategy, in fact, is in shambles. Till a couple of months ago, the party was moving confidently ahead with its plans to emerge as the country's principal Opposition party. BJP leaders had argued that the National Front government was fast losing credibility and would ultimately be disgraced. The Congress(I) was still suspect but remained a major political force throughout the country. Hardliners like Advani were of the opinion that the BJP would at some point have to ditch the Janata Dal and fight for a prominent place in the Opposition.

Traditionally, the Congress(I) has secured between 35 and 45 per cent of the total votes and the remainder has usually gone to the Opposition The Opposition has defeated the Congress(I) on the two occasions it has come together—in 1977 and in 1989. The BJP felt that with the decline of the mainstream Opposition as represented by the Janata Dal and the Congress(I), it could corner a dominant share of the Opposition vote provided it succeeded in projecting itself as a principled pro-Hindu force. The scenario disappeared once V.P. Singh decided to implement the Mandal report. Politics henceforth would be determined not so much by the old electoral equations but by caste equations. The BJP suddenly found itself cornered, handicapped by its upper class identity. As one BJP leader commented: "We have the Hindus, but V.P. Singh has their wallets." The BJP today is left to compete with the Congress(I) for upper caste votes. Vishwanath Pratap Singh has changed the rules of the game. It might ultimately cost the Prime Minister his job but the BJP won't be the beneficiary either. In the circumstances, it can do little but bark. If it bites, it will be attacking its own political future. ●

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi



Mandal Commission: Initial BJP statements suggested that the party was fundamentally opposed to the Mandal Commission. Of late, however, the BJP is saying that its objections stem from the fact that the decision to implement the report was taken in a hurry without consulting friendly parties





FRENZY!

Communal clashes claim 36 lives in Uttar Pradesh

All the signs of the impending storm were there for everyone to see. Colonelganj, in the Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh, is only 50 kms from Ayodhya. The town and the surrounding villages has an equal mix of Hindu and Muslim population. And with 30 October—the day on which the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) plans to start the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya—fast approaching, tension had gripped Colonelganj and its adjoining areas. All it needed was a spark to ignite the volatile atmosphere. And Durga Puja provided just that occasion for the uneasy calm to be shattered. On 30 September, riots broke out in Colonelganj and its neighbouring villages, leaving at least 36 people dead. The unofficial count is much higher and the death toll could well cross the 50 mark as bodies are being recovered from the fields and ponds almost everyday.

Colonelganj doesn't have a single Bengali, yet Durga Puja is celebrated with much fanfare. "The festival is another pretext for the Hindus to demonstrate their strength," said a local Muslim doctor. "We protested vociferously in the beginning especially because on the day of the immersion, the processions usually wound its way through Muslim-dominated areas. But the Hinu leaders just wouldn't listen." Finally, of course, a compromise was reached: it was agreed that the Hindus would not shout slogans while passing through Muslim areas. They kept their word and until this year, the occasion passed off peacefully.

But Durga Puja generates tension every year and the town has been identified by the administration as "communally sensitive". According to Faizlul Bari, a former CPI legislator from Gonda, the small town of Colonelganj is full of socio-cultural outfits belonging to both the Hindus and Muslims. And these have only contributed to the prevailing atmosphere of mutual distrust between the two communities. Bari cited the example of the Shah Bano case, which rocked the nation in 1985. At that time the Bajrang Dal activists of Colonelganj promptly held a seminar on the need for a uniform civil code, where provocative speeches were made. Not to be outdone, the Muslims too held a public meeting to uphold the cause of the personal law. Clearly, the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue was bound to sway the people of Gonda, especially at a time when Advani's chariot is fast approaching Ayodhya.

The early portents were manifest in the first week of September when a state BJP leader, Kalyan Singh, addressed a large gathering of some 5,000 people in Colonelganj, on the Ram Temple issue. Apart from the usual provocative statements, his speech reportedly implied that Hindus should arm themselves. Said a local Muslim leader who requested anonymity: "There was palpable tension after Singh's departure. Everyone was wondering when things would explode." Soon, defiant VHP slogans appeared on the walls. Both Hindus and Muslims accused each other of having made preparations for a showdown on the day of the immersion.

However, one telling incident, which ought to have made the administration sit up, occurred on 29 September, the day of Vijaya Dashami, when Ravana's effigy was burnt on the Ram Lila ground. Members of the Bajrang Dal went around collecting funds not only from established shops but from vendors and hawkers as well. A Muslim vegetable seller, who had refused to comply with their constant demands, was even assaulted. He rushed to the residence of a Janata Dal leader, Talukdar Khan, for help. Khan, who was subsequently arrested for abetting the riots and is presently in Gonda jail, said: "I turned him away because my intervention would have aggravated the tension." But by then, a mob of Bajrang Dal activists began heading towards Khan's house, as it was very close to the ground. They raised slogans against Khan and other well-known Muslim leaders from the area and threatened to "take their revenge the next day". Some Bajrang Dal members also reportedly climbed atop the elevated quadrangle of a mosque adjacent to the Ram Lila ground, and clashed with the Muslims guarding the place. Rattled by these happenings, the local Muslim leaders, including Khan,



KRISHAN SAITH

DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

(From far left) People rounded up by the police on charges of rioting; a house gutted by rioters; eight people of a family were butchered in one of the villages

approached the sub-divisional magistrate and senior police officials, asking them to either ban the Durga Puja procession on the next day or at least requisition additional security forces to patrol the sensitive areas. On the strength of the officials' assurances that the latter request would be complied with, the Muslims, who could well have left the place temporarily and stayed with friends and relatives in nearby places, chose to remain in Colonelganj. The only preventive step they took was to close their shops on the day of the immersion.

In the prevailing tense atmosphere, this was perceived by the Hindus as a "clever camouflage" for a well-planned attack by the Muslims. The procession, which had reportedly drawn some 5,000 people mostly from the surrounding villages, was led by senior political leaders from all parties. They included the local MLA, Ajay Pratap Singh, an Independent backed by the BJP, Khadesh Chand Singhania, chairman of the municipality and a Congress(I) member, and Shri Narain Bhatt, chairman of the local VHP unit. The young activists, particularly those from the Bajrang Dal, were armed with tridents, maces, *lathis* and spears. Some Muslim onlookers alleged that the tractors carrying the idols had bricks and country-made bombs concealed in them. When the procession entered the Muslim-dominated locality of Nayee Bazaar and reached a mosque, Bajrang Dal activists raised provocative slogans.

The trouble began at this point, though in the maze of allegations and counter-allegations it is impossible to pinpoint its source. According to the administration, two Hindu boys were engaged in a mock fight with their swords, during which one of them was injured on the leg. Soon, the rumour spread that a Muslim was assaulted by a Hindu. The Muslims began pelting bricks and stones from the rooftops of their houses on the procession. This version is contradicted by some Muslim spectators who maintained that the inflammatory slogans raised by the processionists provoked a mild protest from them, as a result of which they were attacked. The few policemen posted in and around the area began firing in the air. The cops even broke into houses and rounded up people indiscriminately.

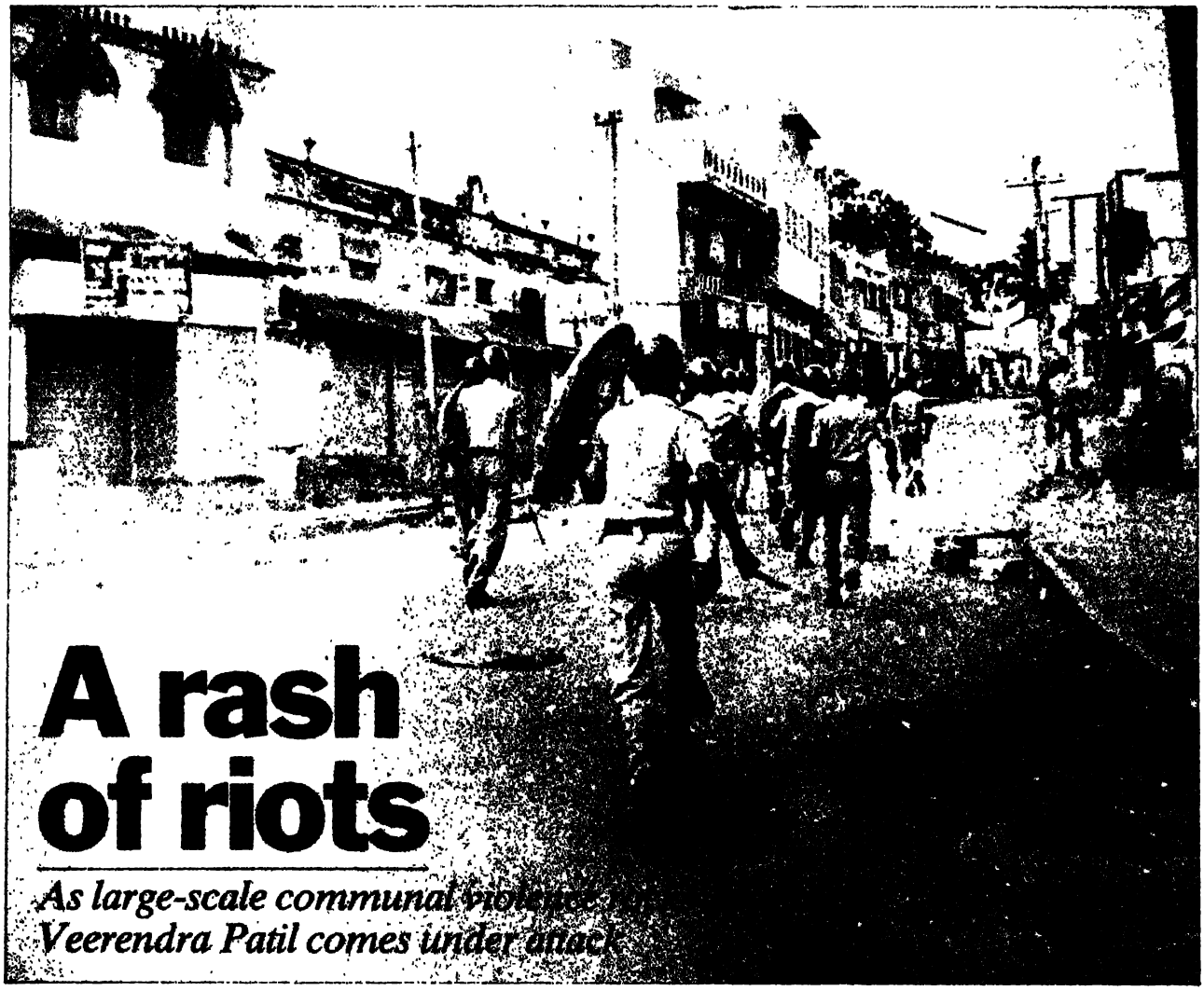
If the first blunder that the administration had committed was not heeding the warning of the Muslim leaders, its second mistake was not ensuring the safe passage of those who had come in from the villages back home. It proved costly, because almost at once the villages were rife with rumours that those Hindus who had not returned home, were massacred by Muslims in Colonelganj. The action now shifted to the rural areas. Pande Choraha, about ten kms from Colonelganj, typifies the pattern. Mohammad Yunus, a small farmer who supplements his earnings by stitching clothes, was the first victim. He recalled, "I was returning from the field at dusk when three men from this village—Ram Sabha, Jagdamba Tiwari and Durga Singh—waylaid and assaulted me." That night a mob of about 500 led by these three men descended on the Muslim hamlets and set fire to some ten houses after looting them to the cries of, *"Jai Durga Mata"*. Some villagers alerted the cops at Colonelganj around three am, but they were turned away with the assurance that the forces would be despatched the next morning. Nothing of the sort happened.

The Muslims of Colonelganj had warned the administration well in advance. But the forces moved in only after the damage was done

Around noon, a replenished force of nearly 2,000 Hindus stormed the place and set fire to the remaining houses. They didn't stop at that. This time they killed some of the Muslims and raped four women, who were too scared to disclose their identities. Eight members of just one family—that of Jameel Ahmed, a tailor—were hacked to death and their bodies thrown into the well outside the house. The village mosque was demolished, and the Koran was torn to shreds. The police force strolled into the village only that evening, by which time the damage had already been done. This pattern of violence was repeated in the other six hamlets which were attacked. All that the villages now have by way of security are contingents of the infamous Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), whose anti-Muslim bias is well-known. "Remove the PAC at once and instead give us arms to defend ourselves", is the demand of most Muslims in the rural areas.

A judicial inquiry into the riots has been ordered, and the officials who were in charge earlier have either been suspended or transferred. But the polarisation of Hindus and Muslims is total, and with the youths of the area geared up to join the VHP in Ayodhya on 30 October, what lies in store for the Muslims is anybody's guess. ●

Radhika Ramaseshan/Colonelganj



A rash of riots

As large-scale communal violence rages, Veerendra Patil comes under attack

It is a state that has prided itself on its record on communal harmony. Over the years, Karnataka may have witnessed the odd Hindu-Muslim clash. But in a country where large-scale communal riots occur periodically, it could still be held up as a model of peace and amity.

No longer. During the first week of October, a surprised government was caught off-guard when frenzied mobs went on the rampage in various parts of the state. The violence first erupted on 3 October in Chennapatna, some 70 kilometres from Bangalore and then spread like wildfire to far-flung places such as Kolar and Davangere. In just four days, the official death toll at all the three places was over 30.

At the end of last week, the unprecedented riots appeared likely to have a serious political fall-out. AICC president Rajiv Gandhi, who made an unscheduled visit to tour the communally-ravaged areas in the state, announced the sack of chief minister Veerendra Patil and promised that Karnataka would, from now on, have a government that "works". In response, a combative Patil—who is ailing from a paralytic stroke—announced from his sick bed that there was no question of his stepping down. He argued that the demand for his resignation was a prerogative only of the Congress legislature party and not that of the high command. At the time of writing, it is difficult to say how this political clash will resolve itself, but Rajiv and Patil may well be heading for a no-holds-barred showdown.

If chief minister Patil could be held directly responsible for failing to avert the mayhem, it was because he is also home minister. And although he has been laid up since 24 September, Patil, until recently, failed to transfer the portfolio to one of his colleagues.

Moreover, it was also possible to argue that the state should have anticipated—or at least been more prepared for—the large-scale violence. As early as 2 September, there was a communal clash in Ramanagaram, with neighbours Chennapatna. An altercation at a gambling den led to four people being beaten up, the burning of many huts and a number of stabbing incidents. Although curfew was imposed and the situation brought under control, the government—perhaps misled by the air of peacefulness—had not taken enough steps to soothe frayed nerves.

Clearly, the violence that shook Chennapatna a month later caught Patil and his government napping. The match for the ensuing conflagration was lit when a Hindu boy

teased a Muslim girl. When rumourmongers managed to successfully portray the eve-teasing incident as a molestation bid, mobs belonging to both the communities took to the streets.

In the frenzy, 17 people were brutally killed - either clubbed to death or burnt alive. Concentrated attacks were carried out on Muslim-dominated areas of the town. The rampaging mobs gutted houses, resorted to looting, and destroyed vehicles and shops.

The incidents at Chennapatna were quickly followed by trouble in Kolar. The problem began when some miscreants attempted to destroy the decorative illuminations that were lit to mark Prophet Mohammed's birth anniversary. This led the Muslims to take to the streets and destroy a few vehicles but the police were able to bring the situation under control by imposing a curfew. The following day, however, Hindu communalists retaliated and by nightfall many people had been injured—two fatally stabbed.

As the violence cast a tense atmosphere all over the state, the ailing chief minister Patil, who had been virtually politically inactive—summoned an emergency meeting of the council of ministers. Curfew was declared in the riot-hit towns and surrounding areas and the police were armed with shoot-at-sight orders.

But even as the state government was preparing to send teams of ministers to the affected areas, there was more disturbing news. Communal violence had broken out over the Ram Shila Jyoti processions at Davangere in Chitradurga district.

The processionists bearing the Shila Jyoti had assured the police that they would not march through areas inhabited by the Muslims. But then for reasons best known to them—went back on their word. When warnings to keep the procession away from sensitive areas failed, the police resorted to tear-gas shelling and firing in the air. Instead of dispersing, the mob retaliated by pelting the police with stones. Finally, the police took what it says was its last option. It fired at the crowd killing one person.

Even as it was engaged in trying to control the mob, communal violence—which led to eight people being stabbed to death—broke out in other parts of Davangere. At the end of the day (7 October), a nervous state administration took large-scale preventive measures—a number of villages and towns were placed under curfew and, as a precaution, Section 144 was even imposed on the state capital, Bangalore.



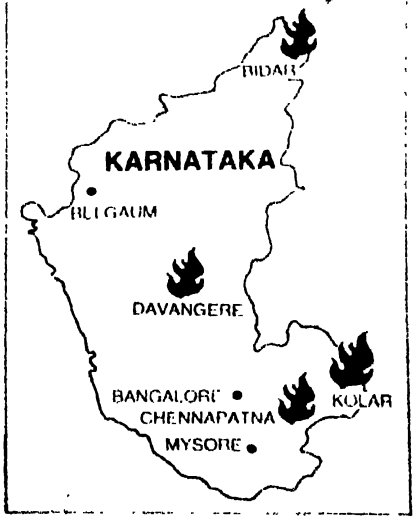


The riots provided the excuse for Rajiv Gandhi (right) to get at Veerendra Patil

The rash of riots revealed that the state police is woefully ill-equipped to deal with large-scale disturbances of this kind. Says one high-ranking police officer: "For long, it has been a recognised fact that the police force in communally sensitive areas needs beefing up. But successive governments have done nothing about it."

For the moment, anyhow, the administration has deployed as many platoons as possible in all the affected areas. In Chennapatna, which saw the worst of the violence, large numbers of policemen keep watch over deserted streets while the people do not so much as dare peep out of their windows. Says a resident: "Everybody is surprised that this could have happened. Both Hindus and Muslims have lived amicably in this town for decades. The last riot that we had here was in 1946 and the peace has been undisturbed since."

FLASHPOINTS



At least 60 people have been admitted with injuries—some serious—at the government hospital in Chennapatna. Says 40-year-old Riyaz Pasha, who is suffering from severe wounds at the hands of a rampaging mob: "They singled out my house as I am the only Muslim who lives in the locality. They spared my family but they left me only after they clubbed me repeatedly on the head and broke my arms in a number of places."

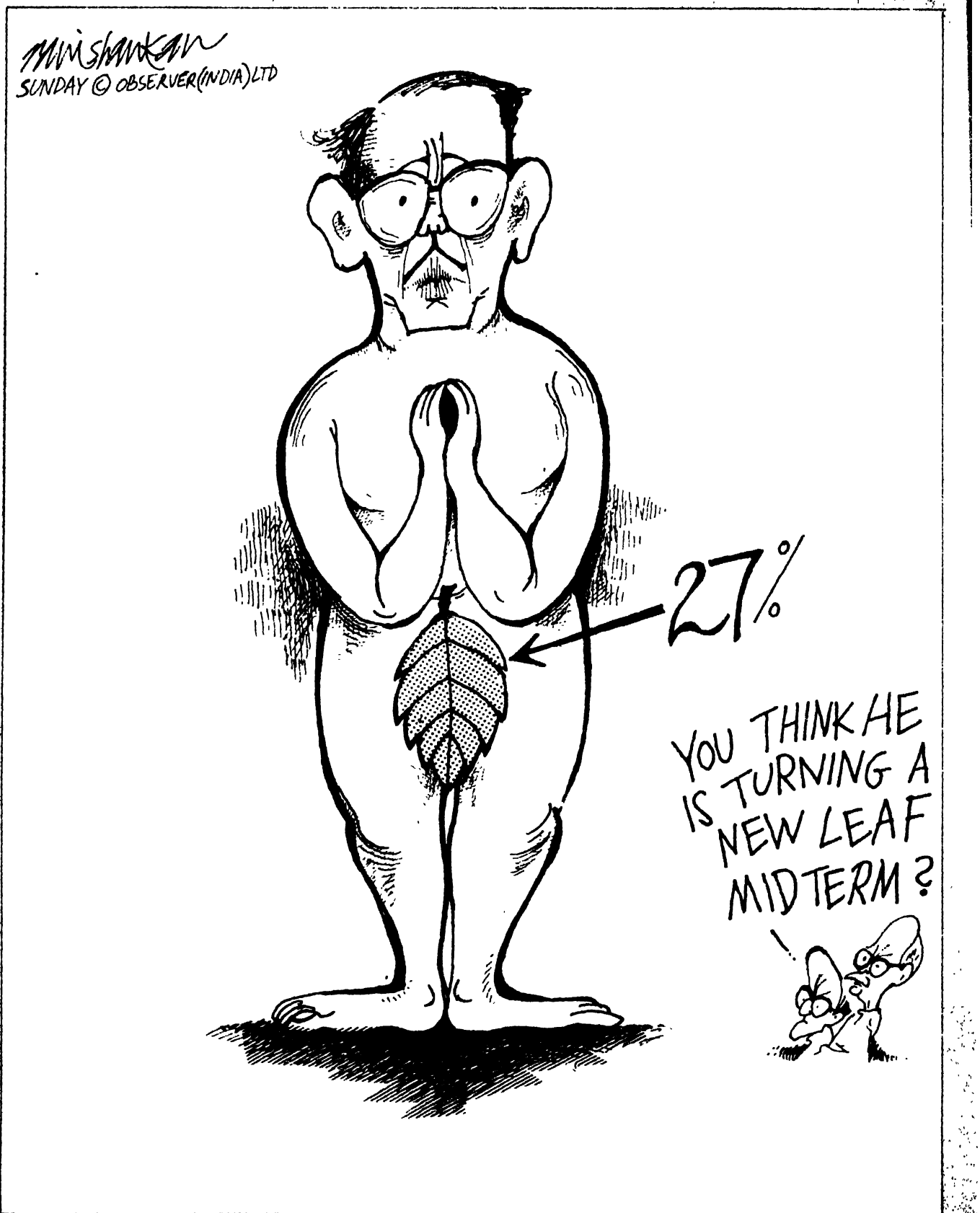
Even as the government was believed to have achieved a measure of control, there was even more violence—this time of a casteist nature. In northern Bidar, a clash broke out following an argument between two drunken youths which resulted in the death of seven people—four of them, including a girl, were roasted alive.

Chief minister Patil is going to have a hard time explaining the failure of his government to control the relentless spate of violence, which has left the state numb with shock. His more immediate problem, of course, is likely to be the Congress high command. Although Patil has given in to pressure and handed over the home portfolio to Cabinet colleague K. Ranganath, he appears adamant about not stepping down.

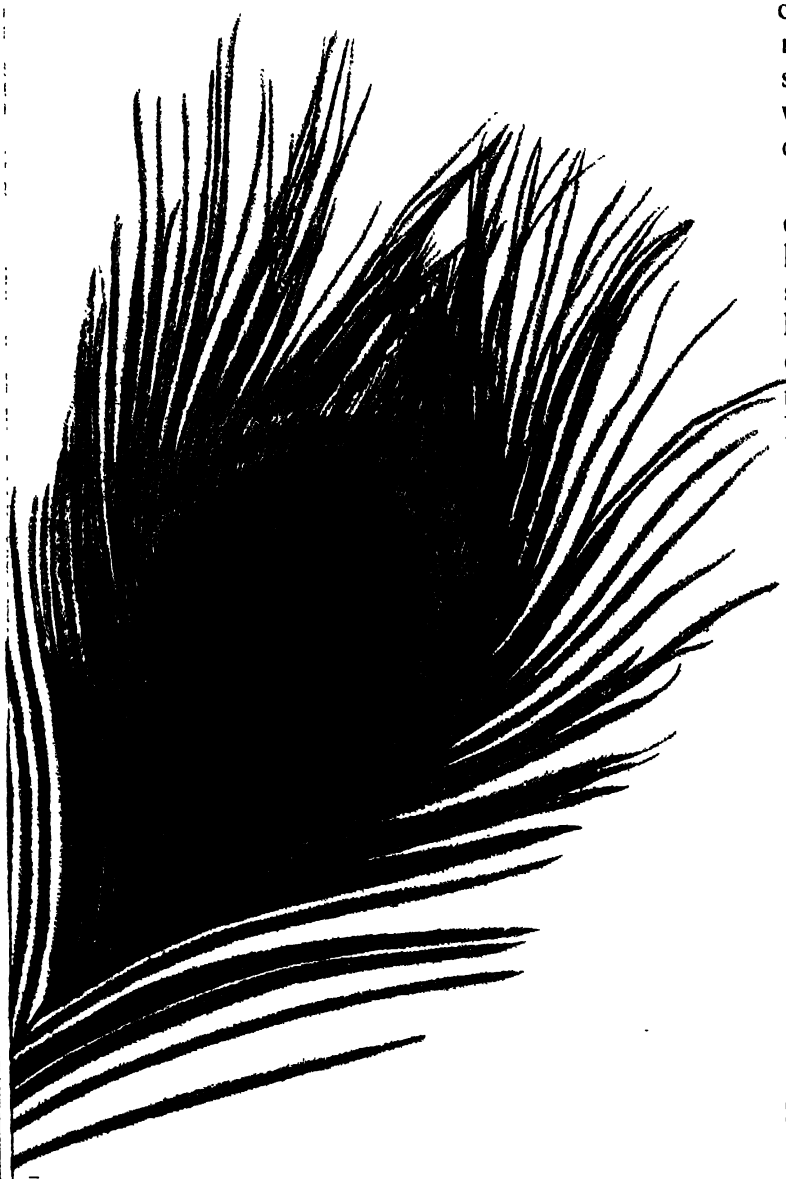
Whatever the outcome of Patil's wrangle with Rajiv Gandhi, there is no doubt that the chief minister's detractors within the state Congress will begin using his poor health and his failure to check the rioting to politically undermine him. There is a danger that, in the following weeks, the Patil-Rajiv squabble will draw attention away from the carnage that was perpetuated in Karnataka in the first few days of October. But if Karnataka wants to keep boasting about its hitherto enviable record on the communal front, then it will have to think hard and long about what went wrong in those terrible days.●

Gauri Lankesh/Karnataka

RAVI SHANKAR



It's not on birds alone that feathers look good.



Many a time, it takes simple logic to manufacture what is required.

The Indian weaving industry, by inducting hi-tech looms, started producing world-class fabrics to meet the discerning tastes of the Indian public.

And Indo Rama set up a state-of-the-art 25,344 spindles plant to meet the requirement of the sophisticated weaving looms which would not work except with top-quality, zero-error yarn.

Which explains why the electronically-cleared, spliced, knot-less and contamination-free synthetic blended yarns from Indo Rama have become the first choice of all major textile manufacturers and exporters in India. In just one year.

And why over 50 percent of the company's production is exported to premium Europe – Germany, France, Italy, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

And also why the company is already on its way to doubling its capacity with a 100% export oriented Cotton and Polyester/ Cotton yarn project.

We have earned our feathers. The birds will be eating their hearts out.

INDO RAMA SYNTHETICS (I) LTD.

903, Mohan Dev Building,
13, Tolstoy Marg,
New Delhi 110001

We / have / only / scratched / the / surface

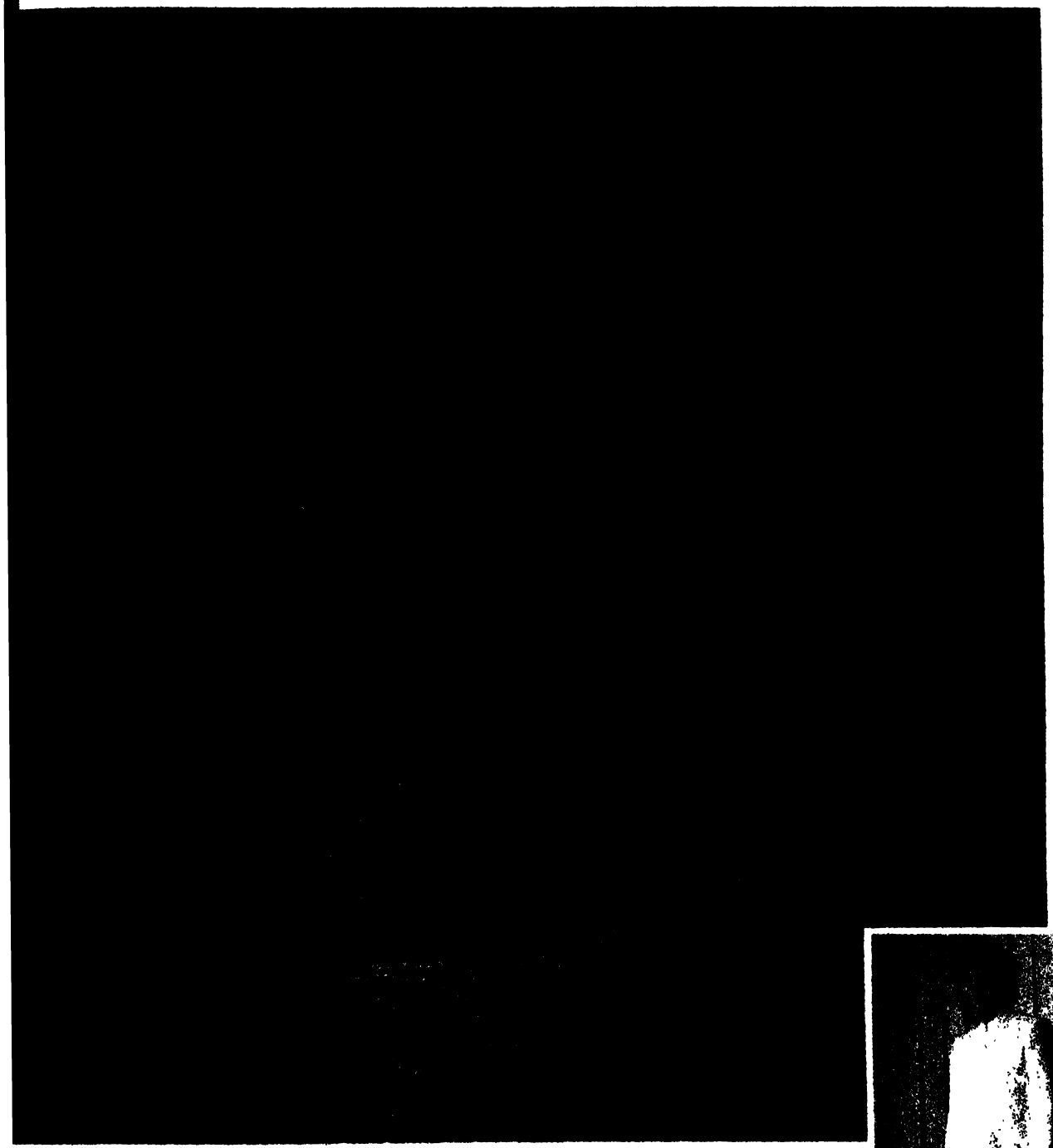
R K SWAMY. IRS 5911

You don't need the magic of a maestro's touch to be a Raymond's man



What paint and brush were to Picasso, the Santoor is to Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma – an extension of a supremely creative will. In his inspired hands, the Santoor has transcended rhythm and melody and sings to the world in the inspired language of his beloved Kashmir.

The world has, in turn,



responded with accolade and honour: the Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Honorary Citizenship of the City of Baltimore, Indian Classical music's first Platinum Disc for The Call of the Valley and special performances before the House of Lords in Britain, and the Queen of Holland, Chief Guest of India's President, at the Hague.

On social occasions, when heads turn at his presence, it is certainly *not* because of his flawless sherwani which may just happen to be tailored from Raymond's sparkle polyester, wool and silk. A fabric with impeccable feel and fall, it never fails to sing the praises of its wearer.

You don't have to be a musical genius to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

... but it helps.



Raymond's

Never say no to life.

THE FLOOR SHOW THAT FAILED

It was hardly the kind of reception she was expecting. Or reviews, for that matter.

For, things went downhill quite rapidly from the time the Indian high commissioner to London Kuldip Nayar inaugurated the Mamata Shankar show. The performance by Shankar's dance troupe was panned variously as: "mind-numbingly puerile", "a hybrid of East and West and perverting both stylistic sensibilities", "so-called experimental choreography" and even as a "night club-style floor show" for which the West had little use.

Wrote the dance critic of *The Guardian*: "We no longer need the kind of patronising and simplistic initiation to Indian dance which Mamata Shankar peddles."

As beginnings go, this was hardly fortuitous.



VIVEK DAS

Mamata Shankar: the tour continues, and never mind the critics

But Mamata intends to go through with the tour.

As they say in the business, the show must go on.

CHAL MERI LUNA

No, he doesn't qualify for a driving licence: he's under age.

But when you're Sachin Tendulkar, such minor details don't deter people from signing you up for "Conserve petrol" campaigns.

Though in this instance, the campaign is only a thinly-veiled advertisement for Kinetic Engineering Ltd, with Tendulkar asking everyone to plump for the fuel-efficient Luna moped to beat the current petrol crunch.

Of course, since Sachin's too much of a baby to carry things off on his own, there's Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin join in with a vehement *"Chal meri* Luna".

But, without a doubt, Sachin steals the show with his baby-faced charm.



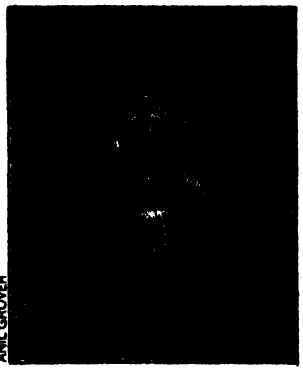
UTPAL SORKAR

Sachin Tendulkar: what's age got to do with it?

CLOSE ENCOUNTER

It started off with a fairly routine complaint. Some neighbours of Yamini Krishnamurthy called the police to allege that the Bharatnatyam dancer's practice sessions were keeping them awake at night.

And soon enough, a policeman landed up at Krishnamurthy's house in Alwerpet to investigate. But he wasn't in uniform, and the man-friend who opened the door wasn't too convinced about his antecedents. An altercation followed, with Yamini, who tried to intervene, being assaulted by the officer of the law.



ANIL GROVER

Yamini Krishnamurthy: did her *ghungroos* make too much noise?

The dancer's friends were hauled off to the police station, with Krishnamurthy following in her car. More abuse followed with Yamini and her friends being arrested.

Of course, they were later released on bail. But by then the damage had been done.

And the PR exercise that followed didn't make things any better.

FEMINIST IRE

In popular perception, she is the prime candidate for canonisation. But noted feminist and author of the much-acclaimed *The Female Eunuch,* Germaine Greer, has her own views on Mother Teresa.

In a column for *The Independent* (London) colour magazine, titled *Heroes and Villains,* Greer wrote: "Mother Teresa is good; everyone agrees that she is good. To be considered so good is a fearful hazard for the immortal soul. Yet Mother Teresa does nothing to correct the popular tendency to canonise her by acclaim before she is dead."

That wasn't all. Questioning the piety of the newly re-elected head of the Missionaries of Charity, Greer continued: "Mother Teresa is a religious imperialist who believes that Hinduism and Islam are wrong and Catholicism is right. She is not ministering to the poor of Calcutta for their own sake but for the sake of their Catholic God ...Mother Teresa epitomises for me the blinkered charitableness upon which we pride ourselves and for which we expect reward in this world and the next.

"There is very little on earth that I hate more than I hate that."



DILIP BANERJEE

Mother Teresa: under fire

ZOOMING IN

Before she retired to the Kenyan wilds to recuperate from tabloid fatigue, Pamella Bordes had said, with due disdain: "I'd much rather photograph animals than people." And sure enough, our Pam from Haryana turned out some great wildlife pictures.

Now, however, Bordes wants back into civilisation. And she has announced her arrival in the human world by donning her safari jacket and a baseball cap to cover a football match in England for a local Sunday paper. "It is my first football match," Pamella admitted coyly, before dashing up the soggy field to get a close-up of World Cup English star Paul Gascoigne.

And as far as Bordes' subjects are concerned, the lady can't get close enough.

Pamella Bordes: it's football stars now



THE GERMAN QUESTION

You can't fault his timing. On 3 October, when the two Germanys reunited, director Mrinal Sen began shooting his new film in the back streets of Calcutta.

And no, this wasn't going to be the usual story of middle-class *angst*, but would focus instead on German unification, with Sen examining the implications of this international event, through the persona of a Bengali youth who returns from East Berlin to come up against the chaotic situation in his own country.

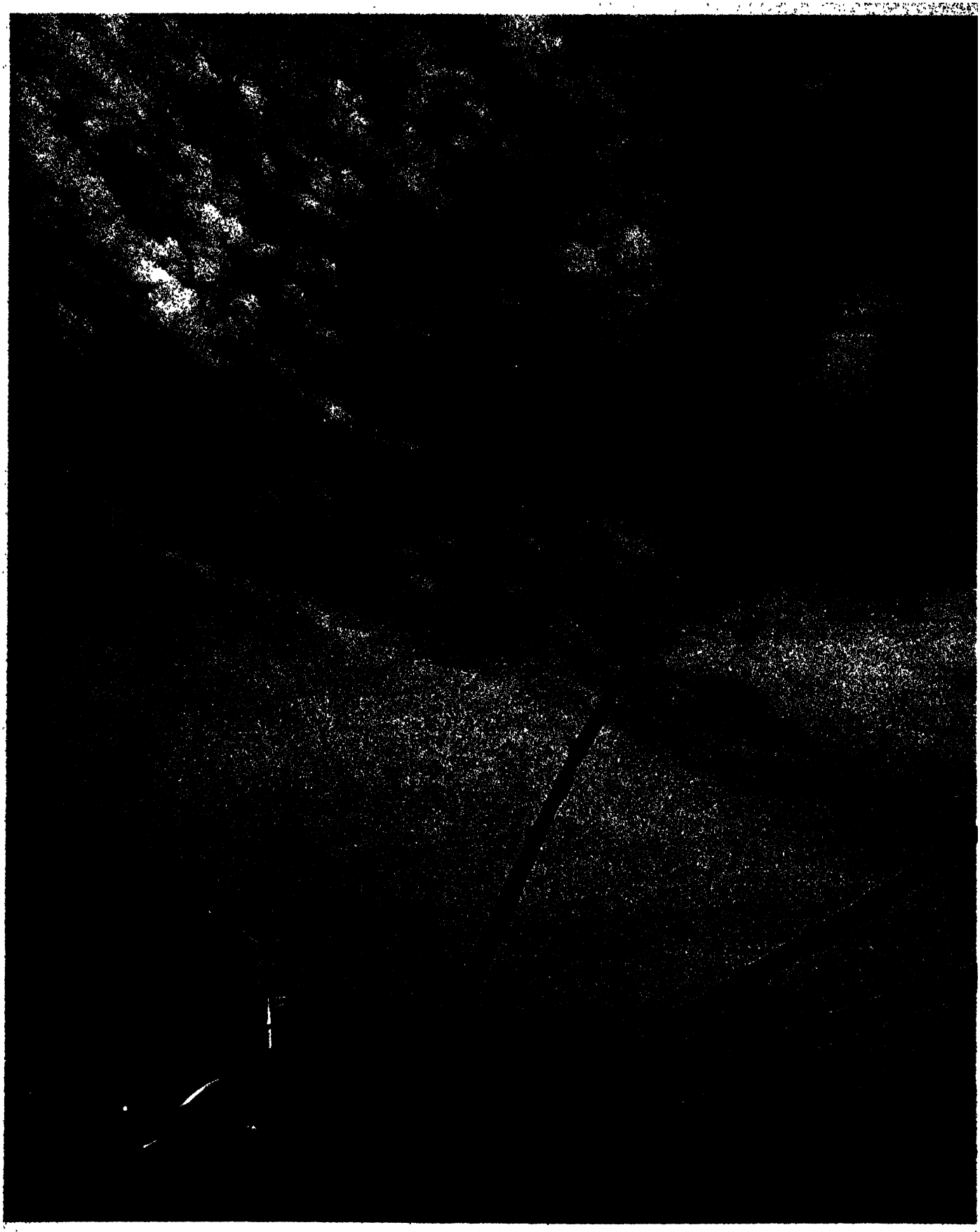


RASHBEHARI DAS

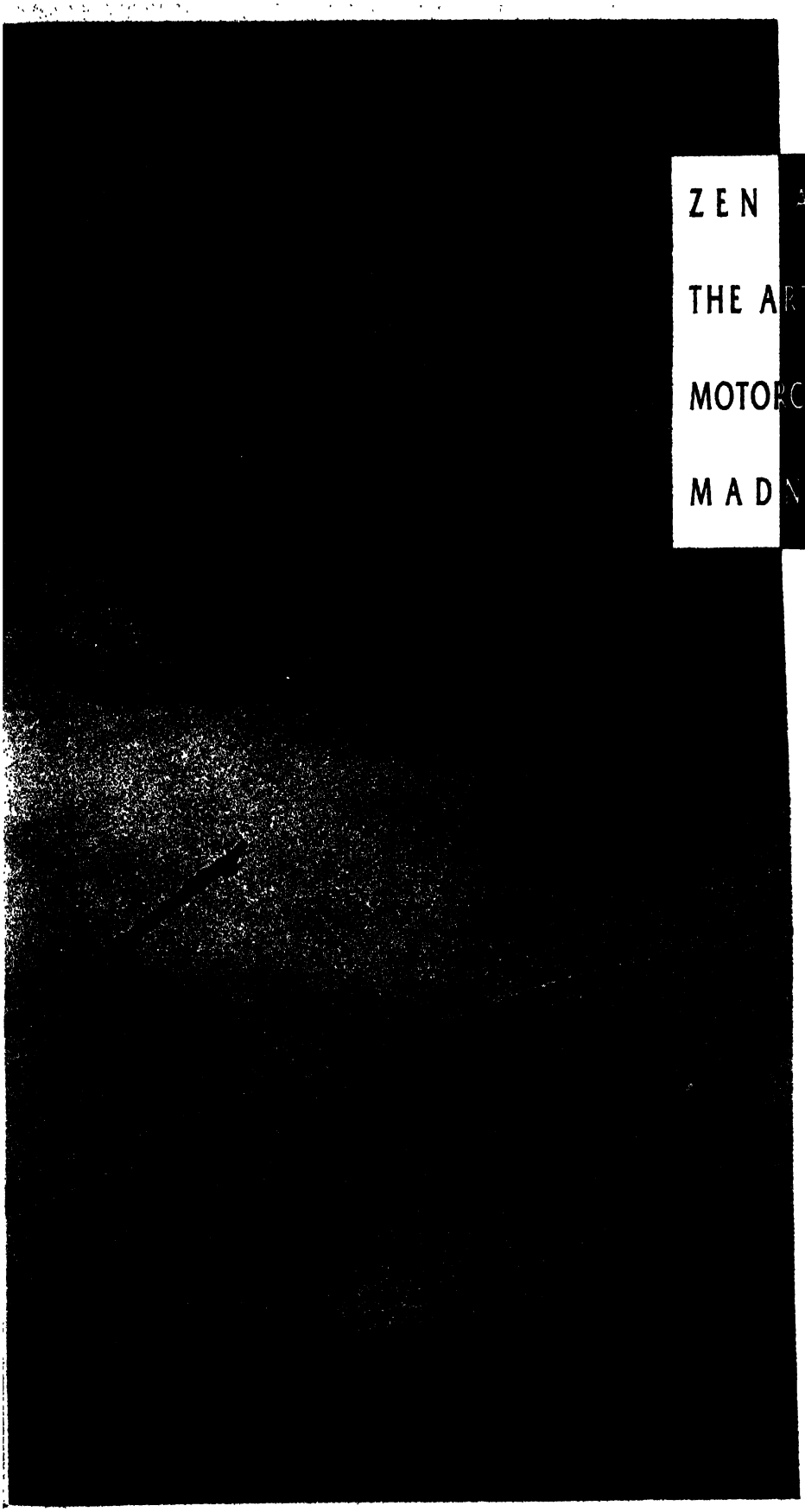
Mrinal Sen: going international

The film, Sen's first in Bengali after *Kharij* (1982), will pay special attention to the reaction to the unification in the erstwhile state of East Germany, once the initial euphoria wears off.

Sen, who has spent the last few months researching his subject, is confident that his film will faithfully project "a very disturbing experience of changes at home and abroad". •



LINTAS IND S 3 2739



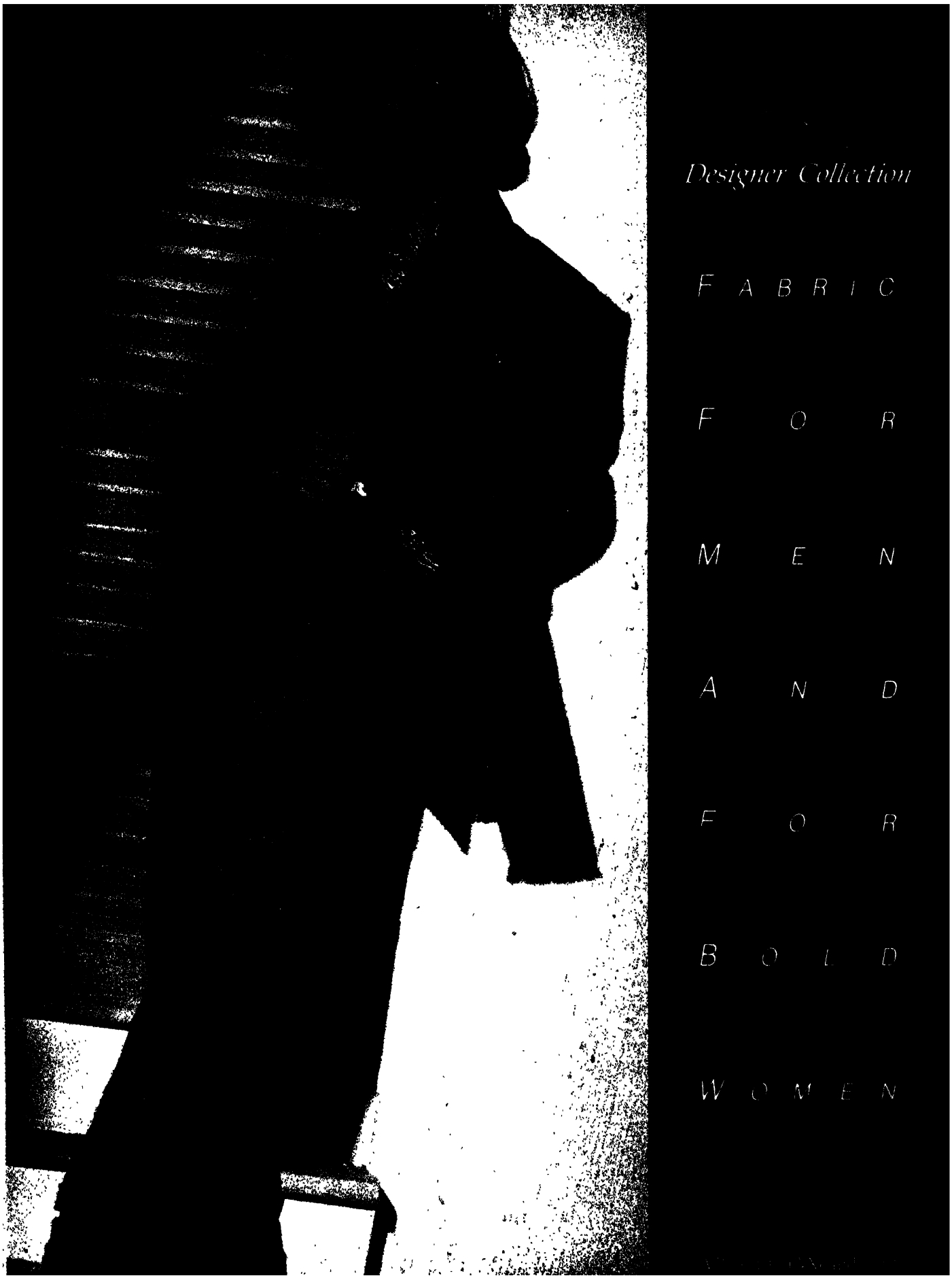
ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MADNESS

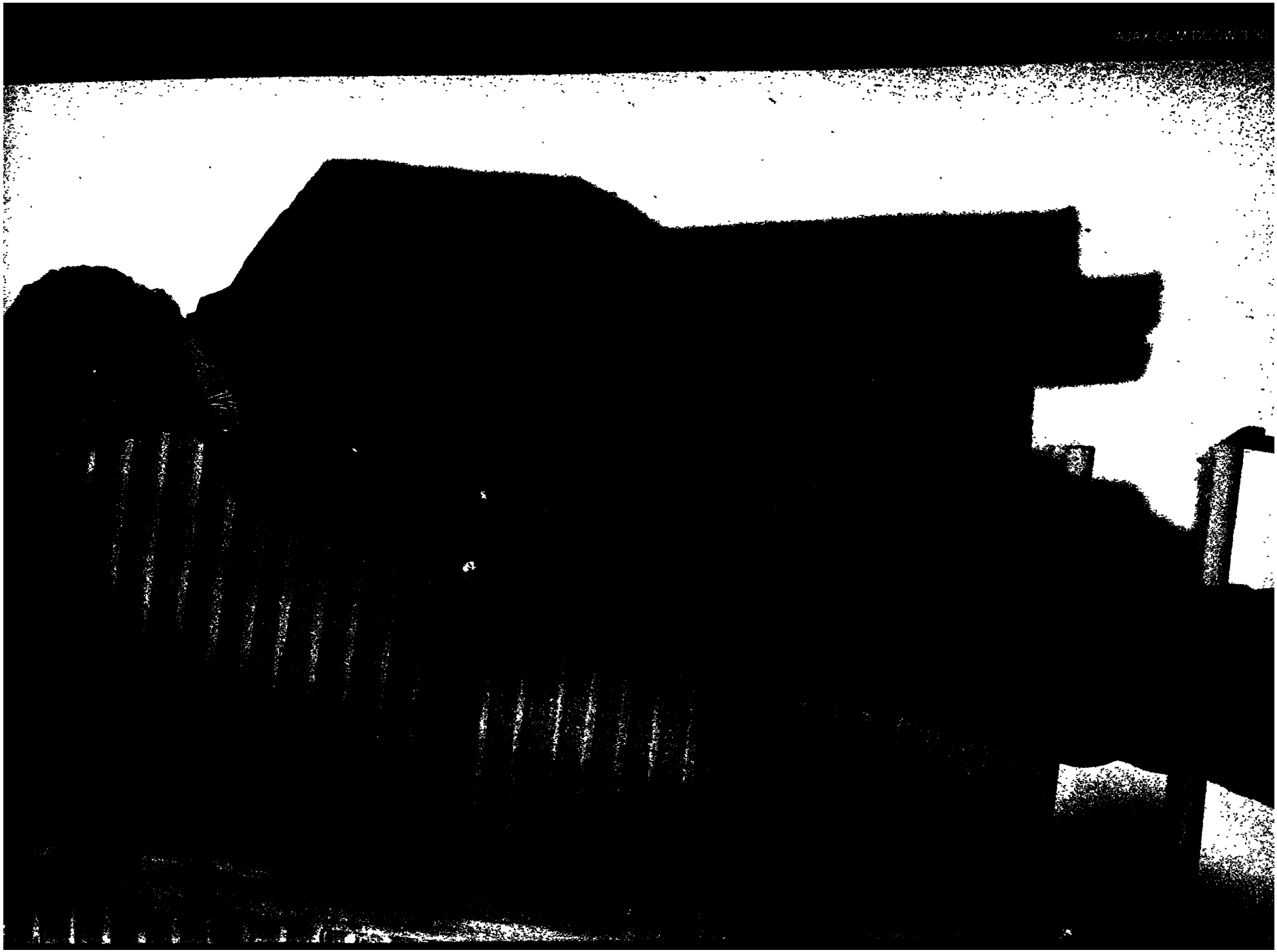
"My first bike. I bunk office. Escape the memos, the telephones, the peppermint-breath boss. The smell of new motorcycle: metal, oil, grease. I swear no other guy will touch her. Take-a my girl, but don't touch-a my bike. Hey! Is there anybody out there who knows how I feel? Or am I the only motorcycle freak in the world? 4th gear. Power. Kee-yah!"



What is this passion that a man feels for his motorcycle that compels him to buy Castrol Super TT? When it's tougher to find than any other engine oil? When it's more expensive? The Buddhist teachings of Zen say: some things in life should not be explained. But merely experienced.

CASTROL SUPER TT


Designer Collection
FABRIC
FOR
MEN
AND
FOR
BOLD
WOMEN





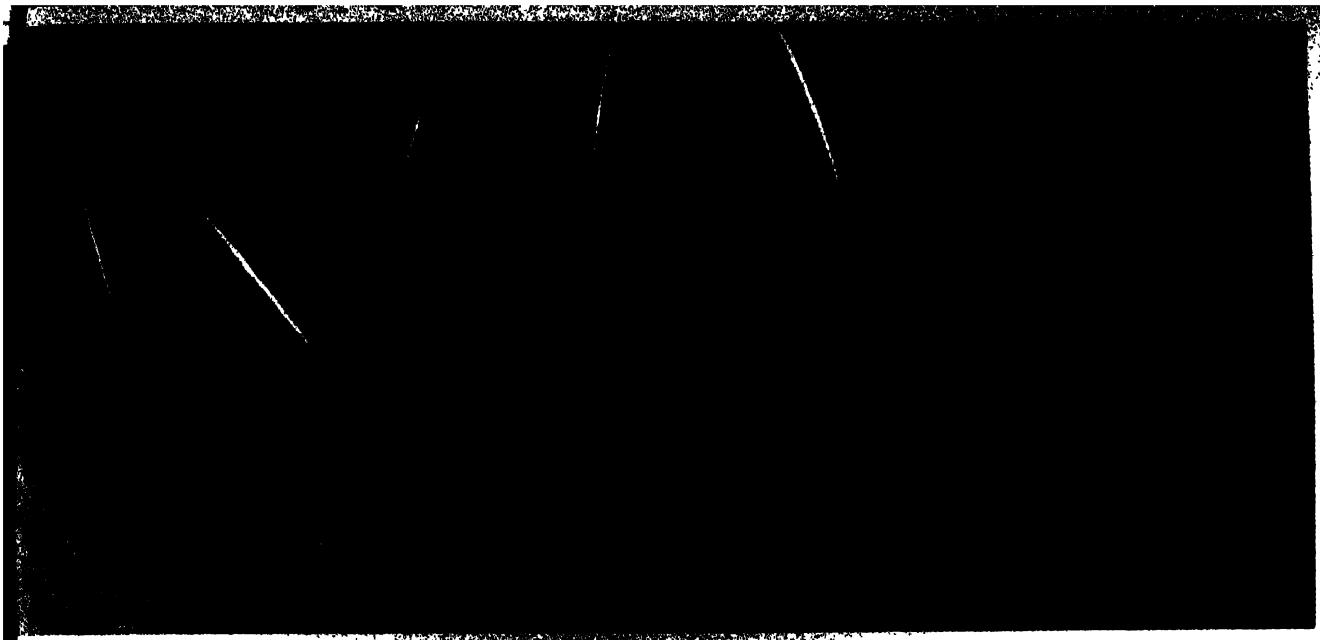
HOW TO MAKE STEEL TWIST AND SHOUT

At a speed of 65m/sec. In diameters ranging from 5.5mm to 25mm. In wire rods. In stainless and alloy steels.

Mukand does it.

Mukand's Speciality Steels Division manufactures steel into 400 different grades. In blooms, billets, bars, rounds and rods. And in the widest range of sizes. To do this, Mukand has India's largest electric arc furnace complex. It produces over 3,00,000 tonnes of specialty steels a year. Mukand is India's largest manufacturer and

CASTINGS ● SPECIALITY ST



exporter of stainless steels.

Mukand is also India's largest steel foundry in the private sector and leads in exports of alloy steel castings. Mukand designs and builds some of India's biggest, most complex valves and machines and undertakes execution of major process engineering projects.

Mukand is a multi-product, multi-division, Rs. 500-crore conglomerate.

The commitment of Mukand's people to technology, innovation, research and development has given them a rare insight into steel and its applications. Mukand knows how to make steel, engineer it and use it effectively.

In 50 years, Mukand has truly become a mastermind in steel.

MUKAND LTD.
(Formerly Mukand Iron & Steel Works Ltd.)
L.B.S. Marg, Kurla, Bombay 400 070

MUKAND. MASTERMINDS IN STEEL

BUILDING ENGINEERING

COMPANIES

WATCH OUT!

Titan and HMT slug it out in a war to tell—and sell—time

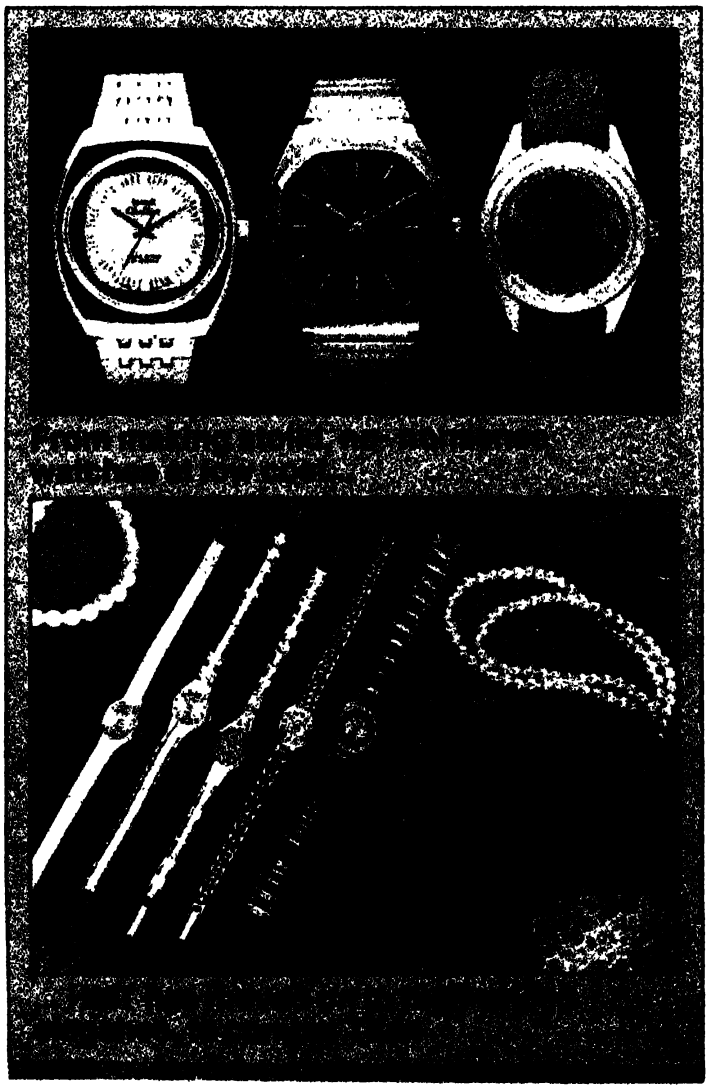
Very simply, it's a battle for time. .Quartz time. And the two key players are giving it all they have to go for a win: 30-year-old public sector giant HMT Ltd, and private company Titan Watches Ltd, three years old, and in a hurry to command India's Rs 600 crores a year-plus watch market.

The war has been on for a while. HMT threw its weight around till 1987, pushing a stolid line of moderately priced, no-nonsense, mostly mechanical watches. Then, Titan stepped in with its all-quartz range, both flashy and elegant, raising the stakes from HMT's Rs 300-700 line up to its own Rs 400-1,800 one. HMT introduced new designs, and in March this year, hit back with its Rs 3,000 a watch *Elegance* range, to outclass Titan's less expensive *Classique* models. Now Titan, not to be outdone, is planning to introduce a Rs 5,000 collection of watches by the year-end.

The game, accompanied by massive advertising hype—Titan's ad budget is close to Rs 3 crores, and HMT is not doing too badly, either—in print and television time, is as frenzied as it can get, with both dealers and urban consumers being wooed constantly.

Titan's tack is mainly on advertising. "Yeah," says Ravi Kant, Titan's vice-president for marketing and sales, "then at the time of purchase the product speaks for itself." And displays, for that final bit of hard-sell. "We have a team of architects," says Kant, "who undertake the designing of showrooms, and a group of people in the company who undertake the design of displays."

HMT has 35 exclusive showrooms and more than 5,000 dealers and retailers countrywide. By comparison, Titan has 21 exclusive showrooms—expected to increase to 50 by end-1990—and 300 dealers and retailers all over India. An increase will, inevitably, mean that some HMT outlets swing Titan's way.

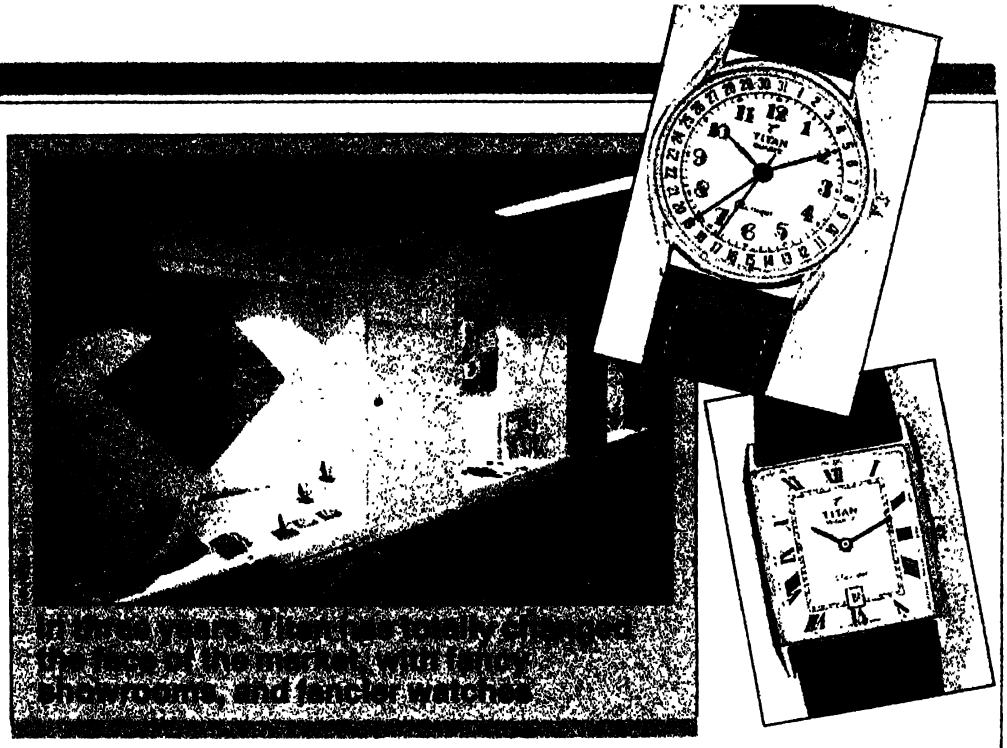


So, HMT is fighting back, shedding its monopolistic stupor and going out of its way to convince sellers that HMT is where the buck stops. "Whenever there is a watch dealer who wants to sell HMT," says M.R. Naidu, the government-run organisation's managing director, expansively, "he shall have it (the dealership)."

There is a reason behind Naidu's generosity. For, this is not simply a battle between a public sector company and a pivately-run one—both Bangalore-based—it is a battle to get to the top.

In a way, Titan already has.

The background: in India, the annual demand for watches, at 17 million, far outstrips the supply of about ten million. Even adding on the three million or so smuggled watches that find their way into the country's Rs 600 crores a year-plus market hardly helps much. In this situation, whatever anyone makes is sold. No question. HMT is the king, lording over with a seven million watches a



year production figure. Titan expects to sell two million this year, and number three, Allwyn Watches Ltd, estimates sales of 1.5 million.

There is a major difference, however. While HMT's and Allwyn's sales include mechanical watches, Titan only makes quartz, battery-operated ones. And here, in one of India's fastest growing—over 60 per cent annually—markets, which could soon swamp the hand-wound one, Titan is tops. For the year-ending March 1990, Titan sold 1.2 million quartz watches, HMT half that figure, and Allwyn was nowhere near "Look," protests Naidu, "HMT watches are still popular."

"We are not time keepers to the nation," says Titan executive vice-president A.K. Manchanda, smiling as he makes a dig at HMT's advertising catchline. "A two dollar (about Rs 36) watch can keep time as accurately as a Rolex. But today, people are more aware of their appearance, to the face they present to the world." The watch is an integral part of this attitude, says Manchanda, and "accuracy or time keeping is no longer what is in question". Adds Titan's senior vice-president for operations, I.K. Amitha: "HMT established worldwide that India can produce watches. But after that... nothing has been done to upgrade the product to international standards."

This is precisely where Titan came in, hinging its success on the hope that as quartz movement watches were the rage the world over, why not cash in on it in India? Titan did its homework, surveyed the market, found out why people still buy watches from abroad, and so on. And then, says Amitha, decided that "we would position ourselves with good-looking watches matching international standards". Playing on the assumption that as urban incomes in India were growing rapidly, and as people were using more and more of their discretionary income to buy shoes, clothes and see the world, why not turn part of that income to buying Titan watches? And, accordingly, unleashed glossy, saturated advertising to play on the age-old I-desire-therefore-I-want attitude of a consumer.

The ploy worked. Three hundred designs like nothing India had ever seen before, ranging from flashy, sedate to elegant. And in a price range India had never seen before, either, one that said good looks and quality do not cost the earth.("It's the product which changed the market," says a top Bangalore advertising executive, who declines to be identified. "The advertising merely placed it up front.")

In three years, Titan's turnover has zoomed from zero to Rs 74 crores for the year-ending March 1990. The company went public last year, declared a dividend this year, and the scrip is a hot buy at the stockmarkets. In comparison, HMT's watch division, which accounts for over 30 per cent of the machine tools, farm equipment and electrical goods manufacturing corporation's Rs 600 crore turnover, grew by Rs 50 crores to touch the Rs 200 crore mark. For both mechanical and quartz watches



This is not simply a battle between a public sector company and a privately-run one. It is a battle to get to the top

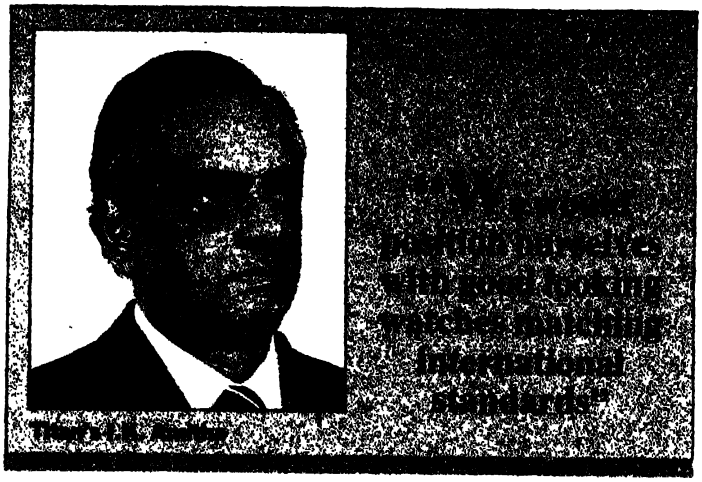
The irony of it all is that HMT introduced quartz watches way back in 1981, six years before Titan made its flashy entry. Says HMT managing director Naidu, a little ruefully: "It was HMT that identified quartz was here to stay. But, for a variety of reasons and constraints (the production) couldn't grow fast enough."

One was consumer resistance, say HMT executives, which was on the lines of *"hamein* battery *ka ghari nahin chahiye"*—an expected response in a country long used to mechanical, hand-wound watches. "When we decided to launch quartz watches in the country," says M. Jagannath, general manager of HMT's watch marketing division, "HMT had to embark on an educative campaign, make the people aware, had to assure them of the serviceability of quartz." The corporation, says Jagannath, started off with a annual quartz watch production of two lakhs a year—one-third its 1989 sales—and spent Rs 120 per watch (a total of Rs 2.4 crores) for the "educative" campaign.

Quartz sales picked up gradually, but was never in high gear. Because, say many industry insiders, while the campaign worked, HMT watches still continued to look dull, not very different from the mechanical incarnation. In effect, what HMT did was

prime the market for something more appealing. "We provided the infrastructure," admits a top HMT official who declines to be identified. "We also created the competition."

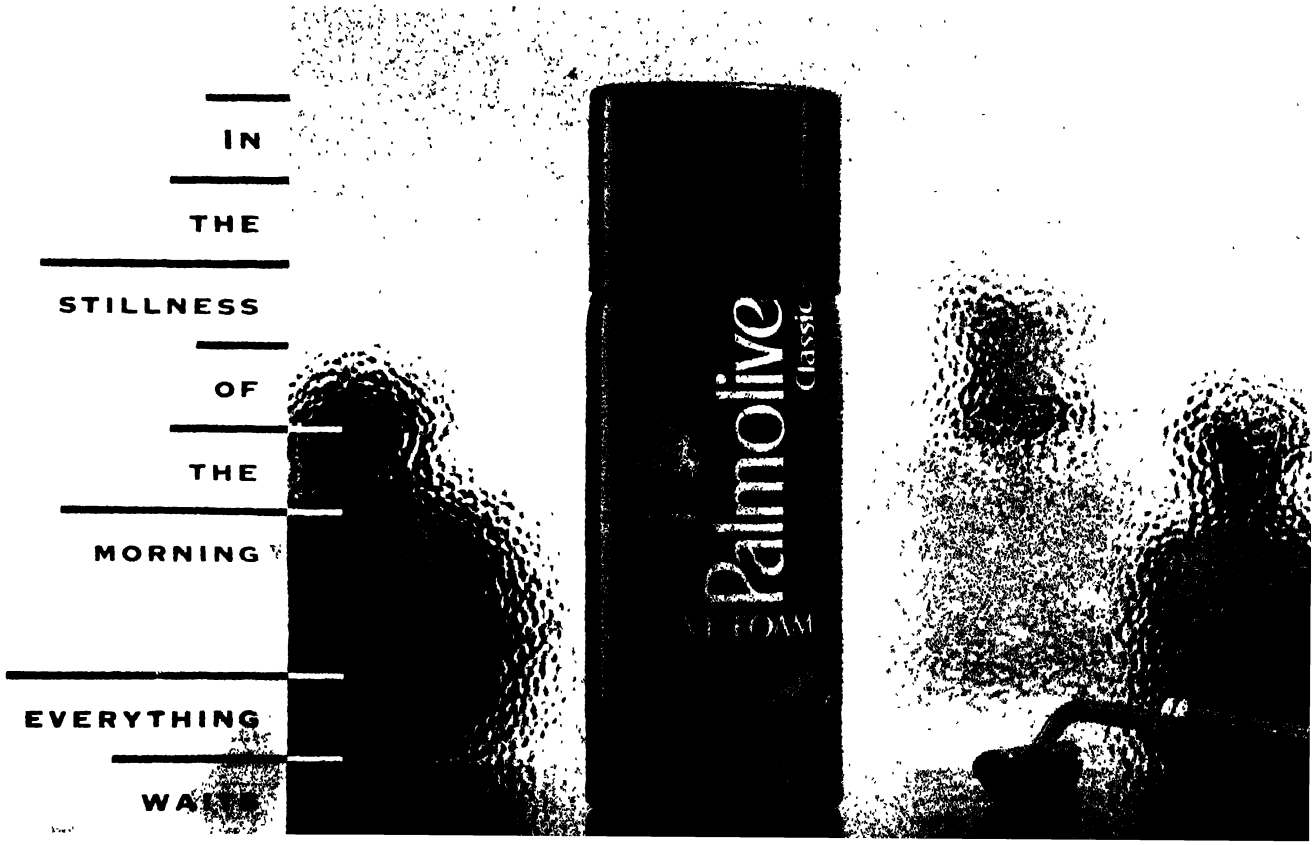
The prime competition was the Tata business group, which received a go-ahead for the Rs 90 crore project in 1986. The Tatas hold 25 per cent of the shares, the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corp. 26 per cent, and the rest split between Unit Trust of India, Washington-based International Finance Corp. and the Indian public. Titan's technical associates are impressive. France Ebauches for watch movements, and Japan's Citizen Watch Co. for cases.



Citizen also provided HMT's initial knowhow, and a company official sneers at Titan's Ebauches link: "France Ebauches in fact offered the movements to us, but we declined." More angst, and this time, in a typically public sector vein. "Our objective was to bring the quartz technology to India," says C. Subba Rao, general manager of HMT's watch directorate. "We are not traders. The country's needs have to be met. We can't keep depending on imports."

This is where it cuts to the bone. As far as Titan is concerned, the import bogey is something it has to contend with: while HMT can claim what it offers entail a 10 per cent foreign exchange outflow, the Titan project, say industry observers accounts for 50 per cent. Quality for a price, say HMT executives, the country can hardly afford—even if consumers think otherwise. Titan imports and therefore, it scores over HMT, seems to be the implicit message.

Titan officials, expectedly, disagree. Says Amitha, the Titan vice-president: "In the first two years, yes, we imported various components because the government didn't allow us to manufacture (them). But now, the indigenised component is 80 per cent. In fact, next year we are aiming at 90 per cent." Little things point to Titan's "foreign" element. The date disc, for example. Many Titan watches display 'Sam' –the shortened form of Samedi.



Saturday in French—instead of the regulation 'Sat'. "In the first two years," says Amitha, "we were importing the day disc from France. *Now* we are manufacturing it ourselves. So, slowly, even that will be changed." He adds, hurriedly: "That doesn't mean the entire watch is imported, contrary to what people say."



HMT can go on bickering about imports, and Titan can go on defending its position, but both are very clear about what to do next. For Titan, the gameplan is simple: go for the quartz kill. For HMT, it is as simple, prevent the kill, and instead, turn hunter. "Remember," says HMT managing director Naidu, bringing up the point that HMT has been around far longer than Titan and is practically a household name, "marketing does not merely mean going and selling but at what cost I am selling. A man entering the market today has to spend more to deal with the existing competition. We don't."

As if to add some punch to the threat, HMT is going in for a massive ad campaign—executives decline to say exactly how much it will cost, but, it could well be over Rs 1 crore. Says a Rediffusion Advertising executive, whose agency is handling the blitz: "This campaign is going to give HMT the thrust it needs to fight back and recover lost ground." Maybe not, suggests Vijay Bhat, manager with rival ad agency Ogilvy & Mather in Bangalore, and handler of the Titan account. Because, says Bhat, "the difference between Titan and everybody else in the watch market, is that Titan doesn't underestimate the consumer."

Perhaps, it is only fitting that ad executives pick up where the watch company bosses leave off, in a marketing end-game that will decide the future time keeper of the Indian watch industry. It will definitely be a future clocked in quartz movements. And the winner? Nothwithstanding the cliche, only time will tell. ●

Subadhra Rangamani/ Bangalore



THE WATER WAITS.
THE RAZOR'S EDGE QUIVERS.
DON'T LOOK BACK.

GRIP THE CAN. PRESS THE NOZZLE.
FOAM GUSHES ONTO YOUR PALM.
FEEL THE FRESHNESS
WHISPER AGAINST YOUR FACE.
SAVOUR THE RICHEST LATHER
EVER TO MEET SKIN.
SCENT THE SENSATION
OF ITS EXHILARATING FRAGRANCE.
EXULT.

PALMOLIVE CLASSIC SHAVE FOAM.
FROM COLGATE-PALMOLIVE.
MAKERS OF
INDIA'S LEADING SHAVE CREAMS.

Palmolive Classic SHAVE FOAM

THE NEW WORLD OF SHAVING

Rediffusion/CP/90/387 a


Take the world in your stride
HI-COMFORT WOOL
dinesh

ECONOMY

OUT OF CONTROL

It is a long road down to ruin, and the economy could head that way frighteningly soon

The Indian economy could go off the rails. Very soon. Not because it is moving too fast, but because the government is out of fiscal control. A series of recent studies, culminating in the Reserve Bank of India's latest annual report published last month, are flashing danger signals, all warning that the era of the government as the engine of economic growth might well be over. Runaway, unproductive expenditures, increasing difficulties in squeezing additional tax revenues and mounting investment requirements are making it virtually impossible for the government to stay on the fast growth track. Worse, if the government's fiscal structure derails, the rest of the economy will crash as well.

The problem essentially stems from the government's cast iron linkage with the economy. The government has over the past 40 years deliberately built itself up as the biggest player in the national economy and today, finds it can neither afford to slacken nor get out of the game. Gigantic public sector steel plants, power houses, shipyards and other government enterprises have come to dominate the Indian industrial skyline. How much they invest, produce, and at what cost, are crucial matters for the rest of the economy. The government, similarly, keeps much of the private economy going with massive subsidies, multi-crore rupee purchases of foodgrains, fertilisers, defence items and countless other commodities.

In the Nehruvian past, public enterprises were created to pull the economy up by its bootstraps. In the next phase, government investments continued to prime the economic pump. The years when government spending—specifically investment—slumped, so did the fortunes of the private sector. Through the 1980s, high industrial growth rates were maintained, among other things, by ever increasing government outlays. But by the end of that decade it was frighteningly clear that the government could in no way keep up the frenetic pace to raise more resources for investment. For, less was coming in—public investments were increasingly being financed by borrowings and through budget deficits.

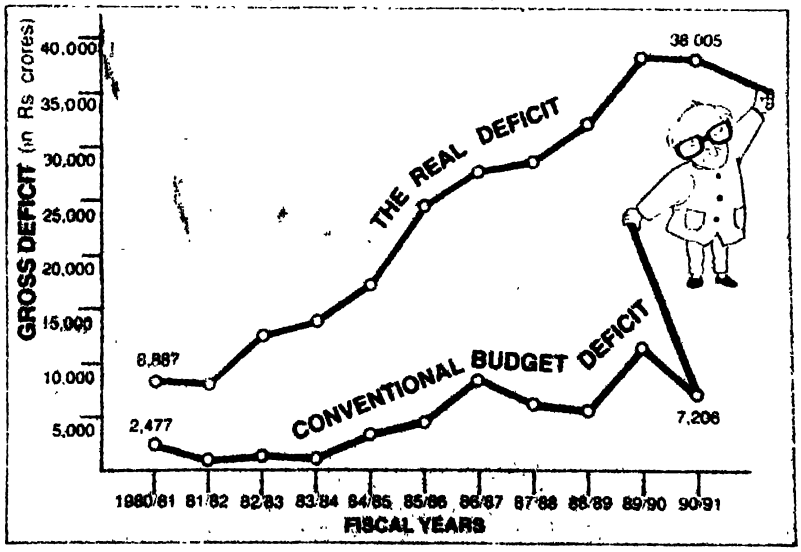
The government as an institution has acquired an inordinately high propensity for profligacy. The result: a fundamental fiscal disequilibrium. The manifestations were not immediately felt, and the previous regime in particular was highly successful in suppressing them.

But now it is all out in the open.

The Chasm: Successive administrations, including the present one, have tried to make out that the gap between its revenue (from taxes and public sector profits, etc.) and expenses is relatively modest. This gap has traditionally been shown as a 'budget deficit'. However it now appears that the conventional budget deficit figure hides more than it reveals. The Reserve Bank has presented a far more frightening picture of the chasm in



The deficit looks set to get worse



● The official figures for budget deficits, touted by the government year after year, always hide more than they reveal. In its latest report, the Reserve Bank of India has disclosed the alarming state of government finances—by pointing out that the "real" or gross deficit is far higher than what is claimed by the Centre.

(The gross fiscal deficit is the total gap between the government's spending, and its own resources, and includes internal and external borrowings.)

In the current fiscal year (1990-91), the finance ministry has shown a smaller official deficit, but in real terms, deficit has not decreased. In fact, it will increase.

government finances by pointing out that the figure of 'gross fiscal deficit' (GFD) more accurately measures the real resources gap. The gross figure measures the full impact of total RBI lendings to the government which, in recent years, have been subsequently higher than the 'conventional' deficit. The GFD also includes government transfers to the state treasuries, and its borrowings. And this figure is many times the conventional deficit *(see chart)*

The present administration has promised to slash the conventional deficit from Rs 11,750 crores in 1989-90 to Rs 7,206 crores in the current financial year. But the dismaying fact is that the gross deficit, at over Rs 38,000 crores, remains roughly at the same level as last year. The Union finance ministry has been able to keep the conventional deficit figure down because it hopes to borrow more from the people, financial institutions and foreign banking consortiums, get marginally more foreign aid and perhaps, a couple of extra thousand crores of rupees from the RBI.

Indebtedness: The disquieting part is the government's acceptance of borrowings as a legitimate way to cover a fundamental resources gap. The only snag, as every householder knows only too well, is that borrowings which do not create greater earning capacity can ultimately have only one result: bankruptcy.

And that is precisely where the government is headed. The Central government's total liabilities were already at the staggering level of Rs 2,66,913 crores at the end of the last financial year, a figure which works out to about 60 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP). These cumulative liabilities are slated to

FALL GUY

Madhu Dandavate's impassioned plea for IMF aid barely makes the grade

"India Seeks Crisis Funds...Hat in Hand."

In a September Washington, with a nippy breeze and some of the best weather of the year, the news of sweating Indians made disturbing newspaper headlines. Especially this year, because India has never been quite as desperate for aid. Ever.

In the US capital for the International Monetary Fund-World Bank meet, finance minister Madhu Dandavate and finance secretary Bimal Jalan did all they could to convince the gathering of finance ministers and bank governors that India's fiscal predicament is only temporary. Dandavate insisted in meetings that India's foreign exchange problems are tied to the Gulf crisis and should be treated as such. Are they? "India might just be sitting back to see what comes along," says John Lewis, a professor of economics at Princeton University and an authority on India's relations with the IMF and World Bank. "And so," says Lewis, "be included in a class of countries (affected by the oil shock) rather than go out and press its own particular case."

The stance appears to have worked. Rather than having to approach the IMF for a politically damaging medium-term loan, or a rescheduling of foreign debt payments, India is now fairly confident about receiving emergency funds to assist it through the oil crisis. A crisis that is likely to cost India almost US $ 3 billion (Rs 5,400 crores at current exchange rates) in the next year.

"The crucial question," Dandavate told SUNDAY, "is what are the expectations from the multilateral financial organisations. The situation being special and extraordinary, the remedy has also to be special and extraordinary." Earlier, the minister, in his IMF address, warned that the "economic slowdown in the industrial countries would have an adverse effect on (India's) export prospects, and higher interest rates would increase the burden of debt servicing". To put it simply: you are in trouble, we are in trouble, but you have more money. So, help us out.

It may not be that simple even if Dandavate's plea has scraped through: the paperwork is yet to be done. Questions are sure to be raised about how India is going to cope with the ramifications of having the third largest foreign debt in the world, and the largest outside Latin America. According to the World Bank's 1990 report, only Brazil and Mexico have foreign debts bigger than India's US $ 57 billion (over Rs 100,000 crores).

Equally ominous, the share of concessional aid in India's foreign borrowings has fallen drastically since the 1970s, and 40 per cent of the country's borrowings today are from the international credit market at full rates. Lewis, who

World Bank's headquarters in Washington: the destination for all bail-out pilgrims

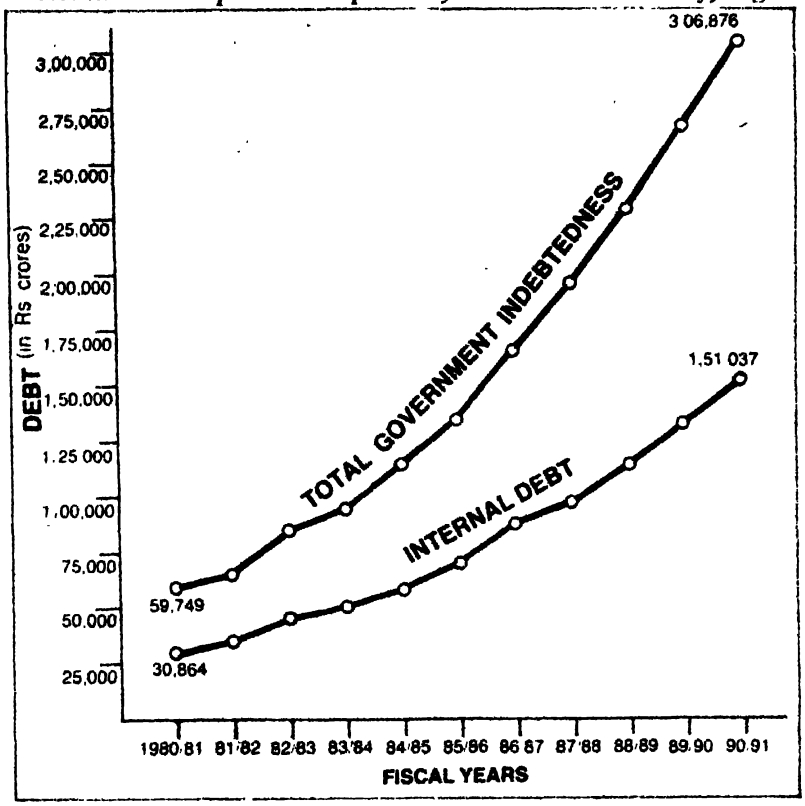


touch an incredible Rs 3,06,876 crores by end-March 1991.

Perhaps more alarming is that this gargantuan government debt is roughly doubling every five years. This year as much as Rs 20,850 crores will have to be paid to service the Central debt in 1990-91 alone. To put it mildly, this is a lot of money—it constitutes over 16 per cent of total government receipts. Put in another way, this year's interest payments is about Rs 3,000 crores *less* than the total money the public sector will be able to raise, to build power plants during the next four years. And two-fifths of the

INDEBTED TODAY, THERE TOMORROW?

India's debt spiral is hopelessly twisted—and terrifying



● The Central government is hopelessly in debt: today, its cumulative liabilities add up to a nerve-shattering Rs 3,06,876 crore, or 60.3 per cent of gross domestic product. (GDP is the value of goods and services produced in an economy.)

In March 1981, the Centre's total liabilities stood at about 44 per cent of GDP. Since, the government has borrowed recklessly to finance its profligacy. Debt service commitments as a percentage of total Central revenues has shot up from 10 per cent to 16 per cent in just four years, prompting the RBI to warn of a vicious circle. "The increased interest burden invariably leads to a squeeze on capital expenditure," says the RBI report, "thereby inhibiting investment and growth."

chaired a World Bank Task Force on Concessional Flows from 1982-86, says that the drop in concessional aid levels forced India to increase its reliance on non-concessional public lending and commercial loans. It is this "harder mix" of borrowing, says Lewis, which is of concern, because of the high interest rates and the severity of debt servicing. Even before the Gulf crisis, the cost of servicing India's debt as a percentage of exports had reached an all-time high of 30 per cent.

Emergency bail-out or not, the crunch on foreign debt is likely to be felt soon, as repayments of US $ 2 billion are due to the IMF this year, largely from India's last medium-term loan of US $ 5 billion in 1982. Dandavate declined to comment on long-term debt, beyond his usual socialist fence-sitting, manifesto-thumping attitude in the face of a fiscal storm. "I have come to the conclusion," he told SUNDAY, in a repeat of his December 1989 line in an interview to the magazine, "that our habit of relying upon the soft option of loans and borrowing has to be restrained."

The emphasis is obviously on concessional loans and aid, but how much of it will India get, notwithstanding the minister's posturing? And how much of the minister's pleading will international banking consortiums lap up? Because, India's ability to clear interest payments on a huge debt—though a notch up from Latin America's disastrous record—is somewhat scary: how much more, [illegible] will India be able to take on without breaking up?

Dandavate and his team countered this apprehension by talking about sacrifices the Indian people made during the 1965-66 austerity drive. Then, Indians willingly gave up a meal a day, Dandavate told the IMF. He implied that his countrymen were willing to do it again, make sacrifices to ease the debt burden, and the Gulf crisis. The world may fall for this line, and help stem India's panic. But the question is: will Indians?

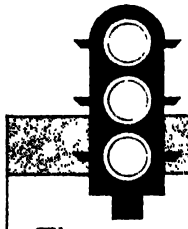
[illegible] Washington D.C.

entire amount the private sector is expected to raise during the Eighth Plan period (1990-95) from the capital markets.

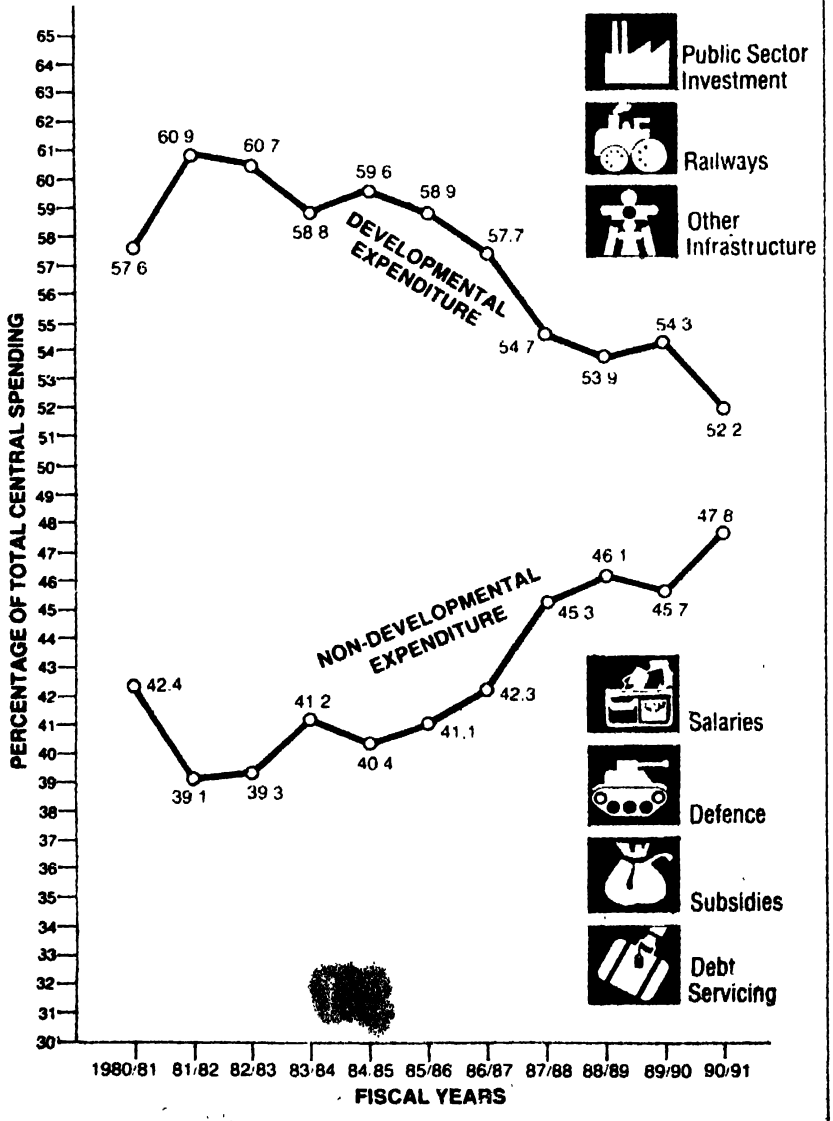
Improvidence: It would have been quite another matter if the government was borrowing desperately and printing notes to finance a mammoth programme to create productive assets. The fact is, it is not. Rather, the extra rupees being garnered are going towards meeting what is termed 'non-developmental' expenditure: salaries, ministers' trips abroad, Bofors guns, subsidies, interest payments, *ad nauseum*. Interestingly, the

gross fiscal deficit figure has come to exceed the Centre's total annual plan expenditure. In other words, if the government had not resorted to deficit financing and borrowings, *its investments would be zero*. All the crores of precious taxpayers' rupees are being gobbled up to maintain the Central bureaucracies (the armed forces included) and their routine functions (including the payment of dole to favoured sectors such as farming.)

The situation was not half as bad even in the early part of this decade, when the gross fiscal deficit in any one year ruled at levels below that of annual Central plan expenditures.



The government turns around to stall the growth machine



● The government is supposed to be an engine of growth. But the danger of going off the rails is very real. Hundreds of crores of productive, investible funds are being diverted to pay for non-productive salaries, subsidies, interest obligations and the armed forces. The likely result: recession.

The villain was Rajiv Gandhi's administration. Rajiv came in with a promise to liberalise the economy but ended up by investing more money in the tottering public sector in just five years than his grandfather had in his entire lifetime. The Rajiv regime's spectacular ends were achieved through record levels of market borrowings and deficits. As a matter of fact, in the last year of his rule, Rajiv set the record for 'conventional' budget deficits- Rs 11,750 crores. If his regime achieved anything, it was to ensure that the government was permanently pushed into the red.

No ideas: The fiscal disequilibrium created during the Rajiv years was brought to the new government's notice immediately after the elections. In December 1989, the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) headed by the late economist, Sukhomoy Chakravarty, submitted its report on 'The Current Economic Situation and Priority Areas for Action'. The most telling portion of the report was on the state of government finances. Of particular concern was the fact that "a significant part of the borrowed resources goes towards covering the revenue gap and non-remunerative capital expenditures. Since the commercial activities (of the government) also do not generate a sufficient return flow, this means that interest payments are not counterbalanced by a return flow of income in the budget". In short, the EAC had warned of bankruptcy.

As a first fix, the report had suggested that the government should try to contain the growth in non-developmental expenditure, but without suggesting how the government could go about doing this. It had, moreover, stressed that without correcting the fiscal imbalance it would be impossible to ensure development without inflation and balance of payment (BOP) problems.

Inflation, according to the EAC, was bad because it hurt the poor and wiped out the real worth of hard-earned savings and a BOP crunch was bad because it curtailed imports required to keep the economy going. That was stating only part of the problem. At any rate, the finance ministry too had no new ideas on how to drastically cut down on non-productive expenditure.

The 1990 Budget was full of good intentions: employment guarantee schemes, debt relief for farmers, and a Rs 4,000 crore fertilizer subsidy,

THE MONEY MEN



Rajiv Gandhi: his blind, desperate profligacy has almost finished India



V.P. Singh: no new ideas, and all the old expenses



Madhu Dandavate: a balancing act with the begging bowl



Bimal Jalan: *quo vadis*, finance secretary? Towards a grim future?

among other things. But there were no hard decisions. A close look at the latest budget figures shows that the bad old trends continue. For instance, developmental expenditure is slated to rise by just 3.8 per cent whereas non-developmental expenditure is up by 13.2 per cent from the last financial year's levels. Borrowings too will be much higher this year. Coupled with the oil price hike thanks to the Gulf crisis, the overall crunch in government finances could reach crisis proportions sooner than imagined.

The Crunch: If the impact of the government's fiscal imbalance was only on prices and the BOP position it would not have been so alarming. Sure, inflation is tough and a cut in imports debilitating, but the two do not add up to a catastrophe. The problem lies elsewhere.

Specifically, it is, as the latest RBI report has pointed out, the "vicious cycle of higher deficits, higher debt and higher interest burden" which invariably lead to "a squeeze on capital expenditures thereby inhibiting investment and growth". This is the crux of the issue—and a point which the Economic Advisory Council glossed over.

There can be no getting away from the fact that public sector investments and the creation of government assets, such as dams, canals, roads and railways, is the single major determinant of economic growth rate after the agricultural sector. Just how major a factor public investment is can be gauged from the amount of money annually invested in the public sector. During the first four years of the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-89), total gross fixed capital formation (that is, investment in plant, machinery, etc.) was Rs 1,35,696 crores for the public sector as compared to Rs 1,27,543 crores in the private sector.

If the public sector is big, it is, as everyone knows by now, also colossally inefficient. During the Seventh Plan period it was supposed to finance 52 per cent of the total Central Plan but ended up providing just 37 per cent. This government knows only too well how badly it is weighed down by the public sector white elephant. In all, there are about 222 public enterprises with a total employed capital of more than Rs 70,000 crores, and earning post-tax profits of an average 3 per cent or less. Simply, the public sector makes for a high cost economy.

Cutting Corners: Faced with the public sector drag and the fiscal imbalance, *the new government has chosen the easy way out.* It has decided that it cannot invest ever-increasing crores of rupees in the public sector. Not necessarily because it does not want to, but because it just does not have the money. The 8th Plan outlay for a critical sector like power, for instance, has been slashed from Rs 48,000 crores to Rs 24,000 crores. The private sector has been asked to put up power plants to make up for the shortfall. But not surprisingly, the private sector is balking. It just does not have that much money.

The government has over the past 40 years deliberately built itself up as the biggest player in the national economy and today, finds it can neither afford to slacken or get out of the game

The bigger point, which the government seems to have conveniently missed, is that the private sector, presently, cannot take on the commanding role played by the public sector overnight.

Years of bureaucratic controls, government stranglehold over institutional finance and hothouse economic conditions have made for a relatively feeble private sector. The tens of thousands of crores required to keep industrial growth rates above the eight per cent level (as was achieved during the 7th Plan) simply cannot be achieved by the private sector alone. The government's hope that private companies will be able to raise a mammoth Rs 50,000 crores from the capital markets during this plan period might just be wishful thinking and at any rate, would not be sufficient to meet a major shortfall in public investments.

This means a downhill ride for the economy in the next few years.

And it could be a long, long way down •

Indranil Banerjie / New Delhi and Bombay

Charts by Santosh Dutta

INDUSTRY/ NEPOTISM

All in the family

Kerala industry don K.P.P. Nambiar faces charges of favouring his son's company in an export deal

Even a month ago, K.P.P Nambiar had no problems. The former secretary of the department of electronics had his hands full as a key policy man in Kerala, as the state's special advisor for industries.

Now, however, things are radically different. Nambiar faces allegations of corruption and nepotism. The former bureaucrat is also part-time chairman of state-run electronics outfit KELTRON, which is thinking of exporting digital control systems to the USSR. At a recent board meeting, the corporation suggested that Bangalore-based Namtech Exports Pvt. Ltd be appointed agents to pursue the export deal.

The thing is, Nambiar is Namtech's chairman. And his son Padman owns the company.

If the charges of favouritism prove to be true in this case, it could affect a key Kerala minister, K.R. Gowri, who holds the industry portfolio, and is widely believed to be one of Nambiar's mentors. More importantly, the same tag is applicable to chief minister E.K. Nayanar.

Trade unions, which have a free run of the state's business and politics, are baying for Nambiar's blood. The left-leaning Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), in particular, is already upset about the way Nambiar is running KELTRON, and blames Gowri for it. The CITU and other unions insist that Nambiar, in a written statement issued them earlier this year, made it clear that the National Thermal Power Corp. will handle all control system procurement for shipping to the USSR.

Namtech came into the picture, suddenly, two months ago. KELTRON switched mid-stream and proposed that Namtech be paid 7.5 per cent of the f.o.b. (free on board, or when a contract says the seller will incur all costs of putting buyer's consignment on board a vessel) value of export orders. A percentage of f o b. is considerably higher than a percentage of the total cost of goods.

Nambiar flatly denies any wrongdoing. Says he: "A gang of four, including two disgruntled elements from KELTRON who have connections with the Marxist party are on a smear campaign against me and the industry minister, Gowri *amma*." Nambiar admits that Namtech belongs to his son "who is a highly qualified engineer." He adds: "I had made it clear to the government of Kerala when it sought my services that I will continue to work as consultant and as chairman of my own companies. The posts of KELTRON chairman and special advisor to the Kerala government were part-time and honorary, without executive powers."

In fact, Nambiar goes a step further to say that till Namtech came on the scene, KELTRON did not have a single export enquiry about control systems in its books. It was in July 1989, he says, that Namtech received information about Soviet queries through a Moscow associate. Nambiar took over as KELTRON chairman on 1 December the same year, but critics, such as the CITU, are quick to point out that as he was already special advisor to the state government, he was in a position to influence KELTRON decisions.

Nambiar: nepotism could nail him



Perhaps some of Nambiar's confidence stems from the fact that chief minister Nayanar is backing him—at least for now—to the hilt. Nayanar has made it clear that Nambiar will not be investigated, and publicly denied that anything was wrong about KELTRON's proposed move to appoint Namtech as agents. The allegations are totally baseless, maintains Nayanar—turning down his party-affiliated trade union's views—as there is no formal agreement.

Ironically, at about the same time that Namtech moved in, Nambiar was involved in an enquiry which aimed at censuring another person accused of nepotism: Satyen "Sam" Pitroda. Nambiar headed the 13-member investigating panel which was looking into Pitroda's allegedly favouring two of his family-run hi-tech firms in the US with plum orders from his brainchild, the Centre for the Development of Telematics.

"The two cases are totally different," says Nambiar. "I am not a government employee. I am a private citizen doing private work. Only, I am spending more than half my time for the industrial progress of Kerala." A noble pursuit. The point is, Pitroda is as much a "private" citizen as Nambiar. And, like Nambiar, devotes considerably more than half his time to run India's telecom operations—as secretary of the department of telecommunications. All for an honorarium of one rupee.

Chief minister Nayanar may find—even if he sticks to his assertion that the Nambiar–Namtech-KELTRON link is clean—that jettisoning Nambiar may be a way to stall growing political instability. ●

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

■ The last Tang(o)

Hope it swings this time around. Kothari General Foods (KGF) chairman D.C. Kothari went public with a merger announcement last week, a move to foist his chronically sick processed food and drink unit onto Brooke Bond India Ltd. KGF has toted up losses of almost Rs 20 crores as of end-March 1990, and a



D.C. Kothari: the last dance

merger means Brooke Bond—now in the Hindustan Lever fold—will have to pick up all the liabilities. Perhaps what makes the move worth it is the KGF stable of brands, leading with Tang, the concentrated orange-lemon breakfast drink, plus cereals, none of which took off. Brooke Bond can capitalise on the brands. What can also help are tax benefits for picking up KGF losses.

The Kotharis hold 33 per cent equity in the ailing Madras-based company, Kraft General Foods of the US another 33 per cent, the rest being split between the public and financial institutions. Brooke Bond says it prefers to pay cash for equity, instead of offering its own shares in exchange to KGF shareholders. Wise move. Now all that remains—and this is crucial—is approval for the deal from the increasingly quirky Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction.

Kothari has his fingers crossed: he can't afford to muff up this number.

STOCK QUOTE

"We've been screaming for years for privatising banks. Just look at what's happening now. It's true, we're almost broke."

A top Bombay public sector banker, commenting on the Reserve Bank of India's report that eight of India's major public sector banks are sick.

■ Farewell

Pure Drinks chairman Charanjit Singh died last week. A tragic event, for no entrepreneur would like his life to be cut short when he is trying to claw back to prominence. This is the essence of a businessman, always keen on high notes.

Singh's legacy is disturbing. Flagship company Pure Drinks, the makers of Campa Cola and Campa Orange, has been steadily losing out market share to Parle Ltd's Thums Up and Limca. And with



Charanjit Singh: troubled legacy

the advent of Pepsi, the trend is set to become still more pronounced.

The Meridien hotel in New Delhi, which Singh opened with much fanfare five years after the 1982 Asiad deadline, is another problem. It is in the middle of a legal tangle, with accusations that Singh got the land illegally, constructed the hotel without proper clearances, and besides, was totally overextended on loans. In addition, the New Delhi Municipal Corp. is shouting its head off about the Rs 25 crores or so Singh owes them in taxes.

As of now, nobody knows where Pure Drinks is headed.

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

Arif Mohammad Khan

Union minister for energy and civil aviation



● In the thick of it, that's Arif. The minister—one of the few that people still believe in—is caught in the middle of two completely different developments. One is privatisation of power, which the minister plans to push through with. The other is his bugbear, the Airbus A320. On the first count, the private sector is suddenly having some doubts, saying that liasing with the bureaucracy *and* the state electricity boards for sale and distribution of power may not be worth it, and returns on investment could take as long as 10 years. About the A320, the less said the better. Even after ferrying thousands of evacuees from the Gulf, the planes remain grounded in India. There is talk that A320s may be reinducted, but Arif, for one, and passengers, for another, won't believe it till it happens. The credibility factor strikes again.

■ Who needs poverty?

Not the World Bank, at any rate. And officials are livid that one of the Bank's former members have suggested that officials should quit on extravagance. Michael Irwin, a top UK civil servant who resigned from the Bank, told the *Washington Post* that "poverty reduction is the last thing on most World Bank bureaucrats' minds". Irwin also suggested Bank officials should travel Business Class instead of First.

Sacrilege, screamed the Bank. An Asia regional office adviser, Grant Sinclair, wrote in the Bank's in-house magazine that Irwin's suggestions are pointless, and would achieve nothing "but a lot of dissatisfaction". Sure, who wants to give up on paid holiday perks? Irwin's former boss Bislel Alisbah, went one up. "Mr Irwin must either be terribly ill-informed or frighteningly insensitive," he said. "My family and I will not feel safe again until Mr Irwin is replaced by someone who really cares." He was.

Poverty, according to the Bank, has to be handled in style. First Class is one of the ways to handle starvation. Sure, and add on some caviar. ●

ANIL DHARKER

A conspiracy of silence

There is an acute absence of real information on the implications of the Mandal report

"I have been on the national political scene from the time of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. If I had wanted to be Prime Minister, I would have succeeded Panditji. The point is, I don't want *to be PM."*
—Biju Patnaik, Orissa chief minister

"I would like very much."
—Chandra Shekhar, Janata Dal leader, on being asked if *he* would like to become Prime Minister



These gentlemen were speaking in Delhi about their concern for self-immolating students. Did the students, busy making human torches of themselves to make V.P. Singh see the light over the Mandal Commission recommendations, realise what strange torch-bearers Messrs Patnaik and Chandra Shekhar made? But they weren't the only ones. Another torch-bearer was Devi Lal, whose conscience was so bruised over what was happening to the students that he resigned his parliamentary seat. "I am writing," his resignation letter began, "with deep distress and heartfelt anguish over the way our young boys and girls, even in their early teens, are sacrificing their dear lives by self-immolation, consuming poison or otherwise."

How did Devi Lal further express solidarity with the agitating students? He sent in goons hired by his favourite son, Om Prakash Chautala, to Delhi. According to a report in *The Independent*, the Bombay paper I work for, "Young men armed to the teeth with pitchforks, spears, lathis, acid bulbs and country-made rifles went on a rampage...They had come from the outlying areas of Delhi and Haryana."

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of L.K. Advani expressed its concern too. Mr Advani said, "The government is displaying insensitivity to the extreme and terrifying phenomenon of self-immolation by several students," and went on a *rath yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya. He wasn't bothered that violence followed in his wake. Not anti-Mandal violence, but the communal kind. In a country going up in flames, he was adding his own little fires.

Rajiv Gandhi's party didn't say much, preferring action to words. A report by *The Independent's* Delhi special correspondents, Smita Gupta and Vidya Subramaniam, quoted intelligence reports pointing to "the direct involvement of senior Congressmen in the agitation...The reports have identified Congress(I) MPs P.R. Kumaramangalam and Harish Rawat as the chief forces behind the students' Equality Front, and east Delhi's strongman H.K.L. Bhagat and ex-MPs Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler as the financiers of the agitation." Most of these characters have been mentioned in connection with the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. They have,

V.P. Singh's portrait is now being garlanded by deprived people as their first real champion after Babasaheb Ambedkar. There wouldn't be too many garlands if it were known that only 40,000 jobs were being reserved



you could say, the requisite experience.

What about the man in the eye of the storm himself? V.P. Singh was maintaining an obstinate silence. Talk to me, he was saying to the students, but my mind is made up.

There is a certain piece of information he could have given out to them. Had he used this in his address to the nation on television, it is certain to have reached all the agitating students all over the country. The relevant information was this: the Mandal Commission's far-reaching recommendations have been considerably diluted by the government. It has been announced that these will not apply to states which don't want to implement them, to science and defence establishments, nor to educational institutions. After all the watering-down, the reservations now apply to only about 40,000 jobs in the central government. Is that small number worth all the agitations, all the violence and all those immolations?

So why did V.P. Singh keep mum? Because to announce that his pro-Mandal reforms were so feeble would have been certain to thwart his main purpose, which was to get votes of the Other Backward Classes and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. People tell you that V.P. Singh's portrait is now being garlanded by these deprived people as their first real champion after Babasaheb Ambedkar. There wouldn't be too many garlands if it were known that there were only 40,000 jobs being reserved.





Devi Lal's conscience was so bruised over what was happening to the students that he resigned his parliamentary seat. He further expressed solidarity with the agitating students by sending in goons hired by his favourite son, Om Prakash Chautala, to Delhi

The other political parties knew V.P. Singh was trapped into silence. So they were going to do their best to exploit the situation for their own political ends: for Devi Lal, Chandra Shekhar and Co. of the National Front to serve their personal ambitions; for the BJP and the Congress(I) for their political ones.

The absence of real information to the students was total. Take another example. Akhilesh Pandey is a 17-year-old student currently battling for his life in Bombay's Jaslok Hospital. Some days ago, he tried to immolate himself in Gwalior, depressed over the job quotas and depressed, especially, about the fate of Rajeev Goswami. "When he heard about the death of Rajeev Goswami," his father said, "things went out of control." As it happens, Rajeev Goswami of Delhi, the first student to have immolated himself, isn't dead, at least when this is being written. He certainly wasn't dead when Pandey tried to kill himself "depressed over Goswami's death".

That says something about our television and radio, and says even more about our press. The conspiracy of silence on this question, so vital to the self-interest of politicians and their political parties, envelops the press too. With one or at most two honourable exceptions, no newspaper has bothered to tell the facts of the diluted job quotas. It wouldn't serve their purpose. After all, the press too has been agitating against Mandal. Didn't the *Indian Express* editorially exhort students to take to the streets well before they actually did so? Of course, it added a rider: agitate peacefully. That's so much wishful thinking. Even Mahatma Gandhi, in a largely non-violent climate, couldn't control the crowds. *The Times of India* has written its longest editorials on this one subject, not once but three times. Some papers have even doctored the news to suit their purpose. And ultimately, not one paper has asked the students to call off their agitation.

Why the torrent of opinion and the silence on facts? I have no figures, but the viciousness of the anti-Mandal campaign in the press makes me wonder: are all journalists upper caste? And is there a—perhaps subconscious—caste bias at work?

It's not often that politicians of all hues and the media of all colours are on one side of the fence. When that has finally happened, you see the frightening results. And the victim is truth, and the victim is our country. ●

Anil Dharker is Editor (New Projects) at the Times of India Group of Newspapers in Bombay.

Running amok

Tihar Jail prisoners make an abortive attempt to escape



DELHI

Even as the anti-reservation agitation raged in the capital, another kind of rioting claimed nine lives in Delhi's Tihar Jail last week. Three convicts and six undertrials were shot dead and over a hundred prisoners and staff injured in what was the high-security prison's worst-ever jail-break attempt.

The prisoners, who tore down several walls and broke through iron gates by blasting them with gas cylinders, reached the outer wall of the heavily-guarded prison before being overpowered by the Tamil Nadu Special Police battalion and the prison guards. Over a thousand rampaging prisoners came threateningly close to entering the high security area, where JKLF militants, including Yasin Malik, are being held. Said a jail officer, who escaped with a couple of lathi blows on his back: "Not in all my ten years in Tihar have we witnessed anything like this. For a while, it was as if the prisoners had taken over, and they would soon be free in the streets." Eye-witnesses reveal that even those prisoners who had not engineered the jail-break attempt suddenly felt that freedom was close at hand, and joined the rioting.

It all began with a feeble excuse. Investigations reveal that the escape attempt had been planned in advance and the schemers had waited for the right moment. The opportunity came in the early hours of Friday, 5 October, when Hari Singh, a convict serving a life term, died in one of the jail's barracks. As the news spread through Central Jail number one, belligerent prisoners started shouting that the authorities had deliberately neglected the prisoner, and that the attending doctor had allowed him to die. The police point out that Hari Singh was a smack addict, who frequently suffered severe bouts of asthma, and that the prison doctor rushed to his side minutes after the prisoner complained of uneasiness. Thirty minutes later, Singh, who had been convicted for armed dacoity, was declared dead.

According to H P. Kumar, inspector-general, prisons, the trouble that followed had nothing to do with Singh's death. After the dead body was placed on the jail's *chakkar* (roundabout) for inspection by a sub-divisional magistrate, two convicts of the notorious Babbu Tyagi gang, Rajan Mehta and Balbir, instigated their fellow-inmates at the breakfast table to take the prison authorities to task. Before the prison guards realised what was happening, the convicts, serving in the *langar* (dining area), were sprinkling vegetable oil on a pile of blankets and setting them ablaze. Entering the kitchen, they grabbed cylinders, hurled them against the iron gates and threw the burning blankets on them to cause a series of explosions. The prisoners ran amok, with more and more of them joining in as four successive prison walls were breached with iron pipes, uprooted from the cells. The iron gate near the kitchen area, which seemed impregnable till a while ago, was reduced to a mass of mangled metal when a gas cylinder exploded next to it.

An entire battalion of the Tamil Nadu Special Police force and the prison guards rushed in as the alarm was sounded. But it was impossible to curb the swelling mob, which had broken through four cells, one short of the special security area where the JKLF militants were lodged. The police said that the women's cell (number three) had also been stormed, and several women molested, before the battalion could swing into action. But, despite using teargas shells and lathis, the police were unable to control the bedlam, which lasted some five hours.

Besides keeping the security forces at bay, warring factions of prisoners attacked each other, causing an unprecedented bloodbath. Police say they were forced to fire 26 rounds, mostly at inmates on top of the barracks, before the situation could be brought under control around 12.30 pm. But not before nine people had been killed and over a hundred others injured.

Throughout the day, cars and ambulances were used to evacuate the wounded. Many of them had been



Injured prisoners being rushed to hospital: overpowered

hurt by bricks and pieces of glass that were being hurled about to ward off the prison staff and policemen. Police say that 76 of the injured belonged to the jail staff and the security forces. Defending the battalion's decision to open fire, inspector general, Kumar says: "They (the prisoners) just had to break the last wall to come out of the jail and on to the main Hari Nagar road. Only then did the special force open fire."

Sources in the home ministry admit that the rioting would not have taken on such devastating proportions had the prison not been overcrowded. Originally, the high-security jail was built to house 1,000 prisoners—on the day of the jailbreak, there were 2,035 inmates, 185 of them women, in Central Jail number one alone.

"Every jail has its own history of jail-breaks, but this would have been something of a record, had it worked," says a Tihar staffer. Unfortunately, the government is just not giving the jail's expansion as much priority as it should." The jail manual stipulates that hardened criminals and convicts should be housed separately from the undertrials. "But that is not possible due to the tremendous pressure on space," he adds.

In recent years, there was only one major jail-break attempt at Tihar before this. Charles Sobhraj, the notorious international criminal, had escaped his high-security cell after conniving with corrupt jail staff. The jail's security was considerably beefed up after the Sobhraj incident, and it was further tightened during the Indira Gandhi murder trial, when Sikh militants were brought here. "It is only because the prison is to some extent water-tight that the plans of the prisoners were foiled," says a home ministry official.

An inquiry into the jail riot, headed by Ashok Kumar Banerjee, a retired IPS officer, will go into the details of the incident and suggest preventive measures. Meanwhile, to make up for the gaping holes in the walls, three additional CRPF battalions are guarding Tihar jail, and the inmates will not be allowed out of their cells until full security is restored. "Our main suspect, Rajan Mehta, is dead, and his accomplice, Balbir, is seriously injured," says a jail official. "We are hoping that the inquiry will mean that more attention is paid to making Tihar the high-security fortress it is reputed to be." ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi



Tikait addressing the Boat Club rally: promising violence

The BKU bluster

Kisans *upstage students in the anti-reservation agitation*



DELHI

The belligerence continued. And so did the firings, the lathicharges and the attempted self-immolations, as the anti-reservation stir rocked the capital for the sixth consecutive week.

But as time wore on, political parties, especially the Congress(I), and hoodlums took over what was predominantly a students' movement. This became clear from incidents of mass lootings in Palam Vihar and Shakarpur, both strongholds of Congress(I) stalwarts Sajjan Kumar and H.K.L. Bhagat respectively. Police officers say that the violence in the two areas had been sparked off by known Congress supporters.

More pronounced was the newfound prosperity of the movement, which was ostensibly being flooded with funds from different quarters. Stickers screaming, "Don't blame me. I didn't vote VP", were being offered to car drivers free of cost by the students at every crossing, printed shirts and *kurtas* proclaiming, "The gods must be crazy. They made VP", and "VP Singh is injurious to the nation's health" were being sported by every other agitator. And, during the six-day blockade at the crossing adjacent to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, a full-fledged kitchen had come up to feed the students. "A lot of money is being pumped into the agitation, obviously by political parties capitalising on the situation. It is no longer in the students' hands" said a Delhi administration official.

That the students had been pushed to the back seat in their own movement, was evident from the much-touted anti-reservation rally on 2 October. Though conceived as a joint rally of students, farmers and urban intellectuals, the gathering turned out to be nothing more than an aggressive show of strength by Mahendra Singh Tikait, the leader of the Bharatiya Kishan Union (BKU). Weeks had gone into contacting student leaders all over the country for the rally. On the final day, however, students were hardly to be seen. Dominating the scene were an estimated 35,000 farmers who had come from neighbouring Haryana and the rest from Uttar Pradesh. As a senior Delhi police officer put it, "Tikait could have hardly managed to get the crowd himself. Obviously somebody of Devi Lal's stature has pulled strings to get 35,000 people from Haryana."

Armed to the teeth with spears, pitch-forks and lathis, the volatile crowd was spoiling for a fight. As nervous police personnel watched from the sidelines, the city intellectuals —former ambassador to the US Dr Karan Singh, former foreign secretary S.K. Singh, the eminent lawyer, L.M. Singhvi, and the litterateur, Amrita Pritam—were persis-

tently booed and shouted down Amrita Pritam, the last of the group to speak bore the brunt of the crowd's ire. Tired of the 'sane' speeches on how the Mandal Commission was fragmenting the country, the volatile crowd snatched the mike away from her and shouted for the BKU supremo, Mahendra Singh Tikait.

And, Tikait didn't disappoint them. In keeping with the mood of the crowd which jeered everytime Mahatma Gandhi was mentioned, Tikait exhorted them to burn every MP and MLA. 'What is the point in setting yourself on fire. If you have to die this way then first immolate all MPs and MLAs," the farmer leader thundered and his followers listened with attention "Give us the run of the country for only one month and all problems will be solved," he shouted, and the crowd cheered lustily.

As was to be expected, the rally ended with two water tankers being burnt, shops being looted and three people, including a policeman, being killed in firing. "We have had enough. Anti-social elements have taken over the city. We are not going to allow anymore of this," said the police commissioner of Delhi, Vijay Karan, addressing an impromptu press conference after the violence.

With the agitation slipping out of their hands, the Anti-Mandal Commission Forum, which had been spearheading the movement, immediately distanced itself from the farmers' lobby. "The trouble with the BKU is that they talk more about themselves and less about the Mandal Commission," said a student leader. The students—some of whom were literally in tears at the way the demonstration went—fear that public sympathy might wear thin.

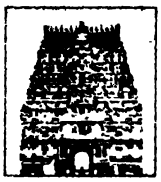
Besides blockades all over the city and no DTC services for days on end, the hapless Delhite had to face acute water shortage as the anti-reservation frenzy spread to the adjacent states. Many parts of Delhi went without water for two days as the agitationists in Haryana diverted water from the western Yamuna canal, which contributes 20 per cent of the city's water supply.

In the still hazy scenario with students, politicians and aggressive farmers jumping onto the anti-Mandal bandwagon, one thing is clear: the anti-reservation stir is going haywire. And the toll is rising and the suicides becoming more bizarre. •

Minu Jain/New Delhi

Cheers for V.P.

The DMK holds a massive rally in support of the Centre's quota policy



TAMIL NADU

The north is north and the south is south While India, north of the Vindhyas, is burning in protest against the Union government's reservation policy, Tamil Nadu, down south, is rejoicing over the Centre's decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations

Last month, Madras hosted a massive rally, attended by a galaxy of National Front leaders and thousands of DMK followers in support of Prime Minister V.P. Singh's quota policy. And the meeting, personally addressed by Singh and N.T. Rama Rao, the former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh and the chairman of the National Front, boosted the beleaguered PM's morale, who has come under relentless fire from the anti-reservationists in northern India.

The rally—held on 16 September—was timed to coincide with a number of important dates associated with the DMK, the birth anniversaries of the late C.N. Annadurai, founder of the DMK (15 September), and Ramaswamy Pariyar, a rationalist reformer and founder of the Dravidar Kazhagam, a precursor to the DMK (16 September), and the DMK's foundation day (17 September). And V.P. Singh gratefully accepted Karunanidhi's invitation to be the star attraction at the rally, though he was due in Madras again on 22 September to attend a meeting of the National Integration Council. "I am grateful to Mr Karunanidhi that in this struggle he came forward to lend support," remarked the PM.

Touching a Dravidian chord, Singh announced: "The dreams of the great Anna, Periyar and Ambedkar have all come true with the implementation of the Mandal Commission report ." The



SUBHA NEWS PHOTO

The rally in Madras: all for Mandal

leaders on the podium and the crowd lustily cheered Singh's statement.

In fact, there could be no better platform for Singh than the one offered by Karunanidhi to declare with a fair measure of assertion that his government was not going to budge an inch from its 7 August declaration which brought alive the Mandal issue and plunged the country into a crisis. "It is a decision impelled by our conscience; it is a fulfilment of our commitment to our people," said the Prime Minister.

Karunanidhi presented V.P. Singh a silver replica of the Tiruvaur temple and went on to explain the symbolism behind the gesture. Karunanidhi told the gathering that soon after coming to power last year, he renovated the famous Tiruvaur temple car that had been lying immobile for about a decade. In a similar manner, explained Karunanidhi, it was V.P. Singh who bought the Mandal recommendations that had been kept frozen for 10 years.

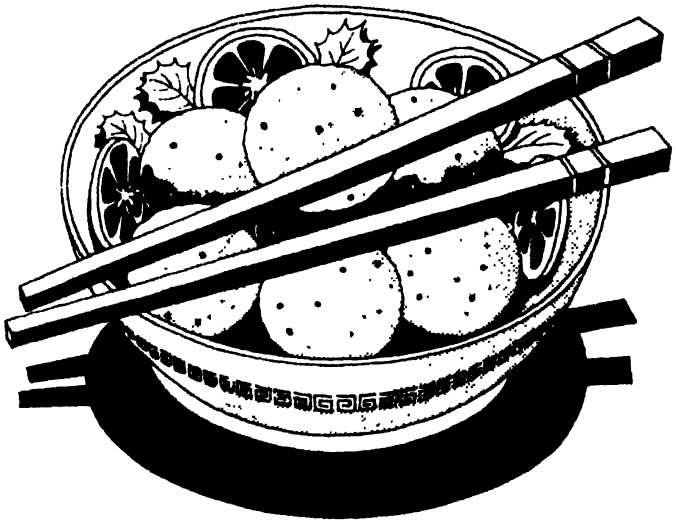
The National Front and DMK leaders utilised this opportunity to launch a tirade against the Congress(I), and especially against its president, Rajiv Gandhi. V.P. Singh said that Rajiv had lost his right to continue as the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, as most of his party MLAs and MPs from the south were supporting the Centre's move while he was campaigning against it.

But organising a pro-reservation rally in Madras was no great achievement. Tamil Nadu had pioneered the pro-reservation movement in the early part of this century when the Justice Party came into being. The party vociferously campaigned against 'Brahmin domination' in education and administration and the first 'communal government order' was issued in this state (then known as the Madras Presidency). It provided for a compartmental reservation to ensure 42 per cent of the jobs for non-Brahmin Hindus and 17 per cent for the Brahmins. Muslims and Anglo-Indians too got 17 per cent each, and the backward classes (now known as the Scheduled Castes) were given eight per cent.

Since then, Brahmins in the state have always been at a disadvantage and the backward castes have ruled the roost. So Tamil Nadu would remain V.P. Singh's strong bastion in the quota controversy, even if every other part were to go up in flames. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

If you think you're having Dim Sum at Holiday Inn, Beijing, you're thinking half a world too far.



Holiday Inn, Bombay, offers you the same international facilities as any Holiday Inn worldwide.

The food at Holiday Inn, Bombay, takes you on a gourmet voyage of the finest Holiday Inns the world over.

We offer fine dining, superior accommodation, conference facilities, inimitable service, and of course, the value for money you've come to expect from any Holiday Inn worldwide...

All the more reasons to choose Holiday Inn first.

Holiday Inn
Bombay
The World's First Choice

ARTIG 469-90

For information and reservation, please contact: BOMBAY: Holiday Inn, Balraj Sahani Marg, Juhu Beach, Bombay 400 049. Tel: 6204444/6202398. Tlx. 011-78411 HOLI IN/ 011-78404 HINN IN. Fax: (0091-22) 6204452 • NEW DELHI: Holiday Inn, Connaught Plaza. Tel: 3320101. Tlx: 031-61186 HIND IN. Tel: 3010211. Tlx: 031-65526 CLAR IN • BANGALORE: Tel: 77676/77931. Tlx: 845-8668/2354 MACH IN • CALCUTTA: Tel: 412009. Tlx: 021-5421 • AHMEDABAD: Tel: 448602 • PUNE: Tel: 661752.



Fatal attraction

What drove Mukesh Aggarwal to commit suicide?

In the best traditions of Hindi cinema, it began with a telephonic romance. Rekha, the dusky sex symbol of the Bombay film industry wanted to be married. And designer-friend Bina Ramani was obliging enough to provide the number of a Delhi-based eligible bachelor. The fact that the portly figure at the other end was the star-struck owner of Hotline, Mukesh Aggarwal, ensured that it was strictly no contest. The couple married after a whirlwind courtship, and the air of the farcical that surrounded the entire episode was compounded when Rekha spent her entire wedding night to quiz friends and acquaintances: "Do you know who's calling? It's Rekha Aggarwal."

But less than seven months later, farce had turned into high tragedy as Mukesh Aggarwal hanged himself to death with Rekha's *duppatta* in his Mehrauli farmhouse (on the outskirts of Delhi). The suicide note dated 13 August (though Mukesh put an end to his life on 2 October) said that nobody was to blame for his death. But as far as friends, family and the general public was concerned, there was no doubt where the responsibility lay. With the wife, who had refused to see him over the last few months and had even served divorce papers on him a week or so before his death.

The star had her defenders. Those who insisted that Aggarwal had had massive financial problems and couldn't take the pressure any more; and yet others who maintained that he had been manic-depressive anyway, having already attempted suicide about six to seven times. But this was strictly a minority view. The conventional wisdom had it that Rekha had taken up with Aggarwal to satisfy a momentary whim and then dropped him when she discovered he was "too boring". The high-strung businessman, who was madly in love—even besotted—with his star-wife, couldn't take the rejection and preferred to die rather than face the humiliation of being projected as a loser.

The family seemed to go along with this version, crying out at the cremation (at Nigambodh Ghat, Delhi), "Rekha *gai chulhe mein. Hamare bete ko kha gayee.* (Don't talk about Rekha. She has destroyed our son.)" A wreath which didn't have the name of the sender was thrown away on the suspicion that it might have been sent by Rekha. Friends of Mukesh, including film star Deepti Naval who had flown down from Bombay for the funeral, chose not to speak to the press. But the animus against the wife was clear to even the most cursory observer.

While this drama was being played out in Delhi, Rekha was in New York, where she was supposed to stage a show. News reached her soon enough through her lawyer, and the star cancelled her programme in the face of her bereavement. Delhi gossip had it that she had taken the next flight back to India and would come to the Aggarwals' Civil Lines residence to the with them in this hour of loss. But the star never arrived and reports that she was in hiding in Bombay went uncorroborated as well. The Aggarwals maintain that she is still in New York, and has not bothered to even condole them over the phone. Says Anil Gupta, Mukesh's elder brother: "All we want is a sorry from her." But even that was not forthcoming.

But in the massive anti-Rekha campaign that followed the suicide, everyone seemed to lose sight of the fact that by all accounts Mukesh Aggarwal had been emotionally unstable even before his wife allegedly drove him to the brink. As far as business acumen goes there was no doubting his ability. Starting off with a small cycle repair shop, Mukesh graduated to making cycle lights which he supplied to Bhagirath Place. He walked to the market everyday for fear that the bus ticket would cut into his profits. His luck changed when he landed a contract from the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC). And Aggarwal celebrated by having his first big meal in a restaurant and riding back home in a taxi.

From then on, he just got bigger and bigger, setting up a company called Fusebase, which manufactured

gas stoves and then diversified into television manufacture with Hotline. Around the time he married (at 37 years) the turnover of his companies stood at Rs 35-40 crores, and he submitted personal income tax worth Rs 10 lakhs every year.

But while his business career unfolded without event, the same couldn't be said about his love-life. In his mid-twenties, Mukesh met and fell in love with a Delhi society girl Kitty Malhan. Malhan seemed to reciprocate his feelings initially, but something went wrong somewhere along the line. Nobody is quite sure what the matter was, but insiders have it that she ditched him for a film career. She didn't make it—though her younger sister Jyotsna is now making her debut in Rajiv Rai's forthcoming release *Vishwatma*—but her betrayal proved too much for Mukesh and he tried to kill himself.

That's one version. Mukesh's elder brother, however, insists that the story about the suicide bid are completely untrue. Says Anil Gupta: "He just broke the TV screen one day in frustration. And a piece of glass flew at him and cut his wrist. So everyone thought he had tried to kill himself. But it just wasn't true."

Whatever the truth of the matter, it was around this time that Aggarwal met the one steadying influence in his life: Akash Bajaj. A divorcee with two daughters, Akash was nearly a decade older than Mukesh, but the two soon became the best of friends. Current gossip had it that she was his psychiatrist and that's how the so-called affair began, but Bajaj strenuously denies these rumours. She met SUNDAY a few days after the funeral to set the record straight: "I was never his analyst. Just because I have a doctor for a friend does not mean that I am ill. But I was very fond of him and with reason. He was one of the most generous caring and loving persons I have ever met."

Shattered after the event, Akash denies that Mukesh was suicidal. Yes, he did attempt suicide several times, she admits, but that was only during recent months.

But Bajaj has more to contend with than canards about the state of Aggarwal's mental health. A section of the press had it that she was the other woman in the Rekha-Mukesh marriage. The rumours began with the discovery of the note Mukesh left for his brother asking him to take care of Akash when he was gone. And once the gossip mill got going, there was no stopping it.

One story had it that Rekha and her husband had arrived at an agreement when they got married. Rekha, apparently, accepted the fact that Akash was a dear friend and would continue to see Mukesh. But she insisted that Bajaj keep away from the Mehrauli farmhouse, she could meet Aggarwal at the Civil Lines family residence. On two separate occasions, however, when the star called her husband late at night, Bajaj picked up the phone. Incensed at this, Rekha filed for divorce.

This version of events is somewhat suspect when one examines the evidence at hand. Akash, like the Aggarwal family, was completely thrown when news of the Rekha-Mukesh marriage broke. But like the dignified lady that she is, Bajaj gracefully withdrew from the scene. She recounts: "I didn't meet him after he got married. I wanted him to concentrate on his marriage and try and make it work. I just wanted things to work out with him."

"I was very fond of him and with reason. He was one of the most generous, caring and loving persons I have ever met"—Akash Bajaj (centre) with Deepti Naval



The friends met only a month later when Akash's mother died and Aggarwal came to the funeral. "I made my peace with him then," she says, "and then met him once more to sort out some business problems." Akash's company Opus supplied gas stoves to Aggarwal's outfit and she wanted to work out an arrangement until an alternate source of supply could be arranged. But that was the last Bajaj saw of Mukesh.

Until August, when a distraught Anil Gupta (Mukesh's elder brother) called her up to say that Mukesh had attempted suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills.

Relations between Mr and Mrs Aggarwal had been deteriorating for a while. Soon things got to such a pass that Rekha refused to take her husband's calls when he phoned her in Bombay. Mukesh was convinced that it was Farzana, Rekha's secretary, who was keeping them apart, and that if he met his wife things would soon be back to normal.

Therefore, he decided to fly to Bombay, accompanied by his sister-in-law who was deputed to keep an eye on him so that he didn't do anything stupid in an emotional fit. Once there, the Aggarwals went straight to Rekha's house, only to be kept waiting for several hours, without the actress making an appearance. Close friends of the family have it that Mukesh took the overdose in Rekha's house itself and had to be rushed to a nursing home. As soon as he had recovered he insisted on going back to his wife's house in a last-ditch effort to effect a reconciliation. This time, however, the securitymen would not even let him in, on instructions from their mistress. Mukesh sat down outside her gate and cried like a baby, but to no avail. He was forced to come back to Delhi, where he went even further into depression. The family maintains that the suicide bid took place in Delhi. But it was around this time that Akash entered the picture again. According to her, "His brother came to me totally shattered, and asked me to help them get Mukesh back to normal. My initial reaction was 'this is a matter between husband and wife, how am I involved?' But they insisted, so I went there and helped him by talking things over. He just wanted his wife back, and the family was trying to get to her."

They never succeeded in that attempt but Mukesh seemed to be getting better. He started working again, and even got his factory—which had been burned down—repaired in 90 days time. Normal life seemed to have been resumed with his signing cheques, giving instructions to his workers and getting back in control of his life. "Even the day before he died," discloses brother Anil Gupta, "he had signed 50 cheques."

On the morning of 2 October, therefore, when Aggarwal insisted that he be allowed to go to Mehrauli alone (he was never left alone because everyone was afraid he would harm himself), nobody thought very much of it. "I'll be back for lunch," he called out to his brother and drove off.

And a couple of hours later was found hanging from the ceiling with Rekha's *duppatta*, with her photograph in his pocket, and two notes by his side. The one addressed to his brother created some misunderstanding as it spoke of Akash Bajaj. But Akash maintains that there was nothing more to their relationship than friendship. "He knew I was alone in the world. I am divorced, my mother died some months ago, both my brothers are dead and I have two nieces and two daughters to look after. He just wanted to ensure that I would have someone to count upon as family."



Mukesh with Rekha: what happened to their love?

But in the spate of rumours which have been doing the rounds, truth is the first casualty. One version has it that Rekha tired of her husband when she discovered that he didn't have as much money as she thought he would. Another story is that the star wanted her husband to open a joint account with her to help her with income tax problems. He balked at that and the lady opted out. Yet another version is that Mukesh Aggarwal commited suicide because of money problems.

The last version is debunked by both family and friends. Even if he did have money problems, they say, it was no reason for him to kill himself. He had built up a business empire from scratch and there was no reason why he couldn't attempt a repeat. Also, no matter how grave the financial crisis, he certainly wasn't on the verge of bankruptcy.

The family also discounts the notion that Rekha married him for his money. Says Anil Gupta: "She has so much of money and property of her own. Why should she marry Mukesh for money? That is being unfair to her." And what lends credence to the denial is the fact that Aggarwal to the last believed that his wife loved him and it was only other people who were creating misunderstandings between them. Says Akash Bajaj: "He was convinced that she loved him as much as he loved her and that once he met her face to face all their problems would be over."

Once the initial bitterness wore off, however, a new villain of the piece emerged: Rekha's secretary Farzana. "It was Farzana who created all the trouble. She wouldn't even let her attend her husband's phone calls," alleges Anil Gupta.

But why did Rekha let her secretary call the shots?

"She has no friends, no company," explains Gupta. "So, obviously when somebody is so close as to stay with her and even sleep with her, she is not an ordinary person."

Farzana, apparently, refused to let the husband-wife relationship develop for fear that her importance would be reduced in the scheme of things. "She'd keep telling Rekha, 'you are Rekha, you are not an ordinary person, how can you keep going to Delhi to see your husband'. She would always be trying to create trouble between the two by insisting that Mukesh had been rude to her," says Anil Gupta.

Gupta, however, refuses to blame the actress for his brother's fate: "I blame my brother for marrying her," he says. "But I must add that there is no humanity in that woman. Until now she hasn't even bothered to call and say that she is sorry. Surely this proves that she is guilty."

But in the end, Rekha may well be the worst loser. If family sources are to be believed, Mukesh had made a will which excluded the actress completely. But the monetary loss, though much is being made of it, is the least of her problems. Whatever the extent of her culpability, it'll be a long time before the actress comes anywhere near being a public favourite again. ●

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

Of the three legends Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand and Dilip Kumar only two took to film-making. And now it is the turn of Dilip Kumar to join the gang. The lucky producer who managed to convince Dilip to direct a film is none other than Sudhakar Bokade of *Izzatdar* fame in which Dilip played a central character.

Nothing has been finalised though, and even the obviously-excited producer is maintaining a tight-lipped silence on the matter. People close to the camp, however, insist that this is just another ploy to generate curiosity.

There's nobody quite like Sattee Shourie—no not even in the big bad film industry.

After calling director Anil Sharma her *beta* and saying she was like a mother to him, the lady went a bit overboard. While having a heated argument with Anil over something regarding *Farishtay*, she lost her temper and slapped him hard.

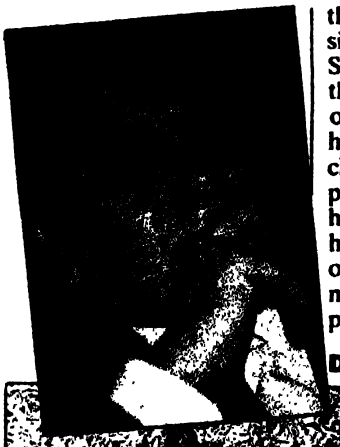
She then proceeded to borrow a page from Nirupa Roy and started crying, profusely apologising all the while for her behaviour.

While Anil himself was too stunned to react, unit members of the film remained unimpressed with her histrionics and insisted that while her slap was all too real, her tears were definitely of the crocodile variety.

B. Subhash, the man who discovered Kimi Katkar and in the process won the gratitude of the entire male population in town, has signed another Kimi Katkar lookalike for his latest film *Naachnewale Gaanewale*.

The girl is none other than Sunil Dutt's discovery Sheeba who will be seen first in Dutt's *Yeh Aag Kab Bujhegi*. Possessing the same cat eyes, sensuous mouth and oomph as Kimi Katkar, Sheeba is well on her way to becoming the next sex symbol.

And now that the Farhas and Sonams are out of the reckoning, there's no stopping Sheeba.



Dilip Kumar: a new role



DURGAPRASAD

Kimi Katkar: easily replaced

With a mother as avaricious as Babita, Karishma Kapoor should have no problems adjusting to the ways of the film world. For even though Karishma has just signed one film opposite Salman Khan, Babita, in the manner of numerous other star *mamas* before her, has already started chalking out grandiose plans for her career. And has, in the process, showed herself to be quite adept at old industry games like manipulating dates and prices for her star daughter.

But isn't Babita being a trifle hasty, doing too much too soon?

Surely she wouldn't like to see her prize hen back home with a bad case of burnout.

Shakti Kapoor, celebrated loudmouth, seems to be going through a bad patch. And his complexes are showing up a bit too often. At the Salman-Naghma starrer *Baaghi's* cassette release function, the compere had left the stage to call someone with the mike in his hand, so, producer Nitin Manmohan loudly yelled across to Shakti asking him to come on stage.

Shakti Kapoor: too many problems



And Shakti just refused to budge. He folded his arms and dug his heels in and insisted that his name should be announced over the mike. And he went up on stage only after that was done.

You can't blame him really. It can't be much fun being on the wrong side of despair. No films, no girls and no liquor either. Right Shakti? •





A STILL FROM *AJOOBA*

MUCH ADO ABOUT AJOOBA

Shashi Kapoor defends his multi-crore venture

"They are all getting ready to attend my funeral," he chuckles. "But, I'm not ready to die as yet." So, why does everyone think that Shashi Kapoor is on the verge of bankruptcy, has mortgaged his house and has become an alcoholic? Simple. The release of *Ajooba*, Kapoor's much-talked about film (co-produced with the Russians), is taking time. And an industry that revels in making prophecies of doom was quick to suggest that the end was in sight for the portly actor-producer.



SHASHI KAPOOR

Explains an amused Kapoor: "It makes for good copy, doesn't it? Suppose Shashi Kapoor made a multi-crore film well within its budget and time-frame, what would be left to write about? Who would be bothered with this fat, 50-year-old, ugly man, otherwise?" Well, actually Kapoor is 52, but despite the fact that the once-famous drawl is today almost as thick as the waistline, there are still plenty of female fans to swear undying love for him. And even, in the case of one smitten creature in faraway London, send him a parcel of underwear from Marks and Spencer every six months, keeping unerring track of that ever-expanding girth.

But Kapoor's past caring about his weight; what is uppermost in his mind these days is *Ajooba*. And, one presumes, the almost one-year delay in its release. Kapoor attributes it to a variety of reasons: "*Yeh to film industry hain, yahan sood pe sood hota hain.* (This is the film industry. Here we pay interest upon interest.) Then there are date problems, star dates, studio dates."

Whatever the reasons, *Ajooba*, slated to be in production for 18 months, was 30 months in the making. And Kapoor now hopes to sell the film, made at a cost of Rs 8-10 crores, at Rs 85 lakhs per territory—a price guaranteed to make every distributor break out in a rash. Shashi, for his part, is confident about the chances of his film: "*Ajooba* will gross more than a crore-and-a-half per territory. After all, it has special effects, magic, fantasy, colour, a parrot, a cockroach, even Amitabh Bachchan." What's more, an Amitabh Bachchan who seems to have recovered his box-office magic if *Aaj Ka Arjun* is anything to go by.

But the box-office has its own logic. And if *Ajooba* fails to draw in the crowds, Shashi Kapoor could be in big, big trouble. For, the film is a deficit release: trade jargon for a



(L to R) AMITABH BACHCHAN, SHASHI KAPOOR and DIMPLE



RISHI KAPOOR with SONAM

movie which depends on box-office profits—not just territory sales alone—to break even. Kapoor doesn't seem to be suffering from nerves, though. Or, if he is, he certainly doesn't show it. "I am a great fatalist," he says. "*Agar film ko chalna hai, to chalegi.*" And if it doesn't? "Well then," comes the wry response, "no more China Garden for me."

Right now, however, he can afford to play magnanimous. A lady enters the restaurant—yes, China Garden, where this interview is being conducted—with a group of friends, and makes her way straight to Kapoor's table to touch his feet. She is a distant relative and Shashi booms in his Prithviraj Kapoor voice: "*Khush raho, khush raho* (Be happy, be happy)." It is the lady's birthday and she has brought her friends out for lunch. Kapoor summons the *maitre d'* as soon as his relative departs. "Bill their amount to my account," he instructs. "Tell her it's a birthday treat from an old uncle."

While the industry has all but written off *Ajooba*, Kapoor is busy preparing for the film's (it is slated for a Diwali release) charity *premieres*, the first of which will be for cancer relief—the disease Jennifer Kendell-Kapoor, Shashi's wife, died of. He's aware that the industry has dubbed *Ajooba* his "death wish", but as he says: "They said the same thing when I made *Junoon* in '79, *Kalyug* in '81, *36 Chowringhee Lane* in '82, *Vijeta* in '83 and *Utsav* in '85. And this makes it Death Wish VI, right?"

Death wish or not, Kapoor hasn't had it terribly easy during the making of the film. True, all the artistes—Amitabh Bachchan, Rishi Kapoor, Shammi Kapoor, Dara Singh, Tej Sapru, Dimple Kapadia and Sonam (after some initial problems)—worked without payment. (Though, says Shashi, Bachchan now has the rights of the Delhi-UP territory.) But there were other problems. First, with the Russian co-director Gennady Vasiliev, "arising largely out of the language barrier". Then, there were three storms while shooting was on in Russia, and special effects cameraman Peter Perreira preferred to do other work when 'trick' scenes were being shot. "I feel cheated," says Kapoor, "but maybe Peter felt he had not been paid enough."

Meanwhile Amitabh Bachchan postponed his dubbing for *Ajooba* because he wanted *Aaj Ka Arjun* to be released first. And then, there was the *Hum* shooting in Mauritius to concentrate on. "Amitji must also have had his own reasons," Kapoor concedes charitably, "but whenever he was on my sets, he was always yawning."

Amrish Puri, too, couldn't give dubbing dates. "Funny guy," muses Shashi, "when I hadn't paid him, he was working for me. Now it's vice versa." Then the afterthought: "Look, I don't want you to think that I'm cribbing; it's just that the film could have been released much faster."

A film trade magazine, however, had it—much to Kapoor's horror—that *Ajooba* had already been released in Russia and had turned out to be a dismal flop. "Absolutely not," protests Shashi. "First of all, the film wasn't even completely shot when this report came up. I was still shooting the crab scene, Vanraj Bhatia hadn't recorded the background music." What was shown in Russia were only a few scenes, and pleads Kapoor: "Aww, don't give a dog a bad name and hang him. See the complete picture, all six songs, three hours of it."

Of course, the ensuing "*Mahabharat* with the distributors" could well ensure that Kapoor cuts down the film to a more manageable length. But three hours, or two and a half, *Ajooba* will be on show soon enough.

And then, as Kapoor puts it, "the audience will decide its fate". And Shashi Kapoor's, for that matter. ●

Nafisa Alyer/Bombay

V GANGADHAR

The leak that creaks

Especially when the regime seeks to distort the truth

'It was the best of leaks, it was the worst of leaks'. I am referring to the controversy over the official briefing of the meeting of a sub-committee of the National Integration Council (NIC) held recently in Delhi.

BJP leaders, L.K Advani and A.B. Vajpayee contend that decisions or resolutions adopted at the sub-committee meeting were not to be released to the press. There was a definite understanding among all participants on this issue, they added.

Yet, details of the deliberations appeared in the press the very next morning. The 'leak' was, however, very visible. Official spokesman I.Ram Mohan Rao said that all that was done by him was the distribution of the copies of the meeting's recommendations. He had not done any "briefing".

According to 'reliable sources', some enthusiastic 'quarters' in the home ministry were responsible for preparing the note and making arrangements for its distribution. They were made available to the press and copies were kept in the duty room of the Press Information Bureau for reporters on their last round.

One cannot blame the government for this 'open' policy. After all, everyone is interested in the meetings of the NIC in view of the ongoing controversies over the Mandal report and the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. What is highly objectionable, however, is the obvious distortion of the actual proceedings which had been done to embarrass the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Initially it was reassuring to learn that the BJP would abide by the court ruling on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. Mr L.K. Advani reportedly told the meeting that his *rath yatra* was meant to diffuse communal tension. Most of the newspapers interpreted this as a 'climbdown' on the part of the BJP.

Obviously egged on by the hotheads within its ranks, the BJP acted swiftly, contradicted the official version of the proceedings and decided to boycott the NIC meeting in Madras. Vajpayee also resigned from the NIC Harmony Council.

Someone, clearly, had doctored the official press release. According to M.J. Akbar, "the principal information officer, who takes his orders straight from the Prime Minister, deliberately leaked the story". Said Chandra Shekhar, "Small minds cannot be expected to do big things."

'Leaks' are part and parcel of modern politics but distorted leaks?

A.B. Vajpayee (left) and **L.K. Advani** contend that decisions or resolutions adopted at the sub-committee meeting of the National Integration Council were not to be released to the press. Yet, it leaked and appeared in the press the very next morning





Caught and bowled

The news was tucked away in a corner of the sports page. Former union railway minister and senior vice president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Madhavrao Scindia defeated B.N. Dutt by 16 votes to 15 in the elections for the post of the BCCI president.

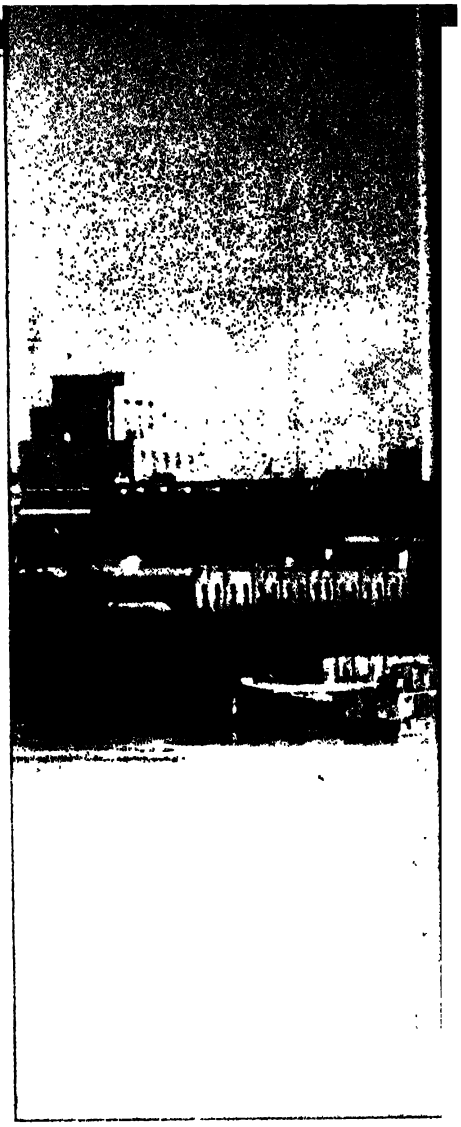
Didn't the papers report earlier that Scindia would be contesting against another vice president, I.S. Bindra? What prompted Dutt, the incumbent, to contest again? Though it is Asiad time, one wished that the press had devoted more space to the startling developments at India's richest and most important sports body.

Some papers did well, though. Calcutta's *The Telegraph* took the lead, recapturing the drama and the politics behind the elections. The services' and the railways' representatives, obviously, had been instructed to vote for Scindia, and this had tilted the issue in favour of the Gwalior prince.

The new selection committee under Bombay's Naren Tamhane, appears to have more than one 'joker'. The earlier committee had Raj Singh Dungarpur as the only non-Test cricketer. The present one has Akash Lal, another somebody called Jeejebhoy and a nobody called Anand Shukla! G.R. Vishwanath is the only genuine Test player. May God help Indian cricket! ●

THE BOXWALLAH'S TALES

Three stories from a Calcutta executive as told to V.S. Naipaul



Ashok worked for an old British boxwallah company. The company itself had now been bought over by one of the new generation of super-rich Indian financiers and industrialists, much of whose business activity lay outside India

Ashok's first story—he told me three stories in all—was of his attempt to get into marketing.

"I made a number of false starts. The first was when I did commerce at the university. That was what my parents wanted me to do. I knew commerce wasn't for me, but I gritted my teeth and went ahead with it. I just scraped through the final exams, and that dented my self-confidence. Then I applied to join a management institute. I did that because everybody else was doing it. Inevitably, I didn't get in.

"At that stage my father fixed me up with a chamber of commerce in Delhi. I was there for a year and a half. I came into contact with a number of the industry barons for whom the chamber had been set up; but you also had a number of rustic individuals. It gave me a fair idea of the half-and-half way things were in India. I was drawing a pittance, 300 rupees a month, £15, but I was living in the house of an uncle, and didn't have many expenses

"One day, at a middle-class party in Delhi, in Defence Colony, I met a Dr Malhotra. He was a portly man of middle height, in a dark-brown suit. I asked him what he did, and he said in an offhand way that he was the director of Imba. I asked him what Imba was, and he said it was the Institute of Management and Business Administration. It sounded familiar, but that was because many of these places have names that sound like that. Anyway, I was terribly impressed. He was a man in his mid-forties. I was in my early twenties. He looked very prosperous, and talked that way too. He was indifferent to me initially, no doubt seeing me as just another young man working somewhere.

"But then the conversation led to the fact that my father was an influential businessman in Calcutta, and Dr Malhotra's attitude to me changed. He became quite interested in what I did, how much I earned, and then he gave his opinion that I was made for much better things. My own gullibility took me along on the wave of his interest. His approval of me was total.

"It was beyond him why someone of my obvious talent should be wasting his time drawing 300 rupees in a nondescript chamber of commerce, when I could have the world at my feet. I said, 'Have you anything better to suggest?' He said, 'Boy, do I!' He described his Imba institute. From the way he told it, Imba was set up to propagate the discipline of marketing to as many people as possible in the country. And he now had plans to expand from Delhi to the other metropolitan centres.

"The way he told it, his own marketing acumen was sought by the large corporations of India, and he had had something to do with the success of quite a few well-known brands. Just listening to him excited me, opening my eyes to the wonderful world of marketing, of which I had heard so much

"I thought I wanted to go into marketing. Partly this was because lots of my friends and colleagues were applying to these institutes of management, in which marketing was an important discipline, or they were joining large corporations as management trainees in the marketing division. I didn't understand what the thing was about, but it seemed to me the thing to do. It had a certain glamour, a certain aura.

"I agreed with Dr Malhotra that I was wasting my time where I was He invited me over to his office the following day, where, as he implied, I might learn something to my advantage. I trotted off the next morning Before I knew it, Dr Malhotra was offering me a job, at double the salary I was getting at the chamber, and with the enticing prospect of going back and working in Calcutta.

"When I asked him why an obviously successful marketing man like him was interested in a raw beginner like me, someone who had failed to get into the management institutes, he said the way he saw professional qualifications was like this: B.S., M.S, and Ph. D.—Bullshit, More shit, and



We put in a lot of effort. We draw a monthly pay cheque. And for people like us, who are not businessmen, we feel that the city in which we live must offer us something in return

Piled High and Deep. Which again made a deep impression on me. Even in my school reports they used to say: 'His marks are not a true indication of his ability.' So I was ready to fall in with what Dr Malhotra said.

" 'It's work experience that counts,' he said. And he said he preferred, having the views he had, to pick up raw people like me and make them blossom.

"He asked me to look after the Calcutta branch or, as he called it, the 'Calcutta Bureau' of Imba—I think he liked the modern sound of the word 'bureau'. The job, as he described it, would mean setting up courses, and enrolling corporate and individual members at fairly high fees.

"I had the presence of mind to ask him how this was going to help me learn about marketing. I saw that the job meant selling Imba rather than learning the marketing skills for which Imba was apparently famous. He said this would be only one aspect of my work. Imba itself would be deeply involved in marketing research and counselling for clients. This impressed me. I saw myself developing into a marketing whizz-kid.

"I overrode my father's doubts, and I accepted Dr Malhotra's offer. The day I joined Imba he gave me a box of visiting cards with my name and my grandiose designation as Bureau Executive. I had never had a visiting card before. I was very pleased.

"I was hoping to spend a week or so in Delhi, learning about the workings of Imba, but it was apparent that Dr Malhotra was in a bit of a hurry to see me off to Calcutta. He wanted me to go there and start enrolling the big corporations as members. He said I was to get the help of my father. This gave me a little pause: I began to feel that he was interested in my father, and that something was amiss.

"He packed me off to Calcutta. He paid the train fare. He had indicated to me that he had an office in Calcutta, and that a friend was looking after the office. Shortly after I arrived, this friend telephoned and invited me over. The office was in a congested part of North Calcutta, and when I went I found a dingy little place in an old, ill-kept multi-storeyed block.

"When I asked this gentleman, Dr Malhotra's friend, where my Imba office would be, he pointed to a broken small table in one corner of the room, and he said I could work from here. He went on to add that while in an absolute emergency he could consider some typing work, he would prefer it if I used a carbon and wrote my own letters and reports by hand. He said I could also use the telephone—the only one in the office that worked. But every time I made a call I should make a note of it, and these costs would be debited to Imba.

"And from that desk I actually

attempted to run my first marketing training course. Dr Malhotra told me I should negotiate with a hotel for a conference hall, and lunch and dinner and so on for the participants. I was to try to get a good price - he was particular about that - and I actually did so.

"He told me more than once that he was getting a reputed American professor down to Calcutta for the training course. That was the point I had to push. The American idea was important. The management scene in the country was heavily influenced by the management boom that was taking place in America, and Dr Malhotra was certainly sensitive to that.

"I did as he said, and was quite successful in enrolling the 25 candidates or so he wanted for the course. I did this primarily because I met a number of senior corporation people who were family friends. That gave me an entry point, and I found that the rest was quite easy. I went to see them, and they were happy to nominate someone in their firm to attend the course for 2000 rupees a head. I should say that a lot of these senior people expressed surprise and dismay that I was associated with such an outfit—of which they hadn't heard.

"The course itself passed off without incident—expect one. The American professor and his wife did come down. He wasn't really well known. He came from some obscure university, and in fact he was running a somewhat similar outfit somewhere in the vast North American continent. He was a cartoon American tourist, paunchy, late forties.

"This professor and his wife were put up in the hotel Dr Malhotra had made me negotiate with, for the conference hall and so on. It wasn't the best hotel in town. It was a couple of rungs below. The professor and his wife didn't like what they saw, but Dr Malhotra told them that this was India, a very poor country, that standards were lower, and that service in these less pretentious hotels was often better than in the five-star hotels, which could sometimes be all show.

"Just when it seemed that the Americans were getting reconciled to their quarters, a rat appeared and scurried across the room. The lady screamed and said, "I can't stand *slithery* things." And, to the chagrin of Dr Malhotra, the Americans insisted on being taken to the very best hotel in Calcutta. This was the Grand Hotel. It was infinitely more expensive. I myself had to make the arrangements.

"The course was seen as a feather in my cap. But then, as soon as it was over, Dr Malhotra said I should start preparing for another -- going through the whole thing again. And I myself wasn't happy about the course I had just arranged, because it seemed to me on reflection that it hadn't done anything for me in the marketing way.

"I also wasn't being successful in enrolling members in Imba. Dr Malhotra was greatly interested in this, since each corporate member would bring in some 7000 or 8000 rupees, and an individual member about 1000 rupees. Most people simply didn't know about Imba. Dr Malhotra thought I should be able to enrol them simply because I belonged to an influential family. But didn't feel I had anything to offer the big corporations. It's hard enough to sell a good product without being pushy. To sell a dud product was well nigh impossible to me at that time, when I was young and shy. And my father's friends were becoming a little more vocal in their protests about my requests to them for 8000 rupees for corporate membership of Imba.

Apart from visiting one of Calcutta's clubs, one has little choice of places to go. He cannot go out walking because the pavements and roads don't allow it

"My weekly, carbon-copied, ballpoint-penned Imba reports to Dr Malhotra made less and less impressive reading. And Dr Malhotra was becoming more and more impatient. He also began to feel that there was some danger that I might leave Imba.

"He flew down to Calcutta and wanted to know why I wasn't producing results. I put it to him that I had joined Imba to develop knowledge and skills in the discipline of marketing, in the classical sense. And what I had been doing in the last couple of months was selling or marketing Imba itself, which had helped neither my knowledge nor my reputation. I suggested to him that what Imba needed in Calcutta was some indigent retired army officer with organisational ability, and not an idealistic 23-year-old man on the threshold of a career. It came to me to say at that point that I hoped we could part amicably.

"We didn't part amicably. he became angry. He said he had invested a lot of money and time in me. I ignored that. I thought he was going to ask for some kind of money back. He became very angry, and said he was going to remove my name from life membership of Imba. It was news to me that I was a life member of Imba, but apparently branch executives or "bureau executives" became that automatically."



Ashok's first story had been about his attempt to get into marketing, and his entanglement with Imba, the Institute of Management and Business Administration, run by Dr Malhotra of Delhi. His second story was about his marriage, his break with the past.

He said, "I eventually went into an advertising agency, and was immediately happy. My career righted itself from here. I grew in my job; I learned a lot about the real world of marketing; it was the most productive five years of my career.

"But this went with an upheaval in another aspect of my life. I came from a traditional South Indian Brahmin



household. My father had travelled on various postings all over the world and had settled in Calcutta. And I had a public-school upbringing in India. Yet so ingrained was the traditional outlook of the family that I had never thought of dating girls, although I was popular, and sang pop songs and Indian classical songs. In this Indian classical side I had been trained at home by a private tutor; it was part of one's traditional upbringing.

"A number of my friends were leading an active social life, but I myself didn't see this as either necessary or indeed desirable. Other people did it, had girl friends, but I felt that wasn't for me. I suppose it was deeply in my subconscious that I would get married in the traditional arranged way—until I actually went to participate in a ceremony of 'viewing' a girl with the object of marriage.

"My family had arranged it in the standard way, through the exchange of horoscopes. The girl lived in Bangalore, and I went all the way down there to see her. There were hordes of my relatives there, and her relatives. We were told to arrive at the appointed place, which was of the girl's parents' choosing, at a certain time.

"It was in the evening. The occasion itself involved everybody sitting round in a circle. I was introduced only to the girl's father, and we sat round in a circle in the hall. Savouries and sweets were passed around. And everyone was dressed for the occasion. So peculiar were the arrangements, I wasn't sure who the girl was. There were other girls from her side, and I hadn't been introduced to the girl herself, and the girl's father kept up a constant chatter, asking me a whole host of questions about what I did, and what I liked, and what I disliked, and so on.

"I told my father I wasn't saying no because I didn't like the girl's face—that would have been unfair: I hadn't had a chance to talk to the girl. I was saying no to the process, not to the girl. And I didn't want to talk about it any more.

"My elders thought that time would heal things, that this was my first time, and that the next time round would be different.

"I became less and less communicative. It's in the situation that parents and children don't talk openly about these things. Nobody ever asks you what your views on marriage are. It just happens that one fine day somebody presents you with a proposal.

"And it was at this time that, spurred on by the thought that I would have to go through with that viewing process once more or many times more, my mind gradually turned towards the principle of making up my own mind who I wanted to marry.

"There was someone I had known, a marketing executive. Marketing—it's always been marketing for me. But this girl I knew came from another community. I declared myself to her. We agreed that it could be a workable proposition. We knew each other socially. We spoke the same language. But she was of a different community. And when I finally broached the subject to my parents, they were as opposed as I thought they would be. They went into a shell, withdrew—as I had withdrawn after the viewing ceremony at Bangalore. It was difficult to communicate with them, because in a situation like this they had a certain crude logic on their side: in a matter like this there could be no half-way compromise. For them I was about to break the family link with history, tradition, and they could have no vision of the future. For them everything appeared to become black.

"I was on test, too, because the person I wanted to marry wanted to see how I would react to pressure. So it was important to me to stand up. I told my parents I wasn't going to change my mind, but I wasn't in a hurry. They could take their time. It was very hard for them, but slowly they came round. They were counselled by some people in the family and by friends. Our wedding was held in the traditional grand manner.

"Among the younger generation of the family, I became a hero. Quite a few members of the family have done what I have done. And it's not now quite the shock that it had been. But one also has to accept—what my parents felt but couldn't express, what made them go into their shell—that something indefinable has snapped. We've been Brahmins for untold generations."

Ashok's first story had been about his attempt to get into marketing. His second story had been about his marriage, his break with the past. His last story was about his life in advertising, and his sighting of the Calcutta boxwallah world, just when that world was about to disappear, giving way to the cruder, richer business world of post-independence India.

Ashok said, "My first experience of the Calcutta boxwallah was when as a trainee account executive in an advertising firm I was taken to my first client meeting, and was introduced to this very senior executive in the marketing division of the company. The man was portly and appeared to be quite jovial. He was smoking an imported brand of cigarette, and—this was the middle of May, which is some-

thing in Calcutta—he was wearing a suit. His office was air-conditioned. The general atmosphere was of a man in a plush office with a leisurely approach to life.

"He appeared to be in no great hurry to discuss the business in hand. We were going into all kinds of trivia about life in general, the cricket series, a little office politics. All kinds of things were being talked about from 11 or so until 12 or 12.15. And then there was this long pause, and it seemed almost a pity that we had to set aside the general discussion.

"My boss broached the subject of business, and this was gone through with great dispatch. I was just observing; I was only a trainee. The business side of things was finished in a quarter of an hour. It was now about 12.30. Lunch was looming. The client asked my boss if he had a luncheon engagement. My boss said no. The client said, 'Perhaps we ought to discuss a little more business over lunch.'

"My boss instructed me to run to the office and take out an IOU for 500 rupees, and join them at a five-star hotel. The client wasn't inviting us—it wasn't known for clients to invite advertising agency personnel to lunch. The lunch was to be on us. I suppose I was quite excited at that moment. I had heard a great deal about client entertainment, but I hadn't done any, or been part of it, at that time. The lunch that day started at 12.45 and finished at 3.30. Everybody was happy at the end.

"This way of doing things went on till the early 70s. The big companies had more or less a monopoly in their respective fields. They didn't have to sell. They merely allocated. There was never enough to meet the demand.

"That's changed now. There are a lot more companies making the products, and companies are having to battle it out—to meet production volumes, to place them in the market, to persuade the customer. So all of a sudden companies had no room for people who merely dressed well, could talk to the boss's wife, could play a round of golf, and hold their drink. The country itself had started setting up business schools. To a large extent they tended to be textbook American models, and this created problems for companies. But these institutes enabled companies to get a shortlist of candidates. It became a status symbol to recruit an MBA.

"Life is hard now for the executive, and the city of Calcutta adds to this pressure, by offering so little in return to a person who's putting in so much effort. After a hard day's work you can find yourself stranded in a car for hours on end, and when you return home there is no power. There are generators, but they make a dreadful din, and are limited. Apart from visiting one of Calcutta's clubs, if he's fortunate enough to be a member, an executive has little choice of places to go. He cannot go out walking because the pavements and the roads don't allow it. The parks are over crowded. Most of these parks are infested with rich young men and women who take their cars and turn up their car stereos and eat all evening—junk food from hawkers—and throw the litter around.

"The infrastructure of the city is crumbling. The drainage system is perhaps the worst in the world. In the monsoon, major areas of the city are waterlogged for anything up to 72 hours at a time. One year the water never drained away. Carcases of animals appeared, and we were afraid of an epidemic.

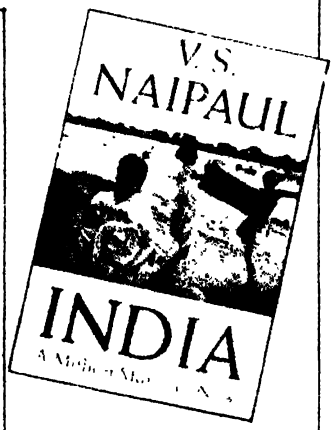
"The only section of people here who seem to be thriving in Calcutta are the Marwaris. They came from parts of Rajasthan a couple of hundred years ago. They thrive by being middlemen, buying and selling. This is what they were good at, and they continue to be. They were never known for cultural or technical skills. And they just grew as a community. They have been the only ones, in the last 15 or 20 years, who are able to buy properties in the posh areas where previously only the rich Bengalis or expatriate executives lived. They have participated in the property boom. Today in these areas you have multistorey buildings coming up—one more nail in the coffin of the city: more cars, more sanitation problems, etc.—with the Marwaris themselves occupying most of the apartments.

"The other aspect is that some of the very rich Marwaris keep buying up companies after buying just enough shares to gain control. And so a number of old firms are now in the hands of Marwaris. Most of them do not nurture or invest in these companies. They strip the assets. They are quite happy to let the company become more and more sick. It is also true that in the earlier era the British didn't bother very much about growth. Their main concern was repatriation of a certain amount of profits in foreign exchange to the parent company, and most British managing directors came here for a short-term period of three or five years.

"We put in a great deal of effort. We draw a monthly pay cheque. And for people like us, who are not businessmen, we feel that the city in which we live must offer us something in return. We must at the end of the working day have more than the prospect of just coming back home. You can't go to any cinema house, because most of them have poor sound systems and virtually non-functioning air-conditioning systems—they don't renovate them. I haven't been to a cinema hall in Calcutta for five or six years.

"The fact is that the problems of Calcutta are of a magnitude that cannot be endured. My wife and I feel now that we won't see improvements in our lifetime. We feel we should be trying our luck somewhere else, and saying goodbye to Calcutta." ●





India: A Million Mutinies Now by V.S Naipaul. Published by Rupa & Co Price Rs 250

CESSPOOLS

Rarely have things been so bad at airport customs. Harassment and corruption are now commonplace

Sahar International Airport, Bombay: A little after sunrise, passengers off a Dubai flight enter from the immigration lounge and move to claim their baggage, a prelude to the customs check. There is palpable tension in the air. And customs officials are fully alert.

A young woman wheels her baggage through the Green channel. "Get back into the line," barks an official, "and get your baggage X-rayed." The woman is perplexed, and argues that she has absolutely nothing to declare. "Get back in the line," growls the customs officer, grabbing her bag with a swarthy hand When her turn at the X-ray machine comes forty minutes later, the officer insists that she open all her bags. "You were trying to escape," he tells her. "You're in trouble now." Not intimidated, the lady complains to the supervisor, and explains that the tape recorder and the camera that show up in the X-ray are in fact the same items she took along for her trip. She is let off, finally, almost with a touch of regret that there were no irregularities to pin on her.

Hasmukh Shah, a young executive, is not so lucky. He had decided to bring in a video cassette player from Singapore, thinking that Bombay Customs would not penalise him as he had no other dutiable goods. Six hours later and seven thousand rupees poorer, he groans that it would have been cheaper to simply buy a Akai machine from a Bombay smuggler. Behind him in the customs queue, there is a banker who fails to understand why there is any difference at all in the Green and Red channels.

Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi: Here, the Green channel actually permits walk-through passengers. It is not that Delhi Customs trustspassengers more—all baggage is X-rayed. But it is not easy for everyone.

"I had already cleared customs in Bombay," says Leela Dhar, a non-resident Indian from Hong Kong. "And they harassed me at customs two days later when I took a connecting Air India flight from Bombay to Delhi." Dhar was wearing gold bangles that Delhi Customs focussed on. It took her close to three hours of desperate pleading to convince the officials that the bangles were from Bombay, not Hong Kong. A gift from her mother who lives in Bombay. "You feel so completely helpless as they cross-question and grill you," complains Dhar. "It is enough to ruin any holiday."

Yes, there is no difference between Green and Red channels anv longer. And yes, the customs attitude is enough to ruin more than just a holiday—composure, calm and contentment. When the Green channel was introduced in the 1970s—in keeping with trends at international airports worldwide—it was meant for passengers without dutiable items to walk through. It *was* a facility that



Delhi is now India's most corrupt airport. Customs officials routinely harass and shakedown hapless passengers. Even senior officials refuse to intervene.

RED CHANNEL



NITIN RAI

Don't walk: *The idea behind the Red channel was that if you had something to declare you told a customs officer, paid your duty and left. Now, it is an invitation to rummage through your luggage*

could be easily misused, but chances were that few people with anything substantial to hide would dare use the Green channel. While finance ministry officials insist that the customs service is not intended to harass passengers, and is basically a preventive force, passengers' experiences show that while the bonafide ones get stuck, the big fish—smugglers—get away.

While officials gloat over their catch.

After hours of chaos, there is a lull in Bombay's Customs area. The early morning rush of international flights over, customs officers wander across to an assortment of goods scattered on the floor.

Some dolls. A dusty set of golf clubs. A pair of Yonnex badminton racquets. A Dunlop tennis racquet. A chessboard. Fancy kitchen scales, Samsonite carry-alls. And bottles of Scotch whisky.

Curious officials scrutinise the pile, desultorily swing a golf club, grip a racquet, and move on. The dolls, whisky bottles and suitcases are snapped up at throwaway prices, such as Rs 50 for a bottle of Scotch. The rest of the stuff is dumped in a gloomy godown, where shelves are lined with confiscated baggage—foam mattresses, two-in-ones, TV sets, video recorders—a surfeit of shattered dreams surrendered at the customs counter.

Following a diktat from the finance ministry earlier this year, which ordered that customs operations should be intensified to increase revenue, the barrier has become more of a nightmare than it ever was. Now, ministry officials and customs collectorates in Bombay and New Delhi are ecstatic about the growing revenue that new, stringent measures have ensured. "We are breaking all records this year," boasts K.P. Singh, collector of customs at Sahar airport, about the take on his turf. The total value of seizures at the airport have shot up: from Rs 85 crores in 1989 to Rs 83.9 crores till August this year alone. And revenue collection till August is at a massive Rs 1,378 crores, bigger than previous annual totals.

In New Delhi, in the five-month period from April to August 1989, 4.29 lakh passengers showed up and shelled out Rs 18.87 crores in duty, or Rs 4,412 per passenger. For the same period this year Rs 19.12 crores was collected from 4.16 lakh passengers, or Rs 5,058 per passenger. "These increases are partly due to luck," says A.K. Pande, customs collector at the airport, "and partly due to the hard work put in."

And, though Messers Singh and Pande would like to play it down, very much due to the harassment of passengers as well.

Take this scene at Sahar, just two weeks ago. Passengers on a packed Lufthansa flight from Frankfurt are resigned to milling about the customs hall—travellers on a flight from Dubai have a headstart on them, and the wait could be as long as two hours.

For the Dubai passengers, clearance is slow and painful. The three X-ray machines are simply not enough to deal with thousands of passengers in the area (on Sahar's busy days, 30-40 flights arrive in the space of just two hours). Everybody's baggage—and to hell with the Green channel—is scrupulously checked. And the suitcases that are opened spew out audio tapes, razors, bottles of shampoo, soap, and countless other items—from hair dryers and hi-tech goods to Drambuie and Dunhills.

A man is asked how much he paid for each of the eight new shirts—they are still in the original packing—he has in his suitcase. Silence. "This is much above your Rs 2,000 free baggage allowance," pronounces the presiding customs deity, and proceeds to charge the passenger duty for the shirts.

"This is sheer harassment," grumbles Lakshmi Das, an executive from a multi-national company, while waiting his turn. Das says that there is a way

Customs officials in the detained baggage room: gloating over their cache



out. He often leaves behind—casually—a bottle of Black Label Scotch whisky at the customs barrier.

And here lies the key, the often mentioned but never eradicated reason behind passenger harassment at international airports. "It is not for nothing that a job with the customs service is more coveted than the IAS (Indian Administrative Service) or even an IFS (Indian Foreign Service) job," says a top New Delhi bureaucrat. "The customs is a more glamorous version of an income tax officer's job. Besides, there is obvious cash to be made. Then, there are the perks of foreign goods."

The problem for the passengers is two-fold. The first has to do with out and out corruption—New Delhi tops the list, followed by Bombay and other metros. Calcutta is supposed to be the cleanest, a relative term, but true, say observers

The second has to do with baggage rules. These stipulate that anyone above 12 years of age can bring in, besides personal effects, duty free articles upto a value of Rs 2,000. Above this limit, every item draws a flat 250 per cent duty (there are some exceptions, such as computers and TV sets, on which the duty is higher).

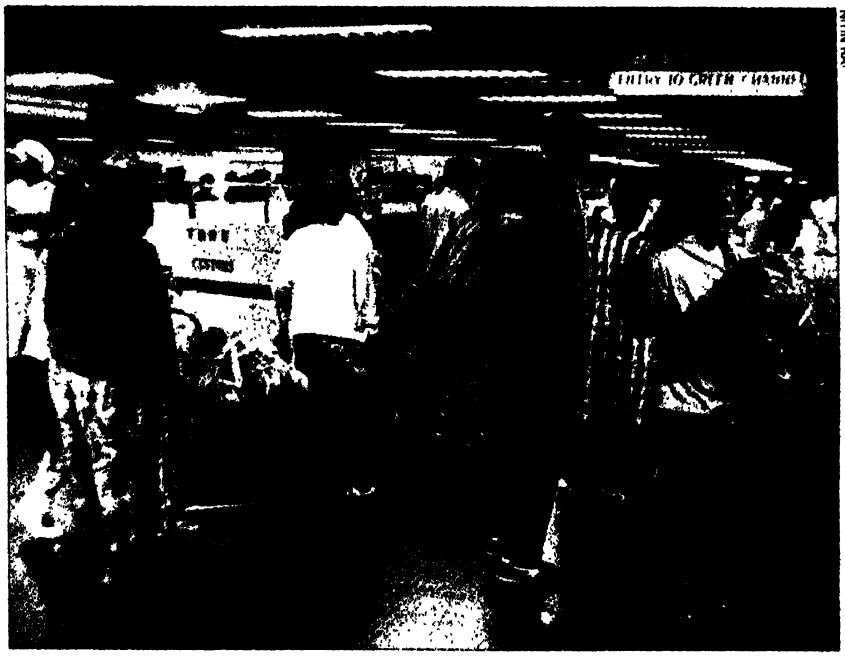
"It's a little over a hundred (US) dollars," says one passenger in at New Delhi's airport. "Two pairs of shoes cost more than that." Adds Dr. Ashwini Chopra, a frequent traveller: "I bring in two pairs of keds and more than one after shave (lotion) and customs officials invariably stop me. They're all ready to pounce."

Customs officials admit that the Rs 2,000 limit is farcical. "Which is why," says one, "we don't insist on that kind of limit." The official is talking about a tacit agreement between the authorities and passengers which says that as long as one does not bring in electronic items and gallons of liquor, it is okay.



NITIN RAI

GREEN CHANNEL



NITIN RAI

Stop here: *The Green channel was a 'walk-through' with surprise checks on suspicious passengers. Now, nearly all luggage is X-rayed at Delhi, India's most inefficient airport—this can take 30 minutes—and passengers are bullied and threatened*

Or, it *was* okay. With the finance ministry riding shotgun on the customs herd, in an attempt to bring in more money to replenish India's depleted coffers, even this little arrangement has been discarded. The big time hauls of gold, watch parts and drugs are still lucrative (gold hauls, for example, fetch the concerned customs official 20 per cent of the catch's value as reward), government pressure ensures than even the small try are netted. "The officials are so charged with enthusiasm to make money through the solid incentives we offer," says Pande, the Delhi customs officer, "that they sometimes get too harsh with passengers." A classic understatement.

Not harsh with everyone, though. The luckiest of the lot, of course, are VIPs. And here, Delhi again tops the list. At the plush Indira Gandhi airport, a major political leader—yes, from the ruling party—arrives with his family to receive a niece. And walks straight into the customs enclosure. As customs officials ply the politician with coffee and PR talk, one of their ilk is despatched to whisk the niece through immigration. When she arrives, laden with bags and packages, there are no questions asked. "She could have carried in a bourse of diamonds," says an official, who also admits that much of his service is corrupt, "and we would have had to turn a blind eye." He adds: "Instructions from above."

Ordinary travellers could do with a measure of this benevolence. At every other international airport in the country—increasing numbers of confiscated goods clutter sheds and godowns. In Bombay, for example, there is an overwhelming stink of fermenting raisins and nuts at an airport room where hundreds of kilos of confiscated perishables are kept. Yet, when Lisa Vaz tries to "escape" with a pack of pistachio nuts and some cans of processed cheese, customs officials are quick to snap them up. They let go of the chocolates, however, when Lisa pleads they are for her grandson.

Small mercies. Enduring nightmares. Welcome back to India.●

Shiraz Sidhva/Bombay and New Delhi

Battered in Beijing

India is humbled at the '90 Asiad

It was the Chinese Games in more senses than one. Easily the most striking fact about the recently-concluded Asian Games at Beijing was the performance of the home team. The Chinese did not more than just dominate the four-yearly event—they simply swept the competition aside. A few simple statistics: China won 175 gold medals; its nearest rival, South Korea, could manage only a sorry 52. Compare this with the '86 Games at Seoul, where the competition was far more keen. The tally: China—94; South Korea—93; and Japan—58.

If China had every reason to delight in how it fared, then India had just as much cause to hang its sporting head in shame. The nation's performance was worse than pathetic. On the medal's table, India was placed eleventh, a few places behind neighbouring Pakistan. For a country which had boasted of having an improved athletic and sporting side, the results were humiliating. At the end of the Games, India had cornered only 23 medals; worse, only one of them was a gold (won at kabbadi). Clearly, it was a showing far sorrier than that at Seoul, where India managed to win 37 medals (five golds). The tally also compares unfavourably with that in the previous two competitions. At Bangkok in 1978, India had 28 medals (not many more but significantly there were 11 golds). And at the '82 Games at New Delhi, India won as many as 57 (13 of them golds).

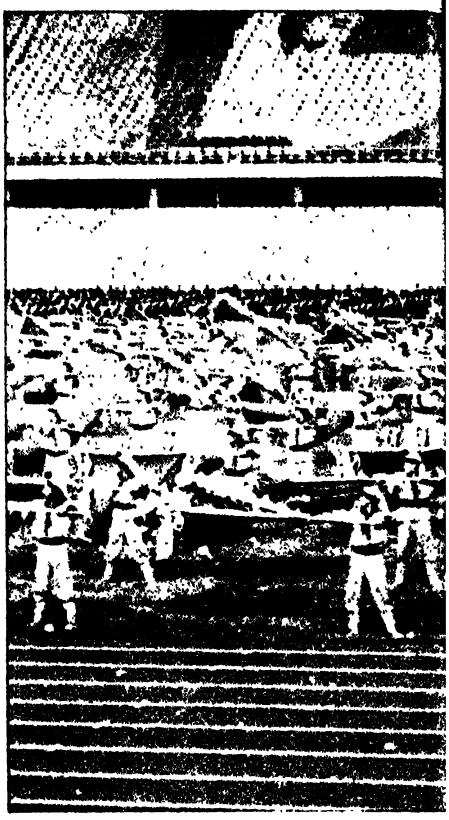
Clearly, there are a couple of things that can be inferred from the performance. One, that the Indian sporting establishment has entertained an exaggerated view about both our talent and potential. The truth is that we have a long way to go before we can make an impact on the Games. Two, that the so-called haphazard showing indicates that we haven't correctly assessed our strengths and our weaknesses. We did poorly in certain sports that we expected to do well, such as athletics and wrestling. And conversely, we exceeded our expectations in events that we didn't expect much from such as rowing and weightlifting. But, even so, there is no denying the fact that given the amount of money India has pumped into sport in the last few years, the overall showing was a disgrace.

If the overall performance in athletics was disappointing, it was partly because there were great expectations that P.T. Usha would grab a few gold medals. Given that there were more than enough hints that the 26-year-old sprint queen was on the decline (that age and wear had reduced the "Payyoli Express" to the "Malayali Mail" was evident when Ashwini Nachappa beat her in the 200m a couple of months ago), it was somewhat unrealistic to pin India's hopes on her.

She came a poor fourth in the 200m but ran a good race to win a silver in the 400m. If she failed to come first, it was just that the Chinese gold medal-

P.T. USHA: She deserved a better exit



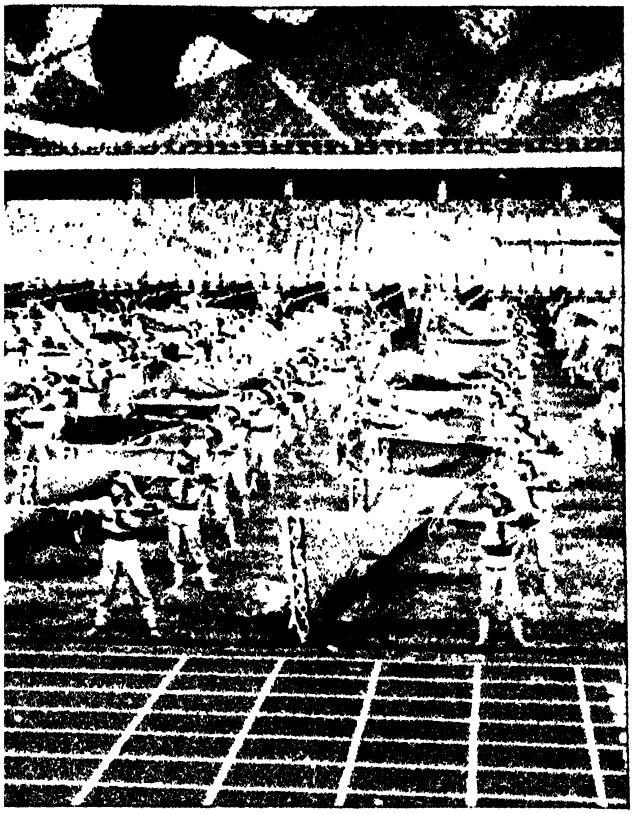


list was far too good. Usha was also the mainstay for the 4×100 and 4×400m relays—both teams won silver.

It was perhaps a sad way for who is probably India's greatest woman athlete to retire. She deserved a better exit, a kinder swan song. But the attention and adulation she received at Beijing must have been some compensation. She was hunted by autograph seekers wherever she went and print and television journalists vied with each other for interviews. She was the subject of intense curiosity and the Chinese revered her as a great Asian champion. It is time that Indians regarded her likewise.

The other big disappointment in athletics was the talented and hard-working Bahadur Prasad, who was touted in some quarters as one of India's brightest medal prospects. But he came only fifth in the 1500m with a time of 3:46.29—a reflection perhaps of the woeful lack of international experience that he was allowed to be exposed to and a lack of strategic planning.

Among those who did well were Dina Ram (silver) in the 3000m steeplechase; an inspired Rosa Kutty (bronze) in the 800m; and the quiet self-effacing S.D. Eshan (bronze) in



THE GAMES: It was an all-China affair



HOCKEY: India was outclassed by Pakistan



KABBADI: The one and only gold medal

the shotput. But Eshan with a best of 17.32 m was way behind the Chinese gold medallist Shabo Cheng (18.89m) and has a long way to go before he can think of winning gold.

In the other events, however, there were surprises galore. The women weightlifters, who left India unsung and without fanfare, stole the limelight at Beijing. While N. Kunjarani, Bharti Singh, Jyotsna Dutta were among the medals, the more fancied men's team failed to win a single one. In rowing too, India exceeded its expectations. In the coxwainless pair oars, R.S. Bhanawala and S. Surinder, cruised to bronze. There were bronzes also in the single sculls (D. Dalbir), double sculls (D. Dalbir and R. Ramanjit) and the coxwainless four oars. The Indian team were helped considerably by the government's decision to allow them to bring their own boats along. India performed creditably also in yachting: Pushpendra Garg and Homi Motiwala in the international enterprise class and Farokh Tarapore and Cyrus Cama in the men's international 470m class won bronzes.

The solitary bronze for tennis must be regarded as a disappointment. Coach Balram Singh caused a surprise when he dropped Leander Paes from the team singles event on the ground that Rohit Rajpal was ahead of Paes on the ATP computer rankings. This was a questionable choice as Rajpal lacks both the verve and aggression of Paes.

In the team doubles, India beat North Korea for a place in the semi-finals but came a cropper against China losing 0-2. There was another debatable change made in this event: S. Vasudevan who nursed a stiff back was called in to replace Rajpal. In the individual events, both Zeeshan Ali and Rajpal (singles) and Ali and Paes (doubles) succumbed in the early rounds.

The Games at Beijing proved that India's sporting establishment entertains an exaggerated view of our talent and potential

Swimmer Sebastian Xavier recorded his best ever timing in the 50m freestyle event (24.18). Although this bettered the national record, he came only seventh. As for Khazan Singh, another of India's medal hopefuls, he failed miserably in his favourite event—the 100m butterfly. Both the swimmers complained about the temperature of the water in the Yingdong pool. At 19 degrees centigrade, it was far colder than that of the Talkatora swimming pool (34 degrees) where they had been training the past several months.

In boxing, India was clearly outclassed. Although the team lacked both technique and guts, there were suspicions of biased refereeing. The person to suffer the most from this was Gopal Dewang in the 67-71 kg category. He clearly outdid China's Wang Ye Wei in the bout for a silver medal, but the judges ruled that the latter won on points. Dewang, who appeared horrified by the decisions, had to settle for bronze.

There were also poor performances in shooting and wrestling (in which we are supposedly strong) but the biggest hoax was played by the cyclists. There

THE FINAL TALLY

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
CHINA	175	103	48	326
S. KOREA	52	49	71	172
JAPAN	38	58	73	169
INDIA	1	8	14	23

were 17 of them in the team but their performance was shoddy and immensely forgettable.

As for hockey, India did exactly as many predicted— winning five easy matches before going down to Pakistan. If there were those who believed that India was gold medal material this time round, it was largely because that we had beaten Pakistan in the BMW tournament at Amstelveen this June.

Although the Asiad result suggested that the match was close and evenly fought, Pakistan outclassed India in virtually every department. For India Pargat Singh and Jagbir Singh performed well, but it was Pakistan's captain Shabaz Ahmed who was the pick of the players. His dribbles and advances confirmed the received view that he is the world's finest hockey player today.

Finally, to the only gold medal of the Games; men's kabbadi. This was perhaps the only event which India could be absolutely sure of winning and—predictably—we did. The team led by Hardeep Singh and coached by E. Prasad Rao did as well as it was expected to. The technique was flawless, the strategy sound and the superiority over the competition showed up distinctly. After beating China, Pakistan, Japan and Nepal, the team finally blanked out Bangladesh (52-17) for the first place.

Clearly, India's showing at Beijing holds out some lessons for sport administrators in the country. Apart from the need to impart systematic training, sportsmen must be exposed to international meets far more than they are allowed to now. It is no accident that Qatar's Mohammad Sulaiman, who won the 1500m, had run at over 40 internatioal races before he came to Beijing. How can one expect Bahadur Singh – talented though he is—to perform at the same level with the kind of exposure he has received?

There is also a need to improve and change selection standards. At the moment, a third place at one Games is a ticket to the next, but this procedure fails to take into account that the meets are a long four years apart and that timings keep improving every year. It would be far better if selection was linked to performance, which may be judged against the international standard.

All this needs to be done without delay and quickly. It is only then that India can hope to enjoy what is becoming an increasingly uncommon sight: the tricolour aloft in the breeze during a medal ceremony. ●

Shevlin Sebastian/Beijing

Available By Post (Inland)



Rs 310 for a year (52 issues);
Rs 610 for 2 years (104 issues)
An annual saving of **Rs 54**
on the newsstand price

Postage free
Address your order to :
The Circulation Manager (U)
Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd.
Calcutta-700 001
Please draw your demand draft/cheque in favour of :
Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd.,
Calcutta

ODDS AND TRENDS

Save the frogs

■ Frogs may be a delicacy in the West but to Indian nature lovers they are an endangered species whose increased export can cause serious ecological imbalance. According to G.M. Oza, secretary of the Baroda-based International Society of Naturalists (INSONAL), some 4,000 tonnes of frozen frog legs are exported every year apart from the 70 million frogs that are exported illegally.

If the well-known botanist from Maharaja Sayajirao University is to be believed, this insensitive killing for the sake of foreign exchange may well cause severe chemical pollution in India. Frogs eat agricultural pests and reduce the need to use pesticides—and their wanton killing could play havoc with the environment. So, recently, Oza has written a letter to the Government of India warning it of the ecological problems that would result if frog exports are not slashed immediately.

It remains to be seen what steps the government takes to tackle the problem.

What's in a name?

■ The ancient city of Ahmedabad will soon have a new name, at least if the BJP has its way. And until it does, the councillors of the city's municipal corporation will have to make do without letter-heads.

Municipal commissioner P. Basu forwarded a resolution to the state government two months ago suggesting a new name for the city that is named after Ahmed Shah—Karnavati. Backed by the BJP-dominated municipal body, the resolution is still awaiting approval.

Meanwhile, the Opposition (i.e. the Congress-I and the Janata Dal) has swung into action, accusing the BJP of trying to get political mileage from this move. The new name, claim the dissidents, has a decidedly Hindu flavour and will obviously go down well with the BJP's supporters. Be that as it may, the councillors of Ahmedabad continue to use blank sheets of paper—till the state government takes a decision on the issue.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Jeetendra



Prasenjit

MILESTONES

DIED: Shankar Nag, popular film and stage actor-director, in a car accident on the Bangalore-Pune national highway on 30 September. He was 36.

DIED: Charanjit Singh, well-known industrialist and former MP, of heart failure on 4 October in New Delhi. He was 51.

CRITICAL: Captain Williamson Sangma, former Meghalaya chief minister, suffering from lung cancer in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (New Delhi).

RETIRED: P.T. Usha, Indian track queen, from competitive athletics at Beijing on 3 October.

RETIRED: P.G. Harlankar, director-general of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in New Delhi on 30 September.

RETIRED: Vijay Amritraj, tennis star, in Washington on 3 October.

RESIGNED: Devi Lal, former deputy prime minister, from the Lok Sabha on 1 October in New Delhi.

RESIGNED: Joginder Singh Saini as national athletics coach after the team's poor showing in the Asiad on 3 October in Beijing.

APPOINTED: Justice Ranganath Mishra, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in New Delhi on 1 October following the death of former Chief Justice Sabyasachi Mukharji.

APPOINTED: Jhamanlal Sharma, coach of the Indian hockey team, as coach of the Asian team for the first inter-continental championship (to be held in Kuala Lumpur starting 10 December) in Beijing on 1 October.

ELECTED: India, to the United Nations Security Council, for a two-year term on 3 October in New York.

POSTPONED: The third round of talks between India and Pakistan scheduled for the first week of October in Islamabad.

POSTPONED: The meeting of the Editors' Guild (scheduled for 3 October in Shillong until March) in New Delhi on 1 October.

POSTPONED: The Janata Dal national convention (scheduled for 11 and 12 October) in New Delhi on 1 October.

TAKEN OVER: Sterling Newspapers Pvt. Ltd by the Indian Express Group of newspapers in Bombay on 1 October.

DEPARTED: Zail Singh, former President, on 3 October for Pyongyang, North Korea, on a goodwill visit.

BEGINNING 14 OCTOBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March — 20 April)



A favourable week for professionals. Businessmen can expand their activities. Corporate executives may go out of town. Avoid any risks. A letter will bring good tidings. The domestic front will be peaceful.

Good dates: 14, 16 and 20
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North

TAURUS (21 April — 20 May)



This is not a favourable week for you. Professionals might not be able to make much headway. You may even run out of money. Politicians may run into rough weather; a ministry might collapse.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 19
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: South-west

GEMINI (21 May — 20 June)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. Do not embark on any new ventures for you might come a cropper. Take care of your health. You have a long and bright future ahead of you.

Good dates: 15, 16 and 18
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: West

CANCER (21 June — 20 July)



This is not a favourable week for you. Meteorologists should refrain from making forecasts as they like. Businessmen should push ahead with their plans. The time is ripe for trekking.

Good dates: 17, 19 and 20
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July — 20 August)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. Businessmen might incur losses, but they should not get worried about it. On the professional front, be cautious and discreet with your colleagues.

Good dates: 14, 15 and 17
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 8
Favourable direction: South

VIRGO (21 August — 20 September)



Financially, this may not be a good week for you. You can clear off your debts and loans. Some professionals could even get promotions. Artists may fare well during this period.

Good dates: 16, 18 and 19
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: North-west

LIBRA (21 September — 20 October)



This is a period of mixed fortunes for you. Be cautious and discreet in your dealings. You may even run out of money. But this phase will pass over. A favourable week for romance. Artistes will fare well this week.

Good dates: 15, 17 and 20
Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South

SCORPIO (21 October — 20 November)



This is an excellent week for you. Take a break from work and enjoy yourself socialising. On the financial front, most of you will gain money or inherit property. Eat, drink and be merry.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 20
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: West

SAGITTARIUS (21 November — 20 December)



The time is particularly favourable for sportsmen. Others might come out with flying colours. The domestic front will be peaceful and happy. A favourable week for romance. Do not strain yourself too much.

Good dates: 14, 15 and 19
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: East

CAPRICORN (21 December — 20 January)



This is a favourable week for most of you. Businessmen and professionals will make considerable headway. You might face a few problems from your spouse. Try to check extravagance.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 18
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: North

AQUARIUS (21 January — 20 February)



This is not a favourable week for you. Avoid going out of town. You might face problems from your spouse. On the professional front, things might not work out according to your expectation.

Good dates: 15, 18 and 20
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

PISCES (21 February — 20 March)



This is not a good week for you. Sportsmen might not come up to expectations. Businessmen should not go in for fresh investments. The time is not ripe for romance. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 14, 17 and 19
Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—AQUARIUS

The Scorpio woman might get carried away by her likes and dislikes. But if she does not check her over-assertive nature, her relationship with the Aquarius man will be strained. For he believes in moderation and not in extremes.

Dinner diplomacy

Why is it that the Raja's "natural allies" haven't deserted him, at a time when he has become the universal hate object?

Simple. The PM keeps the communist leaders, Inderjit Gupta and Somnath Chatterjee, happy by inviting them for fancy lunches and dinners every week. And the MPs, for their part, reciprocate the good deed by keeping their party members off V.P. Singh's back.

The arrangement suits everybody except the CPI and the CPI(M). The communists are appalled at the fact that they are not allowed to lay into the Prime Minister even when the government's actions and policies are indefensible.

Party discipline ensures that the members toe the



V.P. Singh: wooing the left

line set out for them. But their unhappiness is bound to find expression in the coming months. In one form or the other.

Exit, Vajpayee

The BJP may well insist that it will not withdraw support to the National Front government. But party leader Atal Behari Vajpayee has had his fill of the Raja, and is not going to forgive him the leaking of the proceedings of the Committee for the Promotion of Communal Harmony in a hurry.

At a recent social event (BJP MP Arif Beg's daughter's wedding) Vajpayee made no secret of his animus against the PM. As soon as the Prime Minister's entourage entered, the BJP leader made a rapid exit.

The Raja, of course, pretended not to notice.

HEARD AT THE JANATA DAL OFFICE

V.P. Singh has gone from being Mr Clean to Mr Caste to Mr Cast-off.

A DISGRUNTLED PARTY WORKER



A.B. Vajpayee: no to the Raja

BAROMETER

How they rate in Jat politics

M.S. Tikait: His militant stand on the Mandal Commission issue and his performance at the 2 October rally, with much talk of setting MPs and MLAs aflame, have resulted in his raising his stock in the community. If the plan to arrest him does go through, he will be anointed a martyr as well.

Devi Lal: His initial ambiguous stand on reservations had cost him a fair amount of support among the Jats. But by resigning from the Lok Sabha, the Chaudhary has improved his situation somewhat.

Ajit Singh: Started off with a statement supporting the implementation of the Mandal recommendations. Realised his folly soon enough and began a signature campaign to include the Jats among the other backward castes. But by then it was too late. And his anti-Tikait stand only made matters worse.

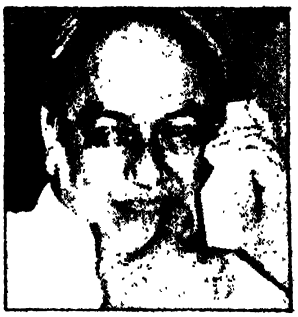
Satyapal Malik: Though the minister of state has not come out openly against the Mandal Report, he has made the appropriate noises about Jat inclusion. His rating, therefore, while not spectacular by any means, is moderately good.

Vishwendra Singh: He made the best move of his political life when he resigned from Parliament on the reservation issue, getting the Jat youth of Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh on his side at one stroke. As measure of his increasing importance, he has become a permanent fixture at all meetings of Tikait and Devi Lal.

Punjab is better than PR

During the Rajiv raj, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had taken on such tasks as were out of its mandate, with varying degrees of success. Thus, we had G.Parthasarathyassuming the role of principal advisor on Sri Lanka while Mani Shankar Aiyar became the PR (Panchayati Raj not public relations) expert.

Now the Raja's PMO seems to be going the same way. At least, if press advisor to the Prime Minister,



Prem Shankar Jha: package deals are best

Prem Shankar Jha's performance is anything to go by.

Jha, during his innings as *The Hindustan Times* editor, had been obsessed with the idea that an economic package would solve all of Punjab's problems. And now Jha has been handed the task of evolving just that package.

Never mind the PM's relations with the press, which stand at an all-time low. ●

Teething problems

He had been best-known for his forcible entry into the Delhi Gymkhana. Apparently Har Kewal Prasad, Janata Dal member of the Lok Sabha, had broken the lock on the main gate to effect entry, to protest the club's dress restrictions

Well, now, Prasad has a further claim to fame. In a recent debate on the Mandal issue, the vociferous MP was holding forth in his usual fiery style when he suddenly stopped in mid-sentence, and sat down in his chair, clutching his mouth.

The hon'ble member had lost his dentures.

All business came to a standstill as everyone went down on their knees to locate Prasad's teeth. But, strangely enough, they were nowhere to be found.

The distraught member retired to mourn the loss.

And latest reports have it that he has been fitted out with a new pair.

Off with their heads

The Prasar Bharati Bill notwithstanding, the Janata Dal government seems to have no intentions of going through with its electoral promise of granting autonomy to the electronic media.

At a recent Cabinet meeting, for instance, ministers Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed tore into Doordarshan for its temerity in giving generous coverage to the anti-reservation agitation. Why had Mandi House, they asked, dared to telecast shots of police firing and of students running riot? This had only escalated the stir, they maintained.

Their tirade didn't go in vain. Sure enough, heads began to roll at Doordarshan. Additional director-general (news) P.C. Arya has been denied the extension promised him earlier. And informed sources have it that director-general Shiv Sharma may soon be removed, with Shashi Kapoor assuming temporary charge.

And the next casualty may well be information and broadcasting minister, P. Upendra.

HEARD IN CENTRAL HALL

Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan are the Ram Manohar Lohia and Dr Ambedkar of today.

A JANATA DAL MP



P. Upendra: will he be the next casualty?

CHECK-LIST

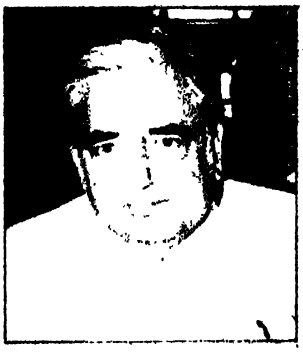
Prominent OBCs (other backward castes), according to the Mandal Report

- **V.P. Singh:** In Punjab, Rajputs are included in the OBC list. And guess what that makes the Raja of Manda.
- **Vijayaraje Scindia:** The Rajmata of Gwalior and her son the Maharaja (Madhavrao Scindia) qualify to the OBC list, being Marathas in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Mani Shankar Aiyar:** He may be a caste Brahmin in Tamil Nadu, but in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, Aiyar is as backward as Sharad Yadav. Or Ram Vilas Paswan, for that matter.
- **Captain Satish Sharma:** Never mind the Italian marble-tiled swimming pool (yes, the kind that all Indian Airlines' pilots have), the good Captain is an OBC in his native state, Punjab.
- **Dinesh Goswami:** In the Union Territory of Delhi, all Goswamis are OBCs. So the minister's progeny can avail of reservations; never mind the fact that they are classified as upper castes (Brahmins) in the rest of the country.
- **K.K. Birla:** The noted industrialist qualifies to this honour in Bihar and Orissa by virtue of being a Bania.

Life as a party

Nero might well have fiddled while Rome burnt. But home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed prefers to pontificate on the finer points of the best Scotch, while disaffected students immolate themselves to protest the reservation policy.

But we suppose as cocktail party performances go, the Mufti's was near perfect. For, yes, the honourable home minister of India was host at just such an affair while the anti-reservation students' stir turned the capital into a city of fear, anger and flames.



Mufti Mohammad Sayeed: modern-day Nero

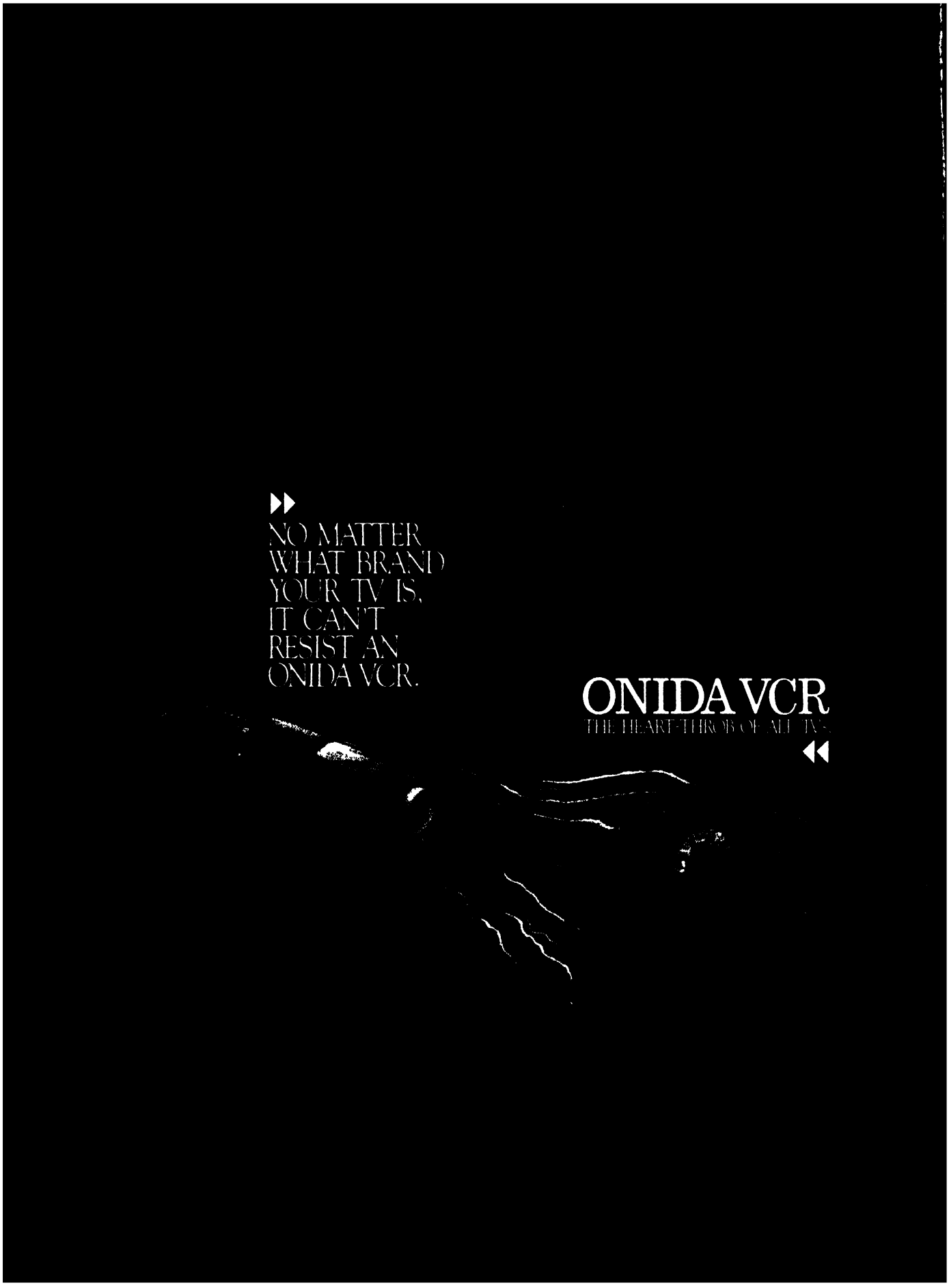
His guests included highly-placed bureaucrats and the usual sprinkling of media persons. And nobody looking in at the gathering could have told that Sayeed had a care in the world. And they would have, probably, been right.

But then, the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Arjan Singh wasn't any better. On 2 October, while the students and Tikait's farmers gathered at the Boat Club to berate the government, Singh spent the entire day at the golf course, improving his handicap.

Well, to each his own.

Golden moments. McDowell moments

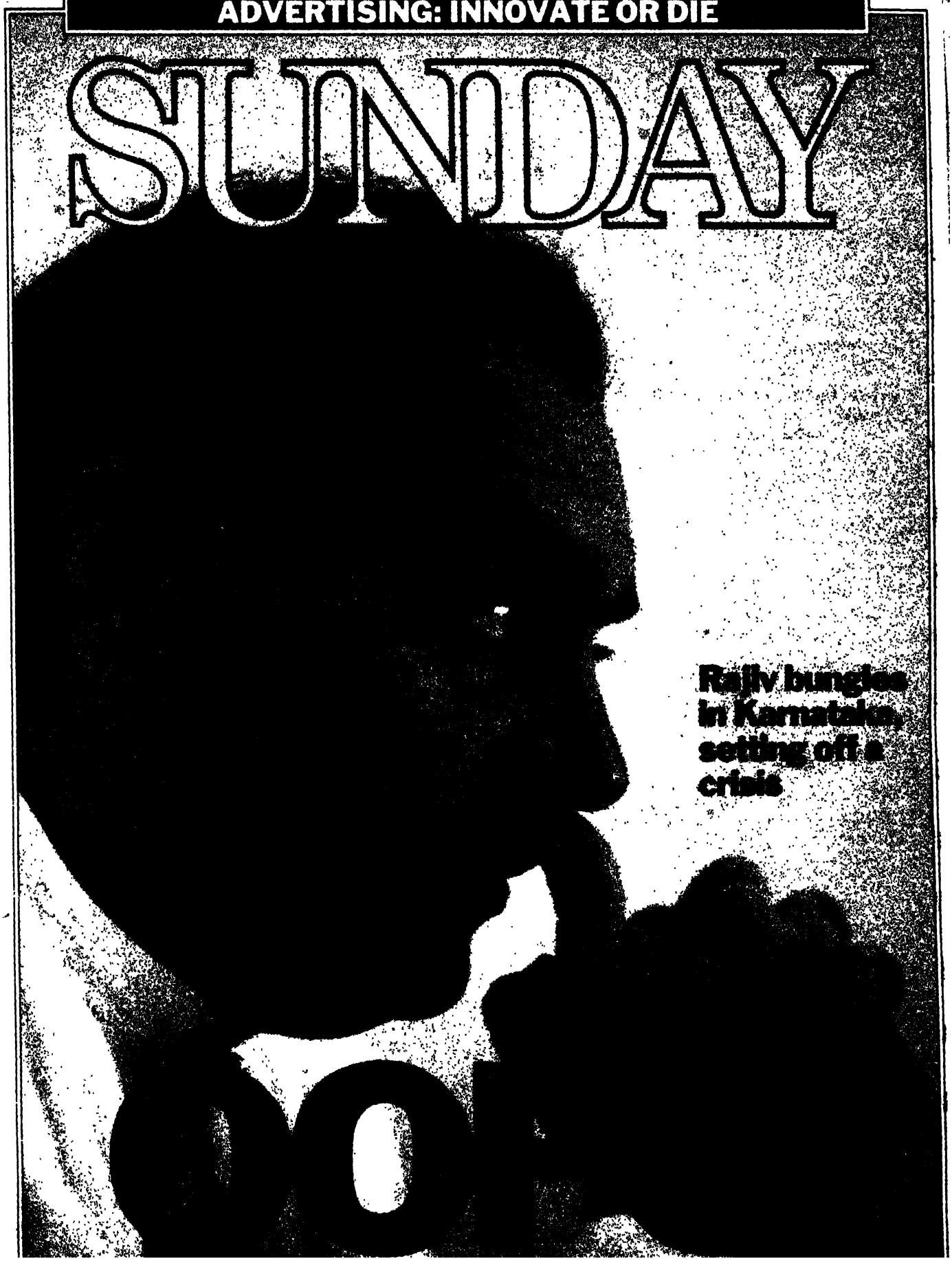



NO MATTER
WHAT BRAND
YOUR TV IS,
IT CAN'T
RESIST AN
ONIDA VCR.
ONIDA VCR
THE HEART-THROB OF ALL TVs

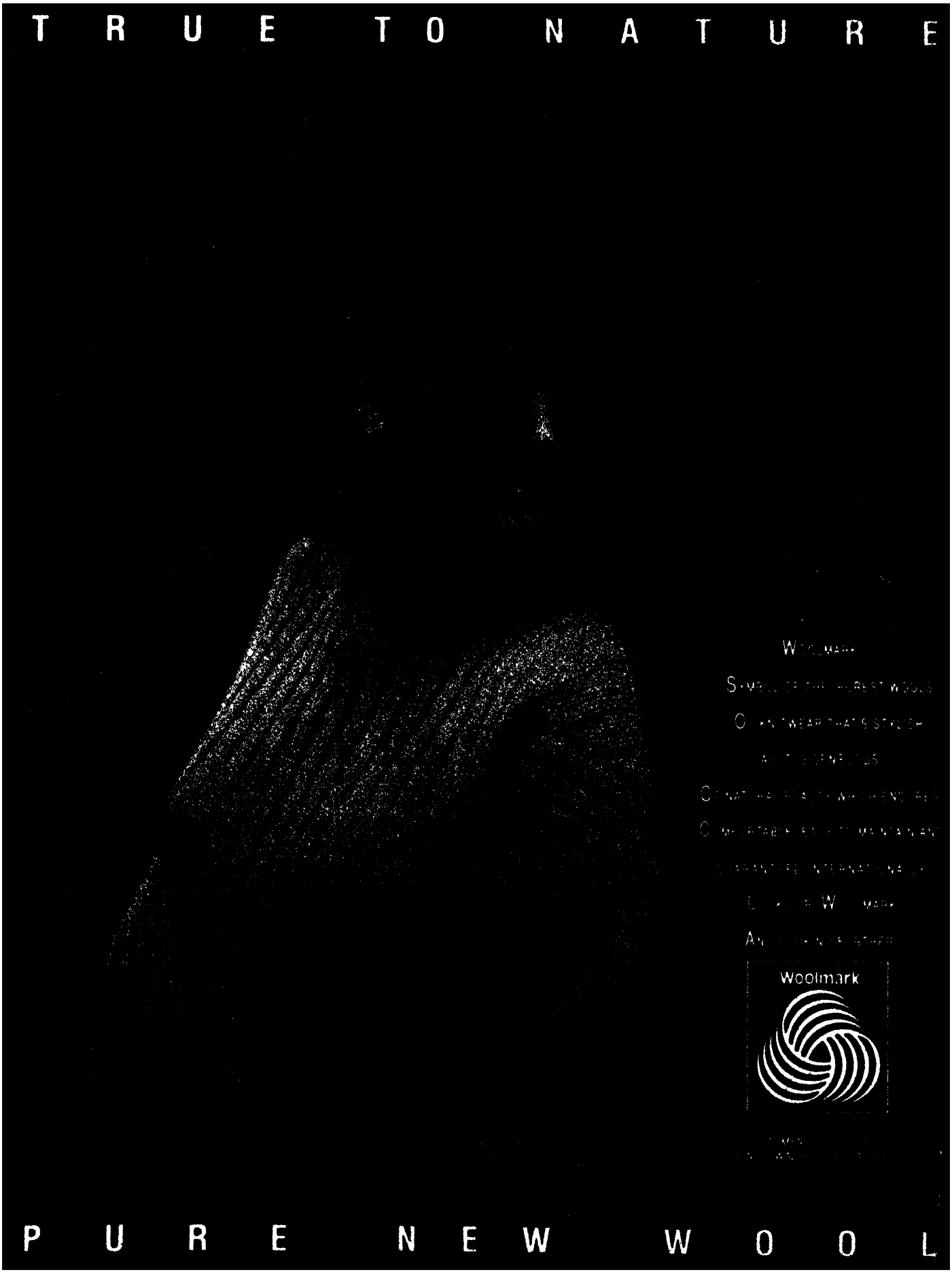
21—27 OCTOBER 1990 □ AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION □ RS 7.00

ADVERTISING: INNOVATE OR DIE

SUNDAY



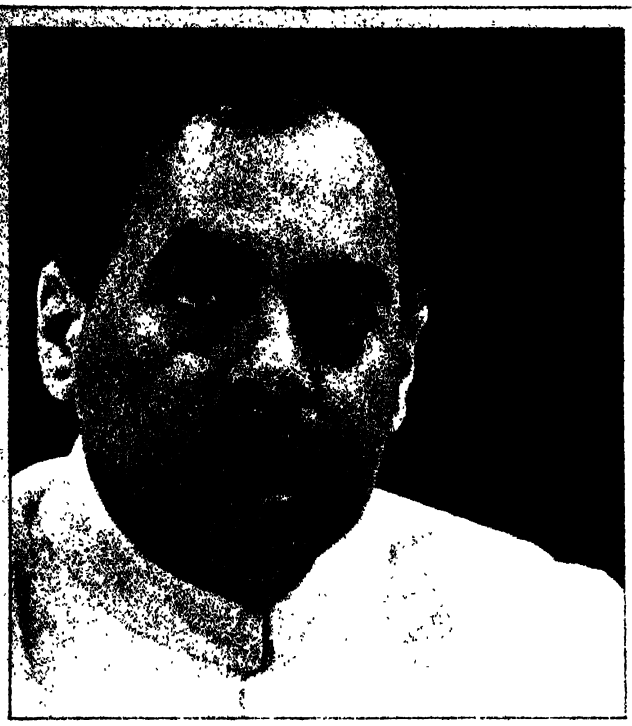
Rajiv bungles in Karnataka, setting off a crisis


TRUE TO NATURE
Woolmark
Woolmark
PURE NEW WOOL

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 41 . RS 7.50
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
21—27 OCTOBER 1990



28
COVER STORY

Oops!

Rajiv Gandhi bungles in Karnataka, setting off a crisis.

10
ANALYSIS

The Hollow Man

Children burn on the streets of India as V.P. Singh frames his agenda in terms of a non-issue.



22
CONTROVERSY

Sabre-rattling

The scion of the Mysore royal family accuses Sanjay Khan of distorting history in his serial, *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*.

48
BUSINESS

Ad-vantage

If you don't innovate, you're dead. And agencies are giving it all they have.

67
CONTROVERSY

Cut!

Students and faculty members at Pune's film institute are fed up with government indifference and an insensitive director.

74
BOOKS

The Shah of Blah

Salman Rushdie's latest book turns autobiography into fiction.



82
NEWSWATCH

The angry hills

The anti-outsider agitation in the north-east gains momentum.

84
SPORTS

After the debacle

The Sports Authority of India is blamed for the humiliation of India at the Beijing Asiad.

LETTERS 4
SOUTH BLOCK 6
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
PERSONALITY 15
Justice for all
MANI-TALK 16
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 25
PROFILE 26
SPOTLIGHT 44
BUSINESS DIARY 57
GUEST COLUMN 58
DE JURE 64
OBITUARY 70
Shankar Nag
PHOTOGRAPHY 71
Gloss and sheen
HEALTH 72
Looking to the future
KHAAS BAAT 73
MEDIA 76
NEWS 77
MEDIA MUSINGS 86
THIS INDIA 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency:
Gautam Patole

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise, North-eastern states 30 paise



Grading the ministers

The cover story (*Checklist*, 23—29 September) featuring the National Front ministers was absorbing. The performance of I.K. Gujral and Ram Vilas Paswan does not appear to be even mediocre. During the Gulf crisis, Gujral, instead of taking an independent stand, ordered the closure of the Indian embassy in Iraq at Saddam Hussein's behest.

On the domestic front, Paswan, the self-professed messiah of the backward classes, is bent upon dividing Indian society along caste lines. Therefore, it would have been appropriate to place them in the bad category.

Siddharth Sharma, Serampore (West Bengal)

■ The cover story on the performance of the central ministers was largely arbitrary, unfair and prejudiced.

There would be general agreement only on the home minister's showing, who has been characterised as rank bad. By his inept handling, the Mufti has allowed Kashmir to drift. Madhu Dandavate is reputed to be a man of honesty and integrity—rare qualities in Indian politics. But his record as finance minister has been dismal, especially because of the recent hike in the prices of essential commodities.

The averages were ill-chosen. For, George Fernandes has been a total disaster as the railway minister. While Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav have proved themselves to be liabilities to the Cabinet. They are capable of shattering any Prime Minister's image by their blatantly casteist tendencies.

I.K. Gujral, the foreign minister, articulate and resourceful, seems to have done a good job with a difficult portfolio. It is hard to imagine anybody else doing any better to solve the problems of the Indian refugees stranded in the Gulf.

D. Anjaneyulu, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

■ The performance of Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan cannot be rated as average under any circumstances. By supporting reservation, they are fanning communal sentiments and dividing the country along caste lines. They do not seem to have any respect for India's secular credentials. Therefore, they are liabilities not only to the party they belong to, but also to Indian society.

Jai Abe Cherian, Tumkur (Karnataka)

■ One is surprised to find I.K. Gujral and Sharad Yadav being labelled as average, when they should be labelled as bad. Under I.K. Gujral, India has lost the international prestige it had built up over the years—thanks to India's soft line on Saddam Hussein. India has now become the laughing stock of the world along with Jordan and Palestine.

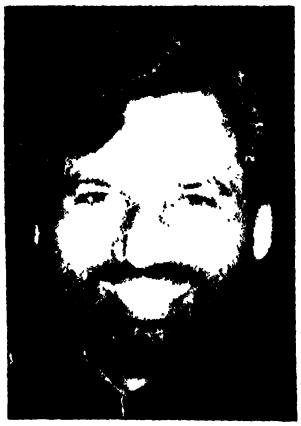
Sharad Yadav's performance has been the worst in the government. Given that he is bent on dividing society along caste lines, it is really surprising to find him in the average category. To say the least, he has been a real disaster.

Amit Mathur, Sindri (Bihar)





(Clockwise from top left) Gujral, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan: bad performance







Farooq Abdullah: opportunist

Running away

Farooq Abdullah's absence from Kashmir (*The marathon man*, 23—29 September) when the state was burning clearly shows that he is not the sort to tackle challenges head-on. Considering the fact that Farooq could have won over at least some of the misguided Kashmiris and thereby brought back a semblance of peace in the Valley, his action becomes even more deplorable.

This, however, raises another important question: why did Farooq decide to leave Kashmir at such a crucial time? His differences with the Centre over the appointment of Jagmohan as the Governor of J&K is well-known. And it is likely that Farooq wanted to prove to the Centre that his absence will worsen the situation in Kashmir. Alas, it only proves that Abdullah is now more opportunistic than ever.

V. Badarinarayana, Mysore (Karnataka)

■ The profile of Farooq Abdullah was excellent. It rightly suggests that the former chief minister should immediately be put at the helm of affairs in the Valley in order to tide over the present crisis. Though Jagmohan did his best to tackle the explosive situation in the state, he couldn't come up with a lasting solution. The main problems that plague Kashmir are both

political and economic—for which there are no answers. And under such circumstances, it is only Farooq Abdullah—who is extremely popular in Kashmir—who can convince the estranged Kashmiris that their future lies with India and bring them back to mainstream politics. Time, however, is fast running out.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ Farooq Abdullah is solely responsible for the mess in Kashmir. The people of Kashmir were alienated by the misrule of Farooq. Rampant corruption and unemployment angered the youth. And whenever the going got rough, Farooq chose the easy way out—running away from the Valley. Therefore, one cannot agree with the opinion that "Farooq is still Kashmir's only hope". It will be a great mistake to thrust Farooq on Kashmir again.

Rajesh Kabu, Jaipur (Rajasthan)

Armchair criticism

The report (*Fading glory*, 24—30 June) on the Tawang monastery is full of insinuations and factual errors. It seems to be a deliberate attempt to tarnish the image of the century-old monastery.

The committee set up after Rajiv Gandhi's visit in March 1988, met four times and not once, as reported in the magazine. So, it is wrong to say that the Centre's initiative to preserve the ancient complex appears to have fizzled out.

And, can the reporter substantiate with proper evidence that obscene films were being screened in the premises? When did he visit the monastery? Simply by gathering most of the information from *Arunachal Review* or from Itanagar, he cannot justify his observations. The report has not only hurt the sentiments of the monks and the people of Tawang, but also the entire Buddhist community.

Tsering Lomden, District Information and Public Relations Officer, Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh)

Changing colours

The write-up (*Chameleon*, 2—8 September) was thought-provoking. But unfortunately, the chameleon has failed to hide its true colours. By deciding to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations, V.P. Singh has not only belied a lot of expectations, he has showed what he is: just another politician with an eye on the vote-bank. The Mandal report has already divided the country along caste lines and if its recommendations are finally implemented, then a lot of talented people could become its victims. So, it is time that the Raja does some soul-searching and set things right.



V.P. Singh: building up a vote-bank

Sasank Sekhar Mohapatra, Kamalang (Orissa)

■ V.P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report is a blow to India's professed social ideologies. Projecting himself as a casteist, V.P. Singh has provoked a caste war which threatens the basic solidarity of our country. Reservations along caste lines are politically motivated and are against the norms of social justice.

Mitali Mohanty, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)



The damaged Jaffna railway station: the battle continues

Mixed-up priorities

Notwithstanding the fascinating aspects of the hi-tech breakthrough (*Enter, the Hyperplane* 16—22 September), I was frankly dismayed at the gross mix-up of our priorities as a nation. Can we really afford the luxury of such expensive development projects? Have we really exhausted all avenues of work on this planet to tackle the process of colonisation of space? Why don't we ask our brilliant scientists to concentrate on solving some of the major problems confronting us, rather than wasting time on Hyperplanes?

Krishan Kalra, New Delhi

War is not the answer

The special report (*The siege of Jaffna*, 23—29 September) was scintillating. In a war where symbolic success counts as much as military achievements, the siege by the Sri Lankan Army cannot be underestimated. However, it would be naive for the Premadasa regime to believe that only a military victory can resolve the Tamil problem. For, the IPKF experience has shown that while the LTTE can be forced to retreat, it is impossible to exterminate it

Therefore, Colombo should complement its military action with a parallel political strategy aimed at winning over the Tamils.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

A matter of faith

The charismatic group (*Crossing over*, 23—29 September) is unknown, unless it means the Catholic charismatic groups. These do not "repudiate all practices of the Rome orders" but have proved invaluable in offering a Catholic alternative to leaving the Church. The Emmanuel Prayer Group is Catholic, *de jure* and *de facto*, and holding its own meetings is an approved and endorsed practice in the CCR. The alleged anti-Mary statements of the EPG is hardly the issue. The real issue is whether the laity will be allowed to take their rightful place in the Church, against the wishes of certain priests whose very existence as priests is an anachronism. Businessmen's Fellowship is not a "splinter group" but a group of Christians who share their experience of Jesus Christ with professional colleagues.

Anthony Miranda, Bombay (Maharashtra)

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

The war bogey

Keeping it alive serves Pakistan's interests



It is not at all in Pakistan's interest to either start or provoke a war with this country over Kashmir or any other issue. Why then are the Pakistani rulers—led by the man who calls the shots, General Mirza Aslam Beg—raising the ante steadily in both bitter words and diabolical deeds? The answer to this question is obvious. The scare, bordering on hysteria, that is being built up against India all over Pakistan is not entirely unconnected with Kashmir, where Islamabad continues to perceive a "golden opportunity" to wrest from India the lovely Valley it has been lusting after for over four decades. Both major military activity and infiltrations of armed and indoctrinated youth into the Valley would become almost impossible at the end of October, by when all mountain passes become snowbound.

Hence the sudden flurry of incessant artillery shelling in the Kupwara sector, normally the favoured route of the infiltrators. So that, with the attention of the Indian forces concentrated there, infiltrations could be attempted in the hitherto unused and extremely hazardous Gurez-Drass-Sonmarg trail. It is a measure of the desperate effort put in by the Pakistanis that from the Gurez-Drass sector, the security forces captured in the first three days of October more militants and greater quantities of sophisticated arms than they normally do in a whole month.

For the present, however, the main purpose of the anti-India campaign is related more to the elections due on 24 October rather than to anything else, including Kashmir. This is because all the clever plans formulated by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, General Aslam Beg and their preferred politicians of the IJI and the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) at the time of Benazir Bhutto's dismissal have gone awry.



Benazir's popularity graph is going up and up. And neither the Pakistani military nor the President is prepared to accept her return to power

Far from being discredited by charges of corruption and court cases or weakened by a split in the PPP, Benzair has emerged stronger than before. Her personal popularity graph is going up and up. Her party is more united than ever before while the IJI-COP combination is in utter disarray. Even those who remain appalled by the reckless money-grabbing by her husband, Asif Zardari, see Benazir to be under persecution.

At the same time, neither the Pakistani military nor the President is prepared to countenance Benazir's return to power. Having realised that it was a mistake on her part to fight the army, Benazir has totally muted her criticism of the armed forces and made Ishaq the sole target of her trenchant attack.

Normally, Ishaq, acting at the army's behest, would have found some way to disqualify her or to postpone the poll. Benazir still apprehends that this might yet happen before E-Day. But there is a problem which the Pakistani ruling establishment must face. The Americans, for their own reasons, want elections to be held in Pakistan as scheduled and for these to be free and fair. This does not mean that they are wanting Benazir's restoration by the Pakistani electorate. But they want to see that the elections are not cancelled.

It is in this context that General Beg's attempt to build up a scenario in which Pakistan's security and stability is seen to be threatened by the "traditional enemy", India, makes sense as a desperate ploy to make the postponement of the poll justifiable. The sequence of events speaks for itself.

At first it was made out that Benazir had sent an emissary to New Delhi to plead for an Indian invasion so that the almost certain humiliation of the Pakistani Army could forestall the dismissal she was fearing before it actually took place. When this lie did not work—ironically, the story was publicised more in India than in Pakistan—Beg thought of an Indian plot to destabilise Pakistan. He backed it up with the equally false allegation that India's XII Corps had been moved forward to positions from where it could easily attack Pakistan. Since US and Soviet satellites keep track of all Indian and Pakistani military movements, the absurdity of the Pakistani charge was exposed in no time. Then came the expulsion of four Indian employees of the Indian consulate-general. Soon enough some other stratagem is bound to be tried and we will be witnessing a cliff-hanger. ●

SIGHT AND SOUND



R K LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA



■ **Why? We have more than three-fourths majority.**

VEERENDRA PATIL, *former Karnataka chief minister, before President's Rule was imposed, denying that he would recommend the dissolution of the Assembly*

■ **I have not been influenced by anyone. Please give me credit for my own actions.**

BHANU PRATAP SINGH, *Karnataka Governor, dismissing suggestions that he had imposed President's Rule in the state at the behest of the National Front government*

■ V.P. Singh can be removed from the PM's office but not from the hearts of the poor.

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister, on the Mandal Commission Report*

■ *Aur kitni jaane loge V.P. Singh?* (How many more lives will you take, V.P. Singh?)

GYNENDRA CHATURVEDI, *student, in his suicide note*

■ You (youths) should live to carry on the struggle.

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister, to anti-Mandal student agitators, explaining that the government would be responsive to their demands*

■ If they are made to see the logic behind the demand, I am sure they will have no objections.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president, emphasising that Muslims need to be given proper perspective of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue*

■ We support the government in the hope that the massacre of the Muslims will stop. But it seems to be continuing.

JAVED HABIB, *Naib Imam of the Jama Masjid*

■ If I had my way, I would lock all the IAS officers in a room until they sanctioned the pending project.

BHAIRON SINGH SHEKHAWAT, *Rajasthan chief minister, alleging that enormous delays in sanctioning the state's development plans have adversely hit the state's economy*

■ My body didn't allow me to realise the goal of winning gold in the Beijing Asiad—my last competition.

P.T. USHA, *athlete*

■ I am never one for finding solutions, solutions find me.

DIMPLE KAPADIA, *actress*



VINOD MEHTA

VP blunders again

The Karnataka Governor's brazenness is turning out to be a major embarrassment for the Prime Minister



When Gerry Ford became the President of the US, Lyndon Johnson was not impressed. "He is so stupid," said LBJ. "He can't chew gum and fart at the same time." It would be uncharitable, even unfair, to express a similar opinion about Rajiv Gandhi. Nevertheless, his talent for messing things up sometimes takes one's breath away. I recently met a Janata party Rajya Sabha MP, who has played a key role in destabilising the V.P. Singh regime, and he told me that in late September and early October he had interacted with Rajiv on an almost daily basis. "He is hard-working, decent, patriotic, well-meaning, but he is completely out of his depth in politics. He just cannot absorb all the different information that comes his way." This assessment was delivered with a twinge of regret.

I see there is much jubilation within the Janata Dal over Rajiv's gift to the ruling party: President's rule in Karnataka. Characteristically, the Congress president created a crisis where none existed, thus allowing Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh to do the needful. In the process, Mr Gandhi wasted a fine opportunity to get rid of a chief minister he greatly disliked. What a screw-up. When journalists in Bangalore were told by the 'supreme' leader that Veerendra Patil wouldbereplaced in 'four days' they were so stunned that they asked Rajiv to repeat the statement. He duly obliged. This public and brutal humiliation of the chief minister left Veerendra Patil with no option but to defy the high command.

Actually, Mr Gandhi was on firm ground as far as the capacity of the CM to govern was concerned. The state had seen the worst communal riots in its history, and the chief minister—as Doordarshan pictures clearly showed—was in no physical condition to cope. Alas, Rajiv went straight for the jugular and clobbered a sick man with the sack. What he should have done is let the demand for the dismissal come from the Congress Legislative Party which he had in his pocket.

Not only has Rajiv handed Karnataka on a platter to the National Front, he has supplied vital oxygen to a gasping Prime Minister. For at least seven days in the month of October, V.P. Singh's mounting woes took second place to the daily drama in Karnataka. Had Mr Gandhi curbed his instinct for shooting off his mouth, the horrendous train carnage in Andhra Pradesh would have received its due attention. Under the circumstances, the first and most savage reply from the pro-Mandal forces got buried in the inside pages of the newspapers.

In one onslaught, the votaries of reservations butchered nearly 70 people in an attack of stunning barbarity. Is the bogie fire on the outskirts of Hyderabad a sample of the way in which the agitation will now progress? If the Karnataka drama had not diverted the country's attention, proper emphasis would have been placed on the fact that the train murders happened 24 hours after V.P. Singh, had addressed a controversial rally in Patna in which he exhorted the backwards not to lose heart but to redouble their efforts to secure a place in the sun.

The government tried very hard to play up the Naxalite dimension of the tragedy, and play down the reservation angle. The truth, however, is that the People's War Group (PWG) has never indulged in this sort of outrage: their targets are restricted and specific (police, landlords, forest officials) and they have always inflicted individual, not collective, punishment. Moreover, the distribution of pro-Mandal and anti-Supreme Court leaflets at the site of the crime leaves no doubt that the 'fitting reply' Ram Vilas Paswan so frequently threatens us with, has begun. It is possible that V.P. Singh's 'inner voice', that Rajiv Gandhi, Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal are banking upon, may have been acti-





Ironically, the day Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh's (above) decision was announced, V.P. Singh was lecturing the invitees to the first meeting of the Inter-State Council on the need to take heed of the Sarkaria Commission Report

vated by the Hyderabad horror if the headlines on 11 October had concentrated on the Andhra train blaze rather than the suspended animation of the Karnataka Assembly.

In the past few months as the Prime Minister floundered aimlessly from crisis to crisis, demonstrating in the process that he was no different from the contenders for the big prize, Rajiv Gandhi had benefited by default. One frequently heard that our Rajiv may be incompetent, juvenile, given to forming 'coteries', but at least his larger vision of the country's future is sound. Now, we are back to the original portrait, a decent bloke perhaps, but 'hopeless'. Make him Prime Minister again and he will tie himself up in all kinds of knots. Despite his pedigree, and by now nearly ten years of experience in active public life, he remains a political innocent whose occasional attempts at individual enterprise (apparently, no one in the party had any inkling that the leader was about to give Patil the chop) end up as unmitigated disasters. Not surprisingly, then, the multiple follies of the National Front government and Vishwanath Pratap Singh have resulted in no 'bring back Rajiv' cry in the nation.

Unfortunately, these are bad days for V P Singh. Rajiv may have come to his aid by providing a timely diversion, but as the events in Bangalore unfold, it is the National Front government in New Delhi which may end up with egg on its face. I am certain the expectation in ruling party circles was that the imposition of President's Rule in Karnataka, temporary or long-term, would draw little flak since Governors during Congress years had on more than one occasion behaved in a blatantly partisan manner. So, while the Opposition would no doubt protest that constitutional norms had been violated, V.P. Singh was hoping for only a few murmurs of disapproval over Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh's dubious decision.

No such luck. The behaviour of Ram Dulari Sinha, Ram Lal, P.V. Venkatasubbaiah, while fresh in the electorate's mind, did not seem adequate justification for the use of Article 356 in Karnataka. Had the Governor exercised his judgement in a situation rife with arithmetical confusion there could have been some justification. But, Veerendra Patil, however deserving of our sympathies, is a lost cause. Out of the 181 Congress MLAs, his followers are less than 40. Therefore, the question of the local Janata Dal—who, incidentally number 25—coming to the rescue of the ailing chief minister does not arise. The Karnataka Governor had only two options, he could either have asked Patil to resign or prove his majority on the floor of the House. Few are going to buy the argument about the communal situation in the state being so grave as to make President's Rule imperative.

Ironically, the day Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh's decision was announced, the Prime Minister was lecturing the invitees to the first meeting of the Inter-State Council on the need to take heed of the Sarkaria Commission Report. And what were the main recommendations of the report? It had been scathing about the role of Governors, it had reiterated that the only proper forum to test the legitimacy of a chief minister was the Assembly floor, it had cautioned against indiscriminate use of Article 356.

V P Singh is a practising poet, so he probably values irony. Nonetheless, he should advise the Karnataka Governor not to make his partiality so apparent. On the day that President's Rule was imposed, the *Indian Express* reported: "Mr Bhanu Pratap Singh answered several provocative questions with a smile on his face." Playing around with the Constitution of India may be a laughing matter for Bhanu Pratap but for V P Singh, the Governor's brazenness is turning out to be a major embarrassment.

Let me construct an alternate scenario. Mr Gandhi goes to Bangalore on 6 October and performs his Chaplinesque act. The state Janata Dal falls over itself in excitement. Ruling party MPs and ministers deplore the manner in which the Congress treats its chief ministers. Even the Prime Minister expresses compassion for the hapless Veerendra Patil.

All the while, Bhanu Pratap Singh remains silent, receiving memoranda and delegations from all parties. He holds no daily press conference, issues no statements beyond, "I am examining the situation". After 145 Congress MLAs supporting change are presented to him on the lawns of Raj Bhavan, he issues a brief statement requesting the chief minister to summon the Assembly in 72 hours and prove his majority.

The Governors standing in the nation would have risen and the Prime Minister could then rightfully claim that his government was committed to higher values. As it is, in a few days Patil will have to go. President's Rule will be revoked with Rajiv's nominee secure in the CM's chair. And V.P. Singh will stand exposed.●





Rajiv Gandhi was on firm ground as far as the capacity of the CM to govern was concerned. But alas, he went straight for the jugular and clobbered a sick man, **Veerendra Patil** (above), with the sack.

The Hollow Man

Children burn on the streets of India as V.P. Singh frames his agenda in terms of a non-issue



SONDEEP SHANKAR

He is the first Prime Minister of India who does not look you in the eye. Ask Vishwanath Pratap Singh a straight question and he will dissemble. Stare him in the face and he will not meet your gaze. Confront him with an unpleasant truth and he will lapse into silence.

And yet, over the last five years, V.P. Singh has set the agenda for Indian politics. In 1985, Rajiv Gandhi hoped to use the largest electoral mandate in history to put politics on a new course, aiming directly for the 21st century He had good looks, charisma, the Nehru/Gandhi dynasty and the propaganda machinery of the Government of India on his side. But finally, his silicon chip, Doon-accented Rajiv revolution collapsed because his little-known finance minister raised an issue that seized the national imagination: corruption.

For four years from 1986 onwards, Indian politics revolved around corruption. Did the government have the guts to act against big business? Had Rajiv made money on the Bofors deal? Could the Congress party ever provide clean government?

Rajiv Gandhi refused to accept V.P. Singh's agenda; he lost his office. Chandra Shekhar told the country that the corruption issue was a red herring; he was written off as 'irrelevant'. R.K. Hegde was unable to clear himself of involvement in various land scams; he was tossed aside.

As each potential Prime Minister failed to see that V.P. Singh had radically altered the terms of reference for Indian politics, his career went up in smoke. Till finally, the Raja became the *only* alternative Prime Minister.

Two months ago, he rewrote the rules of the game again. Sensing that the corruption issue was losing its appeal, Vishwanath Pratap Singh set a new agenda. Now, the issue is caste-based reservation. Suddenly, everything in Indian politics is seen in terms of Mandal. You may be for it. Or you may be against it. Or—like most politicians—you may be both for *and* against it. But your position is still defined in terms of Mandal.

Once again, it is V.P. Singh who has framed the context. Everyone else is only responding to his initiative.

Men who set the agenda are usually great national leaders, statesmen—visionaries even. But up close, Vishwanath Pratap Singh is none of these. He is more shrewd than statesman-like. Much more a deal-maker than a dreamer. If he is a visionary, then perhaps he is the shiftiest visionary in the history of politics; the first great leader who has trouble meeting your gaze.

Yes, he always selects subjects that grip the national imagination, but never does he choose an issue that helps India go forward. Instead, he chooses those that cause division and spread suspicion. By making corruption the agenda, he ensured that everyone suspected everybody else; that resources



that should have been expended on securing the future were wasted in an effort to reopen and re-examine the past in a series of never-ending investigations.

Moreover, he always chooses non-issues. In 1986, when he launched the raid raj, the then government faced several problems and had certain priorities. It had begun the process of restoring peace to the Punjab and had brought order to Assam, Kashmir and Mizoram. It had started dismantling the licence-quota-permit raj and was slowly beginning to bring India in line with the rest of the world. By mid-1987, all of that had been forgotten. The only thing that mattered was Bofors.

The consequence was that most of the problems got worse, the economic revolution remained unfinished and even today, with V.P. Singh in power, we are no nearer finding out the truth about Bofors.

The caste issue has been raised in much the same manner. Since V.P. Singh took office, Kashmir has blown up, Punjab has got worse and Assam is teetering on the brink of chaos. Inflation rages unchecked. Oil prices have sky-rocketed. Our economy seems poised for a recession. And the changes in Eastern Europe have made India all but irrelevant in the international context.

V.P. Singh has *no* solutions to any of these problems. The government does not have a policy on Kashmir, Punjab or Assam. The foreign ministry has formulated no coherent response to the Gulf crisis. And there appears to be no economic policy apart from ritual demands for austerity.

In the midst of all this—at the brink of perhaps our biggest crisis since 1947—V.P. Singh's solution has been to frame his agenda in terms of a non-issue: caste-based reservation.

There is much that is wrong with the Mandal proposals—reservation is counter-productive, to think in terms of caste sets us back 50 years, etc — but that is not the point. Even if Mandal made some sense—which it doesn't—it is still irresponsible to make it the agenda when the *real* problems are ignored.

But then, that is typical of V.P. Singh. Not only does he set the agenda, he takes care to pick a curiously unreal issue, one that has nothing to do with the crises of India.

Admittedly, there is a short-term brilliance in his choice of these issues. Each time, he selects a position that cannot be opposed. In 1986, he talked about corruption. The best his rivals could say in reply was that it was a diversion or that it was not a key issue. Nobody could say that he *supported* corruption. Finally, everybody had no choice but to mouth his line that corruption was a very bad thing.

He has pulled exactly the same stunt with Mandal. By letting the genie out of the bottle, by breaking the last taboo of Indian politics and by setting the agenda in terms of caste, he has framed his context in terms that nobody dares oppose.

The reality of Indian politics is that everyone must accept the principle of reservation or risk losing Scheduled Caste support. Having accepted that principle, nobody dares refuse to extend it to backward castes for fear of committing electoral hara-kiri. Even Rajiv Gandhi, whose first instinct was to condemn the move, had to back down after Congress MPs threatened to revolt.

Thus, V.P. Singh can proudly state today that *no* political party of any consequence has opposed the Mandal Commission Report. Nearly all have quibbled with the manner of its implementation, but not one has phrased these objections in terms that make much sense.

This then is the key to his success. Invent an essentially hollow and fraudulent vision. Ensure that it has little to do with India's real problems and frame your position so that nobody dares oppose you.

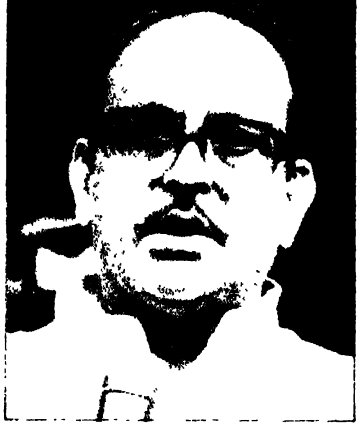
Today, we are appalled by the cynicism. But last year, we were convinced enough to make him Prime Minister.

In metamorphosing from Mr Clean to Mr Caste, V.P. Singh has bartered away the future of our children. As more and more of them burn themselves alive, we pay the price for his ambition

Three weeks ago, Yashwant Sinha spoke at a meeting of the National Front Parliamentary Party. Slowly, almost patiently, he listed the failures of the government. Then, towards the end of his speech, he came to the point. "Therefore," he concluded, "I would respectfully request that the Prime Minister step down and give somebody else a chance."

The demand was not entirely unexpected. Sinha and Harmohan Dhawan had already told the media that they intended to ask for V.P. Singh's resignation. Nor was the Raja's response particularly unpredictable. As Sinha neared the end of his speech, V.P. Singh began muttering to himself—loudly enough for his neighbours to hear—"there is no need for him to go on and on. If they want me to quit,

DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM THE ISSUES





MANDAL

Never before has the country been so divided on such a non-issue. But VP has framed his agenda in terms of caste to win votes

then I will. I don't want this job", etc., etc.

It was a variation on an old theme. Ever since he became Prime Minister, V.P. Singh has never tired of reasserting his readiness to give up the job. And indeed, hearing him mutter away at that National Front meeting, at least one MP thought that he would rise to his feet and announce that he was quitting.

In fact, he did no such thing. Instead, assorted *chamchas* (P. Upendra, Jaipal Reddy, etc.) were promptly assigned the job of drafting a resolution expressing confidence in his leadership and the assembled MPs were made to reaffirm their faith in the Raja. Yashwant Sinha was outraged. "I can understand a motion of no-confidence," he fumed. "But why a motion of confidence? Will you pass one each time an MP criticises the Prime Minister?"

Sinha's objection made some sense, but it missed the point. It is now clear that V.P. Singh has never meant it when he has offered to resign. Instead, he has always made feeble protestations when he is certain that others will persuade him to stay.

The leadership election was one such instance. Nobody could understand why V.P. Singh was so keen that Chandra Shekhar not put himself forward as a candidate for the leadership of the Janata Dal. After all, the Raja had the majority. Shekhar was certain to lose.

In retrospect, the answer is clear. Had Shekhar stood, there would have been an election. V.P. Singh would have won it, but to do so, he would have had to *declare* his candidacy. It is important to the Raja that he should never be seen as seeking office. Nevertheless, he desperately wanted to become Prime Minister, while still professing reluctance to take the job.

So, a rather sordid solution was found. Shekhar would be told that Devi Lal was the consensus candidate and would therefore withdraw his own candidacy and propose the Tau instead. Lal would turn down the post and hand his crown to V.P. Singh. Thus, the Raja would get the job without ever having said that he wanted it.

When Arun Nehru and company resigned over V.P. Singh's deal with Devi Lal, the Raja managed to divert attention from his understanding with the Tau by making his resignation the issue. But to ensure that the resignation was not accepted, he took care not to send it to President R. Venk-

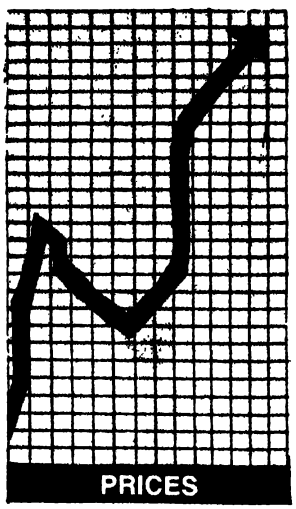
Even if Mandal made sense, VP would still be wrong in focusing on it, while ignoring the problems he was elected to solve





VIOLENCE

Punjab, Kashmir and Assam careen wildly out of control



PRICES

The government is unable to check inflation



GULF CRISIS

It has ravaged our economy and things will get worse



EASTERN EUROPE

The changes in Eastern Europe could make India irrelevant globally

ataraman but despatched it to S.R Bommai, president of the Janata Dal. So while V.P. Singh was able to assert that he cared nothing for office, Bommai was handed the dirty job of ironing out a compromise.

The resignation issue is important because it illustrates the extent to which V.P Singh's prime ministership has been constructed on fraud and pretence. Those who conceded that he ducked the real problems to focus on such issues as corruption would say in his defence that he was other-worldly and obsessed with probity to the extent that nothing else—not even political office—held any meaning for him.

But now, that defence no longer holds. The Raja is far from other-worldly. Over the last year, he has shown himself to be devious and manipulative. He craves desperately for public office—he just doesn't like saying so. And as for cleanliness in public life, we have not heard much about that ever since V.P. Singh decided that Mandal was the way ahead and that the corruption issue had run its course.

Four months ago, SUNDAY called V P. Singh the Indian political phenomenon of the last decade. He was, we suggested, the X factor in Indian politics: a man whose actions were so unpredictable that all political analysis was rendered irrelevant once he made his move.

By rewriting the agenda of Indian politics, V P Singh has proved us right. Nobody expected him to metamorphose from Mr Clean to Mr Caste overnight Gone is the mild-mannered JP-clone who would hand in his resignation at the slightest provocation. In his place stands a stubborn, calculating cow-belt manipulator who will cling to his chair as long as he thinks he has the backward vote sewn up.

It is an astonishing transformation made all the more astounding by the ease with which he has switched personas—still, never once looking the people of India in the eye.

But to achieve it, he has bartered away the future of our children. And with each passing day, as more and more of them burn themselves alive, the cost of his manipulations is becoming painfully obvious.

Is any Prime Minister worth that price?

Let alone one who cannot even meet your gaze? •

Vir Sanghvi/New Delhi



PTI

If he is a visionary, then he is the shiftiest visionary in the history of Indian politics; the first great leader who has trouble meeting your gaze

Does your dudhwalla supply milk at 10 in the night?

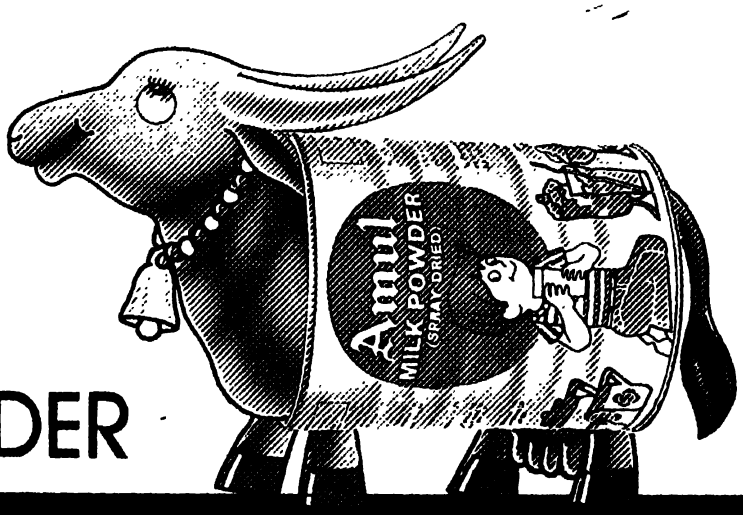


My dudhwalla does.

Your son wants to study late at night and needs coffee. Grandma wants milk instead of dinner. Where do you buy milk at that hour? Keep Amul Milk Powder at home, so the milk is never late, never runs out, never turns sour.

With Amul Milk Powder you have pure, rich, creamy milk mixed and ready in minutes. Good to drink, for tea and coffee, dahi, lassi, kheer, custard, cakes, rasgollas...





Amul
MILK POWDER

It's like having a dairy in your home

RADEJS/AMP/1-88

Marketed by: Gujarat Co-operative
Milk Marketing Federation Ltd., Anand 388 001

OPERATION FLOOD

Justice for all

That's the motto of Ranganath Mishra, the new Chief Justice

"The common man is my interest," says Ranganath Mishra, the soft-spoken judge who has been appointed India's 19th Chief Justice. "My philosophy is simple: a smile on everyone's face." It is a somewhat optimistic note for Chief Justice Mishra to start his year-long term as head of the highest court in the land. Especially, when the country's legal system is burdened with a mountain of cases like never before.

Legal circles in the capital feel that it is too early to comment on whether the Chief Justice will be able to bring about far-reaching changes in the judiciary. Justice Mishra's preference for *lok adalats* is well-known: as executive chairman of the Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes, he has, over the last five years, tried to take "justice to the doorsteps of the people". Justice Mishra himself is hesitant to hold out any promises for the future. He does, however, believe that there is a great demand for *lok adalats*, and is likely to work out a system to encourage people to file new petitions before these local courts. "With a pendency of over two-and-a-half lakh cases, the disposals can be doubled with the help of *lok adalats*," says the Chief Justice.

Over the years, Justice Mishra has built for himself a reputation of being a champion of the underdog. His pro-labour judgements, especially in the Rohtas Paper Mills case of 1989, where he helped reinstate 22,000 workers, have won him considerable acclaim. Environmentalists were also indebted to the Justice when he passed an order to stop quarrying in the Doon Valley; journalists too benefited from his interim order before the Bachawat case was settled. His other landmark judgements held that public sector employees got dearness allowance commensurate with other government employee scales; he also regularised jobs of Karnataka state government employees.

And yet, despite all the judgements which have considerably aided workers and government employees alike, the Chief Justice will always be criticised for his report on the 1984 Delhi riots as chairman of the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission. The judge invited widespread anger because he failed to indict the culprits, allowed Congress(I) bigwigs to go scot-free, and even underplayed the dimensions of the massacre following Mrs Gandhi's assassination. Instead, the judge laid the blame on small-time party functionaries, and diluted the very purpose of an inquiry into the riots, ostensibly yielding to political pressure. Justice Mishra defends himself saying: "People abused me then without reading my report. I said 3,300 people were killed and arranged for 1,900 houses to be made available for the victims."

"Human problems are my biggest concern," says the Chief Justice. And yet, legal circles are quick to point out that the Chief Justice's image as a protector of the downtrodden has been tarnished by some of his judgements. As part of a five-member bench, Justice Mishra, along with the then Chief Justice, R.S. Pathak, allowed the controversial settlement with Union Carbide Corporation in the Bhopal gas leak case. In the Antulay case, Justice Mishra did an about-turn on an order he had passed along with the then Chief Justice, P.N. Bhagwati, saying that the Maharashtra chief minister should be prosecuted. Subsequently, he and the former Chief Justice,Sabyasachi Mukharji, quashed the order.

Other judgements for which the Chief Justice has invited criticism include the controversial ruling he gave in favour of Tamil Nadu liquor baron M Veeraswamy Udayar. It is believed that Udayar attempted to oust his tenants, Indian Airlines and V.G. Paneerdas, from Madras' Victor House building, which the liquor supremo had acquired during MGR's time. There were allegations that the judge had availed of Udayar's hospitality on his frequent trips to Tamil Nadu.

Yet, senior lawyers and legal luminaries who are still trying to get used to the idea of a new Chief Justice so soon (Justice Mukharji's term would have lasted till 1 June, 1992, had he not died so suddenly), are reluctant to comment on the new Chief Justice so early in his term. "He has all the right credentials for a good Chief Justice," says a senior counsel. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi



ASHOK VAIE

Over the years, Justice Mishra has built for himself a reputation of being a champion of the underdog. His pro-labour judgements have won him great acclaim

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Letter to an Editor

V.P. Singh comes across as "an altogether bizarre figure" in The Times of India *interview*

To:

Shri Dileep Padgaonkar,
Editor,
The Times of India,
New Delhi

My dear Dileep,

Wasn't it Shakespeare (or, far more probably, P.G. Wodehouse) who said that if the hour reveals the man, it also remorselessly exposes the washout? Your interview with the Prime Minister (TOI, 30/9/90) left us with the most tantalising glimpses of V.P. Singh—the Populist, the Politician, the Powerbroker. Would that it had gone on a little longer--for there was so much more one would have wanted you to ask.

VP kicks off, in response to your first question about the Mandal Commission with how "we have advised our supporters to be restrained"—a phrase which raises, of course, intriguing implications of the most delightful complexity. Eg: who are these mysterious beings—"our supporters"? Clearly not the Tau or Chandra Shekhar—nor something like 30 Janata Dal MPs, give or take the handful who are being blandished, bribed or browbeaten into switching sides as often as you and I change our underwear (*aya* forward, *gaya* backward kind of thing!)—for neither of the principals nor their occasional followers has been particularly "restrained" in denouncing their titular boss for the cad he is. Clearly too not Arun Nehru and the rest of the Jan Morcha gang in the Cabinet, for while they have indubitably been "restrained", their thunderous silence betokens not "support" but pursed-lips denunciation. The "support", such as it is, comes from the two bearded Neanderthals—Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav—and who could accuse them of being "restrained"? And when the Prime Minister himself is being so totally unrestrained in drumming up Mandalian crowds from Madras' Marina Beach to Patna's Gandhi Maidan, might one take it that even he is not to be counted in his list of "our supporters"?

But let's move on. "There is support for Mandal in the south," says the Prime Minister—and then quickly adds "the support in the north is no less". Oh, yeah? If even *he* believed that, would he have set up the north-south distinction in his answer—when you hadn't even raised it in your question? And if the north-south divide on Mandal is VP's source of hope, what happened in Madras on Sunday, 7 October, must surely have put a damper on his illusions: for, Mandal or no Mandal, where the DMK procession on 16 September took three hours to wind past VP and Karunanidhi at Spencers' point on Mount Road, Jayalalitha's show took *seven* to flow past her and Rajiv Gandhi standing on a platform at the same point. Where, oh where, have all the VP's southern flowers gone?

And when the Prime Minister, surrounded by the charred remains of innocent children and the debris of a thousand demonstrations, says that support for what he has done is "no less" in the north than in the south

V.P. Singh claims that they (the National Front) have been giving notice for years that "We are going to implement Mandal in the first year that we come to power". Then how is it that they failed to say so in the manifesto?



(notwithstanding the refusal of both BJP state governments, Jyoti *babu*, and even Biju Patnaik's wholly JD regime—besides the footdragging reluctance of the JD-BJP coalitions in Rajasthan and Gujarat—to implement Mandal) do you think, Dileep, our Prime Minister is amnesiac, mendacious—or merely ungrammatical?

Couple that with his extraordinary reply to your question: "How then do you explain the violent reaction to your decision in the north?" The Prime Minister says: "The media has been giving a one-sided verdict." What, one wonders is one-sided about young Rajeev Goswami lying burnt on all sides in Safdarjung Hospital? Or the score and more of bereaved and bewildered mothers and fathers watching the Mandal torch set their kids on fire? What of the rallies—even by so obscure an organisation as the Indian People's Front (ever heard of it?)—bringing lakhs to the lawns of the Boat Club? What of the smashed traffic lights on Rajpath? What of the daily headlines from Chamba to Chandigarh, Ambala, Kurukshetra and Sonepat, from Ghaziabad to Varanasi, from Kota to Khandwa and beyond—as far south as Andhra Pradesh and as far east as Bihar, Bengal and Orissa? One-sided?

Followed by this puzzling bit of pop sociology. "An issue becomes socially volatile when there is only one sort of projection in the media"! No wonder the Mandal Commission so summarily disposed of their sociology experts For V.P. Singh's expertise in sociology leads him, it would seem, to believe that an issue (any issue—including one that affects every segment of society) is not volatile in itself but is only made so by the press! It is not, so our Prime Minister holds, his petty politics of upstaging the Tau, nor his abject failure to take even his supporters into confidence, nor even his grave dereliction of duty in not anticipating the depth of antipathy which his decision would provoke, that is responsible for the volatile mess in which we today find ourselves. All, apparently, would in the Prime Minister's view, have been sweetness and light but for media reporting making Mandal a "socially volatile" issue!

You then mildly interject, Dileep, that it is not just the press but "some political parties (who) have also been very critical"—to which V.P. Singh mutters in reply that all such criticism is "basically" confined to "the NSUI and the Congress in Bihar". Oops! What about the Congress in the rest of the country? Or the thousands of students who till yesterday were not even on talking terms with the NSUI (which, for the uninitiated, is the Congress students' wing)? Or indeed—as it takes your next question to point out—his own "outside supporters", the BJP and the CPI(M)? Do you think the man does not know? Has forgotten? Or has merely lost the speaking notes that his press adviser must have slipped him?!

Let's soldier on. The Prime Minister claims that they have been giving notice for years that "we are going to implement it (Mandal) *in the first year that we come to power*". (Italics mine, if you don't mind!) Then how is it that they failed to say so in their manifesto? If Mandal was so important to the NF's designs, I wish you had asked him, Dileep, why did they not even have a separate section on the Mandal report in their manifesto? Or why the total number of words in which the manifesto disposes of Mandal is exactly *nine*? And mentions nothing at all about implementation "in the first year"! Indeed, so ambiguous on the question of Mandal was the President's address to the joint Houses of Parliament that it led to their own party MP, Ram Avadesh Singh, the King of the Backwards, noisily walking out on the Rashtrapati (not kowtowing backwards but straight forward!) both in December 1989 and in February 1990? You should, Dileep, have challenged the Apostle of Truth to produce one single official statement of the National Front (not counting the PM's off-the-cuff populism at assorted public meetings) pledging implementation of the Mandal report in the first year.

V.P. Singh then goes on to claim that they have been "preparing the ground for years and years". Really? Then why was "implementation" confined to one part of one recommendation of the Mandal Commission Report? And why so many retractions in the weeks that have followed the 13 August notification? Is VP governing or waltzing" And does he still know whether this "first phase" is to be followed by other "phases" (asserted at Thiruvananthapuram: denied the next day)? And when are these phases to be? And what will they contain? If this massive confusion (VP is not a Confucianist but a Confusionist!) can you imagine where the NF could lead us without preparation?

You then ask him, Dileep, about why the intelligentsia "has not been able to appreciate you more" To which the Prime Minister responds: "They haven't accepted it in their hearts". Wrong, Prime Minister: they haven't accepted it in their *heads*! For that, Prime Minister, is where the in-



Who are VP's "our supporters"? The support such as it comes from two bearded Neanderthals—**Ram Vilas Paswan** and **Sharad Yadav**—and who could accuse them of being restrained?

telligentsia thinks. Or didn't you know? The fact is that the problem of backwardness varies so much from state to state that no one state's approach is similar to any other's. At least four states—Himachal, Haryana, West Bengal and Orissa (not counting six of the 'seven sisters' of the north-east)—deny that they even have a problem of caste—or community-based backwardness. They recognise only the backwardness occasioned by poverty. In Karnataka, on the other hand, upwards of 90 per cent of the population is classified as scheduled or backward. In most northern states the figure drops to well below half. The removal of backwardness is a constitutional obligation: it was not invented by Mandal but, decades earlier, brought into the Constitution by Jawaharlal Nehru at the instance of Kamaraj. The intelligentsia are pointing to the ambivalences and contradictions besetting the announcement of reserved quotas for the backward classes in central government jobs, even as the Supreme Court is directing the government to definitively identify the backward classes before extending concessions to them—but the Prime Minister apparently believes that since he wears his heart on his sleeve, that is where the intelligentsia should be hanging their brains!



When it comes to undeserved Class I employ for **Laloo Prasad Yadav's** nine offsprings, V P. Singh is to the fore with "equity". But when it comes to 30 lakh jobs in urban and semi-urban India, he forgets all about backward quotas

The Prime Minister then protests that his high objective, Dileep,has been to bring "equity as the central theme of the national politics". First, it was Bofors that was touted as the "central theme". When that blew up in his face, he shifted focus to "the youth". Then it was "the empty coffers". Then it was "the threat from Pakistan". Then it was the holiday on Dr/ Ambedkar's birth anniversary. Then it was the urban downturn for rural uplift. Then it was Prasar Bharati. For a while it was even statehood for Delhi. Then came the National Security Council. Now he says the central theme of our national politics is "equity". In fact, as he knows—and the Tau knows (and as the Tau knows that he knows that the Tau knows)—the "central theme" of the National Front's politics has always been and ever will be the Tau. How to inviegle him in. How to cheat him out. How to retain his supporters. While ridding themselves of the man himself. Whom to cajole. Whom to tempt. Whom to bully. To whom to pander. If "equity" had any place in V.P. Singh's scheme of national politics, why does he adamantly refuse to pronounce himself on reservations for the backwards in Central Universities, ITIs, IITs, medical schools and the like?Blue funk, of course. But is equity in education alien to equity in nationalpolitics?

And, more to the point, if "equity" is to be secured by 27 per cent reservations for a few hundred central government jobs, why has V.P. Singh not provided for any reservations in the scheme that his government have announced—ironically, on the same day that your interview appeared—which, they claim, will conjure up 30 lakh jobs a year under their shiny new employment-generation programme (which, in fact, is nothing but a tired recycling—with the usual dilutions and distortions—of the previous government's Nehru Rozgar Yojana)? When it comes to undeserved Class I employ for Lalloo Prasad Yadav's nine offspring (and may his tribe, like Abou Ben Adhem's, ever increase!). V.P. Singh is to the fore with "equity". But when it comes to 30 lakh jobs in urban and semi-urban India—the vast bulk of which could, if he so wishes, be directed to the backwards—VP just forgets all about backward quotas! What dedication to social justice! What commitment to social emancipation!

The piffle goes on Asked by you whether his concept of emancipation from backwardness means a place for the backwards in the "power structure", VP shoots back a line of inspired verse: "My concept is as follows: even if it is a hut, it must be your home"! Now, what do you think that means—if it means anything at all? Perhaps enlightenment is to be found a few lines down when you ask VP when it was that the Congress came to a dead-end? His answer is illuminating: "I think the watershed came with the Emergency." That was the watershed that marked V.P. Singh's transition from a junior *chhut bhaiyya* to *Congress* chief minister of the largest state in India. It was the watershed that carried him beyond to Number Two in Rajiv Gandhi's *Congress* government at the centre. So what his issue/value-based politics (strike out what is inapplicable) amounts to is this: My hut is my home—and your hut is also my home. And I am going to sit in it whether you like it or not. Even if it means sharing it with the Tau!

As you remark in your introduction to the interview: truly "an altogether bizarre figure"!

Yours in the Mercy of the Lord,

Mani

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.

KEEP AWAY FROM THE HERD



Get yourself something unique. Like the Allwyn.
Quiet, sturdy and reliable.



Allwyn compressor with Hitachi technology for silent and trouble-free working. Tilting bottle racks for easy sliding of bottles. An efficient, quick and non-messy self-draining system of defrost. Leading to an automatic re-start. Withstands a wide range of voltage fluctuations. (170V to 250V) Allwyn- Pioneers of refrigeration in India. Available in 165 litres single and 165,300 and 380 litres double door models. Comes with a seven year warranty. And the choice of an additional seven year protection contract.



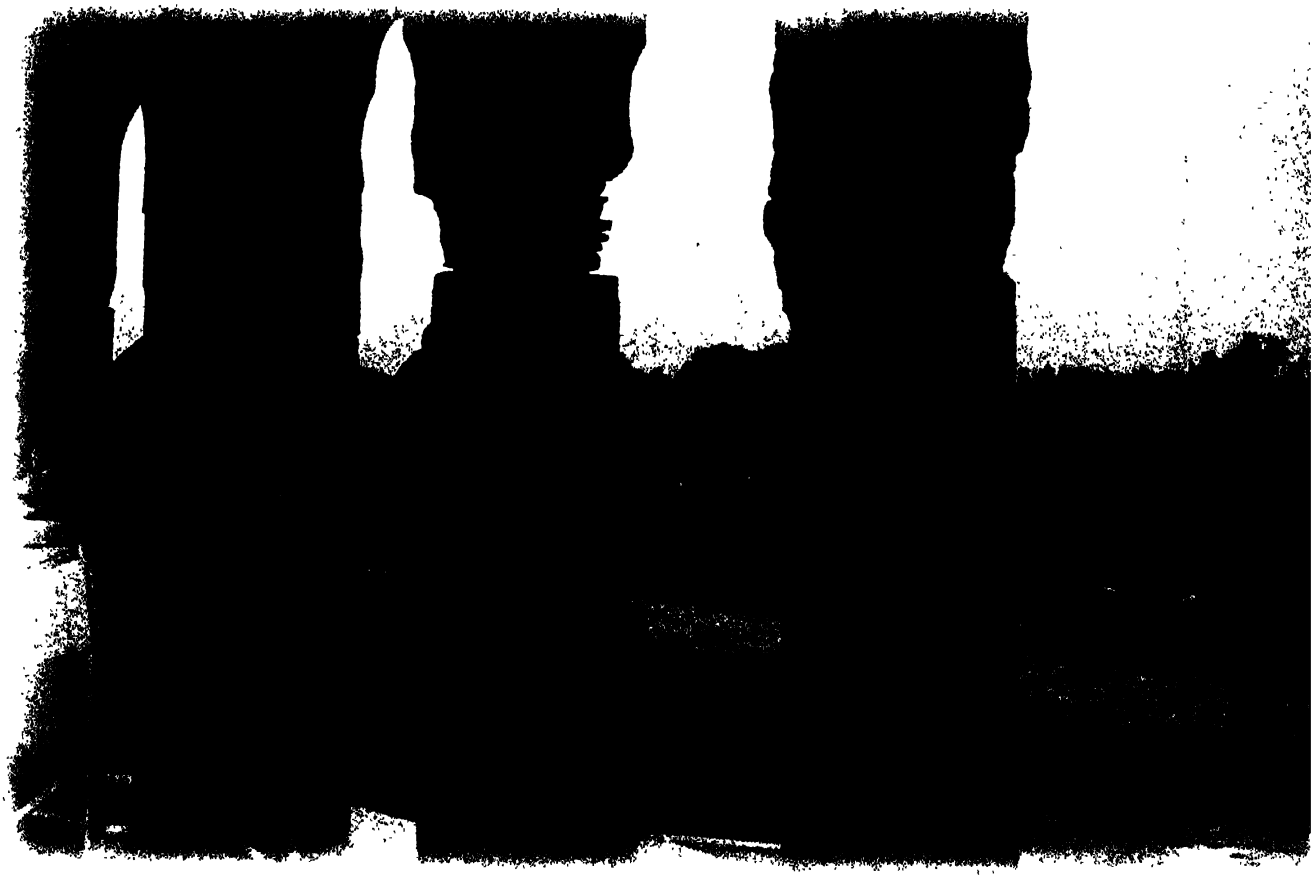
You can be sure now, that Allwyn will keep you away from the herd.

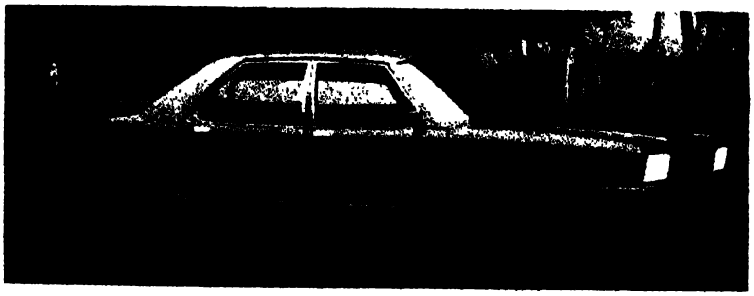
ALLWYN

QUIET · STURDY · FAITHFUL

Mudra . H . HAL

Do people who drive the Contessa





Contract HM 22171A

Accessories shown in the picture are not part of standard equipment.

A Limousine to every other car

look at the world differently ?



The world, it is said, is divided into two kinds of people. The first kind are those who focus on the small things in life, and can't see too far beyond themselves.

And then there are those whose world-view encompasses all that surrounds them. Their foresight and sense of perspective is best expressed by the car they drive–the Contessa Classic.

Its 1.8 litre Isuzu engine effortlessly takes them to places rarely seen by others.

Five forward gears, including an overdrive, help carry them out of sight at 120 kmph.

An impressively responsive steering places them in complete control of any situation.

Power disc brakes help stop them in their tracks --safely and smoothly.

And, of course, a plush interior, an independent suspension and air conditioning are invisible assets that only they could appreciate.

But there's really much more to the Contessa. So why not get in touch with us. And take a closer look at a car that offers you more than meets the eye.

Contessa
Classic 1·8 GL

Sabre-rattling

A scion of the Mysore royal family accuses Sanjay Khan of distorting history in The Sword Of Tipu Sultan

Srikantdatta Wadiyar is an indefatigable fighter. A scion of the Mysore royal family, who recently won a 16-year-long marathon court battle to regain possession of 454 acres of the Bangalore Palace grounds, Wadiyar is now threatening to take Sanjay Khan, producer of the television serial *The Sword Of Tipu Sultan*, to court for distorting history.

But will one victory lead to another? While the first battle was Wadiyar's personal fight against the descendants of a contractor, Chamaraju, in the controversy over the TV serial he seems to have the Mysoreans by his side. And Wadiyar is adamant.

Khan has incurred Wadiyar's wrath because of the way in which he has protrayed the royal family in the serial. Krishnaraja Wadiyar and his wife, Lakshmammanni, contemporaries of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, have been shown as a clown and a scheming woman. "It is not only a distortion of historical facts but character assassination," fumes Srikantdatta, protesting against the injustice done to his forebears.

And it is not just the royal family Khan has irked by showing the former rulers in a poor light, but also the general public. As each episode of the serial is screened on Saturday nights, more and more people in Karnataka feel disgruntled. Mysoreans, because of their proximity and ties with the royalty, feel particularly disturbed. They even organised a protest march soon after the first episode had been telecast.

Now Wadiyar has decided to initiate legal proceedings against Khan. He is bent upon extracting an apology from Khan for depicting the royal family as one given to a licentious way of life and is also demanding the deletion of all derogatory references to his predecessors.

Wadiyar, the Congress MP from Mysore, expressed his displeasure to the information and broadcasting minister, P. Upendra in a letter dated 5 July. He demanded an apology both from Khan and the Doordarshan panelists who cleared the serial for telecast.

He wrote: "To my great dismay I find that the serial is a totally distorted version of historical facts. Mr Sanjay Khan, in his zeal to portray Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan as secular nationalists, seems to be oblivious and blind to the actual historical facts and has presented a totally distorted version of the life and times of my ancestor." Despite the disclaimer at the beginning of each episode that the serial was not based on facts but was a historical fiction, Wadiyar said in the letter that "the very fact that certain historical figures and places have been referred to by their real names tantamounts to character assassination".

When his letter drew no response from Mandi House, the former prince followed up by writing another letter to Upendra. Wadiyar asked the minister to tell his panelists to study the Mysore gazetteers to get a correct picture of the events of that era.

On 4 September, almost a month after Wadiyar's second letter, Doordarshan sent a telex to Sanjay Khan regarding the objections being raised against his serial. Gopal Saksena, controller of programmes, requested Khan in the message to ensure that no derogatory or disparaging references were made to the Wadiyar family in the subsequent episodes.



The only response from the Khan camp to the issue has been a stony silence. The Wadiyar family has not heard a word from Khan and the serial continues to be telecast.

Besides Wadiyar, a number of historians have entered the fray pointing out the factual errors in the serial. All of them have denounced the way Krishnaraja Wadiyar and the queen have been portrayed. It must be recalled that when the entire nation was debating whether Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan were secular, no one from Karnataka raised any doubts about the secular credentials of the two Muslim rulers.

But historians stress that there was no need to berate the Wadiyar family in order to highlight the fact that Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan were unwavering nationalists. H.J. Imam, who has studied the Mysore royal family in depth, says Khan's work is "in extremely bad taste". "There are quite a few flaws in the serial. Krishnaraja Wadiyar was a weak ruler, but he was not a clown," he points out.

Y. Umanath Shenoy, another historian, feels that the serial is not true to history. In an article published in the widely-circulated magazine, *Tarana*, Shenoy has pointed out that "Hyder led a simple life and not an ostentatious one as shown in the serial."

So it seems that Sanjay Khan, is up against hard facts and Doordarshan guilty of passing off distorted history.

While Srikantdatta has reasons to be sore over the serial, he is overwhelmed by his victory in the land litigation. "I had to struggle for 16 years with blood and sweat to get back our property," sighed Wadiyar after the Karnataka High Court validated a compromise formula worked out by him and the contestants. Wadiyar now gets back possession of 344 acres, of which 110 acres will be split between his five sisters. Another 110 acres will remain in the joint possession of Wadiyar and the contractors.

The end of the litigation gave rise to speculations that Wadiyar planned to covert the palace (built along the lines of the Windsor Castle) into a five-star hotel. Among the bidders in the forefront were the Taj and the Oberoi hotel groups.

What lends credence to the speculation is the money the hotel deal would fetch Wadiyar, who is trapped in a huge tax debt. Since the abolition of privy purses, Wadiyar has accumulated tax arrears close to Rs 30 crore.

But Wadiyar soon scotched the rumours, saying: "You can forget such things. I am trying to maintain the grounds as a green belt."

The former prince and present Congress(I) MP, however, does not rule out the palace grounds being used for other commercial purposes. He says: "Our tax planners are working out the modalities. And we also have a few schemes which we are studying for feasibility."



MUSHTAQ AHMED

Built in 1880, the Bangalore Palace stands silent amid controversy. Rumours suggest that it might be converted into a hotel

The Bangalore Palace, constructed in 1880, is an attractive spot in Bangalore. The prime land, with good tree cover, is considered one of the lungs of the city on a par with the famous Cubbon Park and Lalbagh.

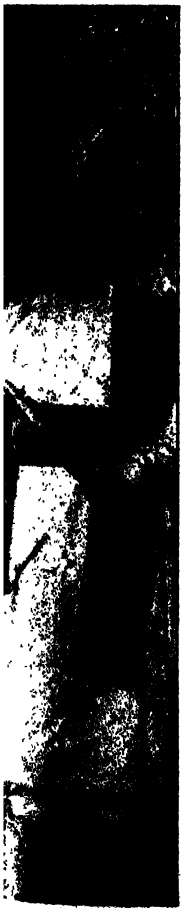
The dispute over the place grounds started during the time of Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar, who had agreed to sell the land to a contractor, Chamaraju. Though Chamaraju had paid Rs. 47 lakh as advance, the deal could not come through due to legalities governing the accession of the Mysore kingdom to the Indian republic. Sometime later, both Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar and Chamarju died, leaving their sons to continue the fight. The compromise formula they evolved in 1982 got the High Court's consent only last month.

But if Wadiyar has won the battle, he is far from winning the war. One of the clauses of the consent order was getting the government's clearance. Though Wadiyar says of his dispute with Chamaraju's heirs: "I am glad it has ended," the bigger obstacle he will have to clear is the Urban Land Ceiling Act.

Veerendra Patil's government seems to be in no mood to entertain his petition for exemption from the Act. "We don't care about any compromise between them. According to the law, they will have to surrender the surplus land. We'll look into the petition and consider our line of argument," Patil told SUNDAY.

"But the palace grounds do not fall under the Act," insists Wadiyar. While the stone and wood palace stands mute testimony to history, the differing perceptions of the government and Wadiyar promises another round of sabre-rattling. •

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore





Sanjay Khan (above) and a still from *The Sword Of Tipu Sultan*: getting the facts wrong?

Khan has not only irked the Wadiyar royal family by showing the former rulers in a poor light, but also the general public

What did Madam Tussaud of London say to the Skypak Man?

"Your wax statue could look splendid! But would anyone ever recognize you in a static posture?"



We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, 18, Vir[illegible] Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Scottish exposure



I had assumed that Scottish was a dialect of English. When I first heard Scottish poets recite their works and failed to comprehend what they were saying, I attributed it to lack of familiarity with their accent. I bought a couple of books of Scottish poetry including Robert Burns. I could make very little sense out of any of them. The reason is simple. Scottish is not a dialect but a language in its own rights with a sizeable vocabulary not found in English dictionaries. Then there is Gaelic which seems to have very little resemblance to either English or Scottish although it is spoken and written in parts of Scotland. Scottish and English have the same ancestry but by the 16th century they had become two different languages. The Scots continued to read and write English because thats where the money was; the English never bothered with Scottish except make fun of the way Scots pronounced English words—including those they never used. A great favourite on the English music hall stage was *hoots mon!* —hardly ever heard in Scotland. By the turn of the present century, radio and later TV, made English the sole *lingua franca* of the United Kingdom. Scottish like Gaelic, Welsh and Irish became relics of the past.

Scottish is as distinct a language as the Scots way of life—their food, drink, music and dance—are different from the English. Scottish food is much tastier than the stodgy English. Their lamb, beef, trout and salmon; their grouse, pheasant and venison are highly rated in Europe. They are the fathers of porridge, oat-cakes and haggis which is made of chopped offal, onions and spices. It is an acquired taste. I have acquired it.

Oats despised elsewhere remains the Scots' favourite. Dr Johnson, the most English of Englishmen, described it as "a food which in English is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people". He evidently never tasted *Athole Brose* made of a mixture of honey, oatmeal and whisky; nor an oatmeal flat-cake called *bannock* or *brose* with milk, butter and salt. As a matter of fact, Scots have a variety of sweets (*sweeties)* which are found nowhere else.

Scotland is best known for its whisky. It was not always so because till the middle ages they were claret-and-wine drinkers which they imported from France. It was after Scotch had become the world's favourite drink, that it gained acceptance in Scotland. No nation has been able to produce the same quality of whisky as the Scots known to them as *Barley Bree.* Irish, Canadian, American and Japanese attempts to produce Scotch failed miserably. Our distillers and brewers have succeeded in producing reasonably good beer, gin and rum, but our whisky remains undrinkably bad and headache producing. Scotch is of two kinds: malt whisky distilled only from malted barley. It has many varieties; Glen Eivet, Glen Fiddich, Glen Morangie etc. The other is blended whisky made from a mixture of malt whisky and distilled from grain (usually maize). Famous brands like Chivas Regal, Johnnie Walker etc., are all blended. Whisky was once known as *Usquebaugh* (water of life). A vast vocabulary has been built up around its consumption. You want to wet your whistle or moustache *(mooch geelee karna)*you ask to *weet your thrapple* (thrapple being the gullet or windpipe). You have too much of it then you are *Stottin* (drunk).



Scotland is best known for its whisky. It was not always so. Only after Scotch had become the world's favourite drink, it gained acceptance in Scotland

Scottish names and place names have interesting origins. The surname beginning with Mac, Mc or just M' means son of. It is very much the same as the Arabic Ibn. Hence we have Mackenzies, Mcphersons and Mackintyres. Some of them are very confusing *(Curfuffling)* or *tapsalteerie (upside down)* and beyond the comprehension of the rabble *(clamjamfry),* nor for the rough and tough people of Glasgow known as *Keelies:* The literary snob uses elegant Scottish known as *Lalluns.*

The effeminate Scotsman is a *Jessie;* a fusspot is a *perjink.* Backsides (buttocks) are *bahookies;* a practical joke on April first a *huntegowk.* After this can there be any doubt that Scottish as a lingo is different from the English used by *Sassenachs* (Englishmen)?

Capital speed

Yavash means slow in Turkish. Accordingly, the Turks have nicknamed their capital city of Ankara, primarily a government centre known for typical bureaucratic delays, *Yavashington*—in homage to the American prototype. Can't we safely name our capital: *New Snailhi?*

Fire service

A small town had just purchased a new fire engine, the municipal board was meeting to decide what to do with the old one. After considerable discussion, a commissioner got up and suggested that they keep the old fire engine and use it for answering false alarms. •

ILLUSTRATION: DEBASHIS DEB



The reluctant rebel

Patil's 'crime': he only bent when others crawled

As a politician, Veerendra Patil has rarely evoked strong passions. His low-key, self-effacing style may have won him both admirers and detractors. But if the praise has never been fulsome, then neither has the criticism ever been savage. At best, he has been characterised as mild-mannered, moderate and affable. At worst, boring, insipid and uninspired.

When Patil was sworn in as chief minister late last year, many predicted that Karnataka was in for a smooth, if uneventful, five-year rule. It's not hard to see why. During his first term—when Patil succeeded the Congress(O)'s S. Nijalingappa as chief minister about two decades ago—the state was run with stability and a quiet efficiency. While he may not have done much to remember him by, Patil is nonetheless credited with having managed both his men and money well.

Moreover, Patil seemed far too cautious (clever?) to become embroiled in disputes and wrangles. Yes, he lacked R. K. Hegde's celebrated charisma and Gundu Rao's crassly populist appeal—the men who, together, ruled Karnataka for the better part of two decades. But he also lacked (or appeared to at least) their tremendous appetite for controversy.

In fact, Patil has rarely been the butt of the kind of charges that are routinely levelled at politicians nowadays—corruption, nepotism, autocracy and the like. Perhaps, the most serious criticism he has had to bear with is that he has been something of an opportunist.

His detractors never fail to point out how he has shifted political loyalties whenever it suited him. There is some truth in the charge. During Mrs Gandhi's battle with the old guard, Patil aligned himself with the Syndicate and, after the party split, was with the Congress(O). He joined the Janata later where, on the persuasion of some central leaders, he fought Mrs Gandhi in the famous 1978 Chikmagalur by-election. Although he did his damnedest to sell that contest as one between the forces of democracy and dictatorship, he lost—and that by a considerable 77,000 votes.

But it was what followed that was the most curious. A year later, Patil deserted a divided and crumbling Janata and went scurrying back to Mrs Gandhi's Congress(I). His reward: a ministerial berth at the Centre.

Patil has since argued that he was a reluctant party to Chikmagalur—that he was talked into contesting by a couple of insistent Union ministers. He has also often explained that, within a year or so of the Janata coming to power, he had realised the experiment was a failure and that Mrs Gandhi was the best thing for the country.

These may well be regarded as a thin defence of his behaviour—a *post hoc* rationalisation of the shifts. But despite this, Patil has managed to retain a fair amount of political credibility—both with his colleagues and the people.

WHEN HE defied Rajiv Gandhi last week, Patil was characterised in the press as a militant mutineer, a rollicking rebel, an irrepressible individualist. It was an odd portrayal of a man who has all along been viewed as faceless, inoffensive and non-controversial—a boss who seemed every bit a backroom boy. So what made him do it?

If Patil differed from the average Congress chief minister, it was more in degree and less in kind. He was only willing to bend when others were prepared to crawl; compromise when others were inclined to yield; and be polite when others were more than ready to grovel.

However, with Rajiv Gandhi as party leader, such attitudes were equated with being mutinous. Patil's first "crime" was his insistence that he be allowed to choose his own Cabinet. Apart from the fact that this was his right, it seemed all the more reasonable given that he had just led the Congress to win its biggest ever majority in Karnataka.

Patil's defiance has won him what he lacked all along—a face, a character, an individuality. And also, a place in political history as the man who stood up to Rajiv



From then on, there were many other confrontations with the high command. Rajiv's men demanded that Vokkaliga champion K. H. Patil and backward class leader S. Bangarappa be taken on as ministers. (Patil—after holding out for four months—finally relented.) Then, there was the demand that Buta Singh be nominated to the Rajya Sabha from the state. (Patil—to the surprise of many—flatly refused.)

Needless to say, none of these controversies reflects well on Rajiv. As for Patil, they have led to the loss of his chair and possibly also the membership of the party. But at the same time, his defiance has won him what he lacked all along—a face, a character, an individuality. And also, a place in recent political history as the man who stood up to Rajiv Gandhi. ●

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

Cheers in UP; tears in Karnataka. Rajiv manages his own contradictions

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. Things were going wonderfully well. It was all falling apart. The future was glorious. The future was only a slow motion repeat of the past.

Last week, as Rajiv Gandhi encountered both triumph and tragedy, nobody was sure whether the Congress was on the road to recovery or whether it was still stuck with the legacies of the past. As the party president's Sadbhavna Yatra received a rapturous response in Uttar Pradesh, Congressmen whooped with delight. But as Karnataka, one of only three states ruled by the Congress, almost seemed to have slipped out of control, party workers watched panic-stricken as their leader appeared to repeat all his old mistakes.

At the centre of the confusion was Rajiv Gandhi himself. Last year, he found only hostility and resentment in the Hindi belt, while in the south, he was hailed as the conquering hero. This year, that situation appeared to have reversed itself. As the Raja's support base in the cow belt evaporated, Rajiv suddenly began to look like a winner again. But in the south—where the Congress wielded real political power—things were not so simple. A single indiscreet remark by the party president led to a revolt in Karnataka, to a farcical situation during which the government failed to function despite being confronted by a bloody communal riot and finally, to the imposition of President's Rule by a partisan Governor.

The tragedy was that while the success in the north was the pay-off for a year of low-profile, good behaviour, it was very nearly wrecked by the fiasco in the south—a consequence of pretty much the same personal style that lost the Congress the last parliamentary election.

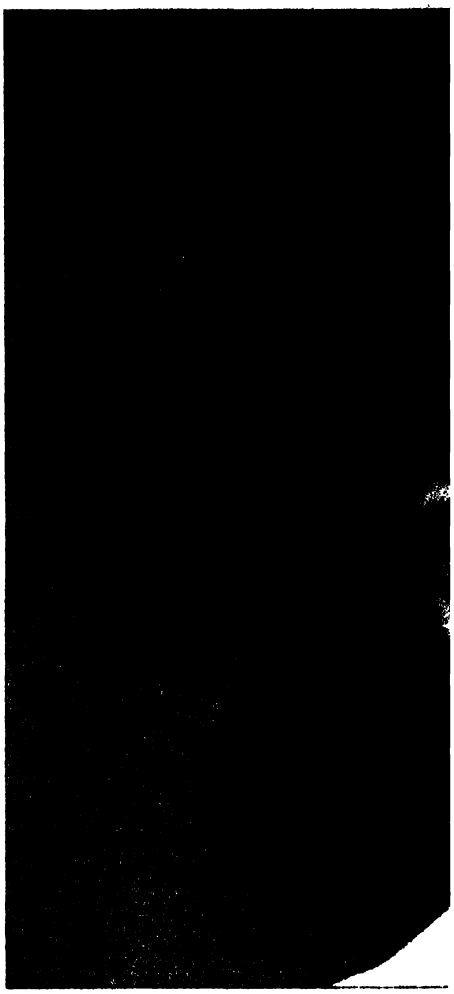
It was almost as though in the north—where the Congress had been routed—the reverses had produced a new, humbler Rajiv Gandhi. But in the south—where the Congress was all powerful—the old, arrogant, indiscreet Rajiv Gandhi still held sway.

Of course, reality did not entirely match the perceptions. And as the Congress came to terms with the consequences of Rajiv's behaviour in Karnataka, there were angry denials of claims that he had behaved irresponsibly.

At issue was the firing of Karnataka chief minister Veerendra Patil. (*See following story.*) What had happened was this: communal riots had broken out in Karnataka. Rajiv had rushed to the spot from Delhi and had been appalled by the failure of the government to get a grip on the situation. He had called on Patil, had discovered he was recovering from a paralytic stroke and had left for the airport to board a flight for New Delhi. At the airport, he had met the press and announced that Patil was to be replaced as chief minister.

The sudden announcement took the press by surprise. There was, first of all, the constitutional question. *Who* was Rajiv Gandhi anyway to decide whether the chief minister should step down? The Karnataka Congress Legislature Party (CLP) had elected Patil. If he had to go, then constitutionally, it could be done in one of two ways: either he resigned himself or the CLP chose to replace him. What was Rajiv Gandhi's *locus standi?*

The electoral reverses in the north appear to have now produced a new, humbler Rajiv Gandhi. But in the south, the old, arrogant, indiscreet Rajiv still seems to hold sway



But even the constitutional question receded to the background when an outraged Patil declared that Rajiv had not told him that he would be replaced before holding that airport press conference. Was it fair of the Congress president to summarily dismiss an ailing senior politician as though he was a peon? Didn't he have the courtesy to at least warn him before talking to the press?

It was R.K. Hegde, Karnataka's best-known politician and a friend of Patil's, who raised these questions most articulately. To Hedge, the entire episode seemed uncomfortably similar to the televised firing of fore-



ign secretary A.P. Venkateswaran at a press conference in 1987.

Matters were further confounded when Veerendra Patil, not the most prepossessing of men (*see Profile*) suddenly discovered new reserves of courage and declared that regardless of what Rajiv Gandhi wanted, he had no intention of quitting. Patil's intransigence plunged Karnataka into a political crisis and when the Governor suspended the Assembly, it seemed as though Rajiv had put his foot into his mouth once again.

But had he? That certainly isn't the way that Rajiv Gandhi himself sees it. His view is that he behaved impeccably and only after full consultation with the chief minister. It was Patil who went back on his word.

"When I went to see the situation in the riot-affected areas of Karnataka, I found that things were very bad," Rajiv Gandhi told SUNDAY. "I knew that Mr Patil was seriously ill and I didn't think that he was in a position to effectively deal with the situation.

"He suggested to me that a deputy chief minister be appointed. I told him that it wouldn't work and that I thought that he should step down. Finally, he agreed and we discussed a date to call a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party. We even discussed possible new leaders."

According to Gandhi, the announcement did not come as a surprise to Patil: "I told him that the press will be waiting for me at the airport and I will have to tell them something so I will tell them about the change." Why then did Patil feign ignorance of the decision? Rajiv says he does not know: "I can't understand why he changed his mind. Immediately after I left his residence, he talked to one newspaper and to a few Congress MLAs and then, he suddenly changed his mind."

The way Gandhi sees it, he acted in the best interests of Karnataka. The Congress had promised the state an effective government and when it found that the administration was unable to control the riots, he acted quickly to rectify the situation. There was no question of insulting Patil because the airport announcement was made with his knowledge. The crisis resulted not from any indiscretion or arrogance, but because Patil went back on his word.

Assuming that Gandhi is telling the truth and Patil is lying, the Karnataka episode still reveals much that is wrong with the Congress. If Patil had, in fact, agreed to resign then Rajiv should have let him make the announcement. There was no need to announce that he had been replaced because this ensured that his exit would be treated as a firing rather than a resignation. Moreover, the constitutional question remains: Rajiv has no *locus standi* in the Karnataka Assembly.

But then, everybody knows that relations between Gandhi and Patil have been tense over the last few months. Partly, it is that the two men are simply not on the same wave-length. Partly, it is because Patil expected the kind of authority that a Congress chief minister had in the early Sixties—quite forgetting that on his own, he could never have been elected leader of the CLP. But mostly it is because Patil never hit it off with R.K. Dhawan, who has emerged as Rajiv's key adviser on political matters.

A mature political leader would have reined Patil in earlier and discounted Dhawan's advice because of the personal enmity between the two men. He would also have let Patil leave with dignity when it came to the crunch—after all, his intention should have been to replace him, not humiliate him.

But then, the experience of the last year shows that while Rajiv's instincts may well be decent, he has not come to terms with political management. On several issues—Ram Janmabhoomi and Mandal among them—he has not followed his own instincts and let the party's position seem convoluted and confused.

Nevertheless, judging by the reception in the north, his popularity is returning. Thus, by next year he might make his comeback. But will he be the same old Rajiv—popular when he does nothing; and a bungler when he tries to act? ●

Seema Goswami with Rajiv Shukla/UP and Gauri Lankesh/Karnataka

Bungle in Bangalore

Indiscretion, rebellion and then, confusion



It used to be said of Indira Gandhi that such was her imperiousness that she never allowed herself to be spontaneous in public. Every statement, no matter how trivial, was always part of a power play. Even a paper called *Stray Thoughts* turned out to be the opening salvo in the battle to control the Congress in 1969.

Jawaharlal Nehru, on the other hand, frequently spoke his mind without fully evaluating the consequences. He led an unprepared nation into a disastrous conflict by suddenly declaring at an airport press conference in 1962 that he had ordered the Indian Army to "throw out the Chinese".

Last fortnight, it became clear that Rajiv Gandhi has inherited his mother's imperiousness and his grandfather's spontaneity. There was something of Indira Gandhi in the regal manner in which he summarily dismissed Veerendra Patil, the chief minister of Karnataka. But the lasting image was that of Jawaharlal Nehru's grandson: making his own gaffe at another airport press conference 28 years later. Even before the chief minister could make his announcement (and, according to Patil, even before he had been informed of his impending departure), the Congress president took it upon himself to declare that he was replacing the chief minister. The throwaway nature of the remark—made to the press at Bangalore airport before Rajiv boarded a flight for Delhi—took Karnataka's breath away.

It also plunged the state into a constitutional crisis.

Patil claimed that Rajiv had not consulted him before making his announcement and questioned the former Prime Minister's right to dismiss him anyway. Constitutionally, Patil was in the right—the chief minister is elected by the largest party in the Karnataka Assembly, not by the MP for Amethi, Uttar Pradesh—and when he refused to resign, there was little that Rajiv could do.

As the deadlock continued, Bhanu Pratap Singh, a Janata Dal hack who had been appointed Governor of Karnataka by V.P. Singh, decided to step in. Patil wrote to him demanding that the Assembly be dissolved. This gave the Governor the opportunity he needed. Shortly after receiving Patil's letter, he dismissed the state government, suspended the Assembly and declared Governor's Rule. When the Congress responded with outrage, Singh feigned incredulity. He had only *suspended* the Assembly, he declared, Patil had wanted him to *dissolve* it.

"I never anticipated it"

Veerendra Patil on his removal

During the political crisis in Karnataka, the ailing Veerendra Patil met very few people—and that too for extremely short periods of time. The interview with SUNDAY *had to be put off at the last moment because Patil complained of fatigue and pain in his right limb, which had been struck by paralysis. He, however, agreed to answer the questionnaire left behind. Excerpts:*

SUNDAY: Rajiv Gandhi insists he told you about the change in leadership. You maintain otherwise. What actually happened?
Veerendra Patil: The question of leadership was never discussed. Only the question of appointing a deputy chief minister was mentioned. I told him he should suggest someone or consult me.

Q: How did you feel when you came to know of Rajiv Gandhi's announcement? Did you anticipate it?
A: It came as a total surprise. I never anticipated it.

Q: If not because of communal violence, why did he decide to remove you?
A: You must put this question to him. As far as communal violence is concerned, it is not the first (time) as far as Karnataka is concerned. Karnataka is a safer place and the vulnerable places are very few. When violence broke out in Ramanagaram and Chennapatna, we did take immediate action. But still it flared up.

Q: Do you think dissidents were



Fernandes tries to pacify anti-Rajiv MLAs at the former CM's residence

Patil's refusal to resign resulted in a constitutional crisis

Surely, he ought to be congratulated on his moderation, not condemned for arbitrariness.

As the charade went on, it was clear that this was one situation in which everybody had behaved badly. Patil had failed to keep the riots under check and had misled the state about the seriousness of his illness. Rajiv Gandhi had been imperious and indiscreet. And the Governor had functioned as a Janata Dal partisan and not as the protector of the Constitution.

Less than a year ago, the Congress had captured power in Karnataka after eight years in the wilderness. It had won an astonishing 179 out of 224 seats in the Assembly, demolishing the Opposition with ruthless efficiency. Since then, under Veerendra Patil, a respected senior politician, it had given Karnataka a stable, fairly effective government that had almost erased memories of the *chakku-chhuri* era of the last Congress administration headed by the redoubtable Gundu Rao (from 1980 to 1983).

What had gone so wrong that despite a brute majority, the party had allowed a situation to develop in which the Governor could claim that he had to step in to restore order?

involved in the communal violence?
A: I can't say now if dissidents were involved. I shall say at an appropriate time.

Q: If your relationship with the high command was not strained, do you think you would still be chief minister?
A: We are in power only in three states. I hope wise counsel prevails to save the party.

Q: Why were you so reluctant to step down and call the Congress Legislature Party meeting?
A: The question of reluctance does not arise. My leadership was challenged, which was not constitutional.

Q: One hundred and forty two MLAs have expressed no confidence in your leadership, but you still say you will form the government. How?
A: I don't believe in guessing numbers. A majority of those who signed the no-confidence memorandum were coerced to do so. Later, they have come to me to express confidence in me.

Q: Why did you recommend dissolution of the Assembly and imposition of President's Rule to the Governor?
A: I can't divulge to you what I have written to the Governor. I have written more than one letter. It is confidential correspondence.

Q: Do you still consider Rajiv Gandhi to be your leader?
A: He is the president and leader of the All India Congress Committee and I belong to the Congress party.



Q: If you are expelled from the Congress, will you form a coalition government or a party of your own?
A: It is a hypothetical question.

Q: How do you rate your chances if fresh elections are called in the near future? How do you think the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal will perform?
A: Why should we think of fresh elections? I am in a position to form the government and I hope to form the government.

Q: Do you think disciplinary action will be taken against you?
A: Why don't you ask Rajiv Gandhi about it?

Q: What do you feel about the imposition of President's Rule?
A: It has been imposed only for a temporary period and the Assembly has been kept in suspended animation. It is good that we have got some time.

How ill?

What's wrong with Patil?

For as long as anyone can remember, Veerendra Patil has been on medication for migraine and diabetes. And on 24 September, his health worsened, with the 68-year-old Congress(I) boss in Karnataka complaining of severe giddiness and vomiting. His doctors recognised the symptoms of a paralytic stroke and rushed him to hospital.

To media persons who met the former chief minister on 7 October (around the time party president Rajiv Gandhi announced Patil's sacking, as always, informally), Patil looked sunken and pathetic, speech slurring and with little control over his limbs.

It appeared that Rajiv's reasons for removing him were valid: how can a chief minister who is seriously ill, run a state torn apart by communal violence?

But how ill is Patil?

Since his now-confirmed stroke, Patil has been on intensive physiotherapy and his condition has improved dramatically. One of the doctors who was in attendance mentioned that Patil would be "completely normal" in four weeks. As to what brought on the illness, doctors say the reason is simple: the stress of governing the state. Also, stress, say political observers, thanks to his detractors, such as All India Congress Committee general secretary Jaffer Sharief, who frequently launched virulent attacks on the former chief minister.

Patil could really be on the mend. "In any paralytic case," said the doctor, "it is the exercise that matters if you want to get well. Mr Patil is determined to become normal again, soon. I have never seen a 68-year-old so eager to do the exercises."

Politics and the desire to be in power can, perhaps, heal better than any medicine.



K VENKATESH

Former CM Veerendra Patil

Despite his stroke, he clung on

Many explanations were offered. The most obvious one came from Patil's supporters who said that Rajiv had never liked the former chief minister's insistence on functioning independently. Earlier this year, there was a mini-crisis when Patil flew to Delhi to seek Rajiv's permission for a Cabinet expansion. According to Karnataka MLAs, Rajiv kept him waiting for days for an appointment and then, insisted that he include the likes of S. Bangarappa in his ministry. Patil resented being pushed around, but Rajiv saw it differently. He felt that Patil would never have won the election as leader of the CLP on his own and that he owed his position to the high command. Therefore, he ought to clear every important decision with New Delhi.

Certainly Patil made no attempt to conceal his resentment at the manner in which he was being treated. He regarded Rajiv as arrogant and believed that he was being wrongly briefed by other Congress factions at the behest of the liquor lobby. His view—expressed most strongly after President's Rule was declared—was that he had improved the state's financial position by launching an excise crackdown on such liquor barons as the Khodays.

Once Rajiv announced his dismissal, Patil's supporters attributed this action to bribes from liquor manufacturers. The Karnataka finance ministry under Rajashekhar Murthy—who remained a Patil loyalist till the end—had raised over Rs 360 crores by cracking down on the sale of seconds (liquor on which excise is evaded). According to the Patil camp, the liquor barons paid Rs 25 crores to ensure the chief minister's dismissal and promised the Congress monthly payments of Rs 2 crores, regularly.

Bizarre as it may sound, this explanation was being taken seriously in Bangalore last week. Why else had Rajiv behaved so badly, asked Patil's supporters. After all, they added, he had made only a brief tour of the riot-hit areas and had spent more time confabulating with the chief minister's detractors.

While such rumours made the rounds, everybody ignored the obvious explanation. Patil's background.

Both of the Congress' other chief ministers—Sharad Pawar and Chenna Reddy—are men who were used to Indira Gandhi's style of functioning. Thus, while Sharad Pawar might talk big about his own base in Maharashtra, he is still comfortable with the chief minister-high command relationship evolved by Indira Gandhi in the Seventies. The same is true of Chenna Reddy in Andhra Pradesh.

Veerendra Patil, on the other hand, was a Congress(O) chief minister of Karnataka after the party split in 1964. He belonged to the Syndicate tradition of powerful local leaders to whom New Delhi deferred. He was never comfortable with Indira Gandhi's style of functioning—in fact, he stood against her from Chikmagalur during the Janata period—and she, in turn, preferred to rely on the Gundu Rao kind of obliging strongman.

In today's Congress(I), no local leader can aspire to the prominence of the Syndicate era. The party in each state consists of a coalition with fac-

tions headed by various contenders for the chief ministership coming together to support the high command's choice for the job.

Because Patil and Rajiv belonged to different political traditions, a clash was inevitable. Afterwards, Patil's supporters pointed out that Andhra's Chenna Reddy had been allowed to go abroad for medical treatment for a year while his state was rocked by Naxalite violence. So why was Patil treated differently?

The argument missed the point. Reddy understood today's Congress(I) and cleared his departure with both Rajiv and R.K. Dhawan. Patil, on the other hand, did not believe that his health was any concern of Rajiv Gandhi's or of his factotums. This stance only increased his alienation from the men around the Congress(I) president. R.K. Dhawan, for instance, has never forgotten that Patil was the man who fought Mrs Gandhi at Chikmagalur and would be much happier with the likes of Gundu Rao.

Then, Patil committed his biggest mistake. When other Karnataka Congress(I) leaders sent an SOS to Rajiv, Patil told him that there was no need for him to visit the state. Rajiv insisted on coming anyway and asked for the use of the state government helicopter. He was told that it was under repairs and so could he please use a car instead?

Thus, the Congress(I) president arrived in Karnataka angry and resentful. He was certain that Patil was hiding something. When he found that the chief minister was in much worse health than he had let on and that the riot situation was not under control, he flew into a rage.

Once that happened, Patil's fate was sealed. But so great was the difference in traditions that despite Rajiv's public announcement that the chief minister would be replaced, Patil still believed that he could hang on and win the support of the legislators.

It was a vain hope and, finally, Patil came to terms with the fact that it was Indira Gandhi's Congress—with its autocratic ways—that had won the battle in 1969, and not his Congress(O).

When Rajiv fired Patil, there was widespread support for the chief minister throughout Karnataka. Said K.H. Srinivas, a Patil supporter within the Congress(I): "There should be some self-respect within the party. This is no way of doing things. You can't dismiss and humiliate the chief minister." Others claimed that Kannadiga pride had been hurt just as the people of Andhra had felt humiliated when Rajiv had shouted at T. Anjiah at Hyderabad airport.

But even as a groundswell of resentment was building up, V.P. Singh made an even bigger mistake than Rajiv Gandhi had. The Governor of Karnataka, 70-year-old Bhanu Pratap Singh, is a Janata Dal appointee who was vacationing in Gonda district (UP) when the crisis broke. The Raja sent a special plane to fetch him to New Delhi and briefed him. It is not known what transpired between the two men, but it is reasonably certain that the Prime Minister phoned Veerendra Patil and promised him "all support". Janata Dal sources say that V.P. Singh only meant the support of Janata Dal MLAs in the Karnataka Assembly (a mere 24), but Congressmen hint darkly that the Raja was offering more substantial assistance—help from the Governor he had nominated.

Man in the middle

Blame it on the Governor

Since he took over as Governor of Karnataka on 9 May this year, Bhanu Pratap Singh has studiously maintained a low profile, content with presiding over his mostly ceremonial functions. But, with the political crisis, which saw chief minister Veerendra Patil lose his seat and the imposition of President's Rule in the state, the affable man from Bulandshahar in Uttar Pradesh is now in the hot seat. For starters, he has to now ward off attacks on his integrity,



Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh

He functioned as a Janata Dal partisan

the time-tested bugbear of Governors in recent Indian history.

But the 70-year-old Singh, a 'farmer' like many of India's political players, seems to be handling the heat quite well.

Yanked out of a stupor from the gubernatorial barracks, the author of books on agriculture showed that he could give it back as well as he could take it.

When angry editorials condemned his action, Singh dashed off a press statement, countering Rajiv as well as the media. "Was it democratic," he asked, "or even humane of the Congress president to ask an ailing chief minister to quit simply because he was temporarily unwell? Would it have been democratic on my part to have allowed endless political manoeuvrings while Karnataka was burning?"

Singh's stand served to strengthen the feeling that he was entirely pro-Patil. This is surprising, as the latter had criticised Singh's assignment to Karnataka, and even complained that the Centre had okayed the appointment without bothering to ask him. But in politics, things have a way of changing: the Governor has now given Patil and his former fiefdom a clean chit.

The Governor's bio-data makes interesting reading. Basically a farmer, he joined politics following Jawaharlal Nehru's call to establish cooperative farming in India. He was twice elected to Parliament as a Swatantra Party candidate, but quit politics in 1974 claiming opposition was futile. He was arrested during the Emergency, though he was not active politically at that time.

But soon, he was back in the game. After all, can a politician ever be out of it? He joined Charan Singh, plumped for him and, as a reward, was made the Union minister for agriculture and rural development during the Janata rule. Later, with the Congress(I) in, Singh was out. Now, with Rajiv out, he has tried to make up for lost time.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF PATIL

2 September: Communal clashes break out in Ramanagaram, claiming five lives.

4 September: Veerendra Patil is taken to task by MPs in Delhi over the "lethargy and obduracy" of his government.

24 September: The chief minister is admitted to hospital after he complains of giddiness. There is some mystery about his ailment and condition.

29 September: Patil is discharged from hospital and advised a week's rest.

3 October: Violence breaks out in Chennapatna, 70 km from Bangalore, and soon spreads to other areas—the worst communal riots in the history of the state.

4 October: The chief minister's office finally reveals that Patil had suffered a paralytic stroke and is fast recovering.

6 October: Rajiv Gandhi makes an unscheduled visit to Karnataka to survey the damage caused by the riots. On arrival, he visits Patil to enquire about his health.

7 October: Rajiv visits Chennapatna. Says nothing about the change in leadership. Before departure, he pays Patil a brief visit. At the airport before boarding his flight, he announces the state will have a new chief minister in four days.

Patil does not react nor does he meet anyone for hours. He finally announces his decision not to resign. He says Rajiv Gandhi had not told him anything about a change in leadership. Rajiv maintains otherwise.

Patil's announcement sparks off a crisis. At an informal meeting of the Cabinet, Patil's finance minister and right-hand man Rajashekhar Murthy, seeks to pass a resolution asking Rajiv to allow Patil to continue for a while. The resolution fails to be passed as most of the ministers dissociate themselves from it.

Moral support comes from the Janata Dal. National Front president S.R. Bommai criticises Rajiv for his dictatorial behaviour and assures Congressmen support if they break away from the party.



Rajiv Gandhi

8 October: Patil sticks to his decision about not

Certainly Patil -who had objected to Bhanu Pratap Singh's appointment—now began to regard the Governor as his friend, writing him letters insisting that he either be allowed to stay on or the state Assembly dissolved.

In reality, the Governor's options were limited. If the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) indicated that it backed Rajiv and not Patil, then he had little choice but to call on whoever the CLP chose as its new leader to form the government. Within a day it was clear that the CLP thought that Patil was through—even K.H. Srinivas, who had talked of "self-respect," now called for the chief minister's removal

But Singh had other ideas. Perhaps at the behest of his masters in New Delhi, he declared that any CLP meeting that was not called by Patil was unconstitutional ("How has he read the Constitution of the Karnataka CLP when we don't have one?" joked Rajiv Gandhi.) And then alleging horse-trading—for which he had no evidence—he called for the imposition of President's Rule. Delhi backed him to the hilt, featuring both the Governor and the deposed chief minister on Doordarshan news with obliging regularity

The Governor's position was untenable. As the uproar over his actions mounted it became clear that he would have to give in and appoint whoever the CLP selected as its leader. But because he had acted in haste, his intervention served to divert attention from Rajiv's bungling. Now, it became a constitutional issue and even the National Front's allies in Parliament—the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Bharatiya Janata Party—condemned the imposition of President's Rule.

In the melee, everybody forgot that this was an avoidable crisis set off by Rajiv Gandhi's tendency to shoot from the hip. In a bizarre twist, V.P. Singh had come to Rajiv's aid!

With Karnataka under President's Rule, the CLP turned to the immediate task at hand: the election of a new leader.

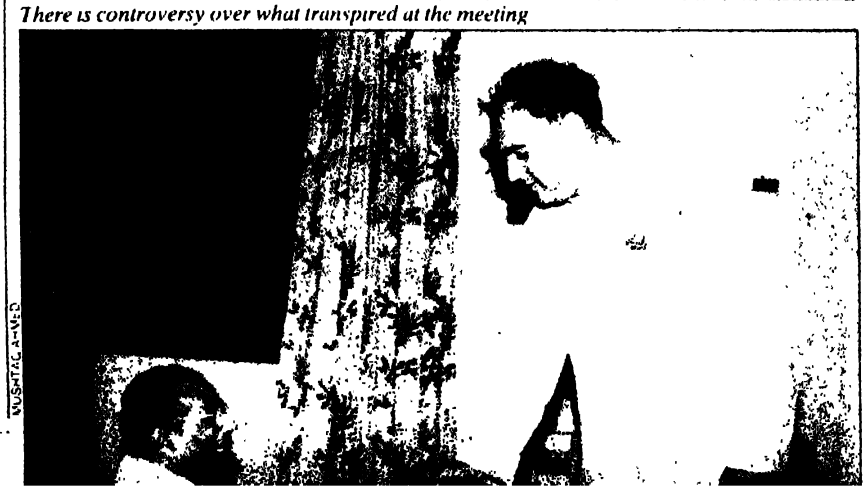
The first candidate in the fray was Gundu Rao, the former wrestler and Sanjay Gandhi loyalist, who had been chief minister from 1980 to 1983. Rao had left the Congress after abusing Rajiv, but once he was readmitted, he found himself entirely at home with the likes of R.K. Dhawan. Though Dhawan pushed for Rao's candidacy, Rajiv was adamant: having been accused of imperiousness once, he was not going to behave arbitrarily.

So, the CLP was told to elect its own leader and warned that the traditional Congress formulation of "we will leave it to our beloved Rajivji" would not be allowed. This time, Rajiv wanted a democratically-elected leader.

There was just one problem with this approach: no single politician could claim that he had the loyalty of a majority of MLAs. Among the con-

Rajiv Gandhi calls on Veerendra Patil

There is controversy over what transpired at the meeting



resigning. He tells Rajesh Pilot and central observers G.K. Moopanar and Mahavir Prasad that he will not quit.

Thirteen of his Cabinet colleagues submit their resignations to the observers, saying that they do not want to be associated with a chief minister who does not fall in line with the high command's wishes.

9 October: 142 MLAs and a number of Congress leaders gather on the Raj Bhavan lawns to demonstrate their strength. The Governor meets them, though he reiterates that he does not believe in head counting.

10 October: Fifteen ministers go to the Raj Bhavan and submit their resignations.

MUSHTAQ AHMED



The Governor greets pro-Rajiv legislators

The Congressmen gather at the party office to elect a new leader. Even before they begin the meeting, news trickles in about imposition of President's Rule.

12 October: The CLP removes Patil from the post of its leader and asks Rajiv to decide on the new incumbent. Rajiv turns down the appeal. The high command issues a guideline, which debars those who are not members of the Karnataka Assembly from contesting the CLP elections. Result: Gundu Rao, Shankaranand, Janardhan Poojary and Jaffer Sharief are disqualified.

While the central observers are still busy trying to effect a compromise, Veerendra Patil writes to the Governor urging him to ignore the CLP meeting, which according to him is illegal.

13 October: S. Bangarappa is unanimously elected leader of the Karnataka CLP.

Veerendra Patil is suspended from the Congress for his anti-party activities.

14 October: Bangarappa meets the Governor and stakes his claim to form the government

tenders for the chief ministership—in addition to Gundu Rao—were Veerappa Moily, K.H. Patil and S. Bangarappa. Though each could claim a significant block of support, the CLP was too divided for any one of them to achieve even a simple majority.

Thus, the CLP failed to come up with a leader and the MLAs reverted to the chant of "let Rajivji decide". Some even went so far as to insist that if there was a secret ballot, they would write "Rajiv Gandhi" in the allotted space.

Finally, Rajiv agreed to a compromise. The new chief minister would be the man who got the *most* votes even if these fell short of a majority. The observers despatched by the high command from New Delhi met each MLA individually and ascertained the pattern of support. They concluded that S. Bangarappa had the most support, Moily was second and Patil third.

Where did this leave Gundu Rao? According to one version, Rao and Bangarappa had done a deal whereby Gundu's MLAs would opt for Bangarappa. In return, the new leader would accommodate Gundu Rao's men and interests in his ministry.

Once Bangarappa had emerged as the leader with the most support, the CLP put on a façade of unanimity. Moily proposed Bangarappa's name, Patil seconded it and the 57-year-old leader was declared "unanimously elected".

It now looks as though Bangarappa will be the next chief minister of Karnataka. On Sunday, 14 October, Governor Bhanu Pratap Singh told a press conference that he was recommending that President's Rule be withdrawn. He defended the decision to suspend the Assembly but argued that now that it was clear that Bangarappa had the support of the CLP, he would have no difficulty in inviting him to form the government.

Should that happen then it will be third time lucky for the veteran Karnataka politician. In 1980, he opposed Devraj Urs and expected to be appointed chief minister by the Congress(I). He was passed over in favour of Gundu Rao and left to join Kranti Ranga. In 1983, his new party allied with the Janata to defeat Rao's Congress, but once again, he missed his chance and watched helplessly as Chandra Shekhar nominated Ramakrishna Hegde.

Bangarappa rejoined the Congress and became leader of the Opposition in the Assembly till he was removed after a court passed strictures against him. He was replaced by Moily. So, Bangarappa must have taken a particular pleasure in defeating Moily in the leadership elections.

If all goes well, then Karnataka may have had the shortest spell of President's Rule in Indian history. But for Rajiv Gandhi, the episode should have proved at least one thing: act like your mother and you will end up with those (Gundu Rao and Bangarappa) who hung around her. •

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

Bhanu Pratap Singh visits Patil

The Governor took the former CM's side



WAVE AFTER WAVE



The mood is changing. Rajiv Gandhi's Sadbhavna Yatra draws huge crowds all the way

November 1989: The run-up to the general election. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi lands at Kanpur airport and is all set to proceed to the city to address a public meeting. Only to be told that there are only a few hundred people at the rally and can he please wait until local leaders rustle up a respectable crowd. Gandhi hangs around the airport for an hour, but even then there are only about three thousand people in attendance when he takes the dais.
October 1990: Rajiv Gandhi, now leader of the Opposition, is passing through Kanpur on his second-class train tour through the Hindi heartland. No, he isn't scheduled to break journey here. Nevertheless, over 30,000 people land up at the railway station to have a glimpse of his increasingly less cherubic visage.

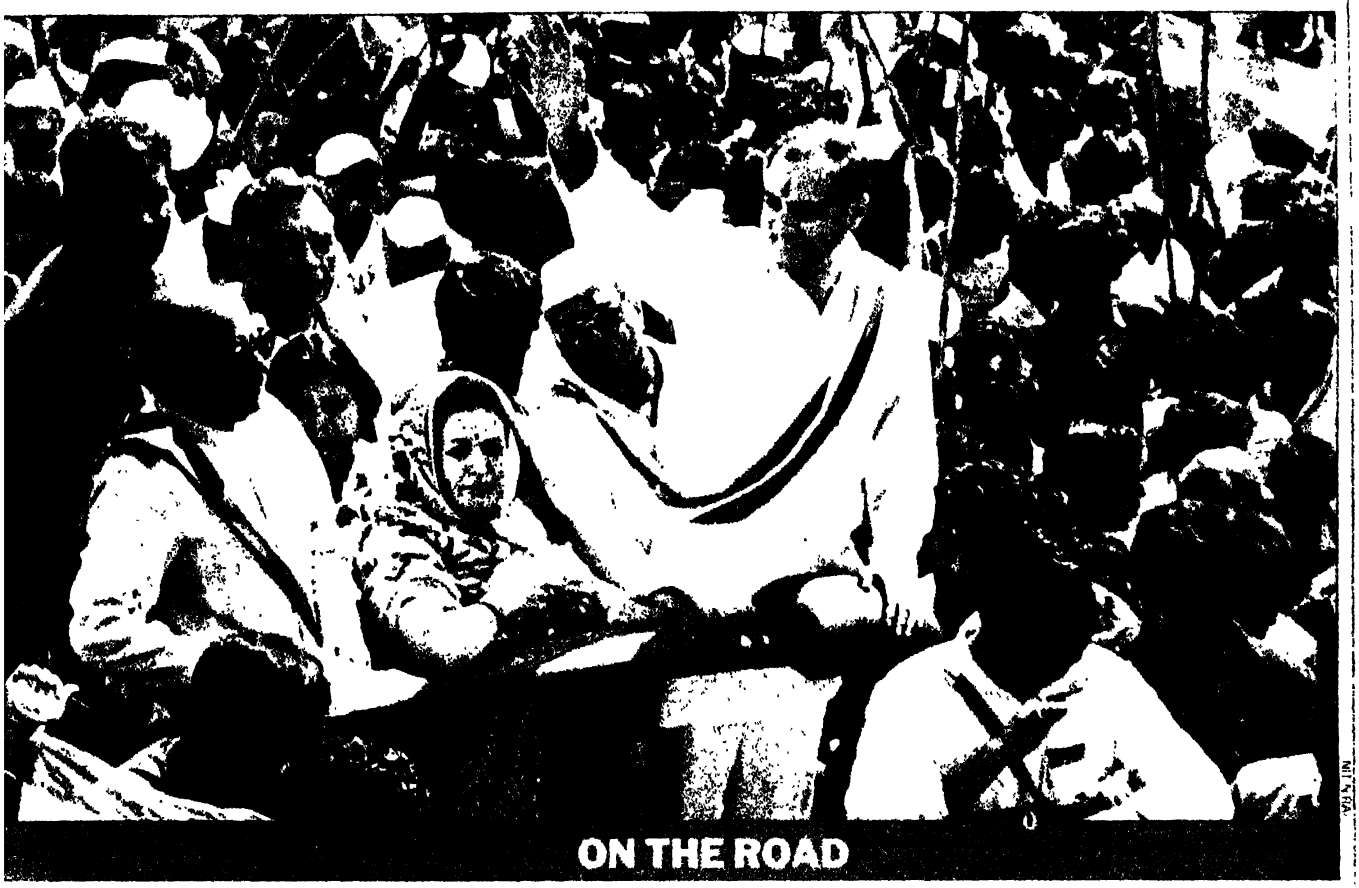
The last election seemed just another bad memory as the Rajiv Gandhi juggernaut made its way through Delhi and the cow-belt. In less than a year, the mood of the masses seemed to have changed completely. Instead of sullenly ignoring Rajiv's innumerable speeches made in his distinctive brand of pidgin Hindi and staying away from his meetings altogether, as they had done during the 1989 poll campaign, people were now lining the route the Congress president's Sadbhavna Yatra was to take. Garlands and *diyas* in hand, all set to perform *aarti* of the great new hope of the nation.

It didn't begin too well, though, with Rajiv getting his timing all wrong. The Congress president kicked off the *yatra* from Rajghat on 2 October, Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary, after all the assembled Congressmen had taken a pledge to safeguard secularism, a particularly evocative vow at a time when the Ayodhya issue had divided the country on communal lines. But unfortunately for Gandhi, 2 October was also the day the anti-Mandal Commission Front had chosen to stage a show of strength at the Boat Club lawns, with more than a little (unwelcome) help from Tikait and his goon brigade. The capital was overrun by the anti-reservationists, the usual drama of violence was played out and media attention was diverted from Rajiv's little effort for communal amity.

That didn't deter Gandhi, though. A smiling Sonia by his side, Rajiv rode in his open-top Gypsy through the crowded roads of New and Old Delhi, evoking a response that cut across communal lines. The reaction to the Congress president's drive-through was quite phenomenal in the Jama Masjid area, especially, indicating that Mulayam Singh Yadav notwithstanding, Rajiv hadn't lost the minorities completely.

The indication couldn't have come at a better time, vindicating as it did those party leaders who had advised Rajiv to undertake such an exercise. It was during the last AICC(I) session at Mavalankar Hall that Gandhi had first announced his intention of taking on the communalists in the country head-on. Soon after, prominent Youth Congress leader, Tariq Anwar, suggested to his president that he organise a Sadbhavna Yatra from Rajghat to Ayodhya over 2-30 October, and do his bit to ensure that the Babri Masjid was not demolished by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists. The idea appealed to Gandhi and a core group, comprising Dinesh Singh, Arjun Singh, H.K.L. Bhagat, Tariq Anwar, R.K. Dhawan and Mani Shankar Aiyar was set up to work out the modalities of the proposal.

The Congress leaders, however, had second thoughts on this. Such a long *padayatra*, with lakhs of people joining in on the way was bound to create security problems, and seriously jeopardise law and order. Also, the government was unlikely to give permission to an exercise which seemed likely to culminate in a confrontation with the BJP, the party having decided to commence the task of temple building at Ayodhya on 30 October.



Rajiv Gandhi kicked off the *yatra* from Rajghat on 2 October Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary after all the assembled Congressmen had pledged to safeguard secularism

So, the programme was modified accordingly. Now the *yatra* would proceed through those parts of north and south India, where communal harmony had been adversely affected, and where Advani's *rath yatra* had surcharged the atmosphere. A team of leaders, including V.N. Gadgil, Ghulam Nabi Azad, M.J. Akbar and others were put on the job to assist the high-powered Sadbhavna Yatra committee headed by Dinesh Singh.

And Rajiv's progress through the capital appeared to indicate that the game plan had worked. The response to the *yatra's* message of maintaining communal harmony was positive at worst and phenomenal at best.

The high mead of the enti e programme was, without a doubt, the journey through Fatehpur, the Raja of Manda's constituency. Rajiv arrived here a day late, having had to defer his tour because of the death of veteran Congress leader Kamlapati Tripathi. But that didn't prevent the town from turning out in full strength to welcome their MP's *bete noire*. The railway platform was crowded with people as the Kalka Mail drew into the station, and it was near impossible to carve a passage through the crowd.

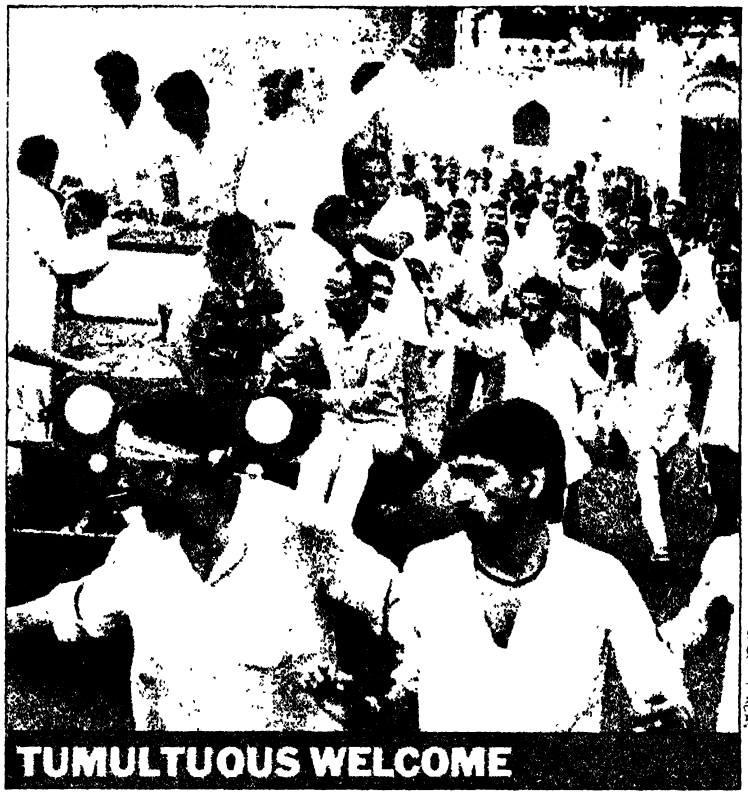
But what gave Gandhi greater cause for cheer was the presence of the Kshatriya Mahasangh, an important Thakur organisation just outside the station. The representatives of V.P. Singh's community had come out in full force, pink turbans and all, to

The message of secularism was reiterated throughout Rajiv's progress with a Hindu gifting him a *Koran*, while a Muslim gave him a *Gita* and a *Ramayan*

honour Gandhi with the Rashtra Raksha Padak (Medal to Safeguard the Nation), a sword (no doubt to help him in this onerous task) and a cheque for Rs 1 lakh. The message couldn't have been louder: the Raja of Mandal had lost the Thakurs with his vote-catching machinations. And the rest of the electorate wasn't too enamoured of him either, if the stickers on 80 per cent of the vehicles ("Don't blame me, I didn't vote VP", "I'm ashamed I voted VP") were anything to go by.

And the Raja's loss was Rajiv's gain.

For once Gandhi didn't need to use the Congress' money power to get the crowds into his meeting. Despite the fact that most buses and trucks had been requisitioned to cart people to Lucknow to attend Mulayam Singh's rally, about one lakh faithful turned up at Rajiv's meeting, getting there by tractor, cycle or even bullock cart. If this was an unexpected development, Rajiv hid his surprise well, lashing out against V.P. Singh in his speech (in slightly improved Hindi, though). Said



TUMULTUOUS WELCOME

The high mead of the entire programme was, without doubt, the Raja of Manda's constituency



HAPPY DAYS

Nobody doubted that the public mood had changed. For, the response had been uniformly heartening

the Congress president: "On the one hand, he is encouraging communal forces like the BJP and on the other he is instigating a caste conflict in each and every village in the country just to increase his vote bank. He is doing just what the British did to destroy this country."

The rhetoric, though not too rousing by cow-belt standards, worked. Said a young Thakur, when asked who would win the next election from Fatehpur: "Anybody but V.P. Singh."

But Rajiv wasn't through as yet. He went on to visit the three villages of Fatehpur where Harijans had been brutally massacred. The usual ritual of expressing sympathy for the affected families followed. With one difference: this time nobody found the concern phony, indicating that Gandhi had managed to redeem himself in a large measure in the public eye.

Rajiv then proceeded to journey further into the Raja's territory, taking the road to reach Allahabad, V.P. Singh's home town, the next morning. The first stop was the ancestral Nehru home, Anand Bhavan, followed by a tour of the city, thousands of people lining the route of the *yatra*. Predictably, by the time Gandhi landed at the Faizabad airport, he was two hours behind schedule. But the crowds were out in full force and the 12-kilometre distance from Faizabad to Ayodhya took over five hours to cover.

By then, however, nobody seriously doubted that the public mood had changed. For, the response had been uniformly heartening from the time Gandhi boarded the Kalka Mail from the Old Delhi railway station. The stopovers at Ghaziabad and Khurga provided good cheer, but the reception laid out at Aligarh had all the Congressmen rolling in the aisles in ecstasy. The crowd, comprising Hindus and Muslims in equal measure, was all over the station, trying to get close enough to Rajiv to touch him. And the same scenario was played out at Mathura, Tundala and Etawah, with Congress leader Sheila Dixit among those receiving him at the last station.

The reception laid out at Aligarh had all the Congressmen rolling in the aisles in ecstasy. The crowd, comprising Hindus and Muslims, was all over the station, trying to get close enough to Rajiv to touch him

At Kanpur, the security arrangements went completely haywire, with Gandhi insisting on getting off the train and mingling with the people. The crowd, of course, went completely hysterical in the bargain, and the train had to be delayed until a semblance of order was restored. His co-passengers couldn't have been too happy, so Rajiv utilised the Kanpur-Fatehpur stretch to mollify them, signing autographs for anyone who took the trouble to ask. The little time left over was devoted to briefing the local press.





HOT FAVOURITE

JAGDISH YADAV

Ayodhya had decided on pulling out all stops in its effort to welcome Rajiv. He seemed to have replaced Ram as the favourite deity

For, Rajiv knew well enough that his final conquest was yet in some doubt. Ayodhya, where everyone appeared to be in the throes of some sort of religious ecstasy, fanned by the periodic attempts at *shilanyas* at the site of the proposed Ram Temple.

As it turned out, he needn't have worried. For, Ayodhya had decided on pulling out all stops in its effort to welcome Rajiv.

The crowds at Faizabad airport were impressive, but Rajiv decided to make his way through them anyway. Securitymen clutched their heads as the leader of the Opposition walked the half kilometre stretch to his jeep, pushed and jostled by the delirious crowd. To his credit, Rajiv maintained his temper, smiling throughout the ordeal, even though he may well have sustained some injury. The journey to Saryu Ghat proved that Gandhi had learnt all the tricks of the electoral trade: he ate whatever was handed to him, never mind how grubby the hand; he drank the water offered, no matter how suspect it seemed; sat on a rickshaw; walked with the crowd. And was rewarded with their applause all through the five-hour journey.

They walked with Gandhi's motorcade, refusing to fall back when Rajiv increased speed. Instead, they broke out into a run in order to keep pace, and the Congress president had little option but to slow down again. The air reverberated with slogans such as, "*Rajiv tum sangharsh karo, Hum tumhare saath hain*", instead of the usual *bhajans*, and Rajiv seemed to have replaced Ram as the favourite deity (if only for a day) with women performing *aarti* and children garlanding him. By the time Gandhi reached the ghat his face was red, thanks to the profusion of vermilion *tikkas* on his forehead.

V.P. Singh: playing the caste card



The message of secularism was reiterated throughout Rajiv's progress with a Hindu gifting him a *Koran*, while a Muslim gave him a *Gita* and a *Ramayan*. Even security personnel seemed quite carried away, leaping for the garlands Gandhi threw back at the crowd, forgetting for the moment, the dignity of their uniform.

The effect, however, was spoilt by the presence of Chaubarjee Mahant, who came to welcome Rajiv and then, astride a horse, escorted his cavalcade for a couple of kilometres. And the attendance of some lower-level BJP leaders diluted the message of communal harmony somewhat.

But it couldn't take away the fact that Rajiv had made his comeback in the Hindi belt—riding on his Sadbhavna Rath. ●

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi and Uttar Pradesh with Seema Goswami



SPECIAL REPORT

Losing ground

The National Front government comes in for criticism for extending President's Rule in Punjab

Punjab has been lost. At least for the V.P. Singh regime. For the people of the state—who are by now fed up with the repressive measures adopted by the administration in the name of containing terrorism—the short session of Parliament that was convened in the beginning of October held out the promise of restoring popular rule in Punjab. But by pushing through the 76th Amendment Bill extending President's Rule in the state by another six months, the National Front government has in one stroke alienated the rank and file in Punjab.

The reactions were spontaneous and immediate. Simranjeet Singh Mann, president of the Akali Dal (Mann), promptly resigned from the Lok Sabha in protest, and there was widespread resentment among politicians of all hue. Prakash Singh Badal, a former chief minister and an Akali Dal heavyweight, felt that Prime Minister V.P. Singh had committed a grave blunder by postponing elections in the state again: "The people now think that there will never be polls in Punjab." Bimal Khalsa, Akali Dal (Mann) MP, echoed his sentiments: "The government is afraid that the militants will pass a resolution in favour of Khalistan in the elections. But how long can they go on postponing elections in the state?"

Even in the trouble-torn districts of

Simranjeet Singh Mann outside Parliament: the key figure

Punjab, the refrain is the same. Most people feel that the V.P. Singh regime has let down the masses by extending President's Rule. Suddenly, the Prime Minister, who had received a rousing reception during his trip to Amritsar last year, is being compared with Rajiv Gandhi. Argued Sohan Singh, the aged *sarpanch* of Gohalwar village in Tarn Taran district: "The government talks of violence but there was no violence during the parliamentary elections. The Janata Dal, the Congress(I) and the BJP all know that they can never improve their base if Assembly elections are held now."

Popular resentment against the Centre is so widespread that most Punjab politicians today are keen to distance themselves from the central government. In such a situation, Simranjeet Singh Mann's resignation from Parliament was only expected. At one time it was felt that Mann was being propped up by the Centre to take over the leadership in Punjab. This had done him enough harm and the Akali leader was looking for an opportunity to take on the Centre. Thus erupted the *kirpan* controversy which was rather crudely handled by Mann himself.

There is no doubt that Mann was the key figure in the post-parliamentary election scenario in Punjab. Having burnt its fingers in trying to play the Mann card, the Centre was desperately looking for an alternate leadership in the state. The move to prop up Badal too, failed; neither Mann nor Badal was willing to condemn the terrorists openly. For a brief period, Amrinder Singh was in favour, but ultimately the government suspected his intentions. The Centre also toyed with the idea of projecting Atinder Pal Singh and Rajdev Singh, both MPs, as the future chief minister of Punjab, but this idea too fell through, and V P. Singh was left with no option but to extend President's Rule in the state.

Would the election have been a bloody affair as the Centre had made it out to be? Though most political parties in New Delhi felt that holding polls in Punjab at this juncture would have brought on large-scale violence and rioting, police personnel in the state thought otherwise. Said Sanjiv Gupta, the SSP of Amritsar district, which is among the violence-prone areas of the state, "I think it was a mistake to put off the polls. We were capable of handling the law and order

"I am shocked"

Akali Dal (B) president Prakash Singh Badal lashes out at the Centre

SUNDAY: Once again, elections in Punjab have been put away. How do you react to this?
Prakash Singh Badal: When we attended the all-party meeting in Delhi, we were in favour of holding Assembly elections in Punjab. We clearly said that President's Rule is no solution. Now, we are shocked that President's Rule has been extended. People have begun to feel that there will never be any election in the state.

Q: Do you think that the Prime Minister backed out only because of pressure from the BJP, the Congress(I) and the left parties?
A: The Prime Minister knows best why he did so. But many times in



Badal : blaming the Centre

the past, V.P. Singh had said that he had committed a blunder by postponing elections in Punjab. We are really shocked that the blunder has been committed once again. If parliamentary elections could have been held in the state, I see no reason why Assembly polls cannot be conducted.

Q: If the polls would have been held, would it be free and fair?
A: People's representatives are much better than bureaucrats. The people of Punjab are facing great hardship because of the police and the bureaucrats.

Q: The Centre is keen to have a moderate leadership in Punjab, a leadership which would condemn terrorism. Do you think that such a leadership exists in Pubjab today?
A: For the last 40 years, they (the central government) have not done anything for Punjab. We are not fighting for new demands—we are fighting against repression and injustice. Successive governments have done nothing to solve the state's basic problems. Today, there is a police raj in the state and all other institutions have become redundant.

Q: You have never condemned terrorism openly. Why?
A: I have always said that I am against killing of innocents either by the police or by individuals. My party has said this too several times.

Q: Do you think that the Centre is caught up with other problems and Punjab is no longer a priority area?
A: I think that Punjab is not just there in their list of priorities. The Centre has announced a couple of measures like the arrest of former Congress (I) MP Sajjan Kumar and the rehabilitation of those who deserted the army following Operation Bluestar. But these are just eye-washes. The latest package announced by V.P. Singh is also an eye-wash. If they were seriously interested in solving the Punjab problem, they would have taken bold steps. We are completely disappointed with the performance of the V.P. Singh government.

Q: Are there any chances of the different Akali parties coming together in the near future?
A: We are in favour of unity and I have suggested steps to bring the Akalis together. But the other factions have not responded. What can I do alone? I think it is in the interest of Punjab and the community that we have one Akali party.

"It was a right decision"

Holding elections in Punjab would have led to law and order problems, says K.P.S. Gill, director-general of Punjab Police

SUNDAY: Most political parties have expressed the opinion that the holding of elections in Punjab would give rise to a serious law and order problem. Do you have the same fears?
K.P.S. Gill: The reading is correct because there has been stepped-up terrorist activity in some areas. I don't think there can be two opinions about that.

Q: But there was little poll violence during the 1989 general elections. Do you mean the elections wouldn't have been free and fair?
A: There are various interpretations of the results of the general elections. But you see, elections aren't the only thing about the political process. With so many other factors, it isn't right to concentrate only on the electoral process. And if the state feels that terrorism has to be dealt with first, so be it.

Q: Is there any political or economic initiative which you think will help you quash terrorism in Punjab?
A: People do not speak against terrorists because of fear. In the countryside and towns there is no support for the terrorists whatsoever. Their support is also declining abroad. Since the government has lifted the restriction on foreigners visiting Punjab, it has enabled a large number of Sikhs to come and see things for themselves. They find that the reality is completely different from what the terrorists propagate there.

Q: There have been a few cases of desertions by police officers who were in league with the militants. Does this worry you?
A: There have been a few such instances and we have found ways of dealing with this. The militant leaders often appeal to the special police officers but no, this is not a cause for worry.

Q: Who are your main targets now?
A: We have a list of about 40 'A grade' terrorists belonging to groups like the Babbars, the Khalistan Commando Force and the BTFK. They are our main targets.

K.P.S. Gill: toeing the Centre's line



situation." Satpal Dang, the CPI Politburo member from Punjab, added: "I think the election would have been peaceful, though it would have been the peace of the graveyard. Even the Lok Sabha polls were held at gun point. There is no reason why the Centre should put off Assembly elections in Punjab."

Satpal Dang has even chalked out a post-election scenario. The senior CPI leader feels that contrary to the government's contention, the militants would not give a call for Khalistan immediately after the polls. They would first ensure that all their members held in jail were released, after which they would infiltrate the administration and demand the removal of the BSF and the CRPF from the state. Only after that would the militants pass a resolution in favour of a separate Sikh state. "Today," lamented Dang, "no Akali leader is willing to sign an agreement with the Centre within the framework of the Indian Constitution. And, any pact outside the Constitution is not acceptable to the country. That is the irony of the Punjab situation."

Whatever politicians might say, in the final analysis it is the various militant groups which call the shots. What is their stand on the elections? While any number of splinter organisations have mushroomed in Punjab today, it is basically three groups that matter. They are the Babbar Khalsa led by Sohan Singh, the Khalistan Commando Force with Wassan Singh Zaffarwal as its chief, and the AISSF-Akal Federation-Damdami Takshal combine.

The Babbars have made their stand clear: they are against any constitutional solution and would oppose the elections. The other two outfits are yet to come out with such a categorical statement, but is widely felt that they are exerting pressure on Mann and other Akali leaders to boycott the polls.

What now? According to sources in New Delhi, the government is contemplating a change of Governor, followed by an administrative shake-up. But it is doubtful whether even this will satisfy the Sikhs. And, already the state's politicians have begun to dismiss the Centre's efforts. Explained Bimal Khalsa: "You see, as the days go by, the demands of the people are increasing. The Punjab problem has become a cancer for the country." Added Amrinder Singh: "The government will have to start working backwards. The killing of Sikhs by the security forces must stop. Our men must be released. We will settle for nothing less."

In this atmosphere of confusion, it is only the militants who are benefiting. They have stepped up their activities, gunning down innocents and looting property at will. The security forces, too, have taken up the challenge. As Narinder Pal Singh, the police chief of Tarn Taran district, said: "The battle is being fought between the security forces and the terrorists. And, casualties are rising on both the sides." ●

Ritu Sarin/Amritsar and Chandigarh

ALL -IN- ONES

SX 48

SF 44



SF 62

GREAT SOUND GREAT LOOKS
GREAT POWER GREAT PERFORMANCE
GREAT RECORDING
YES, WHY SETTLE FOR A TWO-IN-ONE, WHEN YOU CAN GET A VIDEOCON ALL-IN-ONE?

SUPER WOOFER — SF 44 • Bass Boost selector • 60 watts PMPO • Hi-speed dubbing • 5 band graphic equaliser • Rs.3650

TURBO POWER — SX 48 • Detachable speakers • 60 watts PMPO • Hi-speed dubbing • 3 band graphic equaliser • Rs.3375

AUTO REVERSE — SF 62 • Continuous play • 20 watts PMPO • Hi-speed dubbing • 3 band graphic equaliser • Rs.2975

Prices inclusive of all taxes

I'LL TELL TO THE MINISTER!

When you're the reigning sex goddess of the Bombay film industry, it's not difficult to imagine that you're above the mundane rules that apply to the conduct of lesser mortals. But such delusions do land you in trouble, anyway.

As Sridevi discovered, much to her own discomfort.

The domestic terminal at Meenambakkam Airport, Madras, is where it all happened. The film star arrived to take the flight to Bombay, accompanied by her sister Srilata and her brother-in-law.

Which was all very well, except that the star's family insisted on entering the area where boarding passes were issued, even though the entry of visitors is restricted.

Airport staff objected to their presence. But the duo stayed put. Until the duty manager summoned them into his room to give them a talking to.



DURGA PRASAD

Sridevi: standing up for sis

He'd barely got started when Sridevi stomped in, all fire and fury at the treatment meted out to her relatives. Threatening to take up the matter with the Union civil aviation ministry, Sridevi raved and ranted at the hapless officer.

But her sister and husband had to stay out of the restricted area anyway.

GROUCHY? WHO ME?

"Does she ever smile?" used to be the constant public refrain about Sonia Gandhi when she was Mrs Prime Minister.

And sadly, the answer to that one was:"Rarely, if ever."

Well, things have changed since then, and so has Sonia. In her new incarnation as the better half of the leader of the Opposition, Sonia

PAUL ON CALL

"I wish I had the money everyone thinks I have," he once exclaimed ruefully on a television show in England.

But even if Swraj Paul finds his monetary situation less than satisfactory, he can hardly complain about his social position in the United Kingdom. Not when the Prince Consort invites him on the Council

ON THE JOB

She has won numerous awards, medals and accolades. But at the end of a distinguished career as India's top-ranking athlete, P.T. Usha finds herself without a permanent job.

Yes, she is employed with the Indian Railways, but her job as personnel officer is only an *ad hoc* one. Misses the Payoli Express, as she has been dubbed: "All the other athletes have been given full-time jobs. I don't know why I have been left out."

Not that she's complaining. Says Usha: "I have enjoyed every moment of it (her career), though there have been disappointments on the way."

But then the rough comes with the smooth. And star sportswoman that she is, Usha knows the rules of the game.



NITIN RAI

P.T. Usha: only an *ad hoc* appointment



Sonia and Rajiv Gandhi at the Yatra: change of style

smiles, smiles and smiles as if she were competing with the friendly neighbourhood Cheshire cat.

Take her performance on the Delhi leg of the Sadbhavana Yatra.

At her husband's side in an open-top Gypsy, Mrs Gandhi got into the spirit of the moment with a rarely-displayed *joie de vivre*. She waved cheerily to the crowds, threw back garlands at them with enthusiasm, whispered the odd aside into Rajiv's ear, prodded him into looking at people who were trying to attract his attention and passed on bits of paper which dear husband then autographed.

And yes, she smiled all through the proceedings.

HIGH FLIER

[redacted] Now that *The Indian Post* mess is behind him—with the former proprietor insisting that he's washed his hands off the whole sorry affair once he sold the paper—happy days seem to be here again for industrialist Vijaypat Singhania.

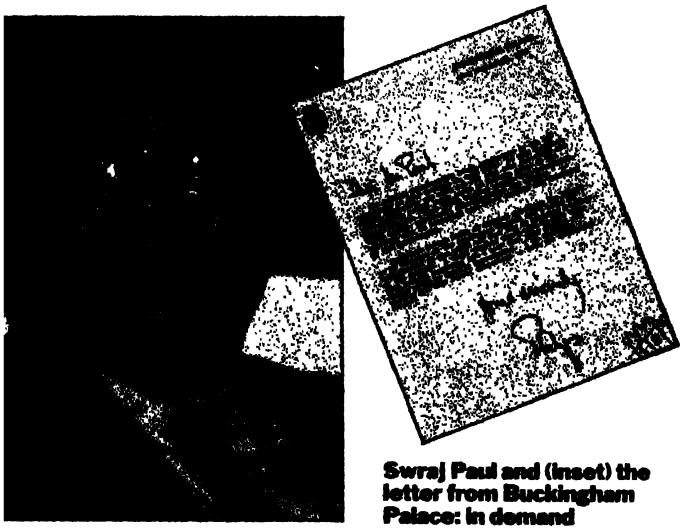
Or shall we say Air Commodore Singhania?



Vijaypat Singhania: Air Commodore now

For, that is the honorary title that has been conferred on the Raymonds man by President R. Venkataraman in recognition of "his significant contribution in the field of aviation".

Wonder what the *Post* employees would have to say to this?



Swraj Paul and (inset) the letter from Buckingham Palace: in demand

of the Seventh Commonwealth Study Conference, scheduled to take place in July 1992.

In a letter to the Caparo chief, Prince Philip wrote: "I would be very pleased if you could see your way to becoming a member of the Council. I doubt whether there will be more than four Council meetings, but I know that your support and advice will be greatly appreciated."

MURLI AND PUBLIC MORALITY

[redacted] Murli Deora, the dapper MP from South Bombay, has led a fair number of demonstrations in his time. But even for him, laying siege to the Bombay office of the Censor Board was a novel experience.

But Deora thought the screening of the obscene film, *College Girl*, provocation enough to resort to such an extreme step.

The film, directed by Surendra Gupta, was publicised as the recreation of a rape which took place in Elphinstone College last year. But was in actual fact, nothing more than an attempt to romanticise sexual violence and titillate the audience in the



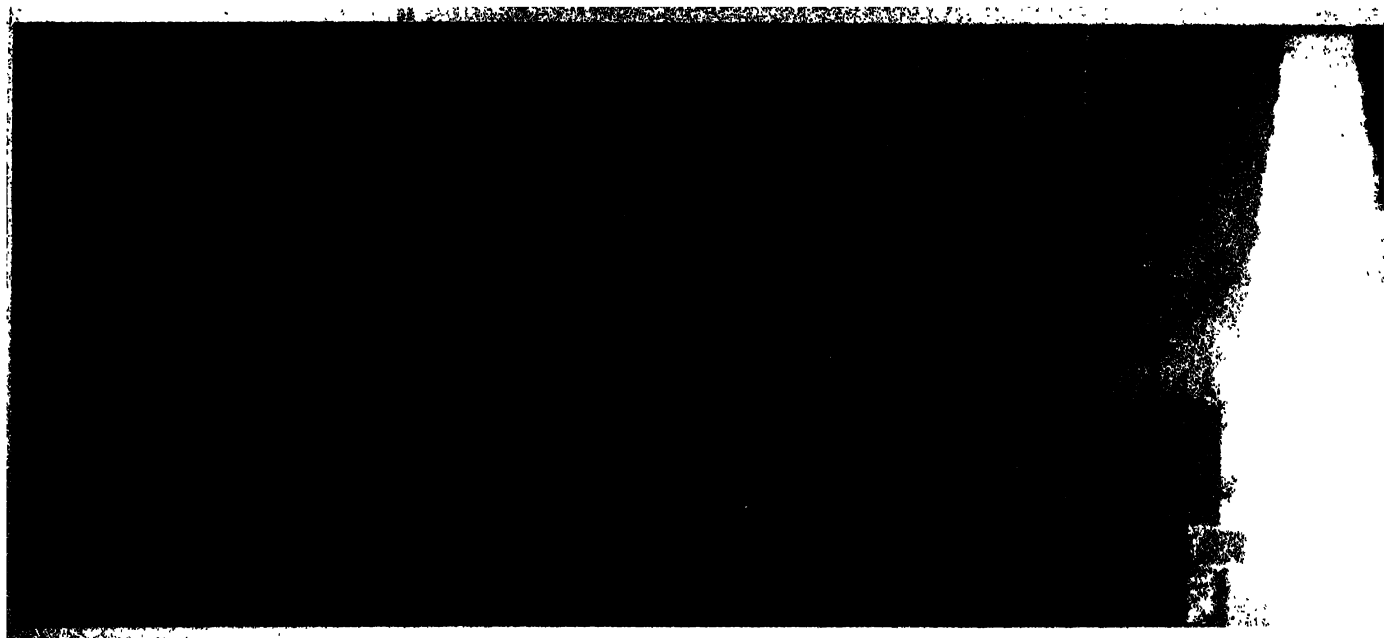
Murli Deora: we don't need no obscenity

bargain.

Appalled that such a movie had been certified fit for viewing by the censors and that the howls of protest from various public organisations had gone unnoticed, Deora decided that drastic action was in order.

And landed up at the censor office, with a band of followers to lodge his protest.

Meanwhile the film ran to packed houses all over the country. •



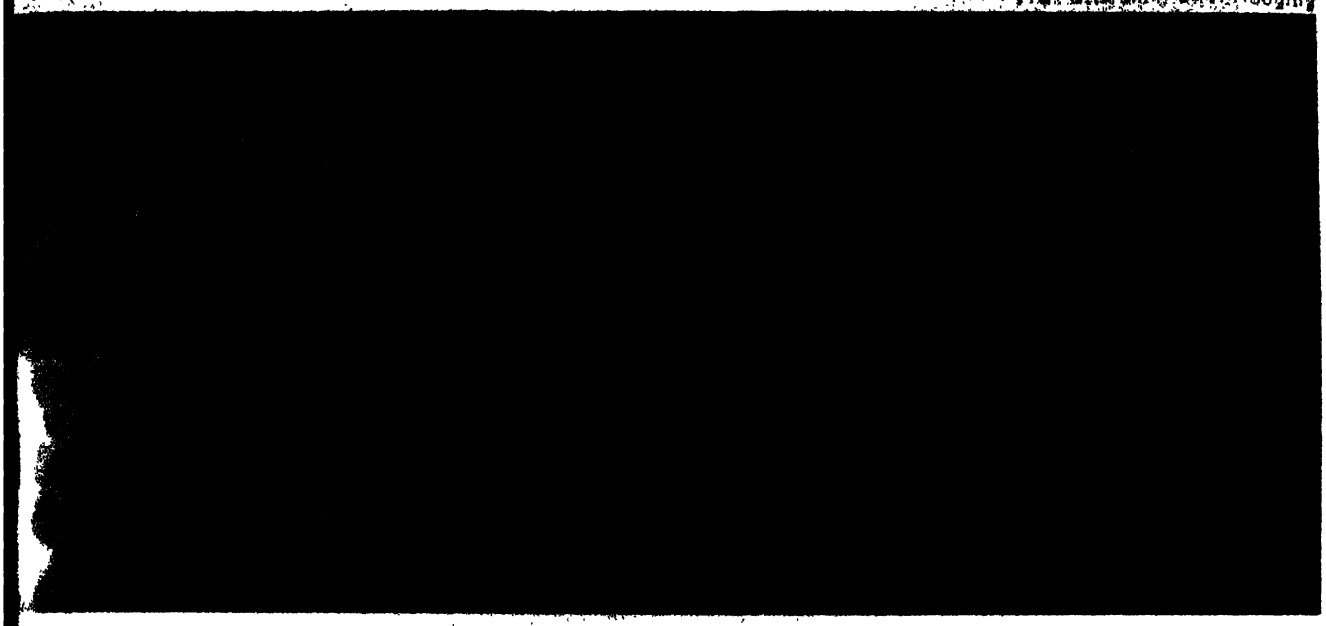
Over rough mining country, over miles of dockyards, over shop-floors.

Mukand does it.

Mukand's Machine Building Division sculpts steel into India's largest industrial machines, steel plants and bulk material handling equipment. The Division built India's first mobile service structure for the vertical assembly of rockets for the Indian Space Research Organisation. An achievement that illustrates Mukand's versatility as an engineering and project consultancy company. With the Division's unmatched design, manufacturing and

HOW TO MAKE STEEL WALK.

CASTINGS ■ SPECIALITY STEELS ■ MACHINE



on-site capabilities, not even the sky is the limit.

Mukand is also India's largest producer of the widest range of stainless and speciality steels. It is the largest steel foundry in the private sector and leads in exports of alloy steel castings; designs and builds some of India's biggest, most complex cranes and machines. Making it a multi-product, multi-division, Rs. 500-crore conglomerate.

The commitment of Mukand's people to technology, innovation, research and development has given them a rare insight into steel and its applications. Mukand knows how to make steel, engineer it and use it effectively.

In 50 years, Mukand has truly become a mastermind in steel.

MUKAND LTD.
(Formerly Mukand Iron & Steel Works Ltd.)
L.B.S. Marg, Kurla, Bombay 400 070

MUKAND. MASTERMINDS IN STEEL

BUILDING ENGINEERING CONSTRUCTION



AVENUES' Onida campaigns play on negative emotions for a positive response

A few weeks after his new Ferrari came in from Italy, Roy's wife filed for divorce. I ran into her

TRIKAYA Grey's tangential campaign for Grindwell Norton uses pointlessness to make a point

MARKETING TRENDS

AD-VANTAGE

If you don't innovate, you're dead. This is today's advertising message. And agencies are giving it all they have

"A few weeks after his new Ferrari came in from Italy, Roy's wife filed for divorce. I ran into her at a cafe..."

"When I was thirteen I fell madly, foolishly in love with a girl eight thousand miles away. As I sit here..."

"The gentlemen sitting next to me was obviously terrified of flying. I was on my way to Japan..."

Three opening lines from Trikaya Grey's latest campaign for Grindwell Norton Ltd, a company that makes abrasives. Only, an entire page of flashy, fast-paced ad copy that follows all openers have almost nothing whatsoever to do with Grindwell. Which makes you wonder what a divorce, falling in love, or fear of flying has to do with products the company manufactures.

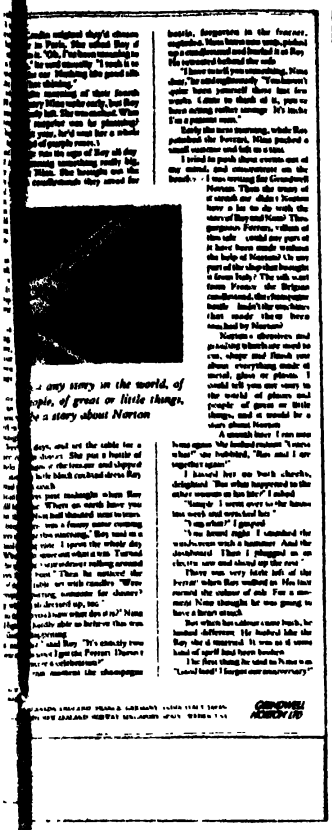


GAUTAM PATOLE

Ambience's Ashok Kurien: "Innovation is bound to occur when there is such ad volume"

They do not, on the face of it. But an identical, and boldly outlined paragraph at the centre of each ad provides the missing link: "I could tell you any story in the world, of places and people, of great or little things," it goes, "and it would be a story about Norton."

"Never before have people noticed our ads," says a Grindwell director, talking about the campaign that even the ad industry considers to be one of the most innovative presentation gimmicks this year. "Our corporate image has received a tremendous boost."





NEXUS advertising's ploy, which uses muted images to sell the product

Whether they are trying to establish a corporate identity, or coaxing customers to part with big bucks, the creative minds in the ad world are coming up with messages that are slicker, sassier, and more sophisticated than ever before. As the country's television and print media grows and evolves rapidly, there is more newsprint and video-tape time to fill. And, the 'hidden persuaders' are sledge-hammering their messages home, making cash registers ring louder than ever. The industry calls it a "quiet revolution", perhaps the understatement of the decade.

The buzz-word is innovation. For, to stand out in a world crammed with consumer goods and corporate attention grabbing, one *has* to be innovative. Concurs Ashok Kurien, managing director of Ambience, one of the hottest agencies in Bombay: "Innovation is bound to occur when there is such a volume of advertising."

A good thing, too. "For the advertiser it is a great chance to display his product," says Mohammad Khan, who runs Bombay-based Enterprise, one of India's most dynamic ad agencies (memorable campaigns: for Charms cigarettes, National Egg Coordination Committee, Vadilal ice creams). "For us, advertising is to create an impact for the brand and we will continue to use our creativity to find novel ways of attracting attention. Tomorrow, I may want to put a whistle inside a newspaper or magazine, so that when you open a page the whistle blows." He exclaims: "What a great innovation it will be."



GAUTAM PATOLE

Trikaya's Chris D'Rozario: with todays ad overload, "innovation can be an irritant"

Actually, one advertising agency has already done something similar. Nexus, one of the country's small but innovative agencies (*See box: Stay small, think big*), which presented the new *Indian Express* advertising package saying "thank you for blowing our trumpet" in a letter to the newspaper group's advertisers, and sent along a miniature brass trumpet to all of them. "As long as advertising exists," says Khan, "innovation will be around."

It will. And not just with little trumpets either, but every which way. For example, says Rajiv Agarwal, of Bombay-based Nexus, "the use of three-dimensional effects on hoardings really makes them stand out". Such as, he says, when a hoarding advertising Rallifan actually had a fan stuck on it, blades and all. Or when real curtains are draped across a hoarding advertising draperies. In other ways too, an ad could be eye-catching. All done very simply. "Using sepia, black and white accentuated with colour has become a big trend overseas," says Agarwal, as it usually uses a dull picture but has the product highlighted in colour. The trend is catching on in India, as Trikaya's widely appreciated campaign for Sweetex sugar substitute shows: a black and white picture, product in colour, and one, just one, snappy sentence of copy.

But innovation works with a crucial proviso: the product has to sell. All creative pundits are unanimous on this score, as innovative advertising works only if it does not queer the sales pitch, however brilliant it may *look*. "Good advertising is not good advertising until it sells your product," says Gurcharan Das, doyen of a laid-back yet professional management style and managing director of Procter and Gamble India Ltd.

Because, while there is a new thinking in the ad world, says Gautam Rakshit, a director with Avenues advertising agency in Bombay, there is also a "veritable deluge, a surfeit of advertising". Selling is difficult in an environment where if everyone innovates, less ads get noticed, going by the simple law of visual overloading. Not the Onida campaigns though—Avenues' creations—which are as difficult to look away from as they are to forget. The Onida devil for TV sets, the chameleon for the video cassette recorders. And a campaign for Onida audio tape recorders which puts Nastassia Kinski's role in *The Cat People* to shame: with a screaming, hissing

Stay small, think big

Minor ad agencies carve out a market share with few clients—but major ideas

None of the promoters were novices. It would never have worked that way.

When Rajiv Agarwal, Arun Kale and David Innes decided to start Nexus over five years ago, they were already at the top, each considered a whiz-kid in his own field. Agarwal, a management graduate from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, was part of the crack team that left Rediffusion Advertising to form Enterprise, still considered to be a trail-blazing ad outfit. Kale, one of the most respected art directors in the trade, an old Rediffusion hand who later started Kalegraphics, his own art/design studio. And Innes, ace copywriter, starting out with Ogilvy Benson and Mather (now Ogilvy and Mather), moving to Hindustan Thompson Associates, then on to J. Walter Thompson in Australia, and later Rediffusion.

The trio started Nexus in September 1985 with zero business, backed only by talent, goodwill and terrific track records. Now, Nexus is one of the hottest—and among the biggest small agencies in town—with a turnover of Rs 5 crores a year, working for a select group of companies. HMV, the Oberoi Group of hotels, Bank of America, German multi-national engineering company Buckau Wolfe, the *Indian Express*, Double Bull shirts, and the Garden Linen range, for Jaya Shree Textiles.





The original Nexus team (from left to right) Innes, Agarwal and Kale; and the agency's slick ad for Linen Garden

And like other breakaway outfits—all small, smart and successful—Nucleus and Ambience (another Rs 5 crores agency with Thums Up's Taste the Thunder and Garden Vareli fabric campaigns in the belt), among others, worked with a *raison d'etre* that is as simple as it comes. After working with the country's top agencies, the team felt that nobody was questioning themselves about what their function was anymore. "The boom that's caught the industry," says Agarwal, "has made it rich with money. But has left the industry poorer than ever when it comes to advertising ideas—an agency was no longer as good as its last campaign."

The early breakaway—now big-time—agencies were Enterprise and Avenues. Enterprise handled the hugely successful Charms 'Spirit of Freedom' cigarette campaign, and though people dubbed it the 'Spirit of Cancer' campaign, nobody could deny the brand's sky-rocketing sales graph afterwards. The campaign is now considered to be the advertising feat of the 1980s.

But agencies such as Enterprise and Avenues have now grown very large. Nexus-like agencies have not. They are choosy about their clients, and says Agarwal, "we plan to keep it that way". Why? "Because we are small," he says, "the number of levels through which an ad passes before it reaches the media are limited. The actual act of creating the ad isn't an impersonal function happening somewhere in the bounds of a bureaucratic giant."

Smaller agencies find that they score over their larger competitors because they lack a hierarchical structure. Thanks to this, they can take decisions boldly—this increases risk, but it also brings out the best. "Some of the ads we created," says Ashok Roy, a director with Avenues, now a Rs 17 crore company, "would never have been allowed through by the so-called professional market research organisations."

Smallness and a brazen attitude—innovation, initiative, *et al*—helps to focus on an advertising campaign. "What business are we in?" asks Agarwal, talking about his clients' needs. "The shirt business, the hotel business, the music business." Simply put, what he means is that a small agency can liase with a client that much more effectively, and the returns all round are that much more profitable.

It appears to work. "You'd think they (the large agencies) wouldn't feel threatened," says the boss of a big, Bombay-based agency, "but they are pretty perturbed by the success stories of a handfull of small agencies."

cat-woman. None of the character portrayals have anything to do with the products they are selling, yet they sell so well that Onida is near the top of the audio-visual heap.

"When there are so many brands on the market," says Rakshit, "all of them reasonably good in technical terms and with their differences narrowing, the consumer durable (product) has to be sold on the basis of psychological appeals." The Onida campign, for example, plays on envy, revulsion and hate, all negative sentiments as opposed to the sun-is-shining-flowers-are-blooming sort or, I'm-sweet-buy-me stuff of babyfood ads. But the public denouement was to go and buy Onida, denouncing the ads, but not the products.

An unthinkable situation, say industry professionals, even in the 1970s or early '80s.

But today, anything negative has undeniable impact. Most political advertising -and what could have been more negative than Rediffusion's election campaign for the Congress(I) last year -- uses the negative emotions of fear and pity. As do numerous public service and insurance ads. (For these, says Kersi Katrak, creative director with Lintas India Ltd, "the raw material is drawn from life. Something that exists, and can be identified with.")

And today, irrespective of what urbanites may feel,even the unaesthetic has impact. Take an example, the TV ad for Cema bulbs. In one sequence, it has Bollywood bomb Sridevi superimposed so that it appears she is dancing inside a bulb. The idea is *not* bizarre. Srivedi *is*— dressed in frills, plump beyond belief, and unappealing in a way she never is on the silver screen. "Everybody tells me how much they hate the ad," says Bharat Dhabolkar, who has kept motorists and passerbys in splits with his smart-alecky, often-incisive ads for Amul butter for over 15 years now. "But in villages of Maharashtra and Gujarat, where the product is sold," he continues, "Hindi films are very popular. And so is the ad." Dhabolkar's agency, da Cunha, created both Amul and the Cema ad. "You don't give an audience Satyajit Ray," adds Dhabolkar with a laugh. "when they want Manmohan Desai." Dhabolkar, though he may sound condescending, is actually being as realistic as an ad person ought to be.



Amul-ads Dhabolkar: "You're only as good as your last campaign"

But when people want slick, you give them slick. Like in the ad for Castrol Super TT engine oil for two-wheelers. The campaign, created by Lintas, the country's number two agency (in billings) after Hindustan Thompson, has just four pictorial elements. A blue sky, deadwood branches, a motorcycle rider and a crow- the way it is, you might think it a swallow- in a far corner. All aesthetically spread across two pages in a magazine, with a bold opener: "Zen and the art of motorcycle madness," it says. "Take-a my girl, but don't touch-a my bike. Hey!" The way it is, the ad may sell more *mobikes*. On the other hand, that is good for Indrol Lubricants and Specialities Ltd, the makers of Castrol.

These stark elements nothwithstanding, another style has permeated ad minds. "The latest trend seems to be to write a lot of copy," says Christopher D'Rozario, creative head with Trikaya. "Like our Norton and Ceasefire (portable fire extinguisher) ads. And the Hero Honda ads (created by Hindustan Thompson). Also, says Dhabolkar, another innovation is the use of the mixed language metaphor. "But you have to make changes," he cautions, "for ads appearing in different parts of the country. *Humko Binnie's mangta* worked very well in Bombay (where



"What we are talking about is not innovative ads," says Enterprise's Khan, "but innovative layouts"

Screen sense

Computers and creativity are sprucing up Indian TV ads

The coveted ad slots in the super 'A' special category of television programmes—a serial such as Mahabharata, Chitrahaar, or the Sunday Hindi feature film—cost the advertiser Rs 90,000 to one lakh every ten seconds. For a minute, the bill is a staggering Rs six lakhs.

The cost hardly deters anybody. Or, the fact that with so many ads crowding a pre or post-programme slot, the messages they convey tend to get diffused. It actually makes advertising agencies work harder—in a replayof print advertising—with their creative minds eager to rise above the clutter.



Deven Khote : "It's a great beginning"

"What has been the biggest boost to film advertising is the level of sophistication of the equipment available," says Deven Khote, creative director with Bombay-based United Television. "There's pop art and graphic art, as in the Cinthol Lime ad, the Frooti ad, and the Tips and Toes ad." And then there is experimentation with the musical form. "The entire Milkfood (yoghurt) ad is sung," exclaims Khote. He adds: "It's a great beginning and I hope that we now go places."

Khote can rest easy: TV advertising is going places all right. Every evening, the scores of ad messages that tumble out of the TV screen in drawing rooms—and village recreation centres—across the country, are sometimes good enough to become part of the popular culture. But while sophisticated computer hardware has enabled gimmickry to reach new heights—the card-flip effect, the science fiction scenarios, and computer generated animation—it is the ideas that score. Because today, everybody has access to computer sophistry.

The striking Onida spot touting video cassette recorders, for example, which uses a live chameleon—spray-painted for effect to offset the otherwise stark imagery. Or the Nutramul ad, a Khote offering, which has an animated monster chasing kids. Till one of them drinks Nutramul and becomes strong enough to take on, and beat, the monster. Or, the spot for Kawasaki-Bajaj motorcycles, in which computer-aid merges an animation cheetah with the bike, in an attempt to show the product's speed, power and machismo.

The increasing growth of TV advertising has prompted advertising agencies to make their own ad films, rather than trust the work to independent film-makers. "It gives us total control," says Ashok Roy of Avenues, a Bombay-based ad agency. (Avenues created the Onida chameleon-VCR spot.)

State-of-the-art gadgets and innovative ideas nothwithstanding, one of the most successful ad films in Indian television history is the Liril soap ad, which initially had model Karen Lunel cavorting under a waterfall. The ad lived through a second incarnation, and the move is now on for a third, with yet another fresh face. "There are some properties and ideas too valueable to give up," says Kersi Katrak, creative director with Lintas India Ltd, which handles the Liril account. "And the Liril ad is certainly one of them."



Lintas' ad for Castrol engine oil: space, ze

any Hindi corruption goes), but not in the north."

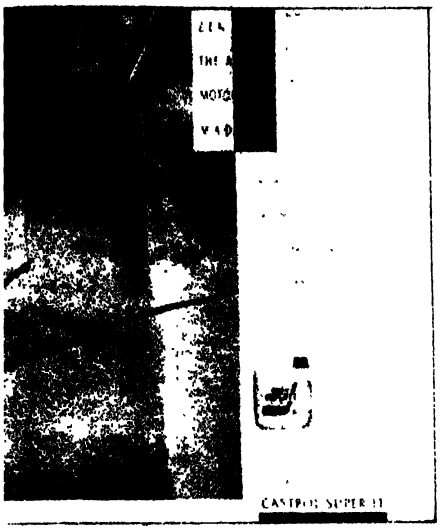
Time for some introspection. Because, even innovation has its pitfalls, presentation its blind corners, and advertising its presumptions.

"What is needed is not just a good, creative mind," says Dhabolkar, "but one that can produce good ideas within a time-frame, or disciplined creativity." He adds: "You are only as good as your last campaign." This, however, is more of a warning than a criticism. Besides, time-frames and disciplined creativity are what most of advertising is about anyway.

But the point is crucial because it helps brings in a discussion about innovation—and problems. And some, such as Enterprises' Khan, are blunt. "In the first place, let's get this straight," says Khan. "What we are talking about is not innovative advertising but innovative lay-outs. And also, let's get this clear. Advertising is *meant* to be innovative."

"See," he continues, "advertising is an intrusion into people's lives. People do not buy newspapers and magazines to read advertisements. They buy them for their editorial content. That is why an advertisement must be noticed strongly. An advertisement must not only compete with other ads, but it must also compete with the editorial." He adds: "If publishers feel that these (innovative) lay-outs are killing their editorial, then my advice to publishers is do not sell out". *Touche.*

But if they do—prompted by the money, that great pacifier, ads bring in—"then innovation becomes an irritant", says Trikaya's D'Rozario. No



motorcycle madness

problem, retorts Khan, "innovation in design will continue as long as the reader does not complain. And let me assure you, readers are very quick to respond to irritants." As far as advertising goes, irritation has not crept in yet. Fortunately for the industry.

Fortunately, again, that key element in advertising—clients—are playing along.

Whether the industry likes it or not, all its innovation and bravado would not amount to much—nay, never take off—if advertisers dug their heels in. Because, behind every good ad, or should one say *effective* ad is a client who is willing to take the risk. According to Dhabolkar, half the credit for his Amul ads goes to his client, a conglomeration of Anand, Gujarat-based cooperatives, which despite the raciness of the campaigns, has "conservative" and "government-control" written all over it. But this risk, like everything else, is relative.

"The message has to be slipped in subliminally" says Lintas' Katrak, "people don't like being sold to"



Much of the advertising that we see today is pre-tested, ideas culled from endless market research reports. "A lot of great advertising has to be altered if research shows that it doesn't work," says Dhabolkar. "With space and television time becoming astronomical (in cost), neither the agency nor the client can afford to take risks."

Now, a word from advertising deity David Ogilvy, in this trypically descriptive and somewhat condescending manner. "Suppose," he goes, "your gall-bladder has to be removed this evening, will you choose a surgeon who has read some books on anatomy and knows where to find your gall-bladder, or a surgeon who relies on his intuition? Why should our clients be expected to bet millions of dollars on your intuition?"

Ogilvy has it down pat. The thing is, times *are* changing, and clients *are* more adventurous than ever before. And advertising bibles are being completely rewritten, almost every year, changing with the target audience's new income patterns, aspirations and lifestyles. The only factor that remains constant is the drive to maximise the bottomline.

And to achieve this end, advertisers have arrived at a stage where they are willing to try practically anything provided it follows a style and is backed by brilliance.

But not *only* brilliance. Advertising, according to Lintas' Katrak, must also entertain and involve in order to work. "The message has to be slipped in subliminally," he says. "People don't like being sold to." He cites the Cherry Blossom Charlie Chaplin spoof ad as a good example of this. "The deeper you bury the message, the better off you are," says Katrak.

But sometimes, just sometimes, it works so well to simply blow it all up' to the sledge-hammering level. Like that *innovative* ad for Araldite adhesive abroad, which went to the extent of sticking a real car onto a hoarding to display the product's binding ability. While this might be imitating the West, "nothing is new or original in that sense," says Kattak. So, go for the jugular, and discount imitation as long as it delivers. Innovation does.

And, in advertising, the sky is the limit. "If people are surprised at the innovations today, watch and wait, I will tell them," says Enterprise's Khan with a flourish, "you ain't seen nothing yet." ●

Avenues' Rakshit and Roy: "brands have to be sold on the basis of psychological appeals"



Sudeep Chakravarti with Shiraz Sidhva and Godfrey Pereira/Bombay



STOCK MARKETS

Come-uppance

When you're high, remember there's a fall ahead. Indian share markets forgot to last fortnight, and they are paying the price

If there is a crash, it must be October—as far as stock markets are concerned. There was Wall Street's Black Monday in October 1987, when the Dow Jones Index knocked off an unprecedented 508 points in a single day, and almost knocked out the US economy. Two years later, Wall Street did a near-repeat. Early *this* October, The Nikkei Index at Tokyo's stock exchange slipped below the 20,000 mark for the first time in three years. And last fortnight, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) sent out feelers that it belonged in the same league.

The BSE sensitive index peaked at 1602 on 9 October—a phenomenal rise since 21 June, when it recorded 790 points. Enter the mutual funds and financial institutions, namely, the Unit Trust of India.

They sold off a large chunk of their massive equity holdings (funds and institutions hold almost 40 per cent of Indian stocks) and immediately, prices began dropping. Just two days after the 9th high, the decline turned to speculative panic. All those speculators, went the market grapevine, who were so content to live on the borderline of sheer profit, driving up prices to where they have never reached before, realised they had a panic on their hands. Thanks to the lead provided by government-run funds and institutions, they started dumping shares.

Tata Steel (TISCO), which was selling at Rs 280 (par value: Rs 10) on 9 October, slid to Rs 227 three days later. Hindalco, another key scrip, dropped by Rs 62 to Rs 336. Reliance Industries Ltd fell to Rs 218, from a high of Rs 260 per share. Tata Tea knocked off Rs 58 to close at Rs 436, Associated Cement Cos (par value: Rs 100), *the* high flyer of the year, crashed by a massive Rs 425 to end the week at Rs 1,800. And by Friday, the 13th, the BSE was considerably less non-chalant to close the index at 1402, a solid 12 per cent drop from its high period, in the space of only *three* trading sessions.

It had to happen sometime. In an interview to SUNDAY in early September, BSE executive director M.R. Nayya, had forewarned a disas-

ter: "I am sorry to say that speculators are not content with a stable market... My overall view is that it is an overbought market, and cannot sustain itself for long, it has to find its level." He added: "What we are worried about is the likely fall emanating from an undue rise in prices, which will shatter the confidence of the investor." People heard him, but nobody really cared much—they were too busy raking it in.

However, men on Dalal Street, which houses the BSE, and Lyons Range, its Calcutta equivalent, and the number two exchange, insist they had seen it coming. "For the past three months," says Shevantilal Shah of Stewart & Co, a major stock broking firm, "we had a scenario in which there were just no bears (a stock dealer who, in anticipation of a fall in price, sells shares at current prices. And if the price falls, the bear purchases at a lower price, taking his profit from the price difference.) Only bulls (who buy to sell *higher*) in a rapidly rising stock market." Because the prices had shot up too fast, the bears had been trapped, says Shah, and had exited the market after suffering huge losses. "This made our markets vulnerable," says Shah. "Had he (the bear) been around when prices dropped rapidly, he would have entered to buy at every level, thereby stabilising the decline." "Now, the market only had sellers, but no buyers. So, it went into a tailspin."

There are other factors that pushed equities downhill, as well. The growing political crisis in New Delhi, and the spectre of communal tension. A key factor was also the rising cost of financing speculative, or *badla*, purchases of shares, which draws unprecedented 100 per cent interest per annum. Besides, the market was shaky about a possible hike in bank lending rates, which in turn would result in increasing capital costs for industry.

And, of course, the ever-present Gulf crisis and its impact. International crude oil prices have zoomed up—a barrel of oil now sells for US $ 40 (about Rs 720 at current exchange rates). The thing is, when finance minister Madhu Dandavate talked about an additional Rs 5,000 crore oil import bill, he had the price pegged at US $25 a barrel. The government had slashed its oil quota by 15 per cent, and has hiked prices. This has affected the entire petrochemicals industry—Reliance and Bombay Dyeing, to name a few. In fact, it will affect any industry that uses oil or its derivatives to run itself.



BSE executive director M.R. Mayya: vindicated, but in no mood to say "I told you so"

Also, it did not help very much that a top international financial consultancy firm, Merril Lynch, said that Indian stock markets were over-valued (echoing Mayya's sentiments) and could collapse anytime. Chaos, stock market panic- and collapse.

Market analysts are looking at another reason behind the price slide. With the Indian industry confused, double-digit inflation a real threat, and not much happening on the policy front, the government used financial institutions and mutual funds to "police" the equities, and bulls, into submission.

There is one piece of good news, however. Recession or no recession, the Indian stock markets could bounce back and fairly soon. Not because corporate results are hot, the monsoon benevolent, or, in the unlikely hope that the government will snap out of its disastrous slumber and get some decent economic measures going.

But because Indian stock markets have incredible resilience, they hate lying low for long. It may take a while, but the bulls will be back •

Mudar Patherya

People heard the warnings, but nobody really cared much—they were too busy raking it in

COMPANIES

Sell and survive

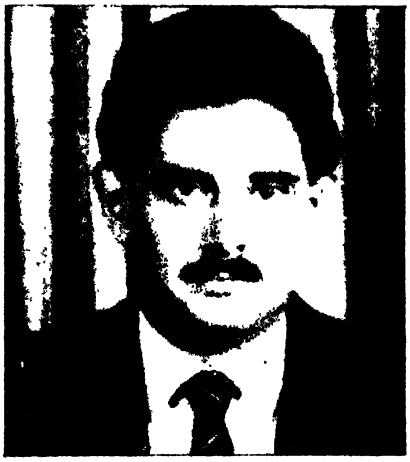
Kothari General Foods looks to Brooke Bond for a desperate bail out

It has been a long time in rough weather. And the Madras-based Kothari Group wants to get out—fast. Actually, they have wanted to get out ever since Kothari General Foods (KGF), a group company, launched soft-drink concentrate *Tang* and *JU-C* amidst much fanfare in 1987. And followed it up with disastrous sales.

KGF is now a Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) recognised sick company, and accumulated losses of Rs 19.52 crores, including depreciation, has gobbled up the Rs 15.16 crore equity capital of the company. All that kept KGF ticking over—only just—was its export of instant coffee to the USSR. Over the past two years, word has gone around of buyouts by some of India's top corporate names: Vijay Mallya of UB Group, RPG Enterprises chief Rama Prasad Goenka, the Modis, Jagatjit Industries Ltd. and the fast-emerging Indodan (the Gold Cafe people).

The deals fell through, and the





KGF Chairman D.C. Kothari and vice-chairman Pradip Kothari: happy with Brooke Bond's chicken feed

Kotharis were forced to pump in money to keep their ailing venture afloat. Now, there is word that Brooke Bond India Ltd, the Rs 550 crore instant coffee, tea and processed foods company, which moved under the Hindustan Lever fold last year, is willing to buy KGF. "Merger" is the terminology used if one goes by the book, but in effect, it is a straight case of Brooke Bond buying in.

The proposed KGF-Brooke Bond deal is to take place under Section 72A of the Income Tax Act that allows for the merger of a loss-making company with a profit-making one. This will facilitate Brooke Bond to show as losses the KGF liabilities it picks up, which means a hefty tax concession. In return for just Rs eight crores-odd in investment for buying into KGF.

"That investment is just chicken feed for Brooke Bond," says Pradip D. Kothari, vice-chairman and manging director of flagship company Kothari Industrial Corp. Ltd (KICL), "a company which had declared a cash surplus of Rs 30 crores last year." Also, says Kothari, along with stock, Brooke Bond will get a state-of-the-art instant coffee plant, intended to make the *Maxwell* brand of coffee, "for a song". He adds: "Its capacity, added with what they already have, will make Brooke Bond much bigger than Nestlé (Food Specialities Ltd, the makers of *Nescafe*, and Brooke Bonds's key competitor). Brooke Bond makes the *Bru* brand of instant coffee.

Ironically Kothari's euphoria about the proposed merger almost exactly matches the KGF euphoria when they launched their products in early 1987. The Indian consumer was primed for a processed foods revolution, and future competition such as *Rasna*, made by Pioma Industries Ltd, was already showing how far the market would go.

In this set-up, the Kotharis tied up General Foods of the US (now Kraft General Foods) for the KGF venture, which planned to introduce the US conglomerate's premier brands—*Tang*, *Ju-C*, *et al*—in India. The Kotharis still hold 33 per cent equity in the company, General Foods the same, financial institutions five per cent. The rest is with the public.

The venture went sour, almost from day one. For starters, *Ju-C* tasted just a little too bitter for the Indian consumers, who prefer their drinks sweet. And *Tang* was just too expensive: at Rs 110 a jar, when competition sold for Rs 65.

Besides, KGF had to import *Tang* concentrates, and faced its own problems with the government deciding to ban imports of such items, which the finance ministry termed non-essential. By the time KGF got down to providing a *desi* touch to *Ju-C*, Rasna was way ahead. And *Tang* simply never went anywhere.

Interestingly, the sale offer comes at a time when KGF has actually improved its performance—turnover is up, and operating losses down

In this scenario, selling appeared to be the *soft* option. However, when the Kotharis initially wanted to pull out of KGF, General Foods decided to hang on just a little while longer. Now, they do not seem to mind the Kothari disinvestment, but are watching their new team-mate very, very closely.

Interestingly, the sale offer comes at a time when KGF has actually improved its performance, substantially. Turnover in 1989-90 moved up to Rs 8.55 crores, from a dismal Rs 4.02 crores in the previous financial year. And operating loss, after interest and depreciation has come down to Rs 3.69 crores from Rs 5.31 crores during the same period.

Brooke Bond has decided to pay off KGF shareholders in cash, rather than give its own shares in exchange. This, a wise move, would prevent enthusiastic KGF shareholders to make inroads into blue-chip Brooke Bond.

The financial institutions appear to have agreed to the deal in principle. The Industrial Credit and Investment Corp. of India, the lead KGF holding institution, has given the go-ahead. Only General Foods is holding back, hanging on to the memorandum of understanding which outlines the deal. "They are a huge group", Kothari says in defence, "and maybe, this Indian operation is not necessarily in their priority rating."

Perhaps, but Kothari is sticking to the confident note despite any hesitation General Foods may exhibit. It is all part of a Kothari plan to junk any company they cannot handle. And they have done it before: three years ago, they sold a caustic soda plant to the Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corp. Such casting off is expected to help the Group concentrate on businesses they can handle, such as its plantations in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, textile units in Coimbatore, and its fertiliser operaitons. "The parent company, KICL, has done quite well last year," beams Kothari. "We should do even better in the coming months. The KICL share was quoted at Rs 101 (last week) and I expect it would touch the Rs 200 mark by the end of the year."

Bingo, But General Foods has yet to play along. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

■ Get 'em!

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is on the rampage, if recent studies, prophecies and circulars are any indication. First, the RBI let loose with a salvo which said all the bad things that the finance ministry was trying to hide: no money, totally overdrawn on credit, and an economy going nowhere at all. Then, the RBI predicted doomsday, and with the recent spurt of belt-tightening measures announced by the government, it looks set to happen as soon as next year. And third, it initiated measures which grab government agencies by their shirt-collars and ask them to behave: 16 per cent lending rates to all public sector production and distribution agencies, policing the finances of financial institutions, and their operations, to boot.

In an era of backtracking and shameless evasiveness, the RBI is behaving like a country's model bank ought to. It remains to be seen how the affected outfits react, but with R.N. Malhotra around as RBI governor, they don't have a choice but to go along.



R.N. Malhotra: shoot to heal

■ Try again

Fact: Dhirubhai Ambani needs money to grow, no matter that paraxylene and Patalganga bring in lots of the stuff. Fact: Key financial institutions are unwilling to lend him any money. Fact: the situation is not about to change, unless the government itself changes. Fact: Ambani has tied up financing—of course, pending official okays—of about Rs 150 crores. But that leaves the incredible entrepreneur terribly short.

So, go to the market for another flash of the Ambani magic wand. There is talk that Reliance plans to unload a mega Rs 500 crore issue on the stock markets. But when? The markets have hit a low *(see story: Come-uppance)* and pickings there are dicey. But one never knows with Dhirubhai Ambani. He might just be able to convince investors that he is still a good bet—and whatever anyone might say, he actually is survival instincts and all—and fall for his line.



Dhirubhai Ambani: encore time

STOCK QUOTE

"Oh, to be a Neanderthal!"

A progressive New Delhi economist, commenting on the shattered economy, the petro-goods price and corporate tax hikes, and the near-certain recession that is set to strike India

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

Madhu Dandavate

Union finance minister



● This is it. Last week, the finance minister went on TV to tell the good citizens about what they had feared for weeks but were afraid to ask: are we going to pay more? Yes, said Dandavate, a lot more. For petro-products—except for the politically crucial liquitied petroleum gas that feeds kitchens countrywide—you have to pay 25 per cent more, thanks to the Gulf crisis. And if you are a company, an extra seven per cent in taxes. But yes, we'll pull oack a bit: as you have to pay more for petroleum products, all restrictions, such as the move to curb sale of petrol and diesel, go. The finance ministry backed him up with a press note, anticipating trouble:"... the government would urge all citizens to exercise maximum restraint and contribute to the national effort to meet the situation..." The government might get lucky with its "request": we don't have a choice, good citizens, do we?

■ Bengal. Boom!

Welcome to West Bengal. Here, most things do not work, and most companies are leaving for safer pastures. But not the house of Tatas, going by chief minister Jyoti Basu's persistent wooing of the number ones. They got the Rs 3,000 crore Haldia Petrochemicals project: it is yet to take off, but that is another story. Now, it looks as if the Tatas may land another massive project: the 2,000 MW super thermal power project at Sagardighi, in Murshidabad district. The project, estimated to cost about Rs 4,000 crores, is being planned as another Tata-state government joint sector venture, a la Haldia. But this one will have a different Tata boss, going by the grapevine. Ratan Tata. As Darbari Seth appears to have had his fill with Haldia.



Ratan Tata: beautiful Bengal

It is truly surprising that the Tatas find Bengal so enticing when other entrepreneurs are thinking twice about playing ball with Basu. For them, business in Bengal equals a disastrous explosion. For the Tatas, however, it appears to signify a business boom of an entirely different kind. ●



COMMENT

Boot-lick business

What they most definitely don't teach at Harvard Business School

Indian businessmen and managers, as their total insignificance in the international marketplace indicates, are far from being efficient or versatile. It is just that they have learned the ropes of doing business in India.

Only, these are precisely the ropes they do *not* teach in Indian management schools. For an Indian entrepreneur who wants to start a large or medium-sized project (promoting a small scale unit requires an 'untaught' technology, but more of that later) the first step is usually to find a foreign collaborator. But, the netas and the babus who minutely supervise Indian industry have no faith in the Indian people. Therefore, their first requirement is that an entrepreneur acquires a foreign collaborator. And the chosen collaborator must meet with neta-babu approval. Quite unmindful of the adage that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, they will finally choose the collaborator. Which again depends on his political hue and his 'reasonableness'.

Alas, I have never been to business school. But is the subject of how to choose a foreign collaborator taught in Indian schools of management? I doubt it.

Let us press on. Once a project promoter acquires a foreign collaborator, he runs up against a more formidable hurdle: bagging an industrial licence. This is a complex procedure which weeds out the boys from the men. All over the free world—and these days, the free world includes the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—promoting a new project is a matter resolved between an entrepreneur and his bankers. Not so in the socialist, secular and generally holier-than-thou Republic of India. Here, the netas and babus have to get into the act. Again. And to get them to issue the all-important licence, you need to know the complex 'technology' of running the gauntlet. Which means you should not only learn about whom to pay off when, to what extent, and distinguish between effective and ersatz middle men, but also learn abject servility. Because, the discretionary powers of the lowliest babu is formidable.

Is the art of squeezing out licences from venal government officials taught in management institutes? No? Well, it should be. Because, if their future bosses know it by instinct, then graduates—not as privileged—need to be told about it.

Also, if business schools wish to impart comprehensive education, they should teach the other all-important tactic: how to stifle competition.

Then there is the fine art of getting money out of the public financial institutions. Under the nation's complex industrial licensing regulations, scrutiny by the babus of the industry and other ministries, as well as the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is not enough. The entire form-filling, pleading, begging and whining ritual has to begin from scratch, to satisfy the babus of the financial institutions. Which means the merits of the project are not the final consideration. The applicant has to know the appropriate 'technology'—a mixture of tall promises, bribes, threats and servility in absolutely correct dosages.

Do the curricula of the institutes of management include instruction and/or case studies on this vital—indeed, make or break—subject? In fact, do graduates of the nation's business schools know what an industrial licence application form or a project proposal to be submitted to the financial institution *looks like* before leaving the portals of their institutions? I suspect not.

The Indian executive: lifestyle, yes. Ropes, no



However, the institutes *do* impart instruction in production, finance and marketing management. But these subjects are not very important in the Indian context. Because, so well protected is Indian industry from external and internal competition, that there is an eager market for whatever is produced—price and quality hardly matter. (Come to think of it, the smugglers' trade is doing the consumer a favour: if it was not for the ubiquitous smuggler there would be no attempt to upgrade the quality of *swadeshi* goods.)

Are things better for small-scale entrepreneurs? Hardly. Perhaps worse. They are set upon by state government officials, inspectors, and a collapsed judicial system. They too have to learn the 'technology' of robbing the consumer to pay off the local netas, babus and inspectors. I doubt if the schools of business management acquaint students with the subtle art of keeping lumpen politicians and grasping, envious bureaucrats and inspectors in good humour.

All this is not to say that a management education is without value. As is becoming increasingly clear, even to business-illiterate politicians and babus, industrial and economic growth is almost impossible in such a perverse business environment. This is why the process of liberalising the Indian economy—however slow—has begun. This means that over a period of time the disciplines of business management will become increasingly relevant.

Meanwhile, however, it might be useful to pay some attention to the more vital aspects of managing a business in contemporary India. ●

Dilip Thakore is the former editor of *Business India, Business World* and *Debonair.*

RAVI SHANKAR



Chalo, Ayodhya!

On the road with Advani's rath yatra



It is many things all at once. On the face of it, it is a DCM-Toyota van which has been rather tastelessly dressed up as a chariot. To the ordinary Hindu villager—who waits for hours at the roadside for a glimpse—it is God's own *rath*, an object of awe and reverence. To the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it is the vehicle to launch what party president L.K. Advani called "the biggest mass movement in the history of the country". And to the Muslims and the secular-minded, it represents the greatest threat to communal harmony in this country.

Last week, when a visibly elated L.K. Advani drove into Delhi, in the manner of a courageous, if ageing charioteer, he completed the first leg of his 10,000 km Somnath to Ayodhya *rath yatra*. Contrary to widespread rumours, the BJP president was not arrested on his arrival at the capital. And as he rode in, tired but triumphant, Advani warned the government as he has been doing right through his journey: "You may be able to stop this *rath*. But you will never be able to prevent this mass movement from achieving its objective."

It is a journey that has taken him through Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. But it is the next leg—where the *rath* is due to travel through Bihar and Uttar Pradesh—that will rivet a nation that has already turned its eyes towards Ayodhya and has its attention fixed on 30 October. If Advani and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)—which is planning to stage many *yatras* which will converge on Ayodhya on that date—have their way, then work will begin on the contentious Ram Janmabhoomi Temple.

With the Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid calling on the Muslims to stop the *rath* and Uttar Pradesh's Mulayam Singh Yadav swearing that he will not allow Advani and his VHP friends into Ayodhya, the battlelines have been already drawn. The risk of large-scale violence if the situation comes to a head needs no exaggerating. But Advani—even as those around him chant *Kasam Ram ki kathe hain/ Mandir wohin banayenge*'—claims that he holds out the hope for an amicable settlement. "The government can still find a solution to this problem," he says. "Any agreement it reaches with the VHP is acceptable to me."

The response to the *yatra*—despite large sections of the press having, perhaps right-mindedly, played it down—has been very impressive. Largely, this is a consequence of the religious air that attends the journey. Advani admits as much. "Many of the people that crowded the roadsides to welcome this *rath* hadn't either heard of me or the BJP," he keeps telling the audience modestly in his speeches. "They came out of sentiment for Lord Ram."

Of all the states that Advani travelled through, it was in Rajasthan that he received the most tumultuous reception. At Ajmer, which Advani reached on the evening of 12 October, the *yatra's* route into the city was illuminated with a brightness that would overshadow a Diwali festival. "Just look at the city...It is like a *mela*," exclaims the BJP's O.S. Lakhawat.

During his public address at Daulathag in the city, Advani was the most restrained of the speakers, most of who were blatantly inflammatory. The BJP's Rajya Sabha MP, Pramod Mahajan, who has accompanied Advani all the way from Somnath and is responsible for overseeing the *yatra* was at its rabble-rousing best. "Are you children of Babur or Ram, Akbar or Rana Pratap, Aurangzeb or Shivaji?" he thunders. "Those who do not answer this question properly have no right to be in this country."

Advani—as he was in his addresses elsewhere—was relatively more moderate. Much of his speech—the text of which remains pretty much the same right through the trip—was devoted to arguing why the best solution to the *Masjid-Mandir* tangle lies in shifting the former to a nearby site.

To the apparent displeasure of some of the more extreme elements in the crowd, he criticised those youth who had been raising slogans which threatened the destruction of the mosque. (*Ek dhakka aur do/Babri Masjid tod do.*) The plea that the *Masjid* must not be destroyed at any cost is made at all his major addresses. "In India, many temples have been destroyed to build mosques. But let there not be a single case of a mosque being destroyed to build a temple," he says.

The turnout at Jaipur was even more impressive. The crowd that thronged the street was so large that the *rath* took a good two hours to reach Tripolia Gate, the venue for the speech. According to one estimate, there were a staggering four lakh people out on the roads that day. Said one



L.K. Advani on his *rath* in Jaipur: unstoppable

harassed police official; "I have never seen anything like this in Jaipur and I hope I never will."

It was as if the Hindu population in the city was celebrating a *mela*. Makeshift gateways, banners and posters lined the *yatra* route. There were BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal members on the roads dispensing puffed rice, *channa* and water to anyone who wanted them. As the *rath* drove in, there were deafening cries of *"Jai Sri Ram"* and that favourite *yatra* slogan, *"Bachcha, bachcha Ram ka, Janmabhoomi ke kam ka"*. During his speech, Advani admitted that he hadn't received a better welcome than that in Jaipur, leading state chief minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat—who shared the podium—to look as pleased as punch.

In Delhi, the extent of the religious fervour that attended much of the Rajasthan trip was missing. All the same, an estimated two lakh people poured on to the *yatra's* route shouting slogans, waving *trishuls* and showering the *rath* with rose petals and marigolds. "No leader has ever received such a tumultuous welcome," claimed Delhi BJP chief Madanlal Khurana who rode the festooned chariot along with Advani, Dr J.K. Jain and other leaders.

Giant arches marked the whole route and in the relatively more affluent colonies in west Delhi, the BJP and its suporters erected fancy *shamianas*, distributed apples and bananas and even lined the roadside with chairs. Religious songs blared through ubiquitous loudspeakers as Advani greeted the crowds with folded hands and Khurana kept up a constant stream of BJP rhetoric.

At almost every major intersection, there was frenetic dancing accompanied by whistles, war-cries and slogans that ranged from the relatively harmless to the blatantly incendiary. A sample of the latter: *"Masjid todo/ Mandir banao"* (Demolish the masjid/ Build a temple); *"Jab jab Hindu jaga hai/desh se mullah baga hai"* (Whenever the Hindus have arisen/the country's Muslims have fled); *"Jo roke mandir nirman/Usko bhejo Pakistan"* (Whoever stops the construction of the temple/He should be sent to Pakistan).

On the same day, Advani addressed a press conference where he adopted his typically soft and persuasive tone. "The *rath yatra* had nothing to do with either the Hindu-Muslim conflict or the *Mandir/Masjid* issues," he said. Rather, that it was concerned with issues such as nationalism and secularism. Advani claimed that he was pained by the reports in the press that his *yatra* had contributed to communal tension. "On the contrary, we have contributed to the easing or removal of tensions in all the states we visited," he said.

Khurana, however, was more blunt. "New Delhi's eyes should be opened now to what the people in the country want. Who will dare stop the *yatra* now?" As the *rath* prepares to leave Delhi in the coming week this is a question that will be uppermost in many people's minds. •

Mukund Padmanabhan and Shiraz Sidhva

"The yatra will go on"

L.K. ADVANI sees no reason to call off his march to Ayodhya

INTERVIEWED BY MUKUND PADMANABHAN

SUNDAY: Do you hold out any hopes for a compromise on the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi issue before 30 October?
L.K. Advani: I have always been hopeful After all, it is not such an intractable problem that it cannot be resolved. I see no reason why the suggestion I have been publicly making—that the *masjid* be relocated—shouldn't be accepted.

Q: But the government refuses to accept this. Will you call off the *rath yatra* for anything less?
A: I am of the view that all these matters have been debated and discussed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad with the government—both this one and the one before. I have never been in the picture and I don't want to come into it. I am not at all keen. If any proposal is acceptable to both parties, then I have no objection.

Q: But what is your stance? That you will go to Ayodhya in the absence of an agreement?
A: Yes. There is no reason why the *yatra* should be discontinued. Everyone who has appealed or threatened me (to call off the *yatra*) has had no reason to do so but for the fact that the point of view I represent has suddenly acquired enormous public support. It is only this which leads them to say that my *rath yatra* is creating communal tensions. This has no basis.

Q: Will you be prepared to call it off in the event of a serious communal riot?
A: I don't see why this should happen. There is already tension in the situation for which I have no solutions. This *yatra* is contributing to the relieving of the tension. This is the impact everywhere. But the people of Delhi are upset because they feel that they are being forced to change the *status quo* (on the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi dispute). Or at least consider doing so.

Q: If your *rath yatra* is forcibly stopped by the government, will you consider withdrawing support?
A: What has that to do with this? It would be for the party to consider. I do not want to relate my *rath yatra* with support for the government.

I am more concerned with the government's attitude to the issue as such. This is a symbolic issue. Even in my speeches, I have said that the issue has become a symbol of a certain approach to problems such as national unity, secularism and communalism

Q: But in your speeches, you have also obliquely threatened to withdraw support if the government stops the *rath?*
A: There is no question of threat. I do not have to threaten the government. It is the ground reality which has to make the government realise that my viewpoint cannot be treated with contempt.

Further, this question has been raised all through the last nine or ten months. I was asked this the moment I said that the withdrawal of Jagmohan from Kashmir was a monumental blunder. My consistent answer to this question is that we had reservations even when we decided to support this government. Just three weeks before our party took the decision, the leader of the Janata Dal refused to go on a platform in support of his own candidate because the BJP flag was flying there. So, the decision was taken after due deliberation. And if there is any change, it has to be done with due deliberation.

Q: You disagree with the government on a number of issues which you hold very important—Kashmir, Ram Janmabhoomi, the Mandal report and so on. Isn't it odd that you continue to support the government? Where are you going to draw the line?
A: It may well seem odd, but the day we decided to support the government, I had been telling my colleagues that this is a very difficult task, a very difficult role.

As for me, I would have been very happy to sit in the Opposition without having to do anything. When I decided to support this government, it was only to honour the people's mandate, which was clearly anti-Congress, which was clearly in favour of change. It was not because I had particularly high hopes of the government. Moreover, on issues that concerned me directly, this government is on the other side of the fence.

But a very mature, well-considered decision was taken after weighing all the pros and cons. So, if there is to be a change in the situation, it has to be duly considered. This is a consistent stand I have taken.

Q: Your party has been promising all along that if it came to power it would do things for the Hindus, redress historical injustices and so on. Now that the BJP is in power in a few states and is more than capable of influencing the Centre, what has it done for the Hindus in these last nine months or so?
A: I have never spoken in these terms. These are attributed to me. I have always said that all the problems that the party has taken a stand on, have been taken in the national interest. And not in terms of the interests of the Hindus as a group.

But all the governments till now have been reacting to Hindu sentiments in a manner that has hurt the Hindu psyche very badly. This has impaired national unity and has also hurt the interests of the minorities.

A sea change has come over political thinking in the last 40 years. And I hold that it is extremely damaging to national harmony. It is just pseudo-secularism or minorityism. And these euphemistic terms for pandering to the minority vote-bank

Q: And it is OK to pander to the majority vote-bank?
A: You don't pander to the majority vote-bank. Everyone in public life knows that Hindu society is not monolithic to constitute a vote-bank. It is therefore treated with so much contempt.

Otherwise, you wouldn't have a person like Mulayam Singh Yadav speaking as he does. He be-



"It is not such an intractable problem that it cannot be resolved. I see no reason why the Babri Masjid should not be relocated"

lieves that Hindu society is inclined to think in terms of caste and language.

Q: But isn't it exactly because Hindu society is not monolithic that you are using the Ram Janmabhoomi issue as a rallying point?
A: Even if I were to accept that charge, I would not think that trying to make 85 per cent of the people rise above narrow political loyalties or think in terms of 85 per cent of the people is going to weaken the country. On the other hand, it is going to strengthen it.

Q: At the cost of the other 15 per cent?
A: No, not at the cost. Even on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, I have been specifically stressing again and again that I do not want the Babri mosque to be broken. I do not want this. I would feel very unhappy if this was to happen.

Q: Your approach to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue seems odd for the following reason. On the one hand, you say that the dispute cannot be resolved by the courts because it involves 'deep', 'religious' or 'transcendental' sentiments. At the same time, you talk of a deal—that is if the Muslims were to give up their claim on the Babri Masjid, then the Hindus will give up their claims on a couple of disputed monuments, one of them being Krishna Janmabhoomi at Mathura.

A: I would like to make it clear that I'm in no position to offer a deal. Because this whole movement is led by the VHP. If I keep stressing the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, it is because it is an issue with which my party is directly concerned, because we have adopted a resolution (on it). We have not adopted any resolution with respect to any other place - one place only. I said that if the Muslim leadership and Muslim society were to agree to this, then it would be a big, monumental step in the direction of national harmony.

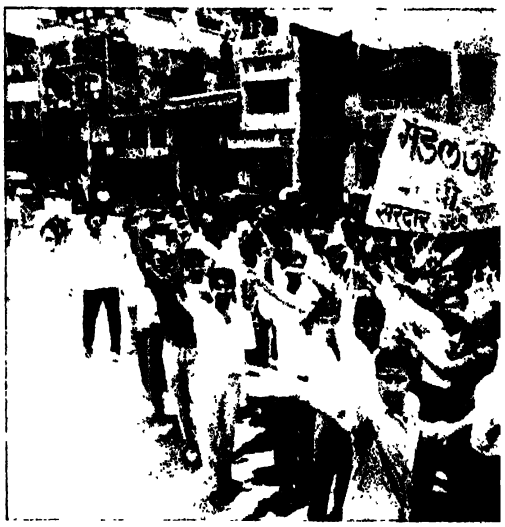
Q: My question is how an issue involving religious sentiment can be the subject of a deal if it cannot be a subject for the courts.
A: It's not a deal. And if it is a deal, then there is nothing wrong about it. But it will depend on the people concerned.

Q: But if you hold this position, then it leads to the conclusion that Ram's birthplace is more important than Krishna's.
A: No. It is not. Why is it that even though there are thousands of (disputed) places, the VHP talks of only three places? It specifically says that we are interested in three symbolic places—Varanasi, Mathura and Ayodhya.

Q: Then, you are more interested in one than the others?
A: No, I am not. I am interested in national harmony. And I feel that if in 1986, the Babri Masjid Action Committee had not been formed, then the Ayodhya issue would not have acquired this present dimension.

MAHESH JETHMALANI





Why I support Mandal

Try reading the report before criticising it



I must confess that before preparing for the subject-matter of this column, I was virulently anti-Mandal. I realise now that that was partly because of a pronounced libertarian make-up, conditioned in turn by a liberal Western education, the pursuit of a conservative discipline like law and residence in a highly competitive society, such as the urban life of Bombay constitutes. For me, the constitutional mandate of equality before the law was consistent only with a strict meritocracy. My convictions were fortified by the trenchant and near-hysterical criticism of Mandal in a section of the press and, particularly, by news of the immolation of students in protest against Mandal.

I then proceeded to read from cover to cover the Mandal Commission Report, relevant provisions of our Constitution dealing with reservation, pronouncements of our Supreme Court concerning reservation and the plethora of outpourings in the press both for and against Mandal. I discovered to my amazement that much of the criticism against the Mandal report was either uninformed or politically motivated. I also discovered that the best answer to the criticism against Mandal was contained in the report itself, in our constitutional provisions and in the Supreme Court judgements.

First, as to the criticism about the principle of reservation itself. Our Constitution recognises reservation through Articles 15(4) and 16(4) which are exceptions to the main provisions of those articles dealing with prohibition of discrimination by the states on grounds of religion, race, caste, etc. and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, respectively. Several states have introduced reservation not only for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes but for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) as well. The Mandal Commission itself was appointed in accordance with Article 340 of the Constitution, and its recommendations were made in accordance with the provisions of that Article.

The argument against reservation, however, is founded on moral grounds. It is suggested that the policy of reservation is unfair, particularly to those who are excluded from the reserved quota, since it is at odds with equality of treatment of all citizens. This argument totally ignores the goals which a policy of reservation seeks to achieve. In the first place, reservation is aimed at remedying historical injustice. The policy recognises that in India there has been a history of invidious treatment to certain ascertainable classes, which has resulted in these classes carrying in the present the accumulated disabilities of the past. Secondly, the policy recognises that formal equality of all citizens guaranteed by the Constitution, requires to be made substantial in practice by eliminating prejudices against historically discriminated groups that may have become entrenched in the process of selection to jobs and which accordingly perpetuate the result of earlier discrimination. Thirdly, the policy aims at national integration, in that, it seeks to bring within the power structure groups which had hitherto been excluded because of social discrimination, and accordingly give them a stake in the system.

The second criticism is directed on the criterion of caste as the basis for reservation. According to this criticism, reservations based on caste militate against the goal of a casteless society, accentuate caste consciousness, inject caste into politics and accordingly, perpetuate the caste system. The students who have immolated themselves are apparently martyrs in the cause of a casteless society. This criticism is specious in the ex-





The rhetoric of opportunist politicians has plunged the country into a caste war. Pro and anti-reservation agitators clash, without bothering to read the Mandal report and understand its implications

treme and should be viewed with considerable scepticism. There are a number of answers to it.

Firstly, Mandal did not create caste: caste is a glaring fact of Indian social life, particularly in the rural areas. The Constitution abolished untouchability but did not abolish the caste system. The law permits caste associations and several of them exist with varying degrees of membership in several parts of the country including highly industrialised centres. They have come into existence as pressure groups whose aim is to lobby for greater benefits for members of their caste. Their very existence—apart from their activities—enhances caste consciousness.

In any event, no one who has cared to read the Mandal report could ever suggest that the Commission recommended caste *per se* as a basis for reservation. The terms of reference for the Mandal Commission were defined by Article 340 of the Constitution. Article 340 seeks to ameliorate the condition of "*socially and educationally backward classes*". The Commission did not blindly recommend that the castes which it identified in the report were socially and educationally backward. After using as large a data-base as possible, including reports of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Anthropological Survey of India, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the National Labour Institute, the Centre for Study of Developing Societies, the Institute of Economic Growth, the Indian Law Institute; after conducting extensive field surveys and research; and after formulating and applying 11 indicators of backwardness, the Commission identified these castes, which it considered to be socially and educationally backward. In other words, the Mandal Commission used caste as a unit for the sake of convenience, recognising thereby two factors.

(i) that the members of a caste tend to share a common level of opportunities and resources, and

(ii) that social and educational backwardness is the result of a hierarchical caste system in which some groups were assigned low status and deprived of advantages.

The Supreme Court itself has recognised that caste is also a class of citizens. In a 1968 decision on reservations, the Court observed that "if a caste as a whole is socially and educationally backward, reservation can be made in favour of such a caste on the ground that it was a socially, educationally backward class of citizens within the meaning of Article 15(4)". In 1971, the Court went a step further when it observed: "If after collecting the necessary data, it is found that the caste as a whole is socially and educationally backward, in our opinion, the reservation made for such persons will have to be upheld, *notwithstanding the fact that a few individuals in that group may be both socially and educationally above the general average*".

Mandal did not create caste: caste is a glaring fact of Indian social life. The Constitution abolished untouchability but did not abolish the caste system

The criticism which focuses on caste can accordingly be dismissed as stemming from gross ignorance about both our social realities and our constitutional development. Moreover, its very ignorance lends credence that it is in addition motivated. While it rests its case on an ostensibly altruistic platform—avoiding a caste divide in the country—as a matter of fact, it exploits the odium attached to caste in a modern society, only to deny redistributive justice to the downtrodden castes.

Then, there is the criticism that some of the castes identified by the Mandal Commission Report, are not in fact socially and educationally backward. This is tantamount to merely saying that there are some errors in the report pertaining to identification. Surely, such a criticism does not vitiate the entire report of the Commission?

Some quarters have suggested that instead of caste as a basis for reservation, the criterion should have been economic. Several political parties have emphasised this as a more appropriate criterion. The suggestion is totally misconceived on at least three grounds.

Firstly, Article 15(4) which permits reservation and Article 340 under which the Mandal Commission was appointed refer to socially and educationally backward classes. Both the Articles do not refer to economic backwardness. The rationale behind theArticles is obviously that social and educational backwardness is a much more pernicious problem in Indian society than poverty, and that it was low caste status and lack of education that in fact led to perpetual impoverishment. Secondly, the Supreme Court has in two decisions categorically asserted that reservation based only on the economic criterion, that is, poverty levels and annual income of families, were not determinants of social and educational backwardness. Thirdly, the Mandal Commission in assessing social and educational backwardness gave due weightage to economic *indicia*. It can be safely assumed, therefore, that the identified castes, apart from satisfying the social

and educational backwardness test, also satisfy the economic deprivation criteria.

This brings us to the last argument against the Mandal Commission Report. The report itself, it is suggested, is unassailable; but the method and timing of its implementation by the present regime is dubious in the extreme and leads to an irresistible inference that the implementation was politically motivated. This criticism has been chanted like a 'mantra' *ad nauseum* by every politician and pressman hostile to the present Prime Minister.

The Mandal Commission Report has been in existence for 10 years. It constituted a part of the Janata Dal's manifesto. The present Prime Minister can hardly be faulted if rival political parties have not educated themselves or their supporters about the contents of the reports. Indeed, on so momentous an issue, it was incumbent upon all responsible political leaders to initiate a political dialogue from the time the report became public. Their failure to do so reflects a marked disinterest in the welfare of the backward classes.

One cannot but grieve for the unfortunate students who immolated themselves. If only they had cared to read the report, the nation might have been spared the tragedy of their brave but misconceived acts

It has been said that the motives of the Prime Minister in implementing the Mandal Commission Report were to counter the BJP's strategy of consolidating the Hindu vote through Ram Janmabhoomi.

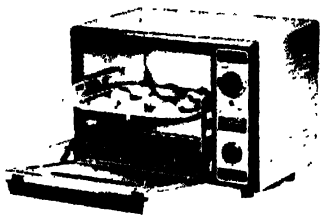
The BJP stand on the Mandal Commission Report is ambivalent. In Maharashtra, the party strongly supports its implementation. So does at least one MP from Rajasthan, Mr Nathu Singh, according to whom "Mandal is here to stay and V.P. Singh has achieved a revolution". Besides, one cannot understand why a party which seeks the unity of Hindu society would balk at the implementation of the Mandal report. Surely, there is no better way of bringing about Hindu integration than by the privileged Hindu castes championing the cause of their less fortunate brethren. Indeed, the BJP seems to have been presented with a golden opportunity to once and for all silence the traditional criticism that it is a party of the status quo dominated by caste Hindus. It ought to grasp the opportunity with both hands and whole-heartedly support reservations.

One cannot but grieve for the unfortunate students who immolated themselves in the belief that by their sacrifice they would avert a fratricidal caste war. Their belief was undoubtedly influenced by the rhetoric of opportunist politicians and by the tendentious editorials of politically motivated scribes posing as crusaders for the cause of a casteless society. If only they had cared to read the Mandal Commission Report and the Indian Constitution, the nation might have been spared the tragedy of their brave but misconceived acts. •

The name is the only guarantee you will ever need.

Racold

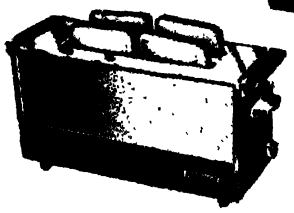
You are sure of quality, if it is Racold Innovative in design, tested quality inputs, high performance efficiency- These factors make Racold distinctively safe and superior.







FEATHER-WEIGHT AUTOMATIC IRON
For effortless smooth ironing Fitted with thermostat Weight 800 Gms
750W, 230V, AC ISI Marked



4-SLICE SEMI-AUTO TOASTER
Designed to give 4 crisp brown toasts at a time When toasts are ready, just press the knob The toasts pop up and the current cuts off
1100W, 230 V AC

MINI OVEN-TOASTER CUM-GRILLER
Sliding tray and grill, Drop-down front door, 2-sheathed tubular heating elements 600W each, thermostat for uniform heat 50°C to 300°C

SNACK 'N' SANDWICH TOASTER
Sleek and handy Designed to give 4 sealed golden brown sandwiches Non-sticky scallops, Pilot lamp and thermostat
600W, 230V, AC, 50Hz

RACOLD APPLIANCES LIMITED
Head Office Bombay-Pune Road, Pimpri, Pune 411 018
Bombay 17, Ist Pasta Lane, Colaba, Bombay 400 005
New Delhi "Vandhna", 11, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi 110 001

ga/1542

CUT!

Students and the faculty at Pune's film institute are tired of government indifference and an insensitive director

If one walks into the Film and Television Institute of India campus in Pune, the impression is one of complete peace and contentment in idyllic, wooded surroundings.

It is deceptive.

The students have a hunted expression on their faces, and a deep-rooted cynicism has replaced the enthusiasm that once characterised the institute. Once a haven for aspiring actors and film-makers, the FTII, as the institute is better known, is languishing from a lack of funds, absence of policy, and, say FTII students and alumni, administrative disinterest. Besides, they complain that the very purpose of establishing what is considered to be Asia's premier film institute is diluted when the information and broadcasting (I&B) ministry views it merely as a training school for Doordarshan and Films Division technicians—and not a melting pot of creativity. A fate that mirrors the state of India's other "cultural" bastions.

Trouble erupted last year, with a three-month long strike, and has since refused to dissipate. There has always been some unrest in the FTII's 29-year history, but never before have the students displayed such a defeatist attitude. "It is as if the institute has contracted a deep-rooted disease," says a student, as he lounges under the 'wisdom tree', a mango tree which is a popular meeting place on campus. "What bothers us most," says the student, who declines to be identified, "is that there is no change in sight, nobody really cares enough to stem the rot."

Over the last two years, FTII students have done almost all they could to highlight their problems—boycotted classes, demonstrated at international film festivals, asked for help from influential alumni such as Shyam Benegal (who is directly involved as chairman of the FTII governing council), Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani and Saeed Mirza, among others. Students say that Kaul and Shahani have been virtually banned from entering the campus because, allegedly, they instigate students.

The students say they were optimistic that the new government would solve their problems. But nine months have passed since I&B minister P. Upendra promised to visit FTII, at a time when all students can think about is being shortchanged on government commitments.

Besides, it does not help to have a director who students mistrust. In fact, it is a feeling closer to hatred. K.G. Varma is an Indian Administrative Services officer, someone, say students, who is so bureaucratic and blind to creative pursuits that problems cannot be solved till he is removed. "Varma is a mean-minded man," says K. Vinayan, president of the FTII students union, "not an academic head. It's the rule of autocracy here, and everybody, including the staff, lives in dread of the director." In addition, say students, they feel intimidated by the 27 security guards prowling around the campus, keeping a tab on everything that is going on.

Director Varma admits that such reports reach him everyday. In a post-graduate institution, it seems a little bizarre that the head should want to know which student sat where and with whom till what time of the night. But Varma makes out as if he does this for the security and well-being of his flock. "I have never taken action based on these reports," he defends himself, a little awkwardly. "So what is wrong with them (security measures)?" Nothing, one might say, but even visitors to the campus are not spared Varma's somewhat paranoid espionage. While he sits in his room, holds his head in his hands, and says forlornly that he cannot figure out how his relationship with the students has soured so drastically.



FTII students on a film-making exercise: problems, and more problems

"There is nothing seriously wrong with the institute," he says with some bravado. As he tells it, the administration was in a mess when he took over as director in November 1986. "There was a low morale situation," says Varma. "Nothing was working." He adds: "I set a lot right."

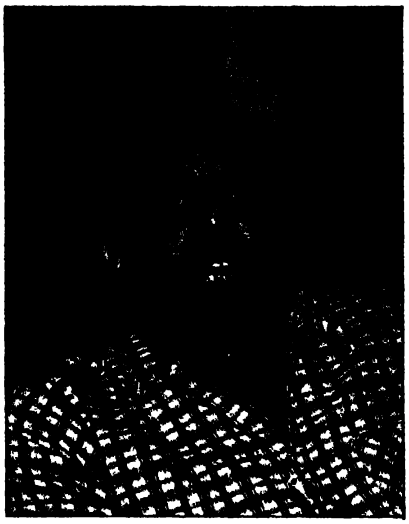
Students, however, disagree. They complain that their creative freedom has been curtailed with a set of draconian laws. For example, one that forbids them to shoot on campus for filming exercises. Certain parts of the

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHIRAZ SIDHVA

campus are out of bounds for "security reasons", says Varma, but declines to elaborate.

Students do not have access to on-campus video cassette recorders to do their private study viewing. Varma rationalises this by saying that if students are allowed to watch films outside their course hours, they will not do much else, and waste their time. "Watching films is a very tiring activity," he says. "It is like telling students that they will not have access to a library because they will spend all their time reading fiction," says Linus, a student. "Watching films is very important for us."

Students also allege that Varma has used institute facilities to amass an impressive, private video tape collection. "This is an unfair allegation," says the director. "When I came here, I already had a personal video library. My interest in films goes back a long time—in fact, I allowed students to borrow films from me, films like, *Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, Apocalypse Now* that they didn't have access to otherwise." Very unlikely: the FTII has almost all movies in its library, the most comprehensive collection in the country.



"I have done my best," says Varma. "And all I've got is abuse...I would love to get away from here"

Varma has also antagonised the faculty. Some members allege that the director favours staffers who kowtow to him, granting them prized foreign trips, among other things. But some academics, such as Suresh Chhabria, a FTII professor for film appreciation course, do not allow Varma to interfere. Chhabria admits that sometimes he bypasses the director to deal directly with the governing council, to ensure that his area of work does not suffer as a result of institute politics. He says Varma has tried to do away with the course—citing budget constraints—but he goes on with his work, regardless.

Here, while most faculty members agree that many campus problems stem from Varma's worldview, Surendar Chowdhary, professor of film direction—and from FTII's class of 1971—believes that it is wrong to blame it all on a personality clash. Despite the fact that from all accounts, he has serious differences with Varma, but stubbornly refuses to admit it. "We must dream the future



afresh,"he says idealistically. Adding: "Budget constraints are a part of life today."

As if on cue, Varma rants about how students are being taught almost for free. "Our costs have gone up from Rs 50,000 to Rs five lakhs a month," he says, "but fees have remained at Rs 100 a semester, since the institute's inception." This comment leads to student outrage. "He pretends we are orphans being brought up," says one. "If we are entitled to government subsidies, it is because we are serving a purpose."

Varma insists that students are on the warpath because he has tried to instill some discipline at FTII. He agrees that a review of activities is overdue, but refuses to accept that budget constraints have in any way jeopardised the training and facilities provided to students. "I have done my best," he stresses, "and all I have got is abuse." Varma says he will continue in office till mid-1991 "due to personal reasons". He adds: "Otherwise, I would love to get away from here. The atmosphere here is terrible. There are threats to kidnap, even kill my family. How do you think I feel about this?"



Students under the "wisdom tree": decrying nonsensical policy

From numerous accounts, Varma himself is to blame for the unsavoury atmosphere. "If one person is causing so much trouble," says a noted Bombay film-maker, "I fail to understand why the government cannot replace him." He may have a point. But the thing is, the FTII is a long way from New Delhi. And culture is a long way from the Centre's current preoccupations. Besides, the way things are, will the situation change once Varma leaves? Till he does, there is no way to find out. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/Pune



THE WATER WAITS.
THE RAZOR'S EDGE QUIVERS.
DON'T LOOK BACK.

GRIP THE CAN. PRESS THE NOZZLE.
FOAM GUSHES ONTO YOUR PALM.
FEEL THE FRESHNESS
WHISPER AGAINST YOUR FACE.
SAVOUR THE RICHEST LATHER
EVER TO MEET SKIN.
SCENT THE SENSATION
OF ITS EXHILARATING FRAGRANCE.
EXULT.

PALMOLIVE CLASSIC SHAVE FOAM.
FROM COLGATE-PALMOLIVE.
MAKERS OF
INDIA'S LEADING SHAVE CREAMS.

Palmolive
Classic
SHAVE FOAM

THE NEW WORLD OF SHAVING

SHANKAR NAG (1954-1990)

If you asked Shankar Nag's friends to describe him, the two most commonly used adjectives would have been "restless" and "enthusiastic". In the end, it was perhaps these two qualities—which endeared many to the talented and popular actor-director—that were most in evidence on that fateful night of 30 September. Nag, who had gone to bed completely exhausted, had decided against attending the *mahurat* of *Jokumaraswamy* — the Girish Karnad-directed film that he was both producer and lead actor of. But in the middle of the night, he woke up—restless at first and then enthusiastic about making the journey to distant Bijapur district, where the *mahurat* was to be held. He asked his wife to pack, picked up their six-year-old daughter and left Bangalore at about 2.30 am. But, as fate would have it, Nag was killed when his car collided head-on with a truck on the Bangalore-Pune highway. His wife was gravely injured in the accident, but his daughter providentially escaped.



The measure of Nag's popularity in the state was evident when thousands of grieving fans thronged his recording studio and his house to pay their last respects. Lamps were lit and his photographs garlanded even in remote parts of Karnataka. It was as if the state was mourning more than just the passing away of a star—but a unique personality, whose zest for life and unaffected ways struck a chord with the people. Says journalist Y.N. Krishnamurthy, who Nag credited with moulding his career: "He had a remarkable knack for making people he worked with feel at ease and at the same time extracting the best work from them."

Nag made his debut as a film actor 12 years ago after he was offered the lead role in a film made by his mentor Girish Karnad. Nag told Karnad that he would rather be assistant director, but when the latter persisted, Nag agreed to do the role. Apart from establishing himself as an actor, his performance in *Ondaanondu Kaladalli* fetched him the Silver Peacock award.

Nag had no apparent difficulty in making the transition from art to popular cinema. Although the director of his first commercial film *Seetha Rāmu* had trouble with teaching him how to dance and play the conventional hero, the film was a hit and launched Nag as one of the top stars of Kannada cinema. After that he was as comfortable gallivanting round bushes with heroines or bashing a baddie in as performing in an off-beat film.

When he found that the role of a star was limiting, he took to directing. His first venture *Minchina Ota*—which he also starred in—won him a number of awards, but failed at the box-office. So did the next four which followed in close succession, though each of them won critical acclaim. The best film he directed was easily *Accident*, which had a political theme woven around it. It added a national award to his list but, typically, left an even bigger hole in his pocket.

All this while, he kept his interest in theatre going. Nag, who had been closely associated with Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati theatre before he took to films, never left the stage. Sanket, the theatre group he formed along with his wife Arundathi and his brother Anant Nag (also a film actor) has many memorable productions to its credit. A few years ago, he took to television—making that memorable 39-episode serial *Malgudi Days* and then following it up with *Swamy And Friends* and *The Vendor Of Sweets*. Nag's short association with television won him a larger following and enhanced his reputation as a man of many parts.

Nag was also something of a dreamer. Among the various schemes that he had in mind were the erection of a ropeway up Nandi Hills (a picnic spot near Bangalore), the creation of a circular railway around the city and the setting up of a large garment manufacturing unit. One dream that did translate into reality was, of course, the Country Club. Launched in August this year, the holiday resort was built on 15 acres of land on the outskirts of Bangalore. His other ideas are at various stages of implementation.

Because of his varied interests, Nag was always a man in a hurry. "I used to keep telling him to slow down," recalls brother Anant. "But he would always reply that this was the time to work and that relaxation could come later." But knowing Nag, he was unlikely to have ever eased up. It was his zeal for work that shaped his personality—gave him that endless energy, that infectious charm. The air of a man who didn't just live but was alive. ●

Gauri Lankesh

Gloss and sheen

A new photographer sparkles on both sides of the lens

In film-crazy Bombay, her only identity had been that of director Ramesh *(Sholay)* Sippy's attractive daughter. And arty circles knew her as the granddaughter of painter A.J. Patel (whose pictures still hang in the New York Museum) and the daughter of Gita Patel, a painter as well though not quite so significant. Not any more. Today, at 24, Sheena Sippy has carved out an identity for herself. She is Bombay's brightest up-and-coming photographer, who promises to change the way pictures are seen and understood in the glamour city. And elsewhere.

With her father in films and a grandfather credited with opening the first colour film centre in Bombay, cameras weren't a novelty as far as Sheena was concerned. "I never discovered the camera," she discloses. "I always had it around me. I just discovered my passion for it."

A passion which led her to train informally with celebrated fashion photographer Gautam Rajadhyaksha, on one of her vacations home from Michigan University. She didn't just get clued in on such technicalities as lighting, but also learnt how best one could put one's subject at ease.

The training came in useful when Sheena began work on her first assignment: a photo-session (in black and white only) with noted industrialist J.R.D. Tata. Then followed shoots with Pakistani cricketer Imran Khan and megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who proved to be her most enthusiastic subject yet. Recounts Sippy with a laugh: "He went totally wild, stuck out his tongue, rolled up his eyes, cocked his head and did a Bill Cosby number for me."

Her first byline, however, appeared with a glamour picture of Sonu Walia in *Filmfare*. "The photograph was spalshed over an entire page and I was glad to see it," Sheena enthuses.

Next on the cards were a *Debonair* cover with model Rhea Pillai, a photo-feature with music maestro Pandit Jasraj and a stint with Meher Jesia underwater for the fashion magazine *Glad Rags*. The latter assignment provided some laughs when Sheena was featured on a Doordarshan talk show with several other photographers. The interviewer asked earnestly: "Why did you shoot Meher Jesia underwater?"

Bored beyond measure by the contrived sincerity of all the participants, a nonchalant Sippy shot back: "Why not?"

This, apparently, was not the answer the interviewer was looking for and she persisted.

By now quite irritated with the way things were going, Sippy replied: "Because it was hot!"



"I never discovered the camera," Sheena discloses. "I always had it around me. I just discovered my passion for it"

She confesses: "I don't think they liked me very much."

But her subjects do. The village women she shot in Rajasthan, for instance. "They were so colourful, yet so shy," she reminisces excitedly. "They danced for me, told me about their lives." And Sippy learnt a lot more when she travelled all over India, looking for picture possibilities. Raves Sheena: "Rajasthan, Goa, what places, what movement, even in a barber's shop."

Street photography, however, is not all there is to Sheena. She's done a fair bit of work for the ad agencies, too: The Garden Vareli ads for Ambience and some shots for the Vadilal account for Enterprise agency. But while it was exciting to see her work in print, the payments left Sippy cold. "Payment?" she mocks. "I think you should run a laughter track over that question. Though, sometimes you do get lucky."

Among Sippy's forthcoming projects is a film—she's not Ramesh Sippy's daughter for nothing—*Pathar Ke Phool* with Salman Khan in the lead. "I want to give the film a new look," she says earnestly, "a new identity."

That's not all. For, Sheena, who claims to be the non-conformist of the decade, promises to create a new-look photography as well. Her guru, she says, is Herb Ritts, of Gap clothes campaign fame, and Sippy wishes to work in his style, "so simple, yet so strong". So, Sheena's going to continue zooming in with her Nikon FM2.

Sharp as a stiletto in ice. ●

Cyrus H. Merchant/Bombay

Living for the future

Dr Rustom Soonawala makes handling birth defects a little easier

"Of an 800 million population," says Dr Rustom P. Soonawala, "ten million children are born with minor or major defects. And to try and ease the trauma for to-be mothers—and their as-yet-unborn children—the well-known Bombay gynaecologist has founded the Indian Society for Prenatal Diagnosis and Therapy (ISPAT).

Basically, the organisation, which Soonawala has founded—with three other top specialists, Adi Dastur, Hema Purandare and Bharat Parekh—plans to make a largely illiterate public aware of the grey zones of pregnancy. It also expects to advise central and state government health programmes on technical and clinical aspects of foetal therapy. ISPAT will be offering awards and scholarships to Indian scientists and doctors, in an attempt to promote prenatal diagnosis, and ultimately, to check infant mortality.



Says Dr Soonawala, "We'd like parents to know that if a pregnancy poses a problem which cannot be altered and will grossly affect the child, it should be terminated. But we can only counsel."

"Pardon me, for this may seem most unclinical," says Soonawala, smiling, "but we doctors do get involved with the pregnancy. She, the mother, that is, places her trust in us. She starts coming here (to Pashmina, Soonawala's clinic on central Bombay's Peddar Road), she calls up if she has any pain as the baby starts forming. Even the clinic staff gets involved." And then, says the doctor, when the baby is born with defects, the parents and clinic staff feel terrible about it.

"I question myself," says Soonawala. "Did I do right? Why didn't I diagnose it properly? Should I have terminated the pregnancy?" For the parents it is definitely a nightmare, says the gynaecologist, and to assist them in facing social stigma—the unfortunate but all-too-true by-product of a child born with defects—is another ISPAT function.

Soonawala says that he and his colleagues would like people to know that childbirth from a late marriage, today's fast deteriorating environment, and often, lack of basic nutrition in the mother's case can cause a fatal pregnancy. Certainly for the child, and in extreme cases, for the mother. "We'd even like them to know," says Soonawala, "that if a pregnancy poses a problem which cannot be altered and which will grossly affect the child, it should be terminated." He adds: "But we can only counsel. The ethics of the medical profession allow us informative counselling, not directive counselling. It is upto the couple. Sadly, because of certain religious beliefs, mothers wish to go ahead with it (the pregnancy)."

ISPAT found that it could push through with some of its public awareness intention last month, at the first international meet on foetal therapy in Bombay. Top specialists from around the world attended—Italy's Bruno Bambati, Guy Besley from the UK and Yves Oumez from France, among others—to discuss current international trends on foetal therapy. The good thing was that admission was thrown open to the public.

While that helped in the awareness campaign, it also helped bring in money. Soonawala says ISPAT received 150 donations—tax-free for both the giver and the taker. One businessman, Yoginder Mafatlal, sent over a cheque for Rs 1.5 lakhs right away. Soon, he says, he will approach big industrial houses for donations.

The funds, says Soonawala, will be used for meeting the expenses of visiting doctors. And to build a reference system for storing—and updating—medical information. Besides, the money will pay for the awards, research, and training of personnel and holding workshops and programmes on pre-natal care in cities as well as small towns. And all the while, ISPAT plans to introduce the latest international techniques in India.

"In the US they have already started performing surgery on the foetus," says Soonawala, "and hopefully, we will start soon." Corrective operations on the foetus have been conducted even in the sixth month of pregnancy, says the doctor, where the uterus has been opened up, surgery done on the foetus, the wound closed up, and then it is just a case of pregnancy as usual. This is, as yet, a little advanced for India—only three such operations have been conducted worldwide—but Soonawala is looking at the basics for now. Diagnosis, treatment and counselling. Says he: "It doesn't require a legal license, just expertise and very sophisticated equipment—that can rectify any kidney or liver damage. It can collect blood samples which can give accurate diagnosis."

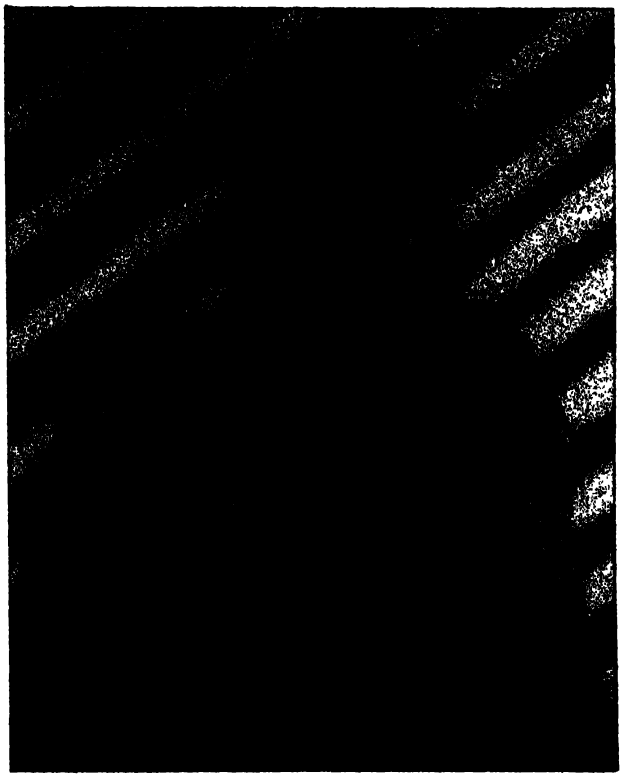
But most importantly, says the doctor, the public should help out, by volunteering and involving themselves. "We gain as much from it as they do," he says. "If parents take the initiative and enroll (in ISPAT programmes) they have done their part." No second-opinion on that count. ●

Cyrus Merchant/Bombay

When she appeared on the scene some time back everyone was sure Tanvi Azmi would go places. With a sister-in-law as influential as Shabana Azmi, she appeared all set for a great future.

But, even after a memorable performance in Vijaya Mehta's *Rao Saheb*, she went nowhere near the stardom everyone had predicted.

To make matters worse, she is now reduced to accepting TV roles—in a Marathi serial she plays a female cop. Her reduced stature in the film world appears to be in tandem with her sister-in-law's plunging career graph.



Anu Aggarwal: wondergirl

Mahesh Bhatt's film on pulsating love and memorable ditties, *Aashiqui* seems to have achieved entirely different results for the lead pair of Anu Aggarwal and Rahul Roy. While Rahul has been dismissed as just another wooden non-actor, the film has done wonderful things for Anu.

Almost every magazine worth its circulation has dwelt at length on how the ex-sociology student from Delhi University fell in love with Bombay and decided to stay on in the big bad city, after a tearful farewell from her family. She then proceeded to find her bearings in the modelling world and was more than successful at it. And then, she kind of strayed into films, courtesy the roving eye of Mahesh Bhatt.

Aashiqui got her rave reviews from the press and critics talked about how the "ultimate" dusky Indian actress had finally arrived, as opposed to the peroxide beauties that we routinely see on screen.

Anu may be one of the oompher things to have happened to the Hindi film industry in recent years, but it should not detract attention from the fact that she is something of a wondergirl. For, to have achieved all this after going through a matchless academic performance at college (or so she says), a stint with a UN project, a successful career as a model, *and* a nine-month-long sojourn abroad, and to still claim that she is just a sweet 22 in a recent interview to a film magazine is nothing short of a miracle.

If only she was half as intelligent as her credentials suggest. Or maybe, she just got worked up a little early.

Meenakshi Seshadri: incredible luck



Meenakshi Seshadri really has nothing but brave words to fall back on. Her attempts to attach herself to the *Ghayal* success story are quite pathetic, considering she did not have much to do in the film (which could be a blessing in disguise).

The success of *Ghar Ho To Aisa* too seems to have eluded the incredible Seshadri. She has lost producer Feroze Nadiawala's next venture, *Pratikar*, to arch rival Madhuri Dixit. And that must really hurt.

So, she teeters on the brink of a spectacular comeback only to fall back into further ignominy. Life can't be much fun this way. Maybe she should scout around for a new bag of tricks. That old Seshadri magic has a touch of the obsolete now.

Juhi Chawla may be a baby-faced charmer but she has plenty of grey cells too.

It would take a smart operator to outwit the deadly combination of Govinda and his brother Kirti.

The brothers had invested them hard-earned money in *Radha Ka Sangam*—the comeback film for Govinda who has not been doing too well. And



Juhi Chawla: smart operator

Govinda was confident that his role would be well looked after, what with brother Kirti directing the film. He got a rude shock, though, when he saw the rushes and discovered that the film revolved around Juhi and not him.

Govinda is still dumbstruck.

The moral: When the deciding factor is Juhi Chawla, do *not* trust your brother. ●

The Shah of Blah

Salman Rushdie turns autobiography into fiction



FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

Eighteen months of virtual captivity has not only left Salman Rushdie plumper, he's also developed a new chuckle—almost a half-giggle—which makes him look every bit the benign laughing Buddha. Gone is the arrogant, defiant Rushdie, and a new reconciliatory, reflective man seems to have taken his place. His obvious good humour, despite his adversity, makes it difficult to believe that this is the man a million Muslims in Britain are gunning for.

"It hasn't been a whole lot of fun since February '89," he told Melvyn Bragg of UK's ITV on the *South Bank Show* last week. "Writers shouldn't have lives this interesting. It gets in the way of your work." In his first television appearance since going into hiding following the Ayatollah's death threat, Rushdie spoke as fluently as ever, hardly showing any rage. The man whose last appearance on television had been an angry defiance of the Ayatollah—"Frankly, I wish I'd written a more critical book," (BBC Television News, 19 February, 1989)—was now apologising for having hurt the feelings of Muslims.

"I'm sorry," said Rushdie, "I didn't want to do it, I'm very sad that, that should be the case. People have said that I ought to be punished and so forth. Well, all I can say is, if punishment was the aim, well I've had some. For me the greatest loss is to be reviled by the people I wrote about.

"I've been separated from the thing which was the motive in my own writing, the places and people, the ideas that have been, that have generated everything I've done. I've never rejected the world I came from. I've tried to do the opposite. I've tried to bring it into the world I'm in. To be rejected by it is horrible."

It is this pain at the separation from his subject which surfaces in his latest book, *Haroun And The Sea Of Stories*. Written for his 12-year-old son, Zafar, whom Rushdie has not seen for over a year, the book is about the adventures of Haroun and his father—the story-teller Rashid Khalifa—variously known as the Shah of Blah, or the Ocean of Notions. The Shah of Blah loses the gift of the gab—the allegory with Rushdie's own situation is too obvious — and father and son go on a wild journey *a la Alice In Wonderland*.

While western critics have carefully tried to avoid comparing the book with Rushdie's situation, the similarities are striking; Rushdie's novel begins in a sad city: "A city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name"

Rushdie's remote hiding place, surrounded by burly special branch men, seems the replica of the sad city. Yet, from here Rushide breaks out, flying out on his magic carpet to the Land of the Fantastic, where the good guys laugh and gossip and the bad ones walk around in fashionable dark glasses in the Land of Darkness. It is here that Rushdie spins a fable, that will be recorded as one of the classic allegories of his time to be enjoyed by adults and children alike.

Rashid Khalifa loses his gift of the gab. The Ocean of Stories from where he draws his fabulous tales is slowly being poisoned by the Prince of Silence—Khattam Shud—who wants to control the world. Khattam Shud hates stories: for him stories are no fun, they only create trouble. He is

plainly an Ayatollah-like character.

Haroun is determined to restore his father's gift. He sits on Butt the Hoopoe, who always talks without moving his lips, and travels to the Land of Gup. But a war is on: between the citizens of Gup City and those of Chup City The Guppies are **the good guys: theirs is the city of fun and make-believe which is lit by the Moon Kahani and where the people** are liberal. A process too complicated to explain is in operation here to keep the balance and help the citizens out of trouble. The city is defended by General Kitab and his army of books and is ruled by Prince Bolo.

The Chup City, by contrast, is the hooded city, where forces of darkness **rule. Free expression is illegal here and there are no theatres, courts or schools. The Chupwalas always have their lips zipped-up and defend their shadowy world by spreading pollution and darkness. It is ultimately the light that Haroun carries that blinds the Chupwalas and leads to the final conquest of Chup City.**

Helping Haroun in Rushdie's classic fight between the forces of darkness and light are absurd characters like Butt the Hoopoe, Iff the Water Genie, and two plentimaw fishes called Goopy and Bagha (here Rushdie borrows straight from Ray's film for children *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*).

As Rushdie explains in a glossary—the first time he has used one in any novel—the Goopy and Bagha characters are taken from Ray's movie and are the names of two goofy characters. "The movie characters are not fishes but they are certainly very fishy," writes Rushdie.

There is also the brave Blabbermouth, and Princess Batcheat—who is kidnapped by the Chupwalas—and the mad driver Butt, who faces Haroun and his father in the Valley of K—variously known as Kachi-Mer (a place that hides the sea) and Kosh-Mar (nightmare) which has at its centre the Dull Lake (no prizes for guessing what Rushdie is referring to). The Valley of K is of course ruled by the despot General Bhuttoo who lies to his people but is eventually overthrown when Rashid gets back his story-telling powers.

Written from the depths of loneliness and despair, Rushdie's novel is at once satirical, moving and wonderfully funny. At the end of the war, Haroun searches for a happy **ending that is not make-believe. The** last few pages where Rashid Khalifa gets back his fabulous gift of the gab, and where Haroun's mother returns to look after them both, is a reader's delight. Haroun at last finds a story that is true: joy breaks out in the sad city, and they've even remembered its **name. The city is called Kahani or** story, **and what could be more** wonderful than that?

No Lewis Carroll ending here, but one that is the most optimistic that a persecuted writer could write. It is impossible to separate this book from its author and the end is a suitable emotional climax.

Describing the relationship with his son, Zafar, as one that he missed the most, Rushdie told Bragg, "It's been an incredible loss, I think, for us both. When I was writing my previous book, he asked me why all my books were for grown-ups and I said good question, and he and I then did a deal, which is, I would be allowed to finish the book I was writing, on the condition that the next one would be one that he might enjoy reading.

"So maybe I should have not written it and written this one instead," he laughed.

"Usually when parent-child relationships occur in books meant, at least partly, for children, either the parents are terrible, or they have to be got rid of, so that the child's world can take over. And I wanted to write a book in which that didn't happen: in which the parent and child were equally involved in the world and where the relationship between them might be full of irritations and mutual contempt, but it was also an affectionate relationship."

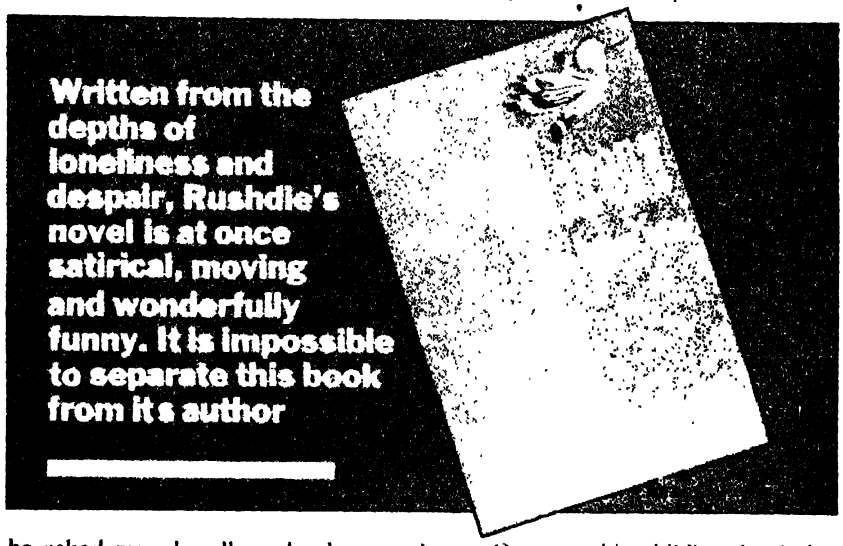
It was modern art cinema that initiated him into the world of writing, said Rushdie. He was also a great admirer of Satyajit Ray, who he said was "an extraordinary lyricist of the real" rather unlike most of what he had done. "He's primarily a realistic film-maker in most of his films. There's the other side of him which is the wonderful children's movies. I loved those films and the one of course which I somewhat shamelessly ripped off him in *Haroun* is *The Adventures Of Goopy And Bagha.*"

It's obvious Rushdie misses India—his source of stories—and particularly Bombay. "The thing that has always been of central importance to me in my writing is the city of Bombay and God knows when I'll be able to get there," he said. He had two relationships with Bombay, said the writer. One was his childhood relation with the city, the other the adult one that he had built up over the years by returning to it and by keeping in touch with his friends there

"My writing has always I think come out of the experience of being a member of the British-Asian community and there's rather colossal disruption in that relationship at the moment. This affair has changed my relationship with the world and there are great losses in it."

It was only his work that kept him going, said Rushdie. Though *Haroun* did not make it to the Booker Prize short-list this year, it is a novel that will stand as a classic of English literature and testimony to the fact that some of the best literature in the world is produced when the novel itself is under threat. ●

Shrabani Basu/London



Express sale

Ramnath Goenka takes over the Gentleman *group*

Minhaz Merchant's decade-long adventure in publishing has came to an end. He is one of the few journalists who wanted to be his own master, publish his own magazines, build an empire, and make it big. For ten years he did just that. His Sterling Newspapers Pvt Ltd brought out five glossies and everything seemed to go well till upsetting newspaper economics made the Sterling founder. And in the end, Merchant gave up. On 1 October, the Sterling Group's management was taken over by the holding company of the Indian Express Newspapers.



Minhaz Merchant: bowing out; the Sterling magazines: moving into a bigger network

In 1941, journalist Russy Karanjia set a new trend by editing and publishing the *Blitz* and 50 years later, he is still flourishing. But there was no one to follow his footsteps, not until the 25-year-old budding journalist Merchant came in. That was in 1980. After 10 years, he looks back with a tinge of sadness and feels he cannot do it all over again. Newspaper economics has put publishing forever beyond the hands of the journalist. It is today a venture only big business can afford, says Merchant.

Starting his career as a trainee in *The Times Of India* in 1976, Merchant became the bureau chief of *India Today* before venturing on his own. "There comes a time when you decide to do your own thing and there in no better way to learn than when you are doing it alone. It's like being at the deep end of the pool", Merchant feels and goes on to compare himself with Russy Karanjia. "Russy had only one brand. I had five-- *Gentleman* (1980), *GFQ* (1982), *TV and Video World* (1983), *Technocrat* (1985) and *Business Computer* (1986). I made what now looks like a big mistake by buying *Megacity* from IBH. I had a record of five magazines in eight years. Each magazine grew organically. The profits of *Gentleman* were ploughed into *GFQ* and so on."

Talking of the magazines he launched, Merchant observes that *Gentleman* was started when there was a general magazine boom in the late Seventies. In the early Eighties, Park Avenue and Sheetal revolutionised the fashion industry, and it was time for *GFQ* to be born. The TV boom followed the '82 Asiad and it was time for *TV and Video World* to step in. It netted Rs 45,000 in six months at Rs 2 per copy. It was a runaway success and imitators lost out in the race. After Rajiv Gandhi entered the political arena, the accent was on industrial liberalisation and modern technology. So the *Technocrat* hit the stands.

The 1988 decision to buy *Megacity*, according to Merchant, was a bad gamble. There were already two city magazines, and newsprint prices were soon hiked by 100 per cent. It threw the magazine economy out of gear and people began selling out to big business. *The Daily* went to Birla, *Sunday Mail* to Dalmia. The Bachawat Award dealt the industry another hard blow. "The Dalmias,Birlas, and the Ambanis started offering senior editors huge salaries and we could not match that," says Merchant. "Actually big business houses changed the arithmetic."

There were a couple of business houses that wooed Sterling Publications too, but they were averse to any "strategic alliance". They wanted an outright sale. It did not suit Merchant, who laid down three conditions—the staff had to be retained, complete editorial independence guaranteed, and the terms of agreement made acceptable.

The deal was a secret affair. No one heard a word before Ramnath Goenka's low-profile grandson, Vivek Khaitan, announced it. Vivek and another grandson, Manoj Santhalia, were instrumental in clinching the deal. "Yes, it was almost an overnight decision to buy the Sterling Group," says Manoj. "It was an exciting offer and we thought it would be the best way we could use our large distribution network."

Merchant feels that a publishing house would do more justice to his magazines than a business house would have. "It is not like selling toothpaste," says Merchant. "A magazine is probably the only product in the whole world that sells for less than its cost of production."

With the magazine boom entering a new phase, Merchant feels that the new chapter in magazine publishing will see the emergence and strengthening of specialised publications like those on fashion, computers and automobiles.

With big money entering the scene, it is anyone's bet how long general magazines will survive. The age is one of specialisation and the big fishes are out to get the small ones.●

Olga Tellis/Bombay

Signals from Baliapal

Has the Centre shelved the national missile test range project?



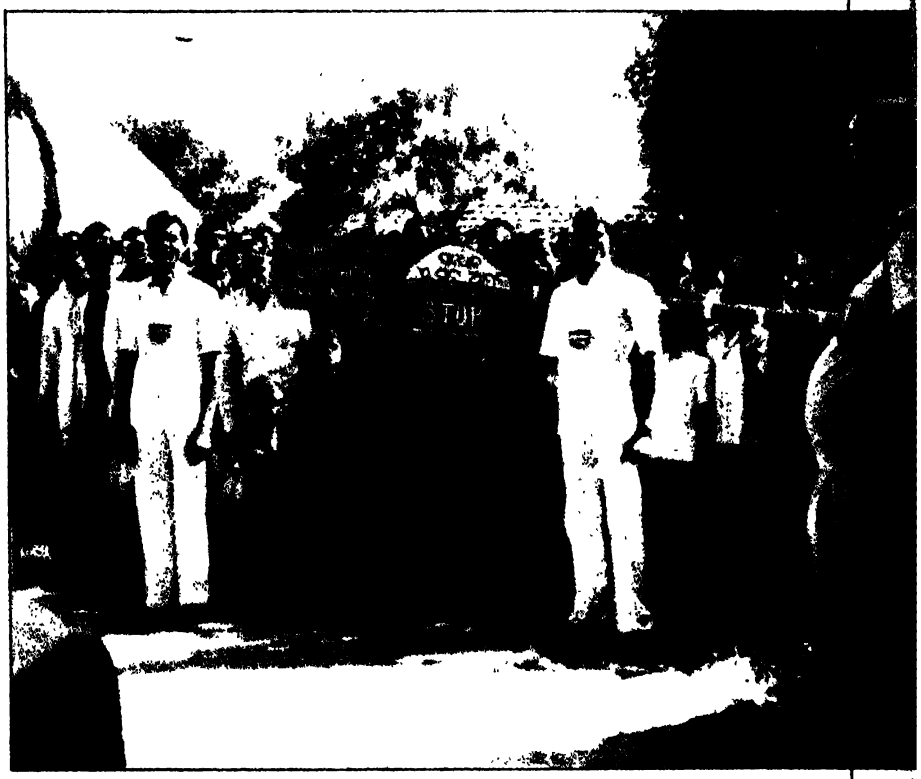
ORISSA

Strange things are happening in Baliapal. For nearly five years the country's national test range (NTR), planned to be built there, has remained a contentious issue, with the Union government doggedly sticking to its decision to go ahead with the project and the people putting up a fierce resistance. When the Congress(I) was in power at the Centre before November 1989, the Opposition Janata Dal had sided with the disaffected people, who faced the prospect of being displaced from the fertile coastal area in the state's Balasore district. But after coming to power, the Dal's central leadership staged a volte-face by concluding that Baliapal provided the most suitable site for the NTR.

The issue is, therefore, proving to be a major embarrassment for the state's ruling Janata Dal and its ally, the Communist Party of India (CPI), which had campaigned vehemently against the NTR before the last parliamentary and Assembly elections. In fact, the setting of the NTR in Baliapal has become a question of survival for the Dal and CPI leaders in Balasore, one of the richest agricultural districts in the state. With the V.P. Singh regime at the Centre opting to pursue the Congress(I)'s policy regarding the NTR, the people of Baliapal are beginning to feel "defrauded" and are growing alarmingly restive.

What the Dal dreads most is the revival of the anti-NTR agitation at this juncture, when the National Front is being battered by a spate of agitations against the Centre's decision to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations, proposing quota reservations in government jobs for the backward classes. And this uneasiness on its part has prompted the Dal's state unit and the CPI to evolve strategies to avert a crisis in Baliapal, at least for the time being.

The stratagem they have adopted is one of subterfuge. The two parties are trying to create the impression that the NTR project has been shelved by "deciding" to lift the embargo on the extention of financial aid to the people under various government schemes so that development activities could be resumed. At a meeting of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), the Balasore CPI MLA, Arun Dey, moved a resolution to this effect, which, according to him was "unanimously adopted ".The meeting, chaired by the district collector, was attended by several ruling party MLAs from the district, including the minister of state for education, Dr Kamala Das. Obviously, the collector was sought to be made a party to the political resolution prepared by the Dal and the CPI leaders, hinting that the project had been virtually abandoned.



The people's checkpost at Baliapal: no let up in vigilance

But the state's home department sources told SUNDAY that no such embargo had ever existed and, therefore, the question of it being withdrawn did not arise. Moreover, there has been no indication from the Centre so far to suggest that the NTR project was being dropped or shifted elsewhere. In fact, the people had reasons to doubt the Centre's intentions when a delegation of the Baliapal Test Range Resistance Committee (TRRC), led by the Balasore MP and former Union minister, Samarendra Kundu, drew a blank from the Prime Minister when it met him last month.

The people of Baliapal have more reasons to feel apprehensive. Last month, chief minister Biju Patnaik went back on his promise to visit the area during the Pujas, giving rise to speculations that the state government was going to endorse the Centre's plan of action. According to Arun Dey, the TRRC had planned to open the gate they have erected to prevent govern-

ment officials from entering Baliapal during Patnaik's visit. But since Biju failed to show up, the gate remains shut, and no state official is being allowed into the area, despite the DRDA resolution on financial assistance.

Interestingly, it was the infighting within the Dal that prompted Biju to cancel his Baliapal trip. The chief minister was clearly miffed at the initiative taken by Samarendra Kundu in leading the TRRC delegation to Delhi and he told some Baliapal leaders that he was not going to take up their cause with the Centre.

The people of Baliapal cannot rest assured till the Centre issues a statement scrapping the project. What worries them most is that the rehabilitation programmes are still on

Meanwhile, the appointment of Arun Singh as the advisor to V.P. Singh on defence matters has made Kundu and his followers doubly suspicious. They see Arun Singh as "another hawk" in South Block, who, they believe, will prevail upon V.P. Singh to go ahead with the NTR project.

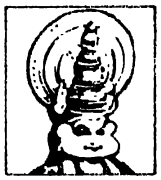
Even though Biju Patnaik is on record having said that the project will never be implemented, the people cannot rest assured till the Centre makes a categorical statement scrapping the project. What keeps the people's fears alive is that several rehabilitation schemes for those who are likely to be displaced in the event of the project coming through is progressing apace.

The sentiments of the people are aptly expressed by the Janata Dal MLA from the area, Aswini Kumar Patra, who says that "the agitation will be revived in greater intensity than ever before if the test range project is not shelved". And his party colleagues have no other option but to take recourse to specious propaganda. The people, they realise, must be reassured at any cost. •

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

Hang them high

CPI(M) workers avenge the killing of their comrades



KERALA

An uneasy political calm prevailing in Kerala for sometime has been rudely shattered. During the last fortnight, two Congress(I) workers were slain by CPI(M) supporters in Chimeni and Kundera. The murders would not have normally attracted mere than usual attention had it not been for the fact that the victims were undertrials who had been acquitted by the court. They had been charged with the murder of CPI(M) workers, and the recent killings were a sequel to the vendetta between the two parties.

Rajan, secretary of the Youth Congress(I), Chimeni Mandalam unit, was hacked to death in broad daylight, allegedly by CPI(M) activists. Chimeni happens to be chief minister E.K. Nayanar's constituency in the Kasargod district. Rajan was the thirteenth accused in the Chimeni murder case in which five CPI(M) workers were killed by Congress volunteers on the day of the state Assembly elections in 1987. One of Rajan's co-accused, Biju, another Congress(I) worker, has also been done to death by the CPI(M) in Kundera,near Quilon.

Says Oomen Chandy, a Congress(I) MLA and a former home minister: "The spurt in political murders and violent activities in Kerala is worse than what is happening in Kashmir and Punjab." He says that the CPI(M) cadres are awarding "death penalties" to those who had been accused of murdering Marxist workers, but were later acquitted by the courts.

The Kerala Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (KPCC-I) president, A.K. Antony, who has also raised a hue and cry against the killings, has demanded that the CPI(M) hand over the home portfolio to some other constituent of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF). He alleges that the police have been totally politicised and are incapable of working impartially.

Ironically, it is not only the Congress(I) but also the CPI, the second largest constituent in the LDF, which is unhappy with the CPI(M)'s handling of the home portfolio. In fact, a war of words has broken out between them. It was the AITUC, the trade union wing of the CPI, which first fired the shot by accusing the Marxists of making a partisan use of the police for supressing trade union activities, rigging elections to co-operative societies, implicating the CPI and

A.K. Antony (with a megaphone): loud and clear



AITUC cadres in false cases, and raiding CPI offices. But the chief minister's office rebutted these charges. So, the CPI state council isssued a statement, listing the charges made by the AITUC.

But the CPI(M) state committee countered the allegations saying that the CPI leadership was being fed with wrong information by its cadres. Says a furious J. Chithranjan, MLA and AITUC secretary: "The CPI(M) leadership has failed to take corrective steps

Meanwhile, a section of the CPI workers have demanded that the party withdraw from the ministry and support the government from outside. The CPI has been also criticising the policies of the Nayanar government. Lately, tourism minister P. S. Srinivasan, the CPI strongman, did his best to sabotage the Taj Group's plan to set up hotels in the state. But, the group had the backing of K.R. Gouri, the powerful Marxist industry, minister, who finally saw the deal through. And more recently, the AITUC working committee criticised the state government for succumbing to pressure from liquor barons by allowing them to run licensed arrack shops.

But chief minister Nayanar is unfazed. Regarding the political murders in his own constituency, Nayanar says that neither he nor his government approves of such methods to settle political scores. He pooh-poohs the Congress(I) ascusation that CPI(M) cadres have unleashed a reign of terror and cites examples to prove that Congress(I)'s hand are no less bloody.

However, the CPI(M) is careful enough not to rock the LDF boat too viciously and is, therefore, ignoring the CPI broadsides. The Marxists are determinded to set a record by leading the first communist government in the state through its full term. Already, the CPI(M) is gearing up for the district council elections to be held later this year. And, expectedly, allegations of the electoral rolls being fudged are surfacing with the Opposition parties complaining that the names of their supporters are being struck off the list. The district elections are crucial for the LDF, as they serve as a dress rehearsal for the 1992 Assembly elections. And clearly, the CPI(M) is ready to overlook the present belligerence of its partners for the sake of future gains. ●

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivadrum



Damaged two-wheelers: anti-socials were active

Back to brickbats

After 50 years of harmony, communal clashes break out in Raipur



MADHYA PRADESH

For half a century, Raipur had an impeccable record. It could boast of absolute communal harmony, when most other places were stained with the scars of riots. But early this month that reputation suffered when Hindus and Muslims clashed on Prophet Mohammed's birthday.

The reason behind the mayhem was flimsy. The clash could have been avoided had the administration been more alert and the two communities considerate. It happened on 3 October, when 10,000 Muslims and the All India Vidyarthi Parishad brought out processions on the same street. The police burst tear gas shells and made lathicharges to bring the situation under control.

Leaders of the two communities, however, debunk reports that the incidents amounted to a communal strife. They maintain that anti-social elements on both sides created trouble with the intention of looting shops and business establishments. In the process several two-wheelers and motor cars were damaged and a number of people injured.

All political parties—the BJP, Congress(I), the Janata Dal—have, held the district administration responsible for failing to take preventive measures. They argue that the authorities should never have allowed the two processions to come out at the same time and proceed along the same route.

Government officials, however, rebut this charge as rank political opportunism. They say that the leaders of the Vidyarthi Parishad were requested to lead their march through a different locality. But influential BJP leaders, having the backing of the minister of state, Brij Mohan Agarwal, insisted that they be allowed to take Malviya Road where the Muslim procession was scheduled. And the inevitable happened: the rival groups confronted each other, much inflammatory slogan-shouting followed, and fighting broke out.

Eyewitnesses told SUNDAY that some Parishad members had tried bursting crackers, but were prevented by the more sober elements. In fact, they say, some leaders of both the communities had frantically tried to lead the marchers away from each other so that a physical clash could be avoided. But before they could take their followers to a safe distance, the stone-throwing began.

As a curfew was clamped on the town, the situation limped back to normal. But presspersons had a harrowing time doing their rounds during this period. Despite holding curfew passes, they were beaten up by the police. About six of them ended up with fractured arms and one suffered head injuries. As a result, the Raipur Working Journalists' Union and the Raipur Press Club have imposed a ban on reporting official programmes, press conferences and statements.

M.V. Khor/Raipur

Talking of rubbish

Bombay looks for new dumping grounds



MAHARASHTRA

Wealth from waste is what Bombay's armchair environmentalists never tire of discussing. In reality, however, very little is left for conversion into useful stuff after the ragpickers do their rounds. They pick off everything recyclable, leaving behind soggy rubbish that is not even good enough for the incinerators.

And in it lies a problem. Four major garbage dumps, spread over 900 acres of land about 25 km from Bombay, will be able to cope with the filth the city produces for another five years. After that, the solid waste management department (SWMD) of the Bombay Municipal Corporation will have to find new dumping grounds. And like many things, land, near the booming metropolis, is difficult to come by.

C.D. Kotnis, chief engineer, SWMD, says that he is negotiating with the government for the procurement of more land to meet the growing conservancy needs. There are tracts of open spaces at Vikhroli and Bhandup that could solve the problem for another 25 years. But as yet there is no guarantee that they will be made easily available.

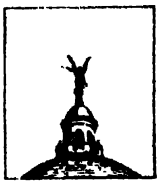
It would have been most convenient, if the garbage could be burnt in giant incinerators, though the arrangement may have given rise to an obnoxious side-effect: air pollution. "Bombay's garbage has very low calorific content per kg," says Kotnis, explaining why the burning-up option is not being pursued.

The city's conservancy operations are still predominantly manual, though the SWMD is bringing in modern technology to augment its handling capacity. The department has acquired about 40 compactors (dumpers with hydraulic lifting devices) to facilitate mechanical loading and unloading of garbage. •

Olga Tellis/ Bombay

Cops under fire

CPI(M) leader Biman Bose lets loose a scathing attack on the police



WEST BENGAL

Protests against police atrocities by CPI(M) leaders can be construed as thinly veiled criticism of chief minister Jyoti Basu, who holds the "law and order portfolio." But the party's central committee member Biman Bose is always ready to do the unexpected. After police fired on agitated citizens protesting against heavy power cuts on 26 September, killing at least two persons, Bose expectedly turned on the heat.

Though a senior policeman has been sent on leave, and an administrative enquiry ordered, Bose demanded a thorough probe into the firing. "The policemen will have to explain their conduct...we don't want the police to blacken the Left Front's name...we won't allow policemen to shoot innocent agitators," Bose said at a rally in Baguihati, where the rattled policemen had opened fire. After the tonnes of criticism, came unwanted advice. Policemen should pore over their service manuals more carefully, be patient and courageous and exercise more restraint, felt Bose. Even during the Congress regime, the central committee member reminded the large crowd, policemen usually fired teargas shells first, before blasting crowds with bullets.

Bose, one of the younger CPI(M) leaders patiently waiting his turn at the top, was not alone. Outraged leaders of the Front's junior parties also drew blood. "We condemn the arrogance of the police service in West Bengal," Forward Bloc leader Ashok Ghosh thundered, while Gurudas Dasgupta, the outspoken CPI MP, warned that more "shameful incidents" would occur if proper steps

Frontier science for farmers

Agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan sets up his own research institute

A unique farm research institute, brainchild of the internationally-famous agricultural scientist, Dr M.S. Swaminathan, is coming up at Taramani, in south Madras. The scientist, who won the prestigious World Food Prize for his contributions to agricultural science,. hopes to "respond to the challenges inherent in the changing nature of national food security" by initiating his own research programmes.

And the accent of Swaminathan's projects is on the uplift of rural women and youths through the creation of skilled employment. He wants to integrate traditional skills with frontline technologies, while evolving ways to preserve ecosystems without jeopardising development.

The institute—Research Centre for Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development—will focus attention on programmes for conservation, evaluation and utilisation of biological wealth, with an initial emphasis on the coastal areas. "Youths and women will be the main target groups since the major challenges facing rural India are the flight of educated youths from the villages, low and uncertain incomes, and the enormous drudgery of women," Swaminathan told SUNDAY. Most of the research would be done at various farm sites and the findings analysed and desseminated at the Taramani centre.

But the research facilities, ...



Biman Bose speaking at Baguihati: no-holds-barred

were not taken this time. The RSP has also demanded a discussion on the incident at the next Left Front meeting.

But chief minister Basu's (away on holiday in salubrious Hallong, in north Bengal) riposte has been silence. Nor has the primary problems—prolonged power cuts—been solved. The state is shrouded in darkness every evening, its antiquated power plants on the brink of breakdown.

Baguihati is only another example of the shoot-first talk-later style of the men in uniform . With the Left Front slowly losing its administrative grip, Bengal may be entering another era of lawlessness reminiscent of the Sixties. Forced to fire on angry mobs an unprecedent eight times in August and September, policemen have killed ten persons including three Congressmen and one SUCI worker. Yet the policemen, heavily politicised after 13 years of Left Front rule, have failed to protect not only senior politicians like former Congress(I) MP Mamata Banerjee who was beaten up by toughs while policemen stood and stared on August 16.

Senior policemen are also appalled by the Left Front's petty politics. Faced by the Congress(I) agitation when bus fares were hiked, the CPI(M) leadership decided that party cadres would maintain law and order, a decision that worries the cop on the beat as does the lumpenisation of the party cadres. Perhaps the Jyoti Basu government has over a year to solve the state's problems: the next big moment of truth, the 1992 Assembly elections, are still a fair distance away.

Srinjoy Chowdhury/ Calcutta

sure to involve large investments. And Swaminathan hopes that financial contributions would be forthcoming from various quarters. Already, a Japanese industrialist has donated 1,00,000 dollars, and Swaminathan says: "I wish to get good response from people locally."

Swaminathan was inspired to set up this research centre by the Nobel laureate, the late C.V. Raman. "He told me (in the early Seventies) that after my retirement, I should dedicate myself to developing research and technologies in agriculture for the uplift of the rural poor. His words lingered in my mind for a long time, and when I got the first World Food Prize, I decided to make the Rs 25-lakh prize money the initial corpus to start a trust," recalls Swaminathan.

His dream project is still at an embryonic stage, but if it develops, Indian peasants, who form 25 per cent of the world's farming community, could hope for a green renaissance. ●

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Time to forget...

The BJP's loan waiver scheme, as Patwa fails to get central sanctions



MADHYA PRADESH

Poll promises are often made only to be forgotten. But for a while it seemed that the BJP government of Madhya Pradesh would prove this wrong. Last fortnight, chief minister Sunderlal Patwa announced a liberal loan-waiver scheme for the 70-lakh-strong farming community of the state. But it took very little time for the peasants to realise that the grandiose plans might come to nothing, as the state authorities were yet to receive the mandatory sanction from the Centre to waive the farm loans.

Under the scheme announced by the government, farm loans, totalling a whopping Rs 664 crores, would be written off outright. And the burden would be shared by the Centre and the state: the central government would shell out Rs 125 crores as grant, another Rs 125 crores would be raised as loans, and the remaining Rs 414 crores would be paid by the state government from its own resources. But the catch is that in the 1990-91 state budget only a paltry sum of Rs 135 crores have been set aside for the loan waiving scheme.

Observers feel that Sunderlal Patwa went ahead and hastily announced the scheme because this was one of his main electoral promises. What is more, even while in the Opposition, the BJP had relentlessly demanded that farm loans be waived for the benefit of the peasants. In fact, on New Year's Day this year, the party had organised rallies in all the district headquarters where the leaders told the farmers that they would soon be free from debts. Naturally, when the BJP stormed to power after the Assembly elections this February, the peasants began to press Patwa for the fulfillment of the pledge. Patwa was thus left with no other option but to make an announcement that would placate the farmers. ●

Arvind Kumar/Bhopal

The angry hills

The anti-outsider agitation in the north-east gains momentum

• There was palpable tension within the campus of Shillong's prestigious St Anthony's College once the institution opened after the holidays. The non-tribals found that their tribal friends were no longer talking to them. And on 11 September, Bijan Roy was surrounded by a couple of tribal students and stabbed in front of the principal's office to the cries of "non-tribals quit Meghalaya".

• On 12 September, S.S. Agarwal, a rich Marwari contractor at Dimapur, Nagaland's commercial hub, and his brother received a letter from the Naga Youth Liberation Front (NYLF), a newly-raised shadowy outfit. The curt letter accused them of being corrupt and warned them not to submit any more tenders to bag government contracts. What is more, the NYLF imposed a fine of Rs 10 lakhs on the contractor. Brothers Agarwal caught the next flight out of Dimapur.

If you're planning to start a business in the north-east, or even thinking of holidaying there, forget it. The entire area—the states of Meghalaya and Nagaland in particular—is in the grip of a fierce "anti-outsider" wave, which has already taken its toll and driven away hordes of non-tribal entrepreneurs. Though the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), currently the most dreaded outfit in the north-east, claims that its movement is not aimed against "outsiders", the truth is that the ULFA's target have been prominent businessmen, most of whom are non-Assamese.

In Meghalaya, *dkhara* (outsiders) is the buzzword today. Since August this year, Shillong, the picturesque hilltop capital, has been rocked by violence. Night curfew has become the order of the day and five people have died as a result of clashes between tribals and non-tribals.

Trouble started when the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP), a militant body raised with the sole purpose of driving out the "outsiders", issued an ultimatum to all non-tribal traders in Shillong, having no trading licences, to pack up and leave the state. (There are over 3,500 non-tribal traders in Shillong alone and fresh trading licences were not issued to them by the government since 1987 for inexplicable reasons.)

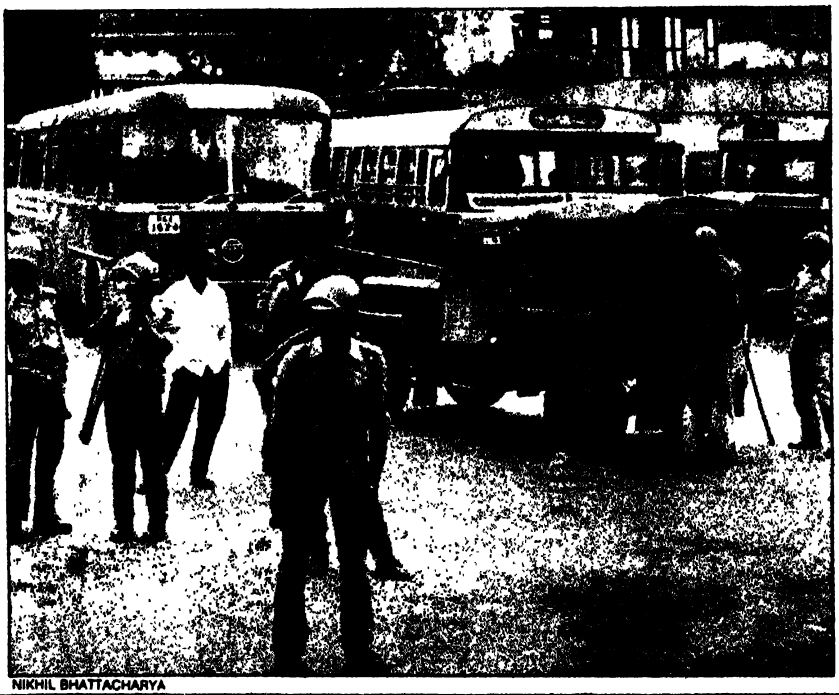
Another militant outfit, the Khasi Students Union (KSU), which spearheaded the anti-Nepali stir in June 1987, also threw in its lot with the FKJGP. Its members took to the streets demanding reservation of jobs and more seats in educational institutions for the Khasis.

An ethnic upheaval was perhaps inevitable. On 28 August, Gopinath Banik, who runs a metal-ware shop in Shillong, was killed. The next day, the non-tribals, in a rare show of solidarity, brought out a procession which clashed with the tribals. The police had to intervene to restore peace. Again on 13 September, a 500-strong mob of tribals ransacked several shops and houses owned by non-tribals. This time the damage would have been greater hadn't the administration come down with a heavy hand.

But for how long can the uneasy peace hold? The polarisation of the tribals and non-tribals in Meghalaya is near-complete and many families have already moved out of the Khasi-dominated localities. The non-tribals have even formed vigilante groups to guard their houses and property at night.

The movement against the so-called "outsiders" in neighbouring Nagaland is even more strident. Apart from terrorising the entire non-tribal trading community, the NYLF has also served notices on all non-Naga employees in the state to give up their jobs and quit the state. Argued NTLF president Sounder S. Cajee: "We are in favour of preserving the exclusive tribal character of Nagaland and that is why we are insisting that the outsiders leave the state."

The fear of the non-Nagas has been further compounded by another notice circulated in the state by the National Socialist Council of Naga-

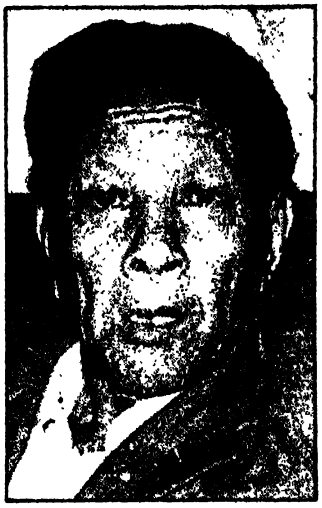


NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA



land (NSCN), the pro-Maoist insurgent gang led by the fabled Muivah. It threatened to "liquidate every living Indian national in Nagaland", as they were "agents of exploitation".

Already, non-tribals have begun to flee the state. Said Anup Singh, a trader in Dimapur: "We have started shifting our families to the plains. We cannot afford to become the willing victims of any organised violence against the non-locals."





The anti-tribal movements in the north-east have justifiably worried New Delhi. Recently, Union minister of state for home, **Subodh Kant Sahay** (right), curtly told both **Vamuzo** (centre) and **Lyngdoh** (left) that they should set their houses in order

In both Meghalaya and Nagaland, it is always the politician who capitalises from the hillman's sense of insecurity by channelising all hostitlity against "outsiders" into bouts of anti-tribal frenzy. A recent report by a central intelligence agency has pointed to the nexus between a faction of the KSU and the Congress(I) in Meghalaya. In fact, a number of state Congress leaders were seen accompanying the 13 September procession of Khasis in Shillong. Chief minister B.B. Lyngdoh even blamed former Congress(I) CM Purna Sangma for fuelling the anti-tribal agitation with his irresponsible remarks. Sangma, on the other hand, held the present ruling coalition of regional forces in Meghalaya responsible for the present mess.

The NYLF, too, has Congress(I) links: the chauvinist outfit is said to be the handiwork of former chief minister S.C. Jamir. Some youths recently abducted Limatoshi, the NYLF chief, and extracted from him a sensational confession. He revealed that his organisation had "links" with a number of Congress politicians and state government officials. What is more, Limatoshi, who was earlier a contractor, alleged that "some" pro-Jamir bureaucrats in the state had collected a staggering sum of Rs 69 lakhs and handed over this money to the NYLF for unsettling the present government in Nagaland.

Such anti-tribal movements, which seem to be spreading fast to the other states of the north-east, has justifiably worried New Delhi. Recently, Subodh Kant Sahay, the Union minister of state for home, curtly told both Vamuzo, the chief minister of Nagaland, and Lyngdoh, the Meghalaya CM, that they should set their houses in order. And since unemployment is said to be the main reason behind more and more youths joining the ranks of the militants, the state governments have been asked to create more jobs. Said Sahay: "We are ever ready to sanction more productive projects in the tribal areas of the north-east. But those who believe that tribal youths could be lured away from the national mainstream will be in for a shock. We will not hesitate to deal with such forces with a heavy hand."

But the rot has already set in and the anti-outsider feeling is so pervasive that it will require more than just jobs and projects to win over the tribals.●



The rot has already set in. The anti-outsider feeling is so pervasive that it will require more than just jobs and projects to win over the tribals

(From far left) Policemen enforcing curfew in Shillong; Nagas performing the war dance: asserting their identity

Santanu Ghosh/Shillong and Kohima

After the debacle

The Sports Authority of India is blamed for India's humiliation at the Beijing Asiad

India fared so poorly in the Beijing Asian Games that recriminations were only expected. What was not, however, was the demand—now increasingly strident—for the abolition of the Sports Authority of India (SAI). Describing it as a "white elephant", the president of the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India, J. S. Gehlot, said it served no useful purpose and should be dissolved forthwith.

Gehlot can afford to voice his opinion. Kabaddi was the only sport which brought in gold for the country as India plummeted to its lowest depths in terms of achievement in the Asian Games since the competition began 39 years ago. Our lowest haul of gold medals was in 1974 at Teheran, where India managed just four. But in Beijing, we barely kept ourselves afloat with the lone team gold in kabaddi.

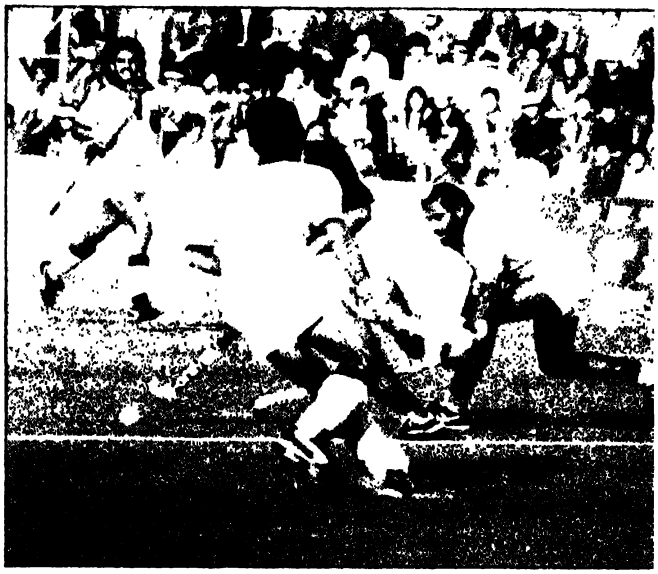
A cryptic note from Prime Minister V.P. Singh to the human resources ministry to probe the debacle and submit a report set the ball rolling. The minister in charge of sports, Bhakta Charan Das, has, in turn, asked the various federations and the SAI to submit reports to him on the causes of our failure.

It has to be understood that SAI is the administrative wing of the government and will, therefore, not be in a position to criticise anyone except the federations and the people concerned. According to sports officials, this report will be biased and will serve no purpose.

The federations themselves are still not clear about their own stand. While some have blamed SAI outright, others have maintained that the government's short-sightedness has resulted in this debacle. The president of the Amateur Athletics Federation of India, Suresh Kalmadi, has, of course, laid the blame squarely on SAI. "The sports ministry and SAI have failed totally," he said. "They have spent lakhs of rupees on foreign coaches, but whatever success sportsmen have achieved has been due to the efforts of our own coaches." He felt things could not continue like this. He said the entire sports policy of the government should be scrapped and new plans formulated. And, sports federations should be given complete freedom with regard to the conduct of coaching camps and team selection.

The chiefs of two other federations, however, refrained from criticising the official machinery. V. K. Malhotra felt India had done reasonably well in archery, while hockey federation president R.L. Prasad said the players let the country down. K. S. Bains of the cycling federation blamed the government for the team's poor performance. "Essential equipment was sanctioned very late and the ministry continuously refused to let our cyclists gain international experience. We should have sent the entire team to the Soviet Union for six months, where they had been assured all facilities free of charge."

A serious charge against the federations came from the chef de mission of the Indian contingent to the Asiad, Mohammad Aslam Khan. He wanted an investigation into the procedure of recording performances in the trials before the Games. He said it was hard to explain the poor performances in Beijing, adding that they were 'worse than the timings recorded in India. The implication is quite clear and it would be interesting to hear the reactions of federation officials.



India playing Pakistan at the Asiad: poor show

Another charge—more direct—was that the sportspersons did not seem to be interested in giving off their best. Aslam Khan felt that all the participants merely concentrated on qualifying for the Asian Games. Once that was achieved, the athletes seemed to let themselves go. Sincerity and determination, he said, were lacking. Of course, this was not a sweeping charge. He said there were exceptions, like Kabita Garari in the women's 10 km walk and the archery team members, as also the women weightlifters.

Taking a middle-of-the-road policy, Aslam Khan said the SAI should be divided into two wings—administrative and technical. He felt the latter should be the preserve of people with requisite experience and the knowledge of what to expect from athletes and sportspersons. The administrative wing could be looked after by others.

The problem with SAI, according to some federation officials, is that it is not only over-staffed, but full of people with very little knowledge of sport. To make matters worse, government policy on sport encourages official control to such an extent that, in many cases, it is the SAI which chooses coaches, instead of the federations concerned with sports. SAI allocates funds, decides when and where coaching camps will be held and, in the ultimate analysis, even the final composition of teams to participate in international events.

If SAI had had federation officials in charge of the technical aspects of each sport, the situation would not have been so bad. After all, it has to be admitted that the federations are getting a lot more finance for their coaching and training schemes through SAI than they got before its existence.

But it is this financial lever through which SAI has been arresting the growth of sports and even hindering India's prospects in international competitions. This is what Gehlot claimed when he alleged that SAI almost robbed





Bhakta Charan Das: needs to get tough

India of its only gold in the recent Asiad. The sports authority had approved of 11 members in the Indian squad, when the stipulated number was 12. "It was lucky that Indian officials still control kabaddi in the Asian arena," he said.

Privately, most federation officials are sore over the authoritarian attitude of the SAI. They realise that it is only the lack of funds that is preventing federations from completely ignoring the government body. They feel that if the government really wanted to aid in the development of sport in the country, it should maintain its financial support, without the stifling presence of "half-baked, so-called experts of SAI, who are nothing more than career officials who are merely serving time," as one sports official said. "SAI officials have no business to meddle in the affairs of sports about which they have no knowledge" said another.

As all these accusations and counter-accusations mount, former Indian athlete Milkha Singh said that Indian sport should henceforth be looked after by Services personnel. He felt that the different federations could settle all issues of coaching and training with Services officers. If the latter takes control, he said, the much-needed concentration and discipline would return to sportspeople, most of whom do not take sport seriously nowadays.

Milkha's salvo is now being echoed by Aslam Khan and, more important, by Bhakta Charan Das. In the near future, one may find more voices in support of what is only a note of desperation. But even this possibility can only be considered after SAI has been well and truly laid to rest. •

Arijit Sen



AWHO

ARMY WELFARE HOUSING ORGANISATION

ANNOUNCES
MADRAS! INDORE!

MADRAS SPOT SCHEME

Prime central location, Kodambakam (Madras Holywood) with high rental potential. Project commencing on turnkey basis with M s GAUTAM CONSTRUCTION in stilt ground plus three configuration with limited parking Units will be finished with wood work in deluxe specifications by 1993 within reasonable costs. 100 Economy, 96 Utility and 64 Thrifty apartments being built

Registration:

(a) Open from 25 Oct to 31 Dec 90
(b) Application fee Rs. 100/- and registration fee Rs. 20,000/- for Economy and Utility and Rs 10,000/- for Thrifty Registrants opting from other stations may apply with additional registration amount. If unsuccessful, reversal with loss of seniority
(c) Allotment by computer draw

INDORE ANNUAL REGISTRATION

2.2 acres of prestigious land acquired in Scheme 78 in Indore close to City Centre, with high rental value.

Registration: Open from 25 Oct 90 Seniority from date of draft as per Master Brochure.

Eligibility: Army personnel only for both stations (including Ex-servicemen and widows).

For Master Brochure and application form forward Rs. 20/- by DD/Postal Order in favour of MD, AWHO.

For further details contact:

ARMY WELFARE HOUSING ORGANISATION

KASHMIR HOUSE, RAJAJI MARG, NEW DELHI-110011. TELEPHONE 3015354

V GANGADHAR

Then, He rested

What to read on the Seventh Day

"By the Seventh Day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his Creation." *(Genesis, The Old Testament)*

God could afford to do that. He did not have the Sunday papers to read, not seven or eight of them, each more bulging than the other. Not the 40-page, new-look *The Sunday Observer* or the 32-page *Sunday Times* (the Sunday edition of *The Times of India*).

The Sunday Observer which was sliding downhill sprang a pleasant surprise. The enlarged edition is well-planned, designed, with lots of good, interesting reading material to suit all tastes. The masthead, despite using up too much space, is eye-catching. The lead story on the Gonda riots by a staffer was well displayed with a three-column photograph of a surviving couple, despair on their faces. Communal riots or mayhem, life has to go on and thank God the paper did not choose to publish pictures of rotting corpses.

The front page edit explaining the new avatar was, I guess, necessary. But why use a double column for the contents panel? A single column should be enough. The news content was varied, ranging from the complaint of Rajeev Goswami (the Delhi student who allegedly set fire to himself to protest against the Mandal report) that he had actually been torched, to a detailed report on the controversial suicide of Mukesh Aggarwal, film star Rekha's husband. Since *The Sunday Observer* sells more in Bombay, it should have carried at least one local story on page one.

A four-page City Observer, including two pages on reviews and a weekly cultural calendar, forms the city coverage. Dowry deaths, Mulayam's visit, Pawar-Sena pact, Vishwa Hindu Parishad-Shiv Sena ties are all okay. But Bombay city has a unique spirit and reporters must look for off-beat stories which reflect this spirit.

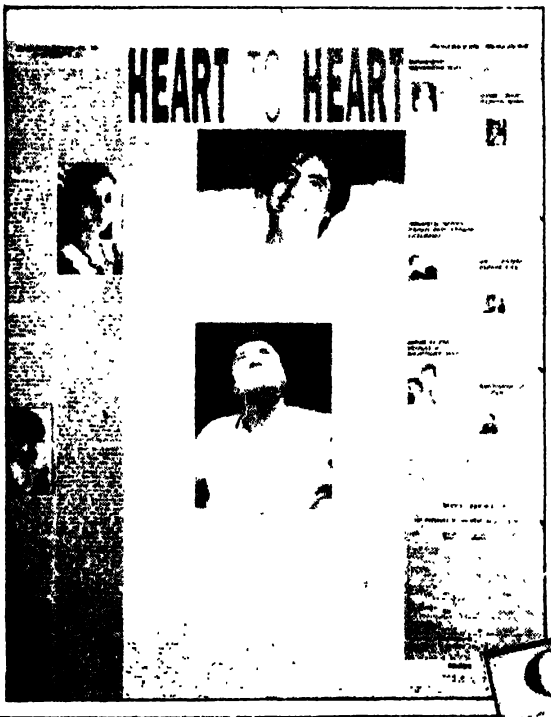
Personally speaking, I enjoyed Chandan Mitra's interview with Girilal Jain. The *Observer* interviews of the past had been mostly routine, too long and featuring run-of-the-mill politicians. Girilal Jain made several valid points, the decline of the editor and his staff in the new, commercially-oriented newspaper set-ups, the emphasis on 'look' rather than the 'contents' (to get more colour ads) and the lowering of the standards of the edit page and its contents. Was he thinking of *The Times of India*?

And three cheers for the colour section! Minus his rage and obsession for V.P. Singh and the National Front goverment, Mani Shankar Aiyar's, *Yes, Ambassador* is all wit and wisdom and packed with anecdotes. Do you know that former foreign secretary Ram Sathe, while posted at the consulate of Kashgar and cut off from his Nanking embassy by revolutionaries, received no salary for three years and subsisted on provisions purchased from Kashmiri traders against *hundies* that were later honoured in Srinagar by South Block accountants sent there with the express purpose of determining how many kilogrammes of cooking oil per month Sathe & Co were entitled to!

The book page disappointed. Why carry excerpts from Nancy Reagan's *Memoirs?* But theatre personality Satyadev Dubey's Open Letter to Amitabh Bachchan was a good idea, far superior to a routine interview where the same questions are asked and stereotyped answers given. Advises Dubey, "There is an innate humility and sense of values in you. Fall back on that. Find somebody non-political, non-religious, non-market, non-artiste, non-fanatic. You need a breather."

Every single page had photographs or sketches, a big plus point. The layout, with a bit of borrowing from *London Observer, The Guardian* and other foreign papers, still was innovative. The following Monday, I still remembered three articles (despite my age and failing memory!)—Jain's interview, Aiyar's comments and the Gonda massacre reports.

The *Sunday Observer*, has finally arrived. ●



The 'open letter' to Amitabh Bachchan, in *The Sunday Observer*, was a good idea, far superior to a routine interview where the same questions are asked and stereotyped answers given

ODDS AND TRENDS

Yuppie haven?

■ Floods in the Garhwal region have had one beneficial fallout. The ruins of a 16th century temple have been discovered on the banks of river Malini.

What makes this archaeological discovery slightly different from other routinely mundane discoveries is the fact that this is the temple where Kalidas' romantic duo Shakuntala and Dushyant are supposed to have got married. The discovery has considerable historical importance. No wonder then, that historians and archaeologists are quite excited about it.

Flushed out

■ The fashion scene in Calcutta is improving. What with several showrooms—Park Avenue, Benetton, the fashion conscious male no longer need look westward for sartorial inspiration—or satisfaction.

Surinder Virmani's Louise Philippe showroom, the first of its kind in the city, is one such place. Offering the entire Louise Philippe range including the Elysee collection the shop has the latest in formal and executive wear for men. And just across the road is the recently inaugurated Beach Fashions showroom catering to more casual and trendy after-hour tastes.

All things considered, a pretty pleasing prospect for the city's yuppies. His entire fashion needs are now well looked after—for a price of course.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



King Hussein of Jordan



L.K. Advani

Comforting words

■ The Central Sahitya Akademi is bringing out a comprehensive anthology of modern Indian literature of 22 Indian languages into English. The ambitious book is edited by the noted scholar Dr K. M. George. The 15 lakh word anthology contains three volumes. The first section is a survey of modern literature and has 300 poems. The next section covers novels and the third deals with drama, prose and other literary pieces.

In all, there are 650 items from the modern period of Indian literature (1800-1975). In the words of it's chief editor the anthology demonstrates the eternal unity of the country. Comforting words, considering the nation is not really at its united best now.

THIS INDIA

HISAR: The Anti-Reservation Front of Haryana has distributed posters all over the state offering people crash courses in dacoity, looting, bomb-making and begging. The 'institution' where these courses have been offered has been named the V.P. Institute for Forward Classes. The poster in Hindi, entitled Rozgar Samachar, informs readers that in case they are talented, unemployed and belong to an upper caste, they can enlist in half-a-dozen courses. The first is a three-month course in bomb-making, followed by a 45-day course in arms manufacturing. The third is a one-month course in dacoity and highway robbery. The fourth is a two-week course in western styles of begging. The last two courses are in shoe-shining and road sweeping, of 12 hours and six hours, respectively. Though the name of the Front is given at the bottom, the printline seems to be fictitious. It carries the name of Shubh Lakshmi Printing Press, without any address—*Indian Express* (Tarlok Singh Chhabra, Chandigarh)



ILLUSTRATION: DEBASHIS DEB

MUZAFFARPUR: Senior Janata Dal leaders thrashed the district collectorate nazir, Janki Mistry, in the presence of the state minister, Ramnath Thakur, at the Samastipur circuit house on Thursday. Apparently they were annoyed with the nazir as he did not serve chilli chicken at dinner, two days ago. A case in this connection has been filed with the Samastipur police. The named accused in this case are district Janata Dal convener, Ramjapit Rai, and two Yuva Janata Dal leaders, Satyendra Rai and Pradip Mahto—*The Times of India* (Prem C. Sinha, Patna)

SRIRANGAM: Among the select band of musicians giving recitals at the famous Srirangathsawamy Temple here during the nine-day Navratri festival this year is an unusual member—a five-year-old elephant, Andal, playing a tiny mouth organ. Andal has been enthralling a large gathering with her music, besides attending to her daily chores of bringing water from the Cauvery River and being fan-bearer and playmate of the goddess Srirankanayagi (popular legend has it that the temple elephant, in response to the goddes's wishes, plays with her in the evenings during Navratri). The elephant receives applause and cheers like any other great artiste—*The Daily* (D.N. Rajan, Kalwa) ●

BEGINNING 21 OCTOBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



Financially, the planets do not favour you this week. A family member may suddenly fall sick. Try to save money for the future. Professionals may be transferred to a better place. A letter will bring good tidings.

Good dates: 21, 23 and 27
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Businessmen should make the best use of opportunities coming their way. Yoy can safely undertake risky ventures. Students will fare well in examinations. A favourable time for matrimony.

Good dates: 23, 25 and 27
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: North

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



Financially not a good week, but your savings will prove handy. Health may deteriorate. A favourable time for romance and matrimony. A letter might bring good tidings. The domestic front will not be calm.

Good dates: 22, 24 and 26
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: South

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



The stars foretell a good week for you. Progress and accolades are foretold for professionals, businessmen and sportsmen. However, the time is not favourable for romance and marriage.

Good dates: 21, 23 and 25
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July—20 August)



A week of mixed fortunes lies ahead of you. Financially, this week will be difficult and you may have to borrow money to meet expenses. Be patient with family members, especially children. A good period for courtship.

Good dates: 22, 25 and 27
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



This week you will suffer reverses on all fronts. Professionals should be careful while dealing with their superiors. Financially, you will incur heavy losses. Do not indulge in speculation.

Good dates: 24, 25 and 26
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 9
Favourable direction: West

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



Social engagements will keep you busy this week, but do not neglect office work. Be diplomatic in dealing with family members. The time is ripe to go ahead with plans for a pleasure trip.

Good dates: 23, 24 and 27
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: North-east

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



A lucky week on the academic front and students may get opportunities to study abroad. Businessmen and professionals will make steady progress. However, the period is unfavourable financially.

Good dates: 21, 22 and 24
Lucky numbers: 1, 2 and 4
Favourable direction: West

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



Stellar influences make this an extremely lucky week for you. An excellent time for writers to publish their work. You may inherit property. This is a good period for lovers.

Good dates: 22, 23 and 26
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: South

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



This is a favourable week for businessmen. Professionals will gain recognition from their superiors. Artists will prosper. Your financial problems will be solved. Go ahead with marriage plans.

Good dates: 23, 24 and 26
Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: East

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This is a favourable week for the unemployed and job opportunities may come your way. Financially, a bad phase, so avoid waste of money. Also an unlucky phase for politicians and lawyers. Your health may cause concern.

Good dates: 25, 26 and 27
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: North

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. The domestic front will remain peaceful. Students appearing for examinations will do well. Love affairs will make steady headway. A favourable week for excursions.

Good dates: 24, 25 and 27
Lucky numbers: 4, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—AQUARIUS

The Scorpio woman's materialistic attitude will be the cause of misunderstandings with her Aquarian man who invariably values people above objects. Jealousy is deeply ingrained in most Scorpios and the total lack of this emotion in her Aquarian mate could cause her to doubt the adequacy of his love.

I no understand English

The person who has lost out the most in the Karnataka mess is, strangely enough, not Veerendra Patil or even Rajiv Gandhi, but Mahavir Prasad, the AICC(I) observer sent to the southern state to extract a resignation from the reluctant CM.

Things went wrong for Prasad right from the beginning. First, he had problems getting someone to introduce him to Veerendra Patil. And once he succeeded in that, he came up against another obstacle: the language barrier. For Patil speaks only Kannadiga or English, while Prasad is conversant only in Gorakhpuri Hindi.



Mahavir Prasad: losing the high command's confidence

After trying sign language for a frustrating hour or so, Prasad gave up and called upon G.K. Moopanar to help him out. This made things a trifle easier, but Prasad still couldn't convince the chief minister to step down in the larger interests of the party, whatever they might be.

And in the bargain, he injured his own interests, with the party high command deciding to assign him no sensitive tasks in the future.

HEARD AT THE TEXTILES MINISTRY

Is this Mandela any relation to Mandal?

STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO SHARAD YADAV BY HIS CIVIL SERVANTS

Keep out!

He has been landed with the sobriquet, "the invisible home minister of India". And every-time the unfortunate Mufti Mohammad Sayeed tries to get more high-profile, his efforts are stymied by his party leaders.

Now, it's Mulayam Singh Yadav's turn to keep the Mufti in the shadows. Apparently, the home minister's Gonda visit was effectively sabotaged by the Uttar Pradesh chief minister. Sayeed sent his detailed programme to the CM's office, so that the UP administration could make the necessary arrangements for his entourage. But Yadav wrote back to advise the home minister to stay out of Gonda. This was a state affair, he informed the Mufti, and he was perfectly capable of taking care of it himself.

And hogging all the consequent publicity, no doubt.



Mulayam Singh Yadav: no assistance required

BAROMETER

How Rajiv's advisers rate

R.K. Dhawan: King of all he surveys. Is as much like Chanakya as Rajiv is like Chandragupta Maurya. On all political matters, RKD has the last word, with results that are often spectacular, ie, the current mess in Karnataka.

P. Chidamberam: An educated counter-point to RKD's intrigues. Chidambaram continues to be the leader's favourite intellectual. But when it comes to the crunch, RKD tends to win out.

Captain S. Sharma: Still a friend, still used for liaison with industrialists, but has little or no political clout.

Buta Singh: Is currently engaged in launching a Safai Mazdoor Congress. No truth in the rumour however that he will be marching to Ayodhya—as part of Advani's entourage.

Mani Shankar Aiyar: Will always have a certain importance in that set-up. But his problem is that he tells Rajiv what he already knows. RKD, on the other hand, thinks of delicious intrigues that Rajiv could never have dreamt of in a million years.

Jaitley vs Khurana

Arun Jaitley's run of bad luck continues. And this time, it's old enemy Madan Lal Khurana who's making life difficult for the additional solicitor-general.

Khurana's enmity with Jaitley goes back to the time when the BJP was handing out tickets for the last parliamentary poll. Jaitley was an aspirant for the South Delhi seat and was lobbying extensively for a nomination. And Khurana was going out of his way to sabotage his chances.

In the end, it was Khurana who succeeded. Jaitley lost the chance of a stab at a Lok Sabha seat.



Arun Jaitley: up against M.L. Khurana

Of course, Jaitley made a brave comeback, prevailing on the Raja to appoint him additional solicitor-general.

But Khurana didn't give up, getting his supporters to heckle Jaitley on the rare occasions he turned up at the BJP office. The ostensible reason being that Jaitley's incompetence had led to the entire Bofors mess, the rejection of the Letter Rogatory, etc. And that the additional solicitor-general should be sacked forthwith.

Jaitley is holding out against the attack at present. And is distancing himself from the BJP to make more friends and influence other people ●

Losing favour

When R.P. Joshi was appointed director, Intelligence Bureau (IB), everyone made out that he was the Raja's favourite sleuth. And the fact that Joshi was cabinet secretary Vinod Pande's brother-in-law only increased his importance in the Raja's durbar—in the public eye at least.

It didn't take long for differences to develop between the PM and the IB chief. VP was particularly indignant about Joshi's failure to even provide an accurate list of the dissidents in the party during the Janata Dal crisis.



R.P. Joshi: losing out to M.K. Narayan

Joshi's loss was M.K. Narayan's gain. The former IB director, now appointed chairman of the joint committee (intelligence), had been relegated to the shadows by the Raja's regime. But with Joshi out of favour, Narayan has been resurrected somewhat

Much to the chagrin of the Joshi camp, which now goes around saying that the man (Narayan) who had ruined Rajiv will now destroy the Raja.

Not that VP needs much help in that connection, the way he has been going of late.

Sorry, no room!

The Raja's media relations just seem to get from bad to worse, despite the well-meaning efforts of Prem Shankar Jha.

First, V.P. Singh was pilloried by almost every major newspaper in the country for his blatant and irresponsible casteism, *vis-a-vis* his stand on the Mandal recommendations. And now, his insensitive handling of the Delhi press corps has alienated journalists even further.

Weeks before the PM's Patna rally, his media advisers had informed the journos in the capital that they would be given a free ride to the venue to facilitate their covering the event.

But the night before the flight was to take off, all the mediamen were called to be told that since too many ministers had opted to accompany the Raja, there was no room for them in the aircraft. Only the official news agencies would go along with the Prime Minister.

> HEARD AT KARNATAKA BHAVAN
>
> **Everytime Rajiv Gandhi opens his mouth, R.K. Dhawan puts his foot into it.**
>
> A PRO-VEERENDRA PATIL MP ON DHAWAN'S ROLE IN GETTING THE KARNATAKA CM FIRED

The rising son

The last time the Raja and the Tau made a deal of sorts, it revolved around Om Prakash Chautala. Now, it appears that Ranjit Singh, the Chaudhary's other son, may have replaced his father in the power stakes.

Delhi gossip has it that V.P. Singh intends to win over Devi Lal by accommodating Ranjit Singh in the council of ministers. And that the dinner meeting the Tau attended at the Prime Minister's residence was devoted in the most part to getting the details right.



V.P. Singh: reconciling with the Tau

Insiders also maintain that the Raja is trying to convince his former deputy to withdraw his resignation from the Lok Sabha. At present, Lal doesn't appear inclined to go for a compromise, but if Ranjit does make it to the Union ministry, he might just change his mind.

Hotel intrigues

In one of his numerous press briefings when the Janata Dal crisis was at its height, party general secretary Jaipal Reddy announced grandly that it would take more than conspiracies hatched in the Ashoka Hotel to depose V.P. Singh.

Guess who was staying in the Ashoka at that time?

None other than Jayant Malhoutra, treasurer of the Janata Party.

Malhoutra's room in the ITDC hotel was, apparently, the haunt of such dissident leaders as Chandra Shekhar and Om Prakash Chautala, with Janata maverick Dr Subramaniam Swamy performing the role of postman, relaying messages from the Congress party to Chandra Shekhar and vice versa. But despite the flurry of activity in the rebel camp, nothing came of the effort.

And Jaipal Reddy, for once, got it right.

BAROMETER

How the Raja's advisers rate

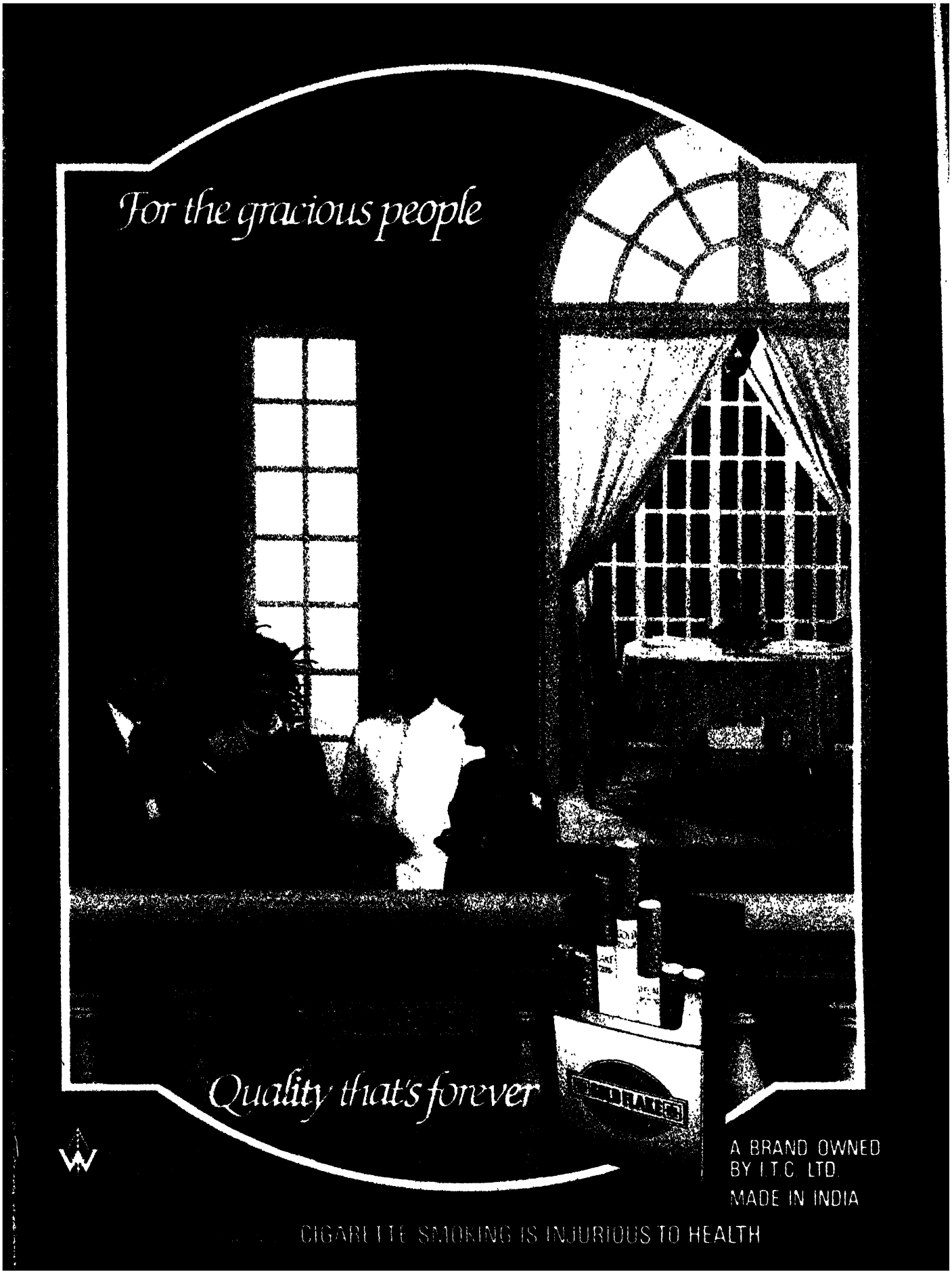
Sharad Yadav: The new strongman of the Janata Dal. Everytime VP is depressed, Yadav bucks him up with a hefty dose of OBC rhetoric.

Ram Vilas Paswan: Not so much an adviser as a cheerleader. The Raja needs him to keep his potential Scheduled Caste constituency intact.

Vinod Pande: Less important than he used to be now that V.P. Singh has transformed himself into the Raja of Mandal. Still important in administrative matters though.

Arun Nehru: Disapproves heartily of Mandal. And so his faction sees no point in helping VP cope with the crisis. Is back to travelling abroad on a regular basis.

The *Express* Lobby: Not the monolith that people think it is. Arun Shourie is viciously anti-VP, but S. Gurumurthy is more sympathetic. Nevertheless, the Raja feels let down by his favourite newspaper.


For the gracious people
Quality that's forever
A BRAND OWNED
BY I.T.C. LTD.
MADE IN INDIA
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

No ban, no challenge... just a burning desire.



KARNATAKA: ENTER BANGARAPPA

SUNDAY



CRUNCH!

The BJP pulls the plug on V.P. Singh

Golden moments. McDowell moments



CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 42 □ RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
28 OCTOBER—3 NOVEMBER 1990



30
COVER STORY
Challenge!
L.K. Advani's *rath yatra* threatens the government—and the secular consensus.

12
SPECIAL REPORT
Enter Bangarappa
The new Karnataka chief minister has his work cut out.

22
NEIGHBOURS
Troubled hills
Ethnic strife accelerates in Bhutan and spills over into India.

48
BUSINESS
Métier, Mettle, and Moves
Birla 3M may have all three, but the future is wide open.

67
SPORTS
Courting success
Tennis ace Naresh Kumar opens a new, 'tough' training camp.

70
MUSIC
And now, Bangla rock
Say it loud, we are Bengalis and proud.

75
BOOK REVIEW
Of sacrifices and legends
The authorised biography of Nelson Mandela says it all.





16
NEWSBEAT
Going to town
Fear of terrorists is turning Punjab's rural folks into urbanites.

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
SIGHT AND SOUND 9
COUNTERVIEW 10
SOUTH BLOCK 18
FOCUS 43
Voices of Mandal
SPOTLIGHT 44
BUSINESS DIARY 57
MANI-TALK 62
KHAAS BAAT 74
FOCUS 76
The American view
NEWS 78
MILESTONES 86
SUNDAYWEEK 87
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency: Nitin Rai

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise; North-eastern states: 30 paise



The dancing sensation

The cover story on Madhuri Dixit (*Ek, do, queen*, 7--13 October) was a refreshing change. Madhuri looks startlingly different. And her performances in *Ram Lakhan, Tezaab* and *Dil* were definitely above average. She has been cautious enough to judiciously mix commercial appeal with her acting ability.

Madhuri's biggest advantage is that she looks very much a woman of flesh and blood and success has not gone to her head. In today's world of showbiz, one has to compromise a lot. So, Madhuri has to put in memorable performances in order to carve a niche for herself in this highly competitive market.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

■ The write-up on Madhuri Dixit was simply superb. In fact, Madhuri, the glamour girl of Indian cinema, is a judicious blend of the beauty of Madhubala, the innocence of Jaya Bachchan, serenity of Waheeda Rehman and the sensuousness of Dimple. Her ability to evoke emotions speaks volumes of her natural talent. Her perfect physique enhances her electrifying presence on the silver screen. She also has the added advantage of being the girl next door.

She danced her way into the heart of millions in *Tezaab* and people went crazy listening to the *Ek do teen* number. In *Dil*, she has beautifully characterised the role of a college girl and also a woman totally dedicated and obsessed with her husband's love. Though she now faces tough competition, she still reigns supreme, and seems all set to pip Sridevi to the post.

Shubhendu Mohanty, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

■ It was a real pleasure going through the cover story on Madhuri Dixit. She is undoubtedly a gifted star with a bright future ahead of her. It seems that she is quite balanced and she has proved her versatility in many films ranging from *Tezaab, Ram Lakhan* to *Dil*. She should now concentrate on doing meaningful films instead of the regular dance and disappear ones.

S. Hussain, Dibrugarh (Assam)

■ The article on Madhuri was really good and entertaining. There is no doubt about her acting talents and histrionics. But since she has already established herself in the topsy-turvy tinsel world, she should now concentrate on choosing roles which give her the scope to portray her acting prowess. This will help her to prove her versatility both as a commercial artist and as an actress in the true sense.

J. Sarkar, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ The *Ek do teen* girl has definitely made a mark in Hindi cinema with her pleasing looks, attractive figure and dancing talent. In Madras, *Tezaab* ran for several successful weeks mainly due to Madhuri's scintillating performance. It was her dancing which captured the hearts of the cine-goers. Undoubtedly, Madhuri is all set to become the queen.

Jayanthy Subramaniam, Madras (Tamil Nadu)



Madhuri Dixit: the reigning star

■ Madhuri has come a long way since her *Hifazat* days to establish herself as the *numero uno* among the present crop of Hindi heroines. Her sincerity, remarkable talent and professional approach have set her on the road to success. It was Madhuri's rendering of the *Ek do teen* number that exposed her acting talent in such ample measure which really did wonders to her film career.

She may not have the oomph of Sridevi but she has a classical dimension which Sridevi lacks. Her ability to infuse realism into every sequence is her forte. And with *Dil's* phenomenal success, she has established herself as a star performer.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

Business sense

Abid Hussain's interview (*"India needs the US"*, 16—22 September) was like a whiff of fresh air. His remark, "In order to enrich the poor we don't have to impoverish the rich. And in order to strengthen the weak we don't have to weaken the



Hussain: plain-speaking

strong", should be repeated over and over again for our policy-makers to see its wisdom. For 40 years, Congress leaders have succeeded in just doing the opposite by making the poor poorer and the rich richer. At least, let us give V.P. Singh a fair chance.

But Abid Hussain, in his otherwise lucid answers, strikes a discordant note when he says, "That is where a state will continuously have to come in to see that private profit does not harm social benefit." Does this not provide the garb to the government to do what it has been doing so far? The right thing would be that the private profits should be channelised to do social good. Of course, befriending USA would do India a lot of good. A little less of egoism in us will certainly repair our relationship with the great country.

R. Singh, New Delhi

Wrong policy

The special report, *The siege of Jaffna* (23—29 September), vividly describes the prevailing situation in northern Sri Lanka. There is a tragic human problem on the island and India should not stand by watching idly. The time has come for India to take a diplomatic step and help bring about a peaceful reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

A. Jacob Sahayam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)

Tarnished image

The special report (*A dangerous place*, 2—8 September) shocked everybody. Ruled by the Marxists, West Bengal had a



Jyoti Basu: losing hold?

relatively clean record as far as state administration was concerned. It is time chief minister Jyoti Basu did some soul-searching and toned up his administration.

K.V. Rajagopalan, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

Dividing the nation

The cover story (*Caste war*, 16—22 September) reveals an hitherto unknown aspect of V.P. Singh's character: his spinelessness. At a time when children are dying on the streets of India every day, when public property worth crores are being destroyed, the Prime Minister remains unmoved, busy framing his arbitrary policies. It is time he realises that an empire can't be built on the tombstone of the nation's youth or by dividing the people along caste lines.

R.N. Vaswani, Bombay (Maharashtra)



Anti-reservationists on the rampage: but VP is unmoved

Speaking out

Azharuddin's views in the article, *It's not cricket* (16—22 September) were precisely to the point. Ever since Bishen Singh Bedi took over as manager of the Indian cricket team, his attitude towards the players attracted considerable criticism. Moreover, his ill-timed comments on former Indian skipper Sunil Gavaskar put Bedi in the thick of a controversy. Therefore, it was not unusual for Azharuddin to have demanded the abolition of the post of the cricket manager. It is now up to the BCCI to sort out things if it wants to get a better performance from Azhar and his men.

B. Nithyananda Rao, Tezpur (Assam)

Azhar (left) and Bedi: parting of ways



Planting stories?

I am happy to be able to reassure Mani Shankar Aiyar (whose remark about potshots being taken at personalities amused me in this context) that I did not pass any story on the Haksar report either under or over the table to anyone (*Culture vultures, 12—18 August*). But why has he overlooked the fact that *The Hindu* carried a story on the Haksar report from its special correspondent in Delhi on 24.7. '90, one day before Anjali Puri's story in the *Indian Express?*

K.V. Ramanathan, resident editor, Indian Express, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

Not the final verdict

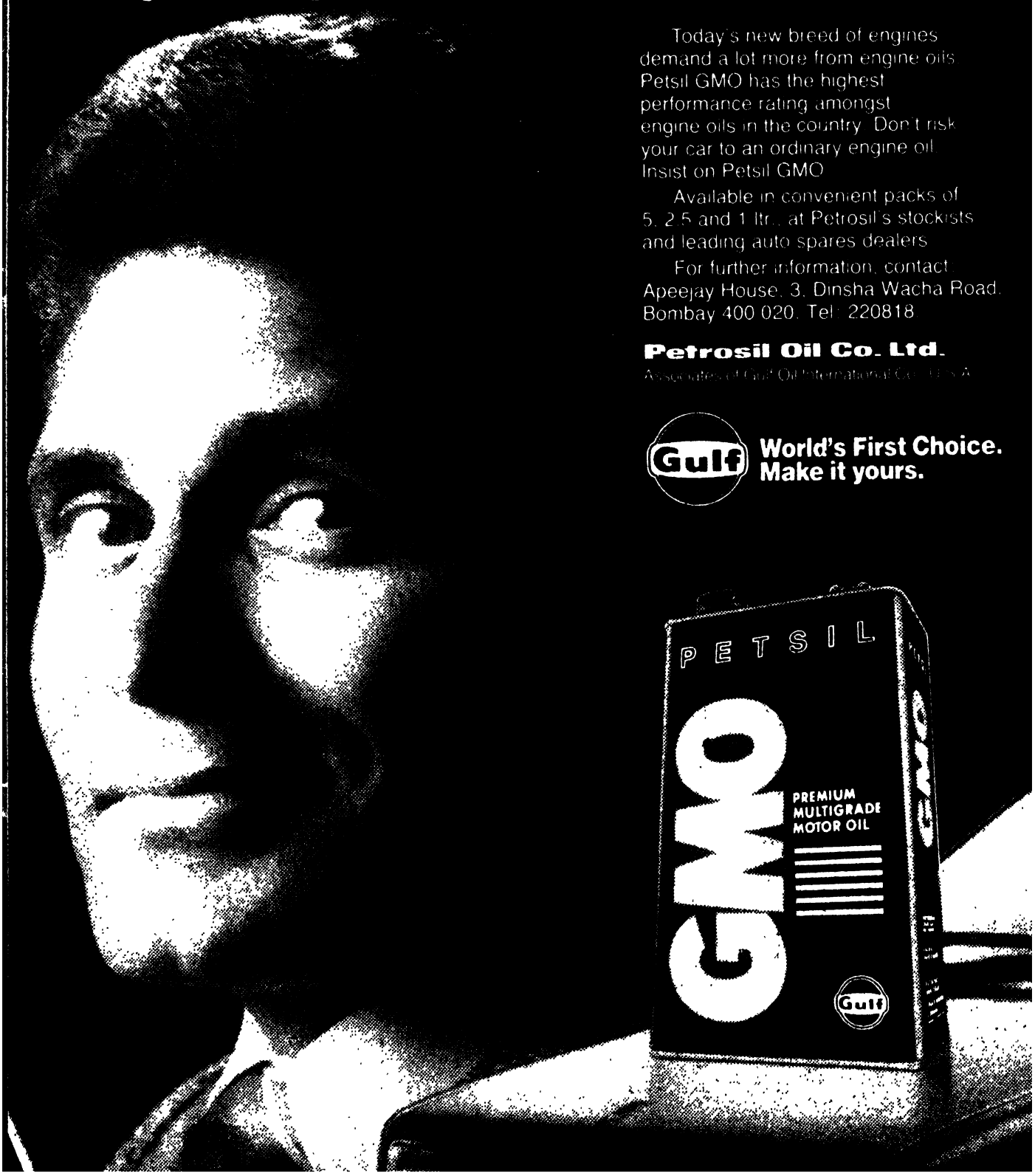


Ameeta: is the trauma over?

If one were to go by the court verdict (*Acquitted!*, 7—13 October), then the agony of Ameeta Modi, wife of the slain Syed Modi, is over. But if one considers the human angle of the incident, then her trauma has not ended. For, whatever the court might say, it is clear that Ameeta was definitely having an extra-marital affair with Sanjay Singh and was in a way resposible for the death of her husband. Ameeta Modi does not deserve any sympathy.

Ram Shankar, New Delhi

"My car moves on petrol. My engine runs on GMO."



Today's new breed of engines demand a lot more from engine oils. Petsil GMO has the highest performance rating amongst engine oils in the country. Don't risk your car to an ordinary engine oil. Insist on Petsil GMO.

Available in convenient packs of 5, 2.5 and 1 ltr., at Petrosil's stockists and leading auto spares dealers.

For further information, contact Apeejay House, 3, Dinsha Wacha Road, Bombay 400 020. Tel: 220818.

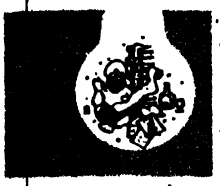
Petrosil Oil Co. Ltd.

Associates of Gulf Oil International Co., U.S.A.

Gulf **World's First Choice. Make it yours.**

KHUSHWANT SINGH

City characters



Every city has its eccentric characters in every age. When names of city fathers, judges and other dignitaries are forgotten, these eccentrics are remembered by generations to come. Strangely enough, it is beggars and hawkers who pass into local legend more than the rich and the distinguished. When I recall my younger days in Delhi, it is not upper class dandies or whoremongers that come to mind but the colourful beggars who came to the door for alms or hawkers selling *chana jor garam* or *peytee kee barfee*. One regular visitor to our home was a large, swarthy, grey-bearded Muslim draped in saffron robes from neck to ankle. In a melodious voice he chanted, "*Aarey! aarey! teyrey bacchon kee khair maangey Jamna Fakeer.*" My grandmother toppled a *katora* full of flour in his *jhola*. Then there was an elderly Rajasthani woman dressed in white and apparently from a good family. She sang a couplet ending with "*talaab banaa do pakka*". She was raising money to have a brick-lined pond in her desert village. She was always invited in, asked how the pond project was going on and given five rupees. Both the Jamna Fakeer and the pond lady must have died a long time ago but their memories haunt me.

Glasgow has had its poor eccentrics who are remembered to this day. Dorothy Whitaker has been able to dig out the past of 14 of them and reconstructed their pictures from accounts that have come down in *Auld Hawkie and other Glasgow Characters*. "Society has always had to deal as it thought best with those poor unfortunates whose physical or mental disabilities rendered them incapable of earning a living by ordinary means," she writes. And continues, "A few of them, very few, however, refused to become anonymous, refused to relinquish their individualities—and in doing so earned the sobriquet of 'characters'...Their names and careers have come down to us, those defiant non-conformists with whom even Bailies and grand city magnates were not ashamed to indulge in verbal sword-play and whose sayings and actions amused and still amuse the citizens."

Glasgow's list of characters begin with "Blind Alick". Alexander Macdonald born in 1771, lost his vision due to small pox but became a popular fiddler playing in the streets and at weddings. Dwarfish, dressed in rags and usually drunk but remembered in ballads to this day.

The most famous of Glasgow's characters was William Cameron, renamed by himself as Auld Hawkie. He had only one leg but a loud preacher's voice and went about in his rags preaching fiery sermons on the fate of evil-doers. He has been described as one of the greatest and wittiest beggars that ever infested the streets of Glasgow. He published a book, *The Prophecies of Hawie, A Cow*. He died in 1851 and is the subject of a biography published in 1888.

Glasgow still has a few colourful beggars who might be recognised as characters. One I saw on the steps of the Central Station. She was a fat, old blind woman with silver white hair and her white cane. She sat on the ground swilling beer and throwing crumbs of bread to flocks of pigeons which surrounded her. Also sang lustily in a most unmelodious voice. If anyone teased her by calling her "hey granny", she broke into a torrent of abuse, "git goin you bloody mother fuckin bastard! I'll spit on yer behookie (backside)".



Strangely enough, it is beggars and hawkers who pass into local legend more than the rich and the distinguished

I ran into one man who is bound to find his name among Glasgow's characters. By no means a beggar but a reasonably prosperous shopkeeper. He is a *sardarji* in his forties. Early one morning, as I stepped out of my hotel to get the morning papers, I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a blue turbanned Sikh in yellow shirt, *kuccha*, sneakers, a *kirpan* slung on his side jogging along at some speed with his pedigreed Alsatian dog following on his heels. I saw him enter the news vendor's shop. As I entered he greeted me with a loud "*Wah guru jee ka Khalsa, wah Guru jee ki Fateh.*" I replied meekly with a "*Sat Sri Akal.*" He collected his paper, gave the paper vendor blessings of the *Sacchey Padshah* and was off hurtling down the road with his German Shepherd. "He is an ardent jogger," said the shopkeeper to me. "He does his ten-mile run every morning. He runs in the city marathons every year and is always among the first five. With his turban, beard and *kirpan*, everyone recognises him. And likes him because he exudes cheer and goodwill. Always full of blessings of the *Sachhey Padshah*." I discovered his identity from Sewa Singh Kohli. He has been teaching mathematics in a Glasgow school for 20 years and there he is known as Master Ajit Singh. His wife, sons and daughter live in Bradford. He spends all his spare time doing service in one or the other of Glasgow's four *gurudwaras*. Whatever he saves he sends to Bhagat Puran Singh's *pingalwara* (leprasarium) in Amritsar.

The next morning I went to check up with the news vendor. "No", he said. "The man you met here is not Master Ajit Singh. Ajit is unwell. This man is Amreek Singh, he runs a grocery shop. Also jogs every day and runs in the marathon."

So there are two *sardars* who will go down in the Glasgow book of record as characters: ●

ILLUSTRATION: DEBASHIS DEB

Buy NHB 9% Capital Bonds. It offers 100% tax exemption plus handsome returns.

Tax exemption plus growth. NHB 9% Capital Bonds have benefits in store for you – and your capital.

- Your investment earns 9% per annum payable on a six-monthly basis.
- Or, you can opt for advance payment of interest at the rate of 9% per annum for the full period of 3 years on a discounted basis, at the rate of Rs. 240 per Rs. 1000 invested, payable 3 months from the date of investment. This takes into account the interest for the intervening period of 3 months in full – so, you do not lose interest even for a single day.
- Exemption from Capital Gains Tax U/S 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961
- No deduction of tax at source on the interest earned.
- Exemption up to Rs. 5 lakhs from Wealth Tax U/S 5(1)(xvie) read with 5(1A) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957 along with other eligible assets
- Exemption of interest U/S 80L of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Remittance charges borne by NHB.
- Available at par throughout the year at more than 130 outlets all over the country.
- With NHB 9% Capital Bonds, you have this added satisfaction–your investment will contribute to the betterment of housing in the country.

Long-term Capital Gains from land, buildings, shares, securities, jewellery, etc?

NATIONAL HOUSING BANK 9% CAPITAL BONDS

Application forms available and accepted at:

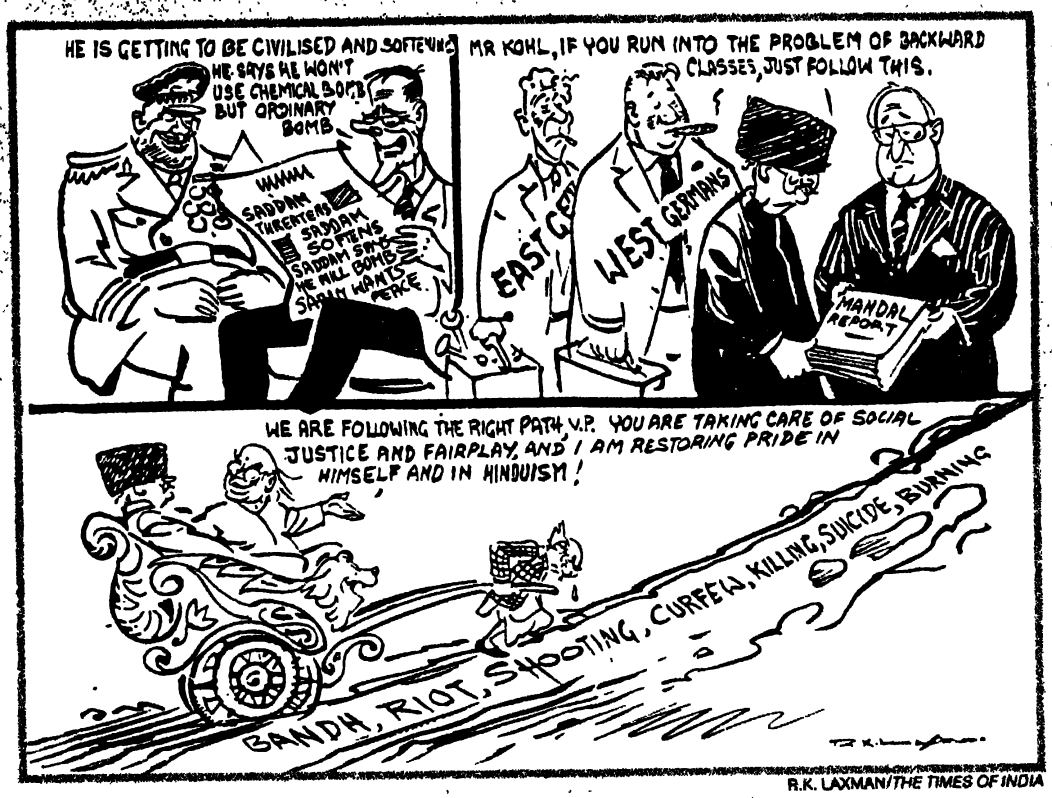
National Housing Bank offices (Bombay & Delhi) • CANFINA offices • 125 branches of the six bankers to the issue in 51 centres: Allahabad Bank, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Citibank (Sakhar Bhavan, Bombay), Punjab National Bank and Vysya Bank Ltd.

Managers to the issue: Canbank Financial Services Limited

NATIONAL HOUSING BANK
(Wholly owned by the Reserve Bank of India)

Opening New Doors On the Home Front.

Bombay Life Building, 3rd floor, 45 Veer Nariman Road, Bombay 400 023.
6th floor, Hindustan Times House, 18-20, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi 110 001.



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ The lakhs that are coming to my meeting are inspired by *Ram bhakti*. This *Ram bhakti* can become *lok shakti*.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president*

■ Arrest is not a big thing. We may have to resort to it as a preventive measure. Why? Mr. Advani's own life is in danger, so we may have to arrest him earlier to protect him.

SUBODH KANT SAHAY, *minister of state for home*

■ We can stop the *rath yatra* if we want but we do not want any bloodshed.

SYED ABDULLAH BUKHARI, *Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid*

■ The incredible thing is that simultaneously we have the Prime Minister building his personal image by tearing our society apart on caste and we have Advani and the BJP building their image by dividing our country on religion.

RAJIV GANDHI, *Congress(I) president*

■ This is a psychological fear some people suffer from. They see my ghost everywhere. But in many cases it is not true.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Janata Dal leader (Dalal, labelled as the leader of the Haryana group*

■ There is some change in the Prime Minister's attitude. He listened to all I had to say.

DEVI LAL, *former deputy Prime Minister, after a dinner meeting at the Prime Minister's residence*

■ Inflation is not a question now. We have effectively controlled price rise.

NATHURAM MIRDHA, *Union minister for food and civil supplies*

■ For the government today the greatest threat is not the ruckus created by Mandal Commission but the price rise.

ANIL SHASTRI, *deputy finance minister*

■ I have no axe to grind. I was never against him. I accept him as the leader of the party.

VEERENDRA PATIL, *former Karnataka Chief Minister, on his relations with Rajiv Gandhi*

■ To talk of a successor to Usha is not possible. You will need five successors for the five disciplines she was champion in.

O.M. NAMBIAR, *P.T. Usha's coach*

■ One song cannot pull a film through. *Ek do teen* didn't do that nor could the *Sailaab* number.

MADHURI DIXIT, *actress*



VINOD MEHTA

BJP vs Rest of India

And, in the battle, the Mandal report and V.P. Singh will be automatic casualties



Those of us who instruct the world on a weekly or fortnightly basis seldom admit to fallibility. A pundit who gets it all wrong will soon be out of a job; and the wise one leaves enough escape routes in his manuscript so that he can beat a hasty retreat. A luminary pundit, who wrote reams of praise for the Emergency, when confronted with the uncomfortable fact keeps insisting that if you read para 9 line 5 of his article in X publication you will discover with what vigour he had opposed Indira Gandhi's "bitter medicine" to the nation.

Without claiming any prizes for candour, I at least must confess to being utterly and totally wrong in my analysis of Lal Krishna Advani and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In these very columns I had argued that while Mr Advani and his party will make much theatre out of the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid controversy, they will baulk when it comes to a final confrontation. And if the BJP had second thoughts about the wisdom of pursuing 30 October as a do-or-die date, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) would also cave in, finding the 'larger national interest' a convenient alibi. All the government had to do, I argued, was to stand firm on its original commitment favouring either a mutually acceptable settlement or the court's verdict.

With Diwali crackers bursting all around, the BJP president has exploded his own time-bomb, one which unequivocally sets him and his party on a collision course with all responsible thinking in the country. While Rajiv Gandhi played his characteristic cat-and-mouse game with the all-party conference in Delhi, the Congress position on the temple/mosque dispute is no different from that of the National Front government. (I suspect Mr Gandhi is sitting back for a while and enjoying seeing V.P. Singh stew in the Janmabhoomi juice). Thus, with 21 recognised political parties behind the government, it is BJP vs Rest of India. Mr Advani is going for broke, and I can forward no rational explanation why he has taken such an enormous gamble—one in which chances for success are extremely slim.

The gamble becomes even more inexplicable when you consider that at the very top the BJP is made up of inveterate non-gamblers, prudent, thrifty, calculating men who think well into the next century and are not given to hankering after consolation prizes. Why, one may then ask, have they boxed themselves into a position from where movement is impossible? After having arrested 5,500 BJP and VHP activists in Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav can hardly back down, while V.P. Singh has at last found an issue on which dithering and backtracking are not required.

Moreover, the dramatic, even insolent, manner in which Mr Advani has posed the challenge leaves no option for the beleaguered Prime Minister but to arrest the BJP president the moment his *rath* sets wheels in Uttar Pradesh. I notice that the responsibility for communicating to the President that the BJP has withdrawn support for the V.P. Singh-led minority government has been left to Atal Behari Vajpayee. We must therefore conclude that he is a major player in this nasty adventurism. Subramaniam Swamy maintains: "When it comes to the crunch Vajpayee is a coward." Sadly, Atalji is lending substance to that charge.

Miracles, especially when such formidable gods are being placated, should not be ruled out, but at this late stage I cannot see the courts or hastily-stitched formulas obliging. At any rate, Mr Advani has now categorically rejected the jurisdiction of the Allahabad High Court (the fact that he and Vajpayee all of three weeks ago initialed a resolution, under the aegis of the National Integration Council, agreeing to abide by the court's verdict is presumably history) and solu-



NITIN RAI

With Diwali crackers bursting all around, L.K. Advani exploded his own time-bomb, one which unequivocally sets him and his party on a collision course with all responsible thinking in the country

tions like the one put forward by Mahant Avaidyanath which avoid demolition of the mosque are unacceptable to the BJP. Only the "relocation of the structure" will satisfy L.K. Advani.

I can forward just one explanation for the course the BJP has charted out. Mr Advani has been so beguiled by the "tremendous response" to his *rath yatra* that he feels his party has finally found an instrument to counteract the ravages of Mandal and reestablish the primacy of Hindutva. Admittedly, the crowds that have greeted Advani since he embarked on his historic journey have been tremendous. The piety in which the *yatra* has been bathed has given it a fervour which, on superficial examination, combines religiosity with some vague feeling that Hindu honour is being reasserted. Nevertheless, whatever the mood and the motivation of the multitudes, Mr Advani is too seasoned a politician to fall for the crowd gambit.

He has only to look around him to observe that another shifty customer (Rajiv Gandhi) on a *yatra* not unlike his own is also drawing phenomenal numbers. Which proves? Yesterday I got a call from a friend in Lucknow breathless with excitement over the anti-communal rallies staged in various parts of UP by Mulayam Singh Yadav. It seems lakhs upon lakhs of people of all denominations and creeds sat patiently listening to pleas for communal harmony, restraint and, finally, resolve. Moral: the easiest thing in India is to gather people.

Mr Advani should know better than anyone else that crowds do not necessarily translate into votes. Two examples from the not too distant past should refresh the BJP president's memory. In 1987, Mr Rajiv Gandhi's election meetings in West Bengal were so well attended that his acolytes predicted the Bay of Bengal for Jyoti Basu and the CPI(M) in the Assembly elections. More recently, in Tamil Nadu, after the death of MGR, the equation between crowds and votes did not materialise for the Congress, even though Rajiv got the kind of throngs his mother would have been proud of. Surely, Mr Advani cannot be a victim of this fallacy?

What Mr Advani has bequeathed to the nation is a general election sometime in March or April '91. Since the BJP has declared that under no circumstances will it support the Congress, and since neither the Janata Dal or the Congress can cobble together a working majority, President Venkataraman will have to dissolve Parliament with V.P. Singh as caretaker Prime Minister in the interim period. The BJP leader seemed fully prepared for this eventuality because along with his threat to withdraw support, he said defiantly: "Let there be a mid-term poll."

Famous last words? Just under a year ago, the BJP won 88 seats to Parliament, an all-time record and a substantial improvement on its 1984 tally of two. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar provided the best pickings for the party. However, in most of these states there were seat adjustments which enabled straight fights—a situation not likely in today's scenario. Indeed, the BJP will be presented to the nation as the single villain which cut short India's second experiment with a non-Congress government at the Centre. Subsequently, three or four-cornered contests, which have traditionally favoured the Congress, will become inevitable.

Whatever enthusiasm L.K. Advani's *rath yatra* may have evoked among the Hindus, in north India at least Mandal will have its impact. V.P. Singh will go around the cow belt shouting that the upper/intermediate castes have stabbed him in the front because he was committed to the Other Backward Castes (OBC). As a result, the BJP will enter the election without benefit of straight contests and the sword of Mandal hovering menacingly. In the circumstances, I would be most surprised if Mr Advani's party retained even half its strength in the Lok Sabha.

It is a devious thought, but could the BJP have deliberately created this crisis simply to get rid of Mandal, in which case V.P. Singh would be an automatic casualty? Rajiv Gandhi's Congress, recipient of 42 per cent of the national vote last time around, has only to hang on to its 1989 support base to win a clear majority in the emerging scenario. To ensure that victory, a sacrifice of 50-odd seats in Parliament for five years is not too high a price to pay if the BJP's principal demon (Mandal) is removed from the national agenda—something Rajiv Gandhi is guaranteed to do on assuming power.

Meanwhile, Mr Gandhi's incredible run of good luck continues. Despite his manifest and numerous deficiencies as a leader, he seems destined to preside over our destinies. Not only was he born with a golden spoon in his mouth, but the gods look benignly on him. They don't on V.P. Singh. He is smart, sincere, capable, relatively honest, but nothing goes right for him. His failure has tragic dimensions. Politics, alas, is a cruel game in which losers, however attractive, can operate only from the margins. •



Like Advani, another shifty customer, Rajiv Gandhi, is also on a *yatra* around the country. And he too is drawing phenomenal numbers. But crowds do not necessarily translate into votes

Enter Bangarappa

The new Karnataka CM has his work cut out for him

The ten days of nerve-wracking political uncertainty in Karnataka may have ended with the revocation of President's Rule and the swearing-in of a new Congress chief minister. But S. Bangarappa—despite the apparent support of the majority of MLAs—is likely to have his work cut out for him.

Although the ambitious backward class leader may have every reason to be delighted with his ascension ("I am very happy. Why shouldn't I be?" he told SUNDAY), Bangarappa's term could well be marked by many difficulties.

For one, he inherits a state that was ruled by Veerendra Patil who, although non-descript and unenigmatic, provided a stable and efficient administration. Patil may have had his share of detractors, but he was able—and that too in the face of orchestrated attempts by the high command to foment trouble—to contain dissidence in what is a notoriously divided state Congress party.

If Bangarappa is likely to have more difficulty in keeping his flock together, it is because his relations with most senior partymen are already very strained. His infamous temper and his tendency to be caustic and scathing have contributed in large measure to this state of affairs. Although he has tried hard to mend fences after becoming chief minister, there are few Congress state leaders—whether K.H. Patil, Veerappa Moily or Janardhan Poojary—who do not have serious reservations about him. Even Gundu Rao—who was forced by the high command to withdraw his claim and back Bangarappa for the post—is no friend. In the late Seventies, Bangarappa, who was a minister in Gundu Rao's Cabinet, held him guilty (on a staggering 60 counts) of maladministration and inefficiency before quitting the Congress and forming his own party.

That not everyone was happy with his nomination was evident when state heavyweight Veerappa Moily was absent at Bangarappa's swearing-in. Moily, who fancied himself as the strongest contender, however, denies that he was trying to make his displeasure known by staying away. "I was with (central observer) G K. Moopanar at that time. There are no motives for my absence at the function," he said.

On the face of it, Bangarappa's backward class credentials—which was what perhaps tilted the balance in his favour—may appear as an advantage. But Bangarappa—unlike his former mentor Devaraj Urs—does not enjoy the reputation of someone who has worked for the downtrodden. Moreover, he presides over a legislature party which comprises as many as 43 Lingayats and 41 Vokkaligas—the two powerful communities that between themselves have ruled Karnataka for much of the time since Independence.

Although the Lingayats have lost Veerendra Patil (who was perhaps their ablest representative) and the Vokkaligas are badly divided among themselves, neither community has been traditionally well-disposed to an

Bangarappa has more to fear from his own party than the Opposition. As Patil and other Congress CMs of Karnataka have learnt, the threat within is often more dangerous than the threat without



A long climb

After many abortive attempts, Bangarappa makes it to the top

Fifty-seven-year-old Sorakoppa Bangarappa has never concealed his desire to be Karnataka's chief minister. It is a dream he has cherished for over a decade—an ambition which has often brought him into confrontation with his political colleagues.

When he was sworn in recently as the state's CM before a large number of his jubilant supporters, Bangarappa reached the apex of what has been a chequered political career. He entered politics as a Lohiaite and was one of the three MLAs elected on the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) ticket. But he got into a wrangle over the question of leadership and formed his own party—the Karnataka Kranti-kari Paksha. In 1977, he accepted Devaraj Urs' invitation to join the Congress and was offered a minis-



try as a reward.

In time, Urs and Mrs Gandhi fell apart, leading the former to form the Congress(U) and later the Kranti Ranga. Although much was made of the Congress(U), it was badly defeated in the 1978 elections by Mrs Gandhi's Congress.

Bangarappa, who was then the Karnataka Pradesh Congress chief, staked his claim for the chief ministership. But just when he seemed certain to make it, Mrs Gandhi sprang a surprise by plumping for the controversial Gundu Rao.

Bangarappa, despite nursing many grudges against Gundu Rao for pipping him to the post, joined his ministry nevertheless. But, clearly, the disgruntled politician was only biding his time. When Urs died, Bangarappa made his move.

After raising as many as 60 charges of inefficiency and maladministration against Gundu Rao, he quit the Congress and went back to the Kranti Ranga. To his credit he managed to rejuvenate the party. In the 1983 elections, the Kranti Ranga won 33 seats after forging an alliance with the Janata. Although the Janata had many more, Bangarappa began eyeing the chief minister's chair again.

Once again, he lost out—this time to Ramakrishna Hegde, who emerged as a compromise candidate in the squabble between the Lingayat and Vokkaliga lobbies. Bangarappa, somewhat typically, became a rabid Hegde-hater—he remains one to this day.

Hegde offered to make him deputy chief minister but, evidently, Bangarappa didn't think this befitted a man of his stature. In keeping with his reputation as a floor-crosser, Bangarappa—who perhaps realised he could not shake Hegde's grip on the Janata—changed horses once again and rejoined the Congress. His reward: the post of leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

He was in the running for the chair once more when the Congress routed the Janata Dal in the 1989 elections. When he lost out to Patil, he may have believed he would have to wait another five years to occupy the chair. Tropically, it came to him when he least expected it.

'outsider' running the state. Bangarappa may not face a threat from either at the moment, but he will have to be cautious (and also perhaps hold his infamous tongue) when dealing with them.

The new chief minister is probably aware of such problems. After being sworn in, he went to embarrassing lengths to make out that he will always be a loyal servant of the high command. I will always consult Rajiv Gandhi about every step I take, he said. Given the potential dissidence he may have to face and the fate that his predecessor Veerendra Patil met, the abject show of subservience was perhaps politically expedient.

While Bangarappa has promised to do all the right things—eradicate poverty, improve administration, speed up developmental work and so on—there are bound to be comparisons between his rule and Patil's. One of the questions that has generated interest is how he will deal with the extremely well-entrenched and often corrupt liquor trade in the state.

Patil's term was marked by strong measures against the liquor lobby which won him the reputation of being honest and gutsy Bangarappa, however, has been very evasive when asked if he will continue with the measures Patil took when chief minister—only adding to the suspicion that he was installed at the behest of the liquor lobby. If he allows the trade the kind of untrammelled freedom it enjoyed in R.K. Hegde's time, then the contrast with Patil's reign will be all the more marked.

Bangarappa has less cause to worry about the Opposition Patil (who has been suspended from the party) may have won a great many admirers by standing up to Rajiv Gandhi, but politically, his options are limited. He does not enjoy the kind of support required to strike out on his own and is in any case much too ill to mount a challenge at the moment. He may choose to join the Janata Dal, but the state party—now managed by S.R. Bommai, J.H. Patil and Jeevaraj Alva—stands discredited by its performance when it was last in power. Moreover, Bangarappa has the necessary majority to fend off an attack from this quarter.

So, Bangarappa has more to fear from his own party than the Opposition. As Patil and other Congress chief ministers of Karnataka have learnt, the threat within is often more dangerous than the threat without. ●

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

FACTS ABOUT ASBES

It's a fact that Asbestos Cement Sheets are a combination of 90% cement and 10% asbestos: a natural fibre with 3 to 4 times the strength of steel.

It's pre-fabricated, ready-to-use and has the advantages of both cement and asbestos

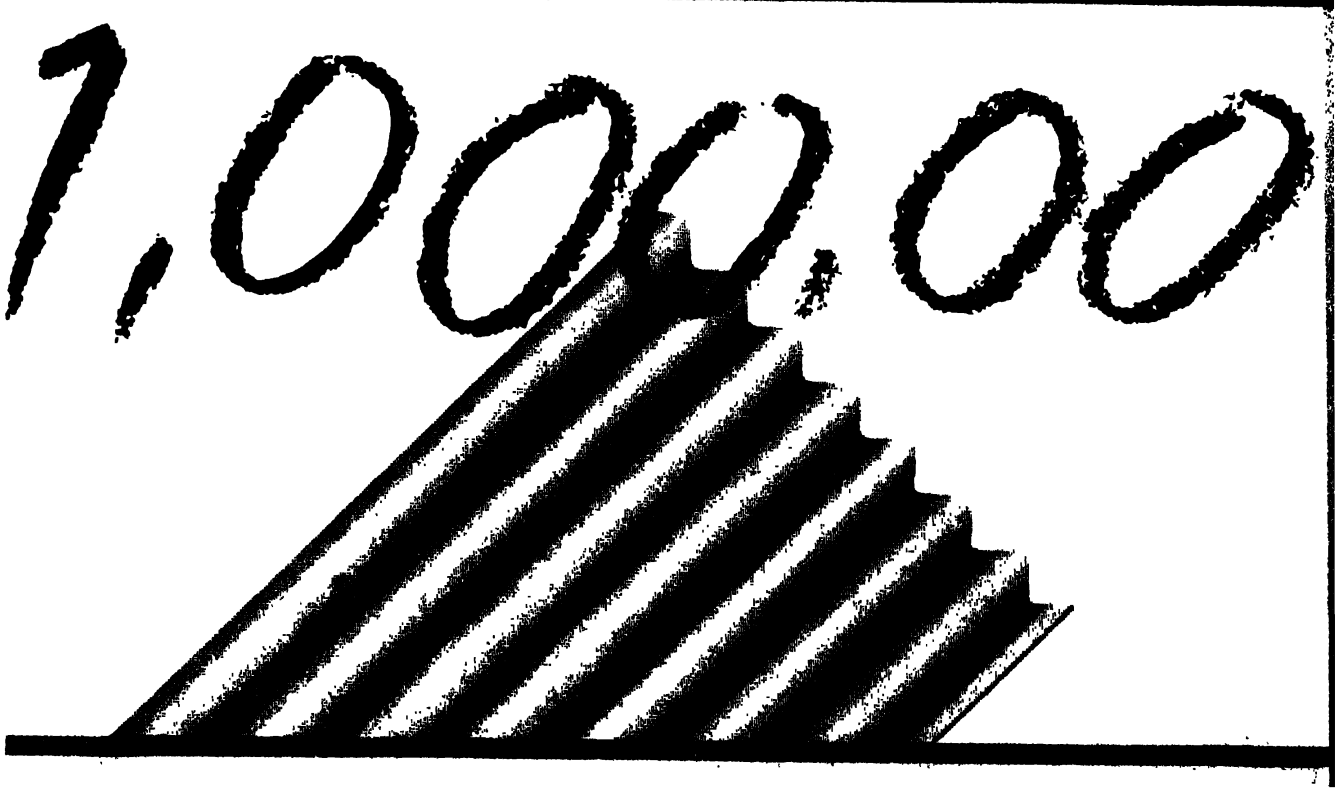
As a matter of fact, Asbestos Cement Sheets need no protective coatings or treatment. Corrosive industrial pollutants leave them unharmed.

It's inherently resistant to fire, heat, rain and salty coastal air, resulting in a long lasting product. Add to the long life of these sheets, higher coverage efficiency. And you have the most cost-effective roofing material.

Fact is, Asbestos Cement pipes, sheets, slates and shingles have been used since the turn of the century. And continue to be used all over the world.

42 lakh tonnes of asbestos, a natural mineral, is mined around the world every year. In countries like USSR, Canada, Brazil and Zimbabwe Of this, India uses only 2% .

SUMMED UP WITH



TOS CEMENT SHEETS.

Safe to use. Rather than listen to propaganda put out by vested interests about Asbestos Cement Sheets, listen to what the experts have to say.

The normal use of Asbestos Cement poses no risk to the environment or the public.

Leading environmentalists, epidemiologists and the working group of the W.H.O agree that this material is safe.

Finally, let the study group of the Health and Safety Executive of H M Govt of the U K clear all your doubts

"Asbestos Cement products are sometimes confused in the public mind with asbestos insulation We should think it necessary, therefore, to say that we should not expect danger to arise from existing Asbestos Cement products, eg roofing, sheeting and guttering"

So if you're looking for the ideal roofing material, you can't do better than choose Asbestos Cement Sheets

And that's a fact

A FEW FIGURES.



(It's a fact that over 1 billion square metres of Asbestos Cement Roofing Sheets are in use in India With nearly 60 million more added every year)

ASBESTOS CEMENT SHEETS. SAFE TO USE. LAST A LIFETIME.

THE ASBESTOS CEMENT PRODUCTS MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION.

Enterprise D ACPMA 55m

Going to town

Fear of terrorists is turning Punjab's rural folk into urbanites

Ranjit Avenue is one of the posher localities of Amritsar. Only sometimes, it does not seem that way. Visitors to the city are surprised when they find farmers atop tractors returning home in the evening to their bungalows in Ranjit Avenue. "This," says Sarabjeet Singh, the deputy commissioner of Amritsar, "is because of the urbanisation of rural families." And, despite a general real estate slump in Punjab, rents in the area keep moving up.

The phenomenon has been noticed in several cities and small towns in Punjab, especially those in the violence-ridden districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozepur. The reason: the large-scale internal migration which began in Punjab around 1986, but which has increased, thanks to the growing terrorist problem.

The militants continue to use the rural areas as their operational bases and for shelter. As a corollary—obvious, in a way—the rich peasantry have become targets for extortions and kidnapping. As a result, the rural-folk are abandoing their ancestral *behks* (farmhouses) and are looking for safer residences in towns.

The trend has been noticed by officials at the state's police headquarters in Chandigarh. Interestingly, available figures show that the exodus *out* of Punjab has trailed off somewhat, and a larger number of families are opting to migrate to urban areas *in* the state. So, say officials, as much as two-thirds of the movement in Punjab can be categorised as internal migration.

Interestingly, again, while 70 per cent of all external migrations take place among Hindu families, as many as 80 per cent of the rural families moving to towns are Sikhs. Says Sanjiv Gupta, senior superintendent of police in Amritsar: "Every house (in the rural areas) has become a hideout. The terrorists come and demand money, clothes, use of telephone and food. There are allegations of rape, and especially, the villagers with grown-up daughters are slowly moving to towns."

Deputy commissioner Singh points out that many of the internal migrants were among those who had been contemplating a shift to towns for some years. "Earlier," he says, "they were planning the action to improve their style of living, but were lethargic about it. Terrorism and its resultant insecurity became an immediate provocation."

Take Gohalwar, a Sikh-dominated village in Tarn Taran district. "Since the past one year," says Sohan Singh, the *sarpanch*, "rich Sikh farmers have become targets of extortions. They are being forced to leave and are mostly taking to trading in towns." Dilbagh Singh, a Gohalwar farmer, explains that besides threats and extortion demands, people of both communities are suffering a complete change of lifestyle. They have stopped tending to fields at night—previously a regular practice. And in any case, if the villagers were not moving to towns they were shifting from their *behks* to the *lal dora* areas, which are really a cluster of houses in the centre of the village unit.

Many farmers, says Dilbagh, worked in the fields throughout the day and returned to the *lal dora* area by the evening. Those who had already shifted to towns made sure they returned home before sunset. Many



RAJESH KUMAR

Sawinder Singh: "I will never go back to my village"



RITU SARIN

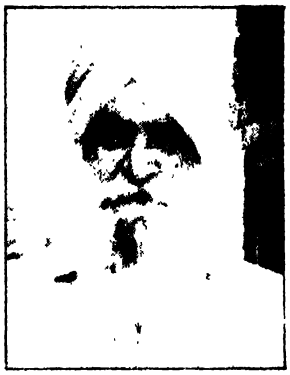


Rural Punjab: changing profile



RITU SARIN

Policemen checking vehicles on the Amritsar highway: tough measures



***Sarpanch* Sohan Singh: "Rich Sikh farmers are the targets of extortions"**



Rajesh Kumar: "The towns are much better"

farmhouses had become *be sirag*, or abandoned, with terrorists using them as hideouts at will. "It saddens our hearts," laments Dilbagh, "but people don't dare to return to the farmhouses again. And they have no resale value because nobody is willing to buy them."

More tales of woe, now from Rajesh Kumar, earlier a resident of Boparai Kalan village in Amritsar district. On 7 October, 1987, his family was attacked by militants while they were returning home from their cloth shops in the village *chowk*. The gang demanded the day's take from the group. When they resisted, the militants opened fire. Four of Rajesh's family, including an uncle and three cousins, were killed.

Rajesh left Boparai Kalan after the 13-day mourning period, never to return. At that time, there were 14 Hindu families in the village. Now, there are none. Rajesh and his clan shifted to Charhta, an industrial town in the outskirts of Amritsar, and took two shops on rent. Only his father attends to the business in the village, and returns in the evening. His interpretation: "Though work in the town is slack, it is far better than facing the dread every day in the village."

There are many Sikhs, too, who like the Hindus have migrated to Charhta. Says Sawinder Singh, a cloth merchant, originally from Badri village in Ajanala district: "I will never go back. I am not even interested in visiting the village I have left behind."

Last year, Sawinder's family received an extortion demand from the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK). The family had heard horror stories of families who had defied such demands being totally wiped out by the militants. Helpless, they paid up the Rs 50,000—in instalments—and then, fled to the town. Though there were commonplace incidents of violence in large towns and cities too, the villages were worst affected. "Even today," says Sawinder, "terrorists are moving around freely with automatic rifles, with nobody to stop them. Extortions are increasing. Even if Khalistan is formed, many Sikhs like me will leave Punjab and go and live in Delhi."

What is most unfortunate is that with ever-increasing migrations, the complexion of rural Punjab is being transformed. As a people, the Sikhs are a flamboyant, aggressive lot, fond of—among other things— flouting their wealth. All that is a thing of the past. Rich farmers and landlords now conceal their income, call off celebrations and even take their drink behind locked doors.

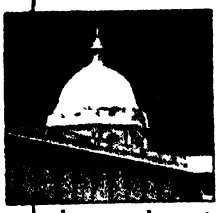
The movement of militants and frequent encounters between the gangs and the police have obliterated the peace and tranquility of the villages. And ironically, though displacement for the villagers was something like an amputation, urbanisation was the only way out for survival. •

Ritu Sarin/Amritsar and Chandigarh

INDER MALHOTRA

Ignoring India

New Delhi is excluded from the Cambodian peace process



If only to get away from the subject of Pakistan, let us turn our gaze to some other developments of significance in the realm of international relations. And since we have to endure what we cannot cure, let us also dispense with the lament about the lack of interest in foreign affairs because of our doleful absorption in the almost literally burning and bloody issues of Mandal and *mandir*.

To begin with, a word of gratitude to the Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen. But for his visit to New Delhi no one in the corridors of power here would have given a moment's thought to Cambodia or the vexed Cambodian issue, now mercifully nearing a solution. Hun Sen put his finger on the heart of the matter when he pleaded, courteously but pointedly, for a greater Indian role in smoothening the transition in Cambodia from a seemingly unending war to durable peace.

Indo-Chinese surely is an area where our stakes are very high. Time was when nothing of importance could happen without Indian participation. Now others are as anxious to exclude us from the Cambodian peace process as we seem to be to stay out of it.

It would be instructive to look back at the story from the beginning. In 1954, when the first Geneva conference on Indo-Chinese took place, the Big Four—the US, the Soviet Union, Britain and France—had invited only China to join them (Dulles, of course, had refused to shake hands with Zhou Enlai). India was not asked. But without standing on ceremony, Krishna Menon, clearly with Jawaharlal Nehru's consent, invited himself to Geneva and worked tirelessly to veer the conference towards a solution India could support. Since then India has been chairman of the International Control and Supervisory Commission in each of the three Indo-Chinese states. The commissions were dysfunctional for long stretches of time; but the meaning of their continued existence was crystal clear.

By the time the second Geneva conference became necessary, in 1962, to straighten out the mess in Laos, India's active role was sought by all participants except China with which India's relations were then fast deteriorating.

Then followed the long night of the Vietnam War and the unspeakable Cambodian nightmare during which a third of its population was butchered by a regime backed by both the US and China until only the other day. No one could do anything for the Cambodians during those terrible years.

However, during the second half of the last decade the world conscience was disturbed and an international conference on Cambodia in Paris began. India was duly invited to it. Indeed, India and Canada jointly chaired a committee on "control mechanism" for whatever transition arrangements might be agreed to. Rajiv Gandhi and his minister of state for external affairs, Natwar Singh, took commendable interest in pushing forward the Cambodian peace process.

By early this year, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council had taken over the task of peace making in Cambodia. Their scheme of things, envisaging a transitional UN administration in that country, has been accepted by the four warring factions though they have not yet been able to effect a cease-fire.

Meanwhile, China has complicated matters by supplying tanks to its old clients, the murderous Khmers Rouges.

The UN-sponsored plan of the five permanent members (P-5) excludes India completely and the Janata Dal government appears to have been content with this. Apart from sending L.L. Mehrotra, a secretary in the external affairs ministry, to Djakarta and inviting Hun Sen to Delhi it has done little.

By comparison, the government's record over Afghanistan is somewhat reassuring. Najibullah's recent visit to India was a useful exercise. It strengthened his position, established largely by his own efforts, in Kabul.



Hun Sen greeting Mother Teresa

But for Hun Sen's visit to India, no one in the corridors of power would have spared a moment's thought to the Cambodian issue

Since then, however, Pakistan—more specifically, the notorious Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)—has launched a last-ditch assault on the Najib regime in the hope that, having belied earlier expectations of its overnight disintegration, it would fall now. A two-pronged attack on the Afghan capital is now on, and its outcome remains to be seen.

The desperate Pakistani plan has two objectives: to topple hitherto unbeatable Najib and to replace him by the totally fundamentalist group of Peshawar-based Mujahideen, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The second part of the plan has aroused strong opposition from other Mujahideen groups in Pakistan. But the ISI has curtly told them to lump it or get out.



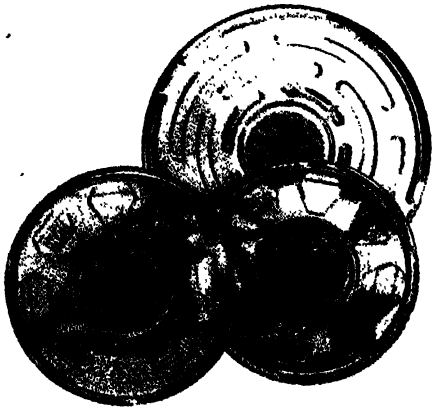
The unsung hero of the Indian silver screen. It's not the young star who never made it to big time. It's not the also-ran at last year's Golden Peacock Awards. Nor is it the latest box-office flop

It is the film on which Indian cinema is captured. The very basis of the world's largest motion picture industry: Hindustan Photo Films' INDU Cine Positive Film in Colour and Black & White. And Cine Sound Negative Film.

Picture this. There are over 12,000 cinema houses in the country today, with a daily attendance of around 1,50,00,000 — and HPF's role becomes more than entertainment

It sustains the Rs.1600 crore Indian film industry. Has curtailed raw stock imports And, indirectly provides a livelihood to over 2,00,000 people.

The next time you watch an Indian movie, whether it's an award-winning production or the stuff box-office hits are made of, remember the unsung hero.



INDU

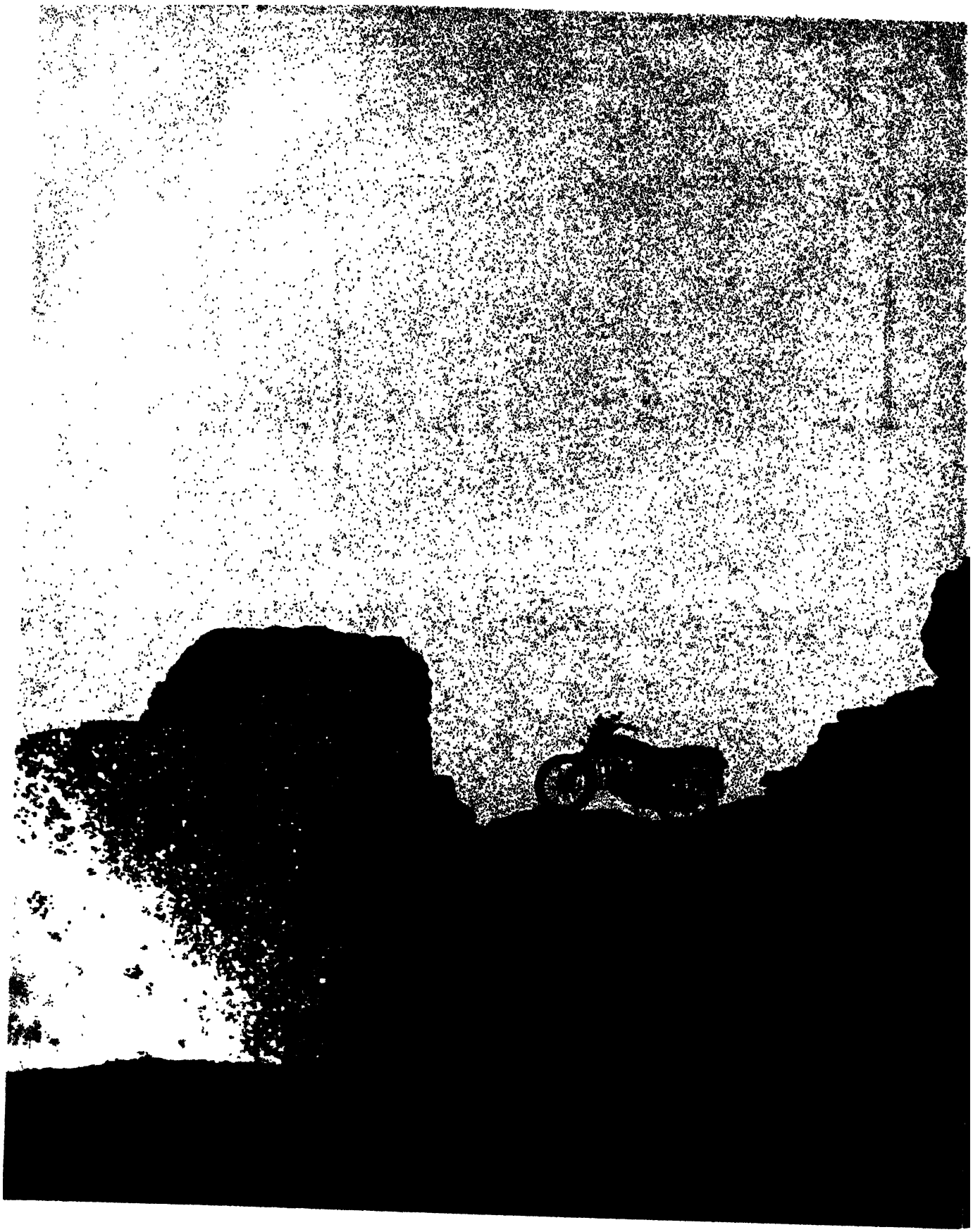
HINDUSTAN PHOTO FILMS

PHOTO
CINE
X-RAY
GRAPHIC ARTS
INDUSTRIAL X-RAY
CHEMICALS
MAGNETIC TAPE
INSTANT PHOTOGRAPHY

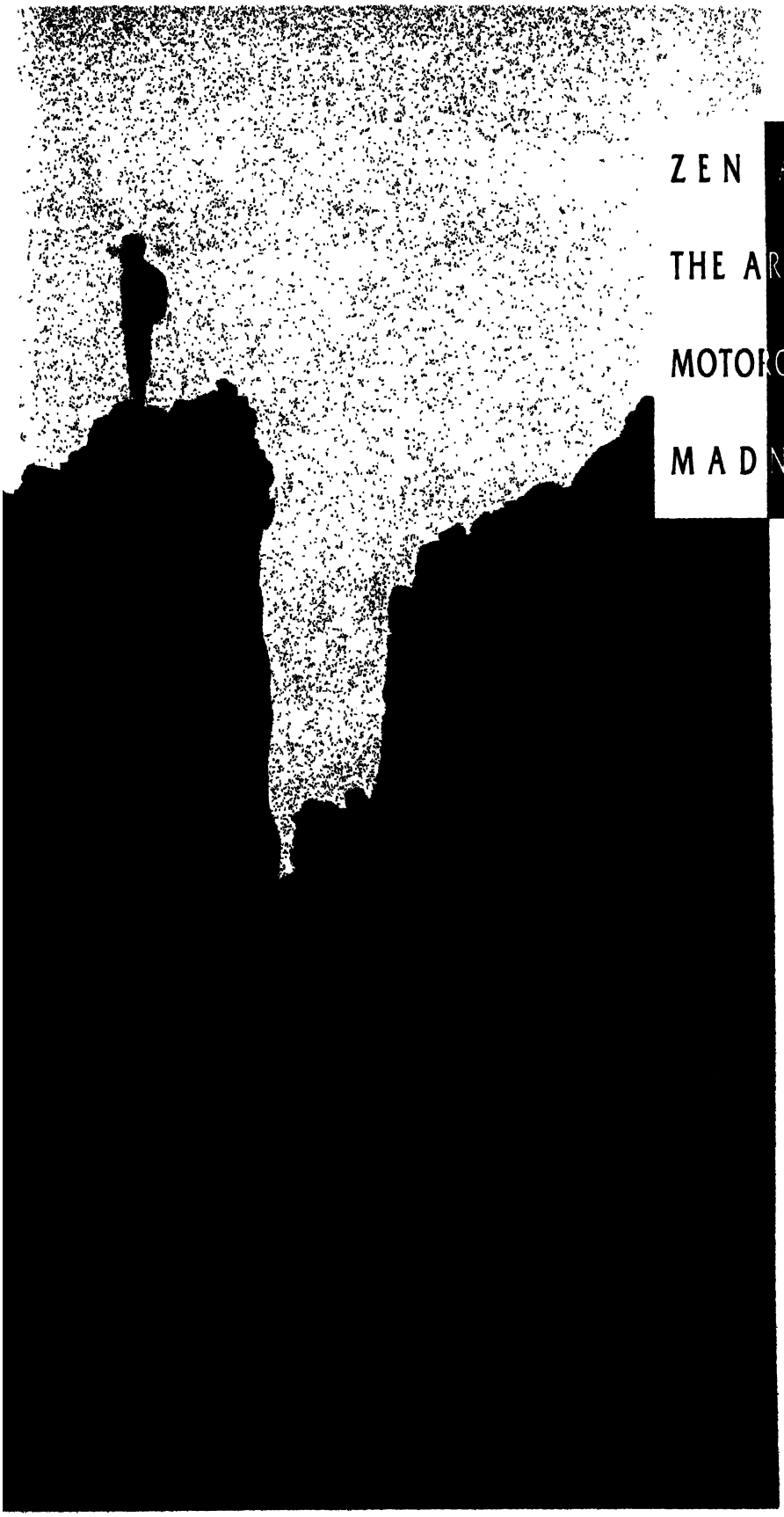
F U T U R E I N F O C U S

Hindustan Photo Films Mfg. Co. Ltd. (A Govt of India Enterprise)
Registered Office: Indunagar, Udhagamandalam 643 005
Marketing Headquarters: Bali Towers, 1 Abdul Razak Street, Saidapet, Madras 600 015

R K SWAMY/HPF/8208



I INTAS IND S 4 2739



ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MADNESS

"The closest I'd been to Goa was Martin's, the restaurant at Colaba. One night after the vindaloo, I decided. The bike glistened gloriously in the dawn light. But would she make it as far as Khopoli? Three days later I had been chased by a bull, had a puncture repaired by a drunk called 'English' and eaten dust for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I was also in Goa."

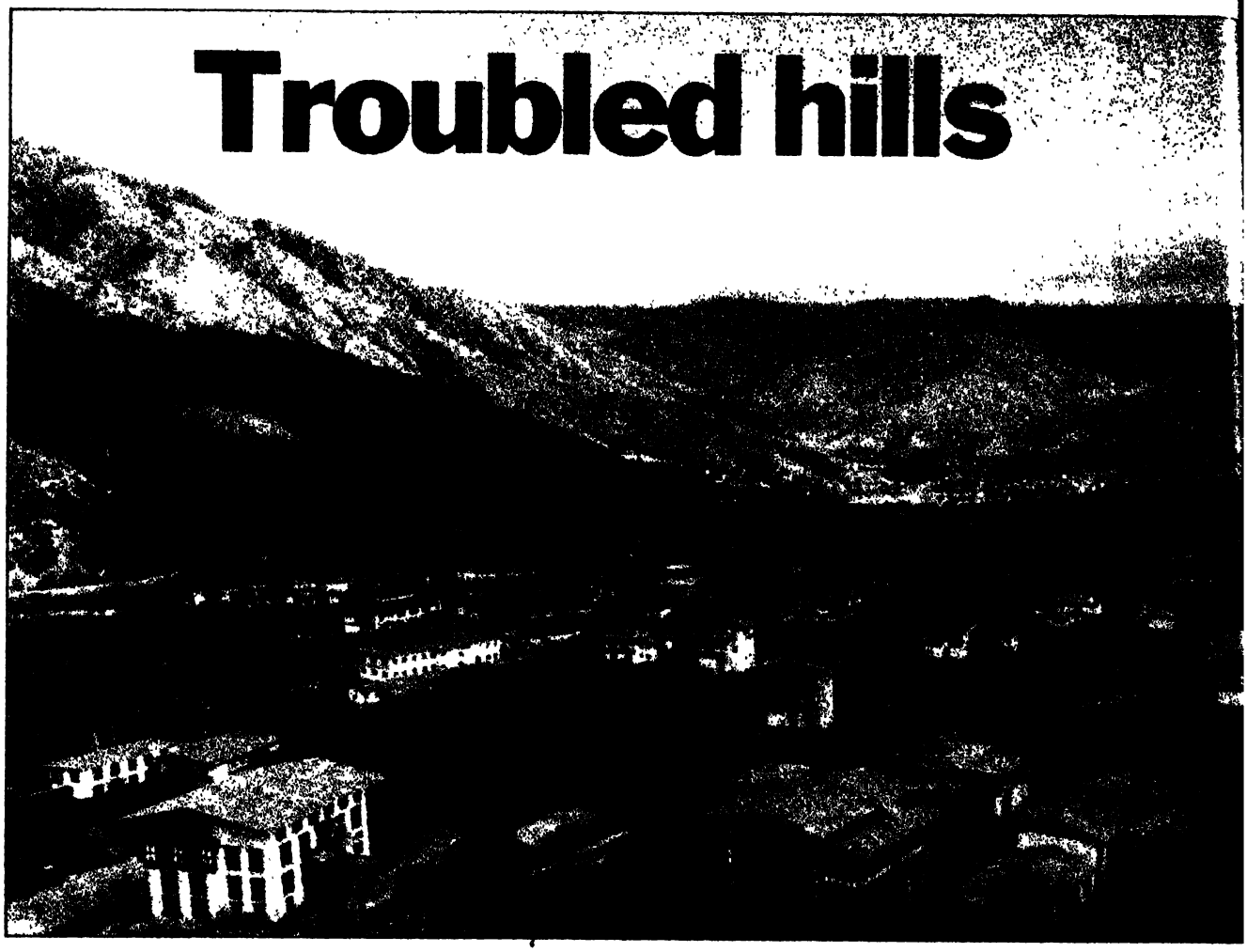


If it's hard to explain your obsession for motorcycles, it's probably impossible to explain why you buy Castrol Super TT. When it's tougher to find than any other engine oil. When it's more expensive. But as Zen says: some things in life should not be explained. Merely experienced.

CASTROL SUPER TT

[redacted]

Troubled hills



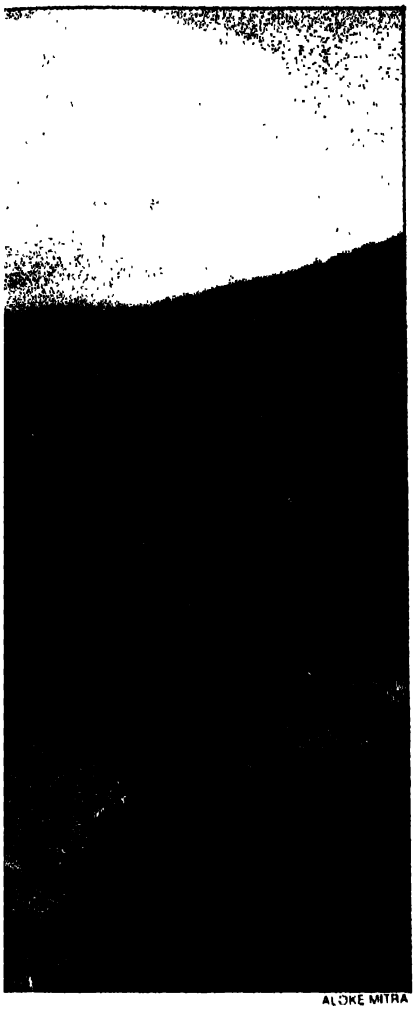
Ethnic violence breaks out in Bhutan—and spills over into India

After a long working day, Munna Dorji, 23, garaged his employer's car and started walking back home. He only got half way. The shot that killed him was fired by the Bhutanese army—the Indian Police and locals insist. "The attack was entirely unprovoked," says Prabh Das, the district magistrate of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Two Indian civilians were killed and two injured in the burst of automatic fire. And the additional superintendent of police, Jalpaiguri, had a narrow escape.

For a border area, this incident at Chamurchi, on the India-Bhutan border, might not seem uncommon. But India and Bhutan have never clashed, and the shooting of Indian civilians allegedly by the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) is unprecedented. Kanchi Dorji, 19, who had been married to Munna just a year ago, says her husband was not politically active. "He was just coming home," she mutters. Panjamaya Tamang, widow of Buddhiman Tamang, 48, also killed in the attack, says her husband had gone to the market and stopped for a *paan*. They simply happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

But ever since some Bhutanese of Nepalese origin started agitating against the Royal Bhutan Government, things have been wrong for the locals on both sides of the border. The agitation started in late 1988, when ethnic Nepalese dissidents in southern Bhutan rebelled against the "Bhutanisation programme" of the government. The tiny Himalayan country, which still boasts a well-oiled monarchy in perfect working order, had decided to curb the influx of Nepalese immigrants, mainly from North Bengal and Assam. The alarming immigration threatened to wipe out the last off-shoot of Tibetan culture preserved in the lifestyle of the Drukpas, the original inhabitants of Bhutan. In 1988, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck ordered a new census and the implementation of Driglam Namzha or the traditional Drukpa code of conduct.

Rebelling against this "cultural imperialism", a section of the ethnic Nepalese, who constitute about 70 per cent of southern Bhutan, launched a "pro-democracy" movement to fight



ALOKE MITRA

this "violation of human rights". The campaign for ethnic equality has now turned militant, spearheaded by three organisations—the Bhutan People's Party (BPP), the People's Forum for Human Rights (PFHR) and the Student's Union of Bhutan (SUB). The dissidents are camping along the border, on Indian soil, supported by their ethnic brethren in India and Nepal. With no clear demarcation of the border, except at a couple of points on motorable roads, and half the local Indians earning their living in Bhutan, the clash seems unavoidable.

And the Chamurchi incident is not a bolt from the blue. Since early this year, the area has been heating up over various minor issues. Finally, on 23 September, to protest against the harassment faced by Indians across the border, locals blocked the road in front of the border check-post near Samchi, in Bhutan. An RBA convoy of 11 trucks was coming back to Samchi that afternoon, since roads linking the border towns of Bhutan loop through India. The officer-in-charge (OC) of the nearest police station, Banarhat, rushed to the spot, received the memorandum from the protestors, and after four hours of soft-talking, managed to clear the blockade.

Meanwhile, Rakhal Das Mukherjee, additional SP (superintendent of police) of Jalpaiguri, was on his way to the spot, overtaking the army trucks to get to the OC out front. "We were about 4 km from the check-post, passing the last but one truck," recalls Fatik Barman, Mukherjee's driver, counting from the rear. "Some boys let out a shout from the roadside and the RBA fired instantly." Barman's left eye was hurt by the splinters of a shattered windscreen as the bullet whizzed past his temple. "We have lodged a complaint and preserved the windshield as evidence," says Jalpaiguri SP Tooshar Bhattacharya.

But the Bhutan government begs to differ. According to government sources, the Indian police, failing to control the violent mob, had fired a few shots. "We offered to carry out a joint investigation with the Indian police," says a senior official. "But nothing came of it. We use 7.62 calibre SLRs and 9mm pistols, whereas the Indian police use .303s. The reports should have been conclusive."

For all of last month, the Bhutan government has been busy denying various allegations of killings. Just two days before the Chamurchi shooting, there had been a clash between the rebels and security forces in Chamurchi Bridge, in Samchi. A Kyodo and an AFP news report from Kathmandu put the toll at 327. Not a single shot had been fired, the Bhutan government countered, since the RBA and RBP (Royal Bhutan Police) were under strict instructions not to fire under any circumstances. However, hospitals in West Bengal host Bhutanese rebels under treatment for bullet injuries.

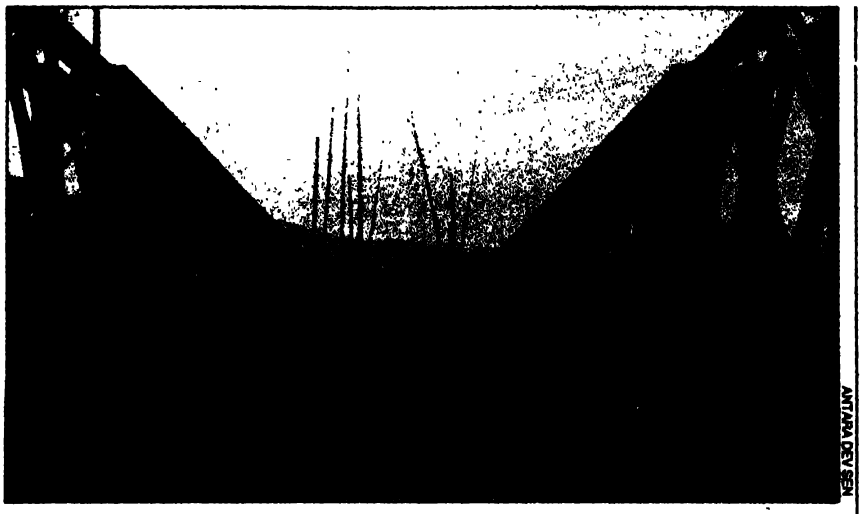
King Jigme Singye Wangchuck: preaching non-violence



According to BPP members, on 19 September, peaceful processions started out from various parts of southern Bhutan, including Sibsu, Pugli, Phuntsholing, Samchi and Samrang. The idea was to march to the district headquarters and submit demand petitions to the *dzongdags* (equivalent to a district magistrate). One, 6,000-strong, marched from Charghari block to the Changmari subdivisional HQ, and on 20 September proceeded towards the district HQ at Samchi. It was first stopped at the Diana bridge, but the demonstrators defied orders and carried on. However, they could not cross the Chamurchi bridge, a few kilometres away from the *dzondag's* office.

The entrance of the bridge was blocked by an excavator, followed by a barricade of barbed wire. The *dzondag* and the police were at the other end of the bridge, ordering them to go back through a megaphone. "They had SLRs pointed at us and the SP, with some policemen, were half-way across the bridge," says Anand Chettry, a BPP member. "They suddenly started firing. About ten people must have been shot. We just ran for our lives." Bablu Tamang, 19, was on the excavator, scrambling to get to the other side. He got hit on his left leg. Recently released from hospital, he is back in the Garganda camp, near Jalpaiguri. "Many were wounded," he says. "Three were probably admitted to Luksan hospital and the others taken to Siliguri." Bir Bahadur Galey, who had climbed to the top of the excavator, was not that lucky.

And the Bhutan government admits to his killing. "They were hurling bombs at us," says Lekhpak Dorji, the Samchi *dzondag*, locally known as a 'toughy'. "Our SP and a constable were badly hurt by a bomb as they approached the agitators to accept their demand charter. The SP fired to cover his retreat." Apparently, SP Sonam Dhendup had fired specifically ten shots from an SLR at the excavator—which sports seven bullet marks. "Three shots are unaccounted for—those three might have wounded or



The Chamurchi Bridge: scene of strife

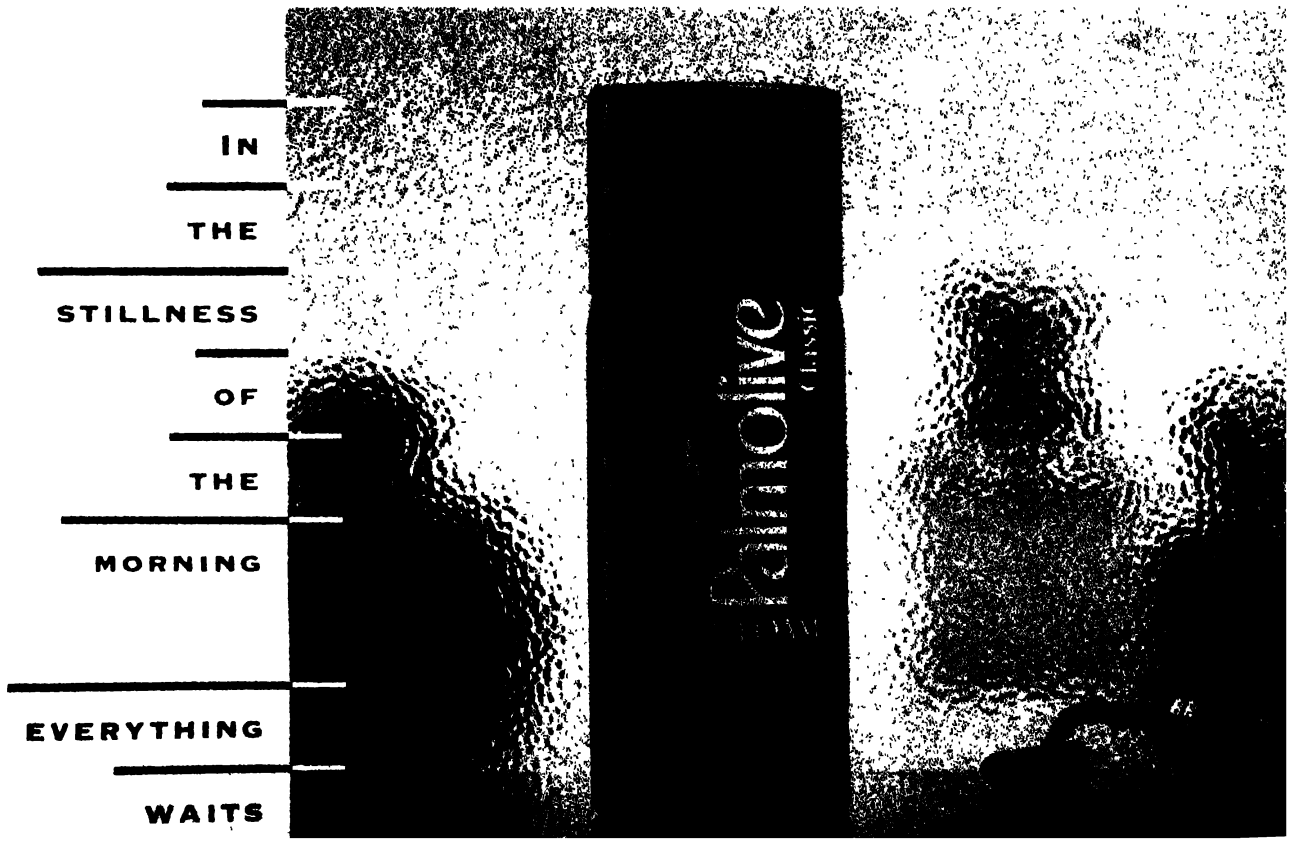
killed three people..." suggests Dorji.

And there are reports of police atrocities in Sibsu, too. Shyam Pradhan, 22, being treated in the surgical ward at North Bengal Medical College and Hospital, Siliguri, was wounded there on 21 September. "The police blocked the way in Golabazar," he says. "They charged with bayonets and shot at us. We ran, but there was no escape route—it was a hilltop. Many fell to their deaths—into the Jaldhaka River far below..."

In the same ward lies Arun Rai, 16. "I wanted to fight against injustice," he says, with bewildered eyes. Dil Bahadur Chhettry, 28, Deoraj Pradhan, 20, Sarad Rai, 20, and Karga Maya Gurung, a 15-year-old girl injured in the bridge shooting, are also in surgical wards of the same hospital.

Further south, on the Indo-Bhutan border at Jaigaon-Phuntsholing, locals talk of the hundreds jailed and the handful killed by Bhutan police. In a BPP camp near Khokla basti, Jaigaon, Om Prakash, 16, nurses his wounds. "The RBP arrested us and gave us electric shocks," he says. "But they let most of them go," adds Meghnad Chhettry, 15. "Only 24 have been jailed." And among them is their camp commander, Mahindra Rana. "One Indian was killed in the violent lathicharge," says Binay Rai, 18. "He had gone to the rally because his brother worked in Bhutan."

The Bhutan government has handled the charges rather ineptly. Beginning with the no-firing-all-lies stand they passed on to a-few-shots-yes-but-nobody-in-hospital stand, finally graduating to please-open-bandages-and-inspect stand. "We use SLRs," points out Dago Tshering, the deputy home minister of Bhutan. "I would expect the victim to be killed if



shot, not to lie there with a flimsy bandage."

And the government has its own quota of horror tales. The rebels' "campaign" has claimed many victims—not just killed, but maimed and mutilated grotesquely. Starting from the two administrative officials in Gomtu, who had their heads chopped off on 2 June, the confirmed number of decapitations alone by the BPP now stands at six. Photos of chopped and burnt victims, both dead and alive, fill the police files. About 152 people have been kidnapped.

Not surprisingly, people seem to be terrified of these rebels. Threat letters to administrative officials, schoolteachers and ethnic Nepalese who don't support the agitation, have practically paralysed the little kingdom, till now unexposed to political violence. Industries, schools and even some offices have closed down, and development work has come to a standstill, as all reserves and manpower are channelised to counter the agitation.

In keeping with a statement by A.P. Mukherjee, director-general (DG) of West Bengal police, that the state will not allow any agitation against Bhutan to be launched from Indian soil, the police foiled a "long march" by rebels into Bhutan scheduled for 26 August. But with an open border and the legal right of every Bhutanese national to stay in India, as well as the absence of any directive by the Indian or Bhutanese governments to extradite the agitators, the local administration seems to be at a loss. Added to that is the love and sympathy showered upon the political refugees camping in the Dooars by the Indian Nepalese, local leftist parties and the Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO). Besides, the GLO is supposed to be providing the



A school in Phuntsholing: The Drukpa dress is a must



THE WATER WAITS.
THE RAZOR'S EDGE QUIVERS.
DON'T LOOK BACK.

GRIP THE CAN. PRESS THE NOZZLE.
FOAM GUSHES ONTO YOUR PALM.
FEEL THE FRESHNESS
WHISPER AGAINST YOUR FACE.
SAVOUR THE RICHEST LATHER
EVER TO MEET SKIN.
SCENT THE SENSATION
OF ITS EXHILARATING FRAGRANCE.
EXULT.

PALMOLIVE CLASSIC SHAVE FOAM.
FROM COLGATE-PALMOLIVE.
MAKERS OF
INDIA'S LEADING SHAVE CREAMS.

Palmolive
Classic
SHAVE FOAM

THE NEW WORLD OF SHAVING

Rediffusion/CP/90/387 a

rebels with arms, while an ex-CRPF man in the Lankapara camp, Kumar Thapa, is said to be giving them training.

The trouble began with the imposition of Driglam Namzha in 1988, in an attempt to preserve national heritage. This prescribed for all Bhutanese nationals the Drukpa dress—*gho* (or bakku) for men and *kira* for women—the national language Dzonkha and generally the Drukpa etiquette. Not surprisingly, the ethnic Nepalese, constituting at least 30 per cent of Bhutan's population, and a clear majority in the south, found that tough. Especially after Nepali was dropped from the school syllabus and Dzonkha made compulsory. The immigrants." The green ID, modelled on the Green Card of the US, gives all rights to the residents except the rights to vote and apply for foreign scholarships. But the rebels had started their agitation against the "racist policy" of Bhutanisation and put forward a 13-point demand charter. Apparently, in order to mobilise people the BPP uses both the carrot and the stick—promising free land in a democratic Bhutan to those who join, and a gory death to those who don't. Families with no member to spare for the agitation have to pay a huge fine, it seems. Said a young agitator: "I joined because our leaders threatened to cut off my father's head."

A rebel pamphlet compares the "far richer" Nepalese culture to the "cheap and educational facilities, the agitators are not accepted as true fighters for democracy. "Why should outsiders tell us to change our system of government?" retorts Dawa Tshering, the foreign minister.

But the agitators are Bhutanese nationals, led by important former government officials. The jailed leader, Tek Nath Rizal, was a member of both the National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council—the highest committee in the government. Accused in 1988 of "falsely" informing the king of a probable uprising in southern Bhutan, he was stripped of his ranks and charged with inciting the southern Bhutanese. He fled to Nepal, but was extradited and jailed in Thimphu. PFHR leader Gop-



Shyam Pradhan: in hospital with bullet wounds



Sabitri Sharma: her hair was forcibly cut



Om Pradhan: tortured by the Bhutan police



Babiu Tamang: injured in the bridge shooting

violation of dress and language codes could cost Rs 200 in fines. And overzealous policemen, who were promised half the amount, went crazy. "Even our grandparents were forced to wear the Drukpa dress...they work in the fields..." says Sabitri Sharma, 17, a member of the Women's Organisation of Bhutan who is now in the Garganda camp, the rebel base. She left school and joined the movement after her teachers forcibly cut her hair, as keeping short hair was [illegible] Drukpa custom.

What put the lid on [illegible]s the new census programme [illegible] the immigrants took to be a charter for their ouster. "But we weren't planning to throw out anybody," explains Dago Tshering, the most powerful man in Bhutan after the king. "We wanted to issue identity cards—red ones to the genuine residents, who were here before 1958, and green ones to later and concocted versions of Sino-Tibetan customs". It plays on the Gorkha sentiment, reminds them of their blood brothers in India and Nepal, and threatens that the "borders of the Gorkha state of Sikkim and adjoining districts of Kalimpong and Darjeeling can very easily be extended across the whole of southern Bhutan". This shocking similarity to the dream of a Greater Nepal, born in the 18th century, makes one wonder whether this "fight against Drukpa cultural imperialism" is not a fight for Nepalese expansionism as well.

And, with reason, the Drukpas (literally Bhutanese) guarding the last bastion of Buddhist Tibetan culture after Tibet was annexed by China and Sikkim made a part of India, are alarmed by the swelling Nepalese immigration. Regarded as economic refugees drawn to Bhutan by her better living conditions, including free health al Sharma, BPP leader Balaram Poudyal, BPP president R.K. Budathoki, were all important government officials. And other than Rizal, all are now in Garganda.

And this may well be only the beginning. However, in a small landlocked kingdom without industries or even newspapers (except for a government-run weekly), where young men in Texas leathers and flashy Toyotas knot a cursory *bakku* apron-like over New York denims, where sleepy hilltop villagers have no concept of life beyond the hills, modern western concepts might not make total sense. And constitutional monarchy or democracy may not make any difference to the larger masses. Meanwhile, some nerves are tense, some progress stalled and some lives lost. ●

Antara Dev Sen/Thimphu, Siliguri and the Dooars

"The people will decide"

King Jigme Singye Wangchuck on the future of Bhutan

Hindu ethnic Nepalese, settled in southern Bhutan, have rebelled against what they call the "cultural imperialism" of the majority Buddhist Drukpa community. These southern Bhutanese have demanded the democratisation of the Himalayan kingdom's political system. It appears that the turmoil is about to intensify. So what is King Jigme Singye Wangchuck doing about defusing the crisis? "I am not opposed to democracy," he told SUNDAY. But he has certain conditions. Excerpts from the interview:

Q: Do you feel threatened by the pro-democracy movement?
A: Well, I am not opposed to democracy, or to any political change, as long as the changes are good for Bhutan and her people. I firmly believe that the future of Bhutan does not lie in the hand of one individual, like myself, but in the hands of the people. Because we have a monarchy, people outside seem to feel that Bhutan has a feudal system of government. And hiding behind the veil of democracy, our boys across the border get away with all the extortions, sabotage, kidnappings, murders and mutilation of bodies.

Q: Would you hold any measures taken by the government responsible for the crisis?
A: For many years we have tried to bring the southern Bhutanese into the mainstream—economically, socially, culturally, politically—because Bhutan is too small a country to be divided. The one nation and one people concept is essential for the survival of Bhutan. But, I am sorry to say that some of the things we did to implement this have been unfortunate. We meant well, but these did not have a very good impact.

Q: And now?
A: A lot of demands have been made by the anti-national boys—don't know whether it is fair to say 'anti-national'—and they want a separate identity in the south. That would mean autonomy, which is just one step away from separation. Bhutan cannot afford that.

Q: Is the agitation numerically quite strong?
A: I think it is about 30,000-strong. That is five per cent of our population. The total number of the southern Bhutanese would be about 25 to 30 per cent. But, if five per cent of our population feel very strongly about something, I, as the King, obviously have to take their sentiment very seriously. Because I am only one individual and the views of one person are less important than the views of 30,000.

Q: So, what do you plan to do?
A: I believe that every problem—political, economic or social—can be resolved through sincere dialogue. I am ready for it, as long as their demands do not jeopardize the security and well-being of Bhutan.



Q: And have you made any progress on starting this dialogue?
A: No. The situation is not conducive for it. There have been more than 152 people kidnapped and the figure is going up. A lot of them have been killed or mutilated. Unless the conditions are conducive for it, it is difficult to have a sincere dialogue. And if I start a dialogue now, they will take it to be a sign of weakness.

Q: What are the conditions?
A: Well, all the kidnapped people must be released. Secondly, the boys guilty of killing innocent Bhutanese nationals have to be brought to justice. Thirdly, all their terrorist acts must stop. When you have a gun pointed at you, it is difficult to actually have a dialogue in an atmosphere of goodwill, sincerity and trust.

Q: Which way is the gun pointing? Both ways?
A: Not both ways. I have given strict orders to security forces not to fire under any circumstances. But the boys across the border don't have peaceful processions, as they say. They have women and children in front, but at the back the anti-nationals in camouflage army uniforms come fully armed.

Q: What do you regard to be your greatest disadvantage in countering this situation?
A: Mainly two—one, that nothing is more effective than their terror tactics. And second, our monarchy. Outside people automatically feel that the system must be very feudal and oppressive.

Q: And how do you feel about the monarchy?

A: The biggest flaw with monarchy is that the king holds so much authority and power not because of merit, but because of birth. That means you can have a good king or a bad king and Bhutan's leadership cannot be dependant on birth-on the hope that we will have a wise, capable, benevolent king.

The political system of Bhutan will never be safe in the hands of one individual. It must be based on a system which is strong and durable, and on an efficient government.

Q: Before the turmoil, had you taken any steps to achieve this?
A: We had. In the last two Five-year Plans, our top priority has been to decentralise power down to the zonal and district levels. And in '82, we formed the Civil Service Commission, controlling our 11,000 civil servants. Earlier, I had complete power to promote or demote whoever I wanted to-an impossible job for one person. Then, in '84, I gave the Royal Advisory Councillors the power to report against the King to the Cabinet and the National Assembly, if they felt the King might harm the nation's interest. I have always put the national interest first, and will never compromise on that.

Q: The rebels claim their rights of speech and expression are being curbed.
A: That is bogus. They made 13 demands, then nine more. Most are on problems we don't have in Bhutan, as the southern Bhutanese themselves will tell you.

In a nutshell, they want two things—democracy and a separate identity. The long list is cosmetic.

Q: But the rebels claim your people went about the job brutally. Like forcibly cutting girls' hair...
A: *(Smiles.)* All my wives have long hair.

Q: How effective is the National Assembly?
A: Quite effective, relatively. It takes all the decisions and rectifies laws and regulations. The majority of the seats go to the people

Q: Is the representation fair?
A: No. I agree with our boys in the south that the representation is not fair. When my father established the National assembly in '54, no one had any idea about it and nobody wanted it. So, when he forced its creation, the seat representation was done on an ad hoc basis. We had no census. It definitely needs to be changed in accordance with the demographic distribution in the districts.

Also, our official population figure is 1.3 million, but actually, it is closer to 6,00,000. People think Bhutan deliberately gave a wrong figure in the Seventies, when we joined the United Nations. But in truth, someone had told my father that if he gave a figure less than one million, we would not be taken seriously by the UN.



If I was confident that it would be for the greater good of Bhutan, I would actively work towards achieving democracy. Otherwise I would not be a patriotic Bhutanese national

Q: Was that "someone" Indian?
A: *(Smiles).* It was so many years ago, and I was away in school in England.

Anyway, there was no scheme to project a larger northern Bhutanese figure and reduce the percentage of the southern Bhutanese.

Q: Has the change to democracy in Nepal, changed your relationship with that country?
A: Not at all. It is a close neighbour, and we will sincerely try to maintain good relations.

Q: You do not anticipate a similar situation in Bhutan?
A: The mass uprising in Nepal should not be taken as a case example for Bhutan. Here, we are talking about five to a pessimistic 25 per cent of the people. A liberation movement needs majority support.

Q: Is the concept of 'Greater Nepal' alive?
A: *(Smiles.)* Well, the Nepalese in India have always wanted their own Gorkha state. That's no secret. I can only hope that they do not include southern Bhutan in that Gorkha state.

Q: Is your economic structure ready for democracy?
A: Yes. Incidentally, our per capita income is over $400, not $150, as projected. It might be the highest in South Asia.

Q: And your army and police strength?
A: About 5,000 and 1,000.

Q: Is that sufficient?
A: No. That is why we are getting volunteers now. With the voluntary militia, we can withdraw the army and free the police.

Q: Are you thinking of asking India for military support?
A: No. This is a family problem.

Q: What is your jail capacity?
A: We hardly have one proper jail. And arresting people does not resolve problems. So, when I went down to the south, I released 405 out of 452 arrested there. We gave them food and bus fare back to their villages.

Q: What would you expect India's role to be, now?
A: The present role is more than satisfactory. India has been very concerned and supportive. She is our closest friend and neighbour. We have received a tremendous amount of cooperation, goodwill and friendship. Also, the West Bengal government, too, has extended tremendous support and goodwill.

Q: So much for your southern border. What about the northern?
A: We are in the process of demarcating it. We are having a dialogue.

Q: Does India have a role in the dialogue?
A: No, we are talking directly to China.

Q: And do you see substantial changes in your political system in the near future?
A: We have a very unique system and are going through a unique period of great change. I think, in a few years, we will surprise a lot of countries. ●

Interviewed by Antara Dev Sen/Thimphu

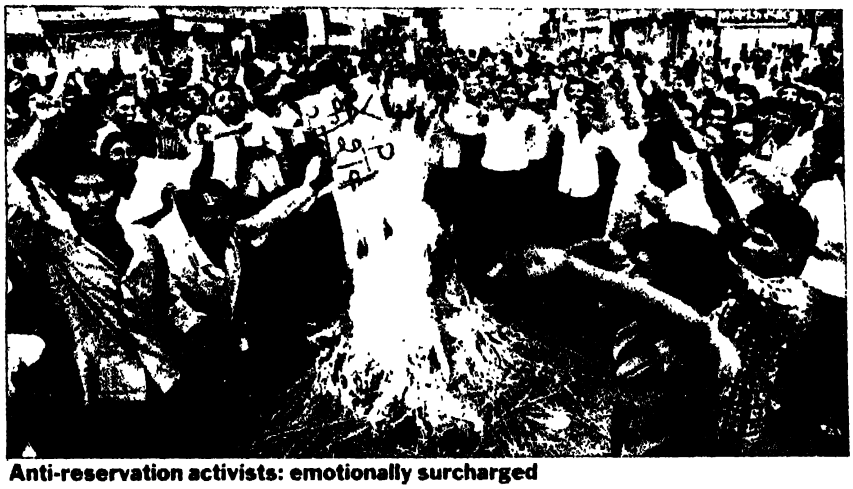
JAYA JAITLY

In defence of Mandal

The controversy holds up a mirror to the nature of our society



As a trade unionist working among the informal self-employed artisans and weavers, who almost invariably come from the lowest castes, one marvels at the perfectly honed, most powerful trade union that the caste system of India actually is. After all, the protection and furtherance of professional interests is what trade unionism is all about. And with professions having been given a hierarchy and a status sanctioned by religion 5,000 years ago, it is no wonder that even the claim to merit is being ardently protected by the upper castes. Priesthood, anointing the ruler, administrating, keeping the accounts, and even plotting horoscopes, in other words the use of the 'head', was their safely protected prerogative. The beneficiaries of this system have been so well entrenched for so long, that they do not understand the incongruity of statements like "but we don't practice caste, after all we have educated our *bhangis* children".



Anti-reservation activists: emotionally surcharged

In a country where the entire organised workforce is only 10 per cent and the rest struggle for pitiful gains in the unorganised sector, the furore about 27 per cent of government jobs being allocated to the backward classes shows up the true nature of the problem. Government jobs mean, at best, power to make decisions and, at least, lifelong job security. The same people who are crying themselves hoarse about merit are those who decry the *babu* culture where thousands of so-called meritorious government employees drink tea, chat and listen to cricket commentaries. Let alone the poor clerks, what about the high priests of the civil service—the IAS officers? There was a time when the colonial whitewash was still around, civil servants joined the All India Services with a sense of idealism and a spirit of service, no matter how feudal or *mai-baap* its manifestations were.

The emotionally surcharged students who care about social justice in their country should perhaps stop to ponder over this point for a moment and read page 23 of the Mandal Report which has a beautiful cameo of two young men, Mohan and Lallu. Mohan is a typical portrait of a child in any one of our families. Lallu first of all is a name we laugh at in the conference rooms and drawing rooms of Delhi, but the description of Lallu's life and background is stark in its reality. How many more centuries must Lallu wait to become a Mohan, and are all our Mohan's who haunt our *Bhavans*, discotheques and corporate offices all that perfect? If Lallu obtains a degree and cannot find a job, he has to pull a rickshaw, shine shoes or become an autorickshaw driver. The agitated Mohans of today, never created a furore to improve Lallu's lot, but instead cleaned shoes to show the extent of *their* misery if the Mandal Report was implemented.

With professions having been given a hierarchy and a status sanctioned by religion, it is no wonder that even the claim to merit is being ardently protected by the upper castes

Emancipated women who see themselves as equal and active members of society have no less shown the strong influence of caste as the single most dominant undercurrent among all status symbols that people adhere to in society. Housewives who stir no further than the nearest market to buy vegetables or drop their children at school are today vociferously throwing stones at the police, along with rioting young men. At a more sedate level, wives of senior bureaucrats have finally come out of their *gulmohar* tree-lined houses in the more posh government colonies of Delhi to march with placards against Mandal. A mighty trauma indeed has finally stirred them from their usual worries of where their next posting will be and how to set their recalcitrant servant boys aright. When I commented on the illogic of young girls raising slogans saying "We don't want unemployed husbands" because they should be more concerned about jobs for themselves and were indicating their caste bias by rejecting the possibility of marrying anyone from those castes who stand to benefit from reservations, I received a flood of mail. Some were very supportive but I was asked by others whether husbands should be reserved by the quota system too and since jobs were in short supply what would men do if women also started demanding jobs?

CRUNCH!

After Advani's rath yatra: *chaos, confusion and more uncertainty*

In the end, it was not Devi Lal's fiery rhetoric, Chandra Shekhar's bitterness or Rajiv Gandhi's sneers that pulled the plug on Vishwanath Pratap Singh's National Front government.

When it came to the crunch, it was not the Raja's enemies that turned on him, but a man he had regarded as an ally for the 11 months of his term.

The mild-mannered, self-effacing L.K. Advani made an unlikely wrecker. While V.P. Singh had been buffeted by criticism from all sides, Advani had held his peace. His attitude to the government was one of detached support: each time a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader shot off a statement attacking the Prime Minister, Advani would hastily issue one of his own, moderating the hostility and pledging his party's continued support.

But when the BJP decided with startling suddenness that it could no longer continue to back the Prime Minister, it was Advani himself who was at the centre of the crisis. At 6:30 am, on Tuesday, the 23rd of October, Advani was arrested at Samastipur in north Bihar. The BJP president was on the cow belt leg of his 10,000 km *rath yatra*, in support of building a temple to Ram at the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya. Also arrested was Pramod Mahajan, the voluble BJP MP from Maharashtra, who is regarded as one of the party's hardliners. Another BJP leader (among them K.P. Mishra, Yadunath Pandey and Dinanath Pandey) were taken into custody.

The reaction was swift and immediate. In New Delhi, the BJP declared that it was withdrawing support to the National Front. A.B. Vajpayee, Advani's predecessor as BJP president, flew into the capital from Calcutta and drove to Rashtrapati Bhavan to tell President R. Venkataraman that his party would no longer back the government in Parliament.

That action landed the crisis-prone government with its biggest test to date. With only 143 MPs, the National Front has just over a fourth of the Lok Sabha's membership. It had survived these 11 months with the support of the BJP and the left parties. While the left continued to back it, the loss of the BJP's 86 MPs left it dangerously short of a majority.

The honourable course was to accept that he no longer had any moral right to continue as Prime Minister

V.P. SINGH *His ally stabbed him when Ram made more sense than Mandal*



ASHOK VAHIE

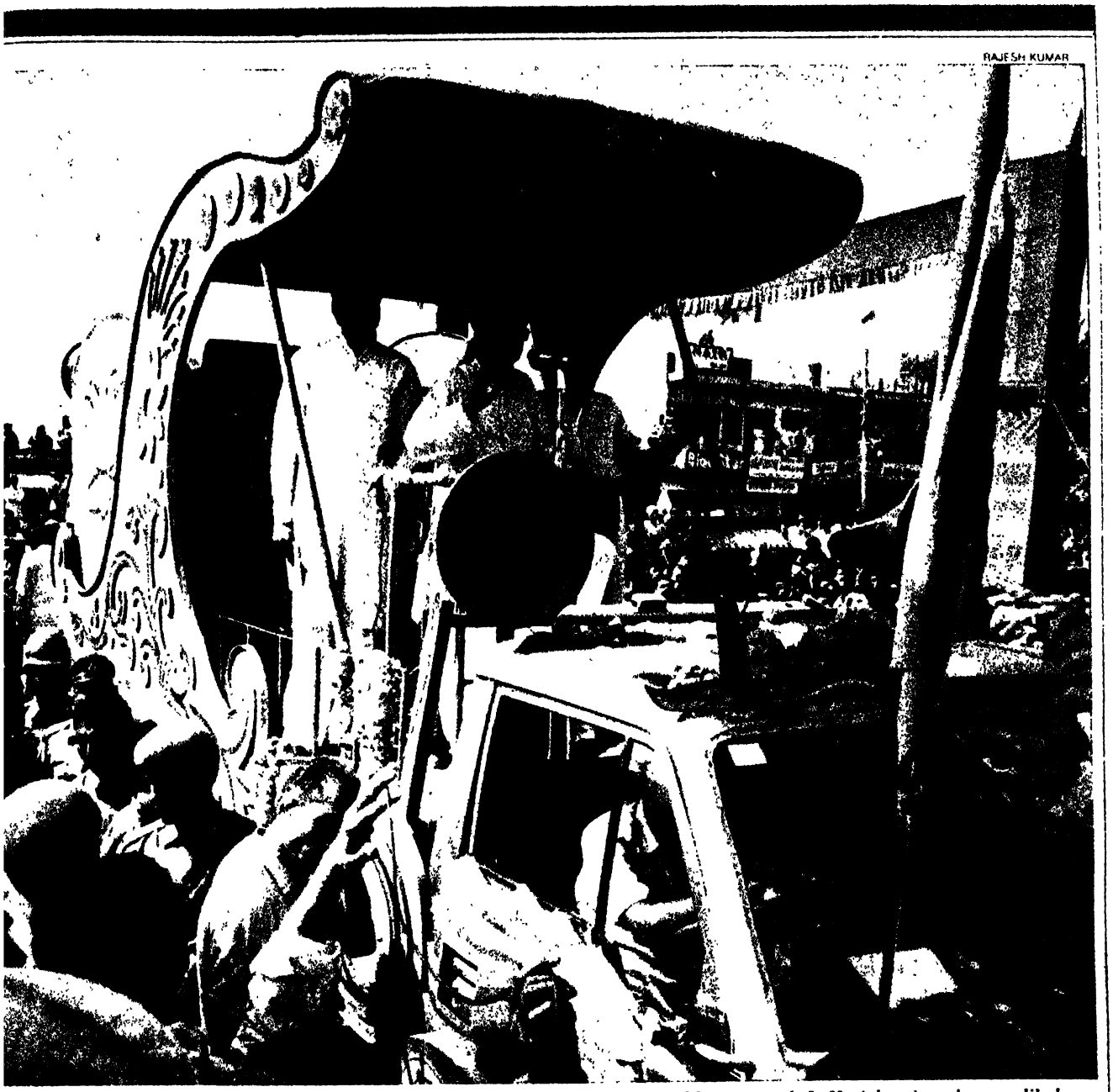


of India and resign. But with the opportunistic obstinacy that has become his hallmark, V.P. Singh refused to quit. He was hanging on, he told his colleagues at a Cabinet meeting called on the morning of Advani's arrest.

At noon, he met the President to assure him—incredibly—that he did not believe he had lost his majority and would prove this on the floor of the Lok Sabha.

It was a sad comedown for a man whose proudest boast had once been that he cared nothing for public office.

If V.P. Singh's behaviour was surprising, so was the rapidity with which the Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri



THE RATH

The mild-mannered L.K. Advani made an unlikely wrecker. But his arrest pulled the plug on the National Front government

Masjid crisis overtook everything else to torpedo the National Front government. Almost from the day the Raja had been sworn in, everybody had known that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu militant organisation with close links with the BJP, had made the Ram Janmabhoomi temple the centre of its appeal. The Congress(I) had lost the last general election by appearing to play both sides in the Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri Masjid dispute. And the BJP had served notice that it would back the VHP—at least to a certain extent—on the issue.

But to V.P.Singh, the potential crisis remained just one more contradiction to be managed. He seemed confident that a compromise could be found and that—in any event—it was not the kind of issue that would topple his government. To be fair to the usually shrewd and perceptive Raja, many others shared this view.

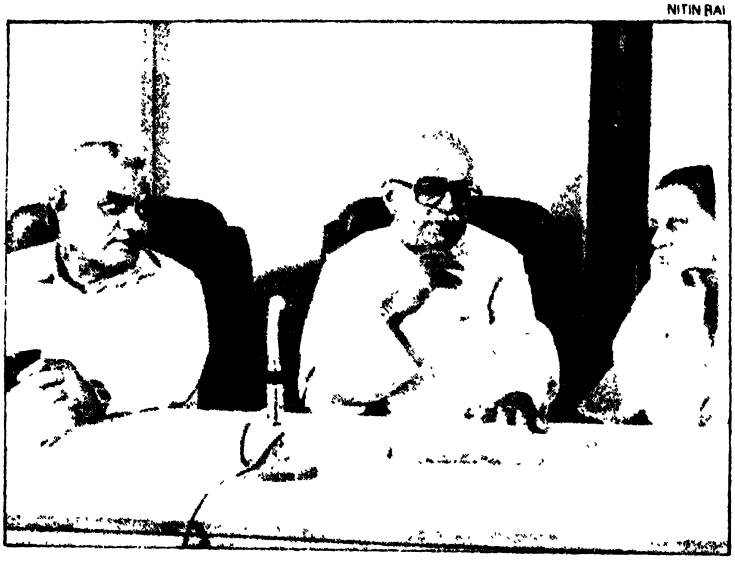
Partly it was because of Advani himself, who at best appeared only half serious. For one, his decision to undertake the *yatra* seemed less a part of a calculated political strategy and more a knee-jerk reaction to V.P. Singh's sudden move to implement Mandal's recommendations. Advani is scared of losing the backward class Hindu vote to the Raja, the argument goes, and the *yatra* is aimed at preventing this.

Moreover, as any journalist who accompanied Advani on the Somnath to Delhi leg of his journey would have discovered, he often assumed the air of a reluctant charioteer—a man who, as it were, had been driven to the roads. It was as if he was making a conscious effort to distance himself from his rabble-rousing supporters and their raucous cries of "*Ek dhakka aur do/Babri Masjid tod do*". And

when he addressed audiences, he seemed willing to risk both boredom and disappointment by making speeches that were—in comparison with those of his BJP colleagues and VHP associates—reasoned and moderate.

In virtually every major public address, Advani criticised those who called for the destruction of the *masjid*, which he said would be both a mistake and a shame. When others talked of confronting the government head on, he held out the hope of an amicable settlement. And while his colleagues boasted that the *rath* was unstoppable as it was Ram's own vehicle, Advani struck a more down-to-earth tone. "What is this *rath* but a mere DCM-Toyota?" he would keep telling the crowds. "Anybody can stop it with the use of force." Predictably, not everybody appreciated this bit of realism. Muttered one BJP member at Jaipur: "It is as if he wants the government to arrest him."

NITIN RAI



SURPRISE MOVE *The BJP's national executive had caught the government off guard by threatening to withdraw support*

Apart from this, the very manner in which the *yatra's* schedule was drawn up raised expectations of a settlement. Advani, who left Somnath on 25 September, arranged it so that he would spend six whole days in Delhi before setting off on the second leg of his *yatra*. Although the organisers claimed that this was to allow him time to rest and recuperate before going to Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, there was no doubt that the break would be used to negotiate with V.P. Singh's government.

There will be a little give, a little take, the optimists concluded. And the *rath yatra* will be called off at Delhi.

Of course, none of this happened. The Imam retracted his call to the faithful to have the *rath* stopped; the BJP's position hardened with the threat that any attempts by the government to hamper the *yatra's* progress would lead to the withdrawal of support; and Advani went ahead with the second leg of the *yatra* claiming he would settle for nothing less than a temple built on the very spot the *masjid* stands.

The only thing that happened as predicted were the negotiations. But all that ensued from the five days of

COUNTDOWN TO CHAOS



L.K. Advani

14 OCTOBER

● L.K. Advani's *rath yatra* completes its first leg when it arrives in New Delhi to a tumultuous welcome.

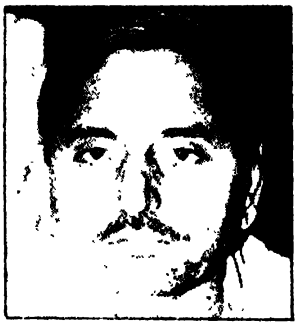
● Advani swears he will proceed to Ayodhya, but there is talk that the government may reach a compromise with the BJP and the VHP.

15 OCTOBER

● The *yatra* proceeds through various parts of Delhi. There are disturbances in the Chandni Chowk area, which leads the police to resort to tear-gas shelling and firing in the air.

● In Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav continues to round up BJP and VHP activists as a preventive measure.

Mulayam Singh Yadav



16 OCTOBER

● At an emergency meeting of the BJP's national executive, the party decides to boycott the all-party meeting to be held on the following day.

● Another emergency meeting of the Congress(I)'s parliamentary board fails to decide on whether to participate in the all-party meet or not.

● Forty districts in Uttar Pradesh are placed under Section 144.

17 OCTOBER

● Representatives of 20 political parties attend the all-party meeting, which calls for the resolution of the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid dispute through the framework of the law. Among those who boycott it are the Congress(I), the BJP and the Babri Masjid

JAGDISH YADAV



The all-party meeting

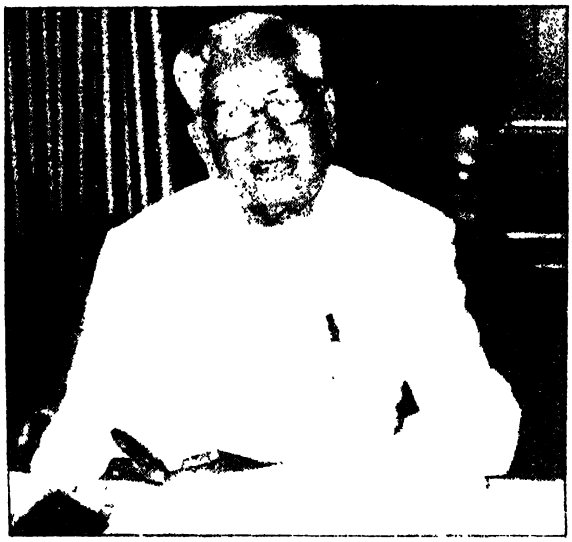
discussions—which involved Hindu and Muslim priests and politicians of every ideological hue—was an ill-conceived government proposal which found favour with nobody. The BJP and the VHP rejected it outright as it did not go far enough and, worse, it left the Muslims feeling betrayed and outraged.

By the time the *rath* reached Delhi to a tumultuous welcome on 14 October, V.P. Singh appeared to have chalked out three parallel strategies to deal with the problem.

- Meet Advani personally and use direct moral suasion to get him to call off the *yatra*.
- Put pressure on the BJP by isolating it to achieve the same end.
- If either of the above fails, stop the *rath* and arrest Advani in Bihar.

It was never very likely that the first would work. The Prime Minister, after all, had spoken to Advani more than once over the telephone during the *yatra's* first leg. In any case, V.P. Singh met Advani on 16 October and later along with Jyoti Basu on 18 October to give it a try. Somewhat predictably, the meetings resulted in failure.

The all-party meet on the *mandir/masjid* issue was fixed for the 17th. For V.P. Singh, a consensus was necessary for two reasons. Apart from isolating the BJP (which had announced that it would boycott the meeting), it would give the government the necessary sanction to halt the *rath yatra* if the need arose.

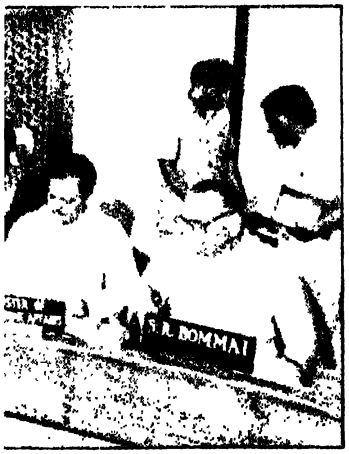


THE PRESIDENT

For R. Venkataraman, a chance to do what he does best, play the political judge for India

But the BJP had a surprise in store for him. On the day of the all-party conference an emergency meeting of the BJP's national executive warned the government that the party would withdraw support if either the *yatra* or work (*kar seva*) on the construction of the temple was disrupted. The resolution passed at the meeting described the National Front government as a "total disappointment"

If this caught V.P. Singh off guard, it is because Advani had maintained all along that the *rath yatra* must not be linked with his party's support for the government. Only a fortnight ago, he told SUNDAY: "What does that (support) have to do with this (the *yatra*)...The decision to back this government was taken after due deliberation and any change will also have to be made after due deliberation." This week, however, he seemed unconcern-



Action Committee.

- Prime Minister V.P. Singh says that the government is committed to maintaining the *status quo* on the issue.
- In a significant development, the BJP warns that it will withdraw support to the government if the *rath yatra* is stopped.
- Meanwhile, ruling party members continue to meet BJP leaders in the hope of a solution.

18 OCTOBER

- The Prime Minister summons Jyoti Basu to Delhi to talk to Advani.

19 OCTOBER

- The Centre places three proposals—including allowing the construction of the temple on undisputed land in Ayodhya—before the VHP, which turns them down.
- The VHP rejects the proposals as they do not meet its basic demand: that the temple be constructed on the very site the mosque



Jyoti Basu

stands.

- V.P. Singh and Basu fail to persuade Advani, who leaves Delhi for Dhanbad to resume the *yatra*.
- A late-night presidential ordinance states that the Union government will refer the *mandir/masjid* dispute to the Supreme Court for expeditious disposal. The Centre also acquires the disputed site and the land around it through the ordinance.

20 OCTOBER

- The *rath* travels unstopped through Bihar.
- Muslim organisations declare a Bharat *bandh* on 30 October in protest against the government's ordinance.
- Advani declares in Bihar that he will settle for nothing less than a temple on the spot where Lord Ram was born.

21 OCTOBER

- The government gives in to pressure and stays the ordinance.
- There are strong rumours that V.P. Singh is preparing to call for a mid-term poll after having Advani arrested.

(continued on page 34)

ed about the consequences that a decision to discontinue support could have. When SUNDAY asked him whether this wouldn't hasten the return of the Congress, he replied: "Yes, it is this which has restrained us

But there are limits. If mid-term polls are announced, let them be."

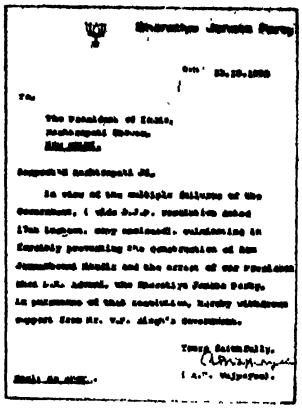
In the end then, it was not the all-party meeting called by the government which pressured the BJP but, oddly enough, the BJP's meeting which pressured the government.

Nevertheless as many as 20 political parties were signatories to the resolution of the all-party conference, which promised, among other things, to respect the "sentiments of the Hindus on building a Ram temple at Ayodhya *within the framework of the law*". In his speech at the meeting, V.P. Singh reiterated the government's commitment to maintain the *status quo* on the *mandir/masjid* dispute. At the end of the day, the two sides only seemed to have drifted further apart.

Next day (18th), there were fleeting hopes that a settlement was on the cards following Advani's decision to stay on in Delhi till the evening of the the 19th in order to meet Jyoti Basu, who was summoned by V.P. Singh to the capital. Although it was a public holiday, both the Cabinet and the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs held marathon meetings. While both the BJP's threat to withdraw support to the government and the possible law and order problems that the continuance of the *yatra* could create were discussed, there was no talk of reaching a settlement with the Hindu organisations.

On the 19th, however, all last-ditch efforts—by V.P. Singh, Jyoti Basu, N.T. Rama Rao and others—failed





THE AUTHOR

A.B. Vajpayee wrote a letter to the President, withdrawing BJP support to V.P. Singh. And rewrote history as well

and Advani—after declaring that the only solution was to have the Babri Masjid relocated—left by train to Dhanbad, Bihar to resume his journey to Ayodhya.

It is then that he should have resorted to the last alternative—to forcibly stop the *rath*. V.P. Singh had already formulated a plan along with Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav to have Advani arrested soon after he reached Bihar. The arrangement was to confront the *rath* in Gaya district, take Advani to Patna by helicopter and then move him to Delhi's Tihar Jail in a Border Security Force plane.

If the Prime Minister had chosen Laloo Prasad over Mulayam Singh for the job, it is because the former is regarded as a 'V.P. Singh man' (Mulayam's attitude to the Raja is at best ambivalent.) Getting Laloo Prasad to make the arrest would have served two purposes. It would have signalled that the *yatra* was discontinued at V.P. Singh's behest. At the

COUNTDOWN TO CHAOS

(continued from page 33)

22 OCTOBER

● V.P. Singh makes it clear that he will not allow the temple to be built, still downplaying the issue.

● A six-member committee of chief ministers—Jyoti Basu, Biju Patnaik, Sharad Pawar, Chenna Reddy, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Chimanbhai Patel—is formed to plead with the BJP. The Raja's last stand.

● The BJP does not want pleas, it wants the Ram temple. Advani reaches Patna. Mulayam Singh says the *rath* should be stopped in Bihar.

● The Supreme Court rejects a plea by the All India Muslim Committee to ban the *yatra*. The army marches in ten UP towns. People die in police firing.

● It looks likely that VP will stop the *rath* in Bihar. Hatchet-man: chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav.

23 OCTOBER

● L.K. Advani arrested in Samastipur, north Bihar, at 6.30 am, along with four BJP leaders. Flown by helicopter to Patna, then shifted to Massanjore, near Bihar's border with Bengal.

Prime Minister V.P. Singh with President R. Venkataraman



same time, it would have allowed the Raja to distance himself from the action if the need arose.

Clearly, the BJP's threat to withdraw support and Advani's departure for Bihar, led the Raja to change his ever-wavering mind. By the 19th, 'Operation Laloo Prasad' was shelved and the Prime Minister, who held a number of meetings with his senior party colleagues, had opted to reach a compromise with Advani and the VHP.

That evening, the government announced a three-point formula which it hoped would win them over. Under this:

- The Centre would acquire the plot on which the Babri Masjid is located and the surrounding areas.
- Barring the land on which the disputed monument is located (about two acres), the rest would be made available to the Ram Janma Yagna Samiti trust for the construction of the temple.
- The legal dispute over the monument, which was being heard by the Allahabad High Court, would be transferred to the Supreme Court for quick disposal.

That very night, the government issued a presidential ordinance to acquire the land and refer the *mandir/masjid* dispute to the Supreme Court. A little later, V.P. Singh phoned Laloo Prasad Yadav in Patna to say: "Don't stop the *rath* in Bihar."

It was a shameful comedown and appeared the reaction of a man who



THE ENFORCER

Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav stuck to the Raja and dumbfounded the BJP by arresting L.K. Advani on the home stretch

was desperate to keep himself and his creaky government in power. And as it proved later, it was also ill-conceived and politically inexpedient.

The Centre's three-point proposal found favour with virtually nobody. The VHP rejected it outright, claiming that it fell far short of its basic demand: that the temple be allowed to be constructed over the *garbh graha* (sanctum sanctorum) or the very spot on which the *masjid* stands. The BJP took a slightly different view. We will consider the proposals if two infirmities in the ordinance are rectified, the party said. One: that the land acquired be referred to as the Ram Janmabhoomi. Two: that the time frame for the Supreme Court adjudication be specified. Said BJP general secretary, Murli Manohar Joshi: "The promulgation of the ordinance was a small step in the right direction, but (came) too late."

Predictably, the compromise formula and the subsequent ordinance left the leadership of the Muslim organisations outraged. For although the Centre's action may have fallen short of handing over the *masjid* to the Hindus, it affected Muslim interests in other ways Zafrab Jilani, convenor of the Babri Masjid Action Committee, complained that by referring the dispute to the Supreme Court, the government had robbed the Muslims' right to appeal to any court of law. "This ordinance has taken away our rights for a judicial redressal," he told SUNDAY.

The other grouse was that the ordinance constituted a direct interference with Muslim personal law. Said Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, MP and the Action Committee's president, "The land that was acquired was *wakf* property. The Shariat does not permit conversion of *wakf* property into anything else." Echoed Syed Shahabuddin, convenor of the rival Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee (BMMCC), "The government has the right to acquire land only for educational institutions, hospitals, etc. Doing so for religious purposes is unheard of."

The Muslim leadership also indicated that V.P. Singh could no longer count on the community's vote. Thundered Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid: "Rajiv Gandhi played the same game with us. He told us that he will not allow the *shilanyas* and did. This government has done a similar thing." The implicit threat: Rajiv's games lost him the last election, V.P. Singh's could lose him the next.

Although the compromise formula was a desperate, last-ditch attempt to persuade

- A.B. Vajpayee rushes to Delhi from Calcutta, and gives President R. Venkataraman a letter saying that the BJP is withdrawing its Parliament support. Calls for the Raja's resignation. Trouble breaks out in Bombay, Calcutta as the BJP calls for a *bandh* on 24 October.



- Meetings in Delhi. Everybody with everybody else. Outcome: the BJP holds firm. The CPI(M) backs the Raja. The Congress(I) wants the Raja to quit.
- The Raja meets the President. Says he will prove majority in the Lok Sabha. VP meets Devi Lal. More permutations, show of strength. Mid-term polls seem likely.



Chandra Shekhar

- Chandra Shekhar says he is "willing to accept any challenge" if he were to become Prime Minister.

Advani to call off the *yatra*, it was not a new one. The formula was first discussed two months ago during a meeting between Union minister George Fernandes and the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram. Later, representatives of the government sounded out prominent Muslim leaders on it. Given this, the government ought to have known that the proposals would not meet with approval. This makes it all the more difficult to understand why the formula was offered unilaterally—without any attempt to get the Hindu and Muslim leaderships to accept it.

In the end, V.P. Singh did what he had to. On 22 October, the decision to arrest Advani was taken. So desperate was the Raja to ensure that Mulayam Singh received no credit that he resolved to arrest the BJP president before he entered UP. The task was entrusted to Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, generally regarded as a V.P. Singh loyalist in the post-Mandal phase, who took Advani into custody on 23 October.

No sooner had Advani been apprehended than the BJP reacted with unprecedented viciousness. Not only did it demand V.P.Singh's resignation, but the normally restrained A.B. Vajpayee issued a bitter statement. Tearing into the Prime Minister's broadcast of the night before, Vajpayee called it "mealy-mouthed" and "full of half-truths, untruths and innuendos". He termed V.P. Singh's politics "blatantly casteist and vote-oriented", accused him of "communalising politics" and claimed that "his closest friends are some of the worst communalists in the country".

Shortly after Vajpayee issued his broadside, others got in on the act. At a crowded press conference on the lawns of Chandra Shekhar's bungalow, three Janata Dal dissidents, Yashwant Sinha, Kamal Morarka and Harmohan Dhawan, demanded the Prime Minister's resignation. So did Congress(I) spokesman Vithal Gadgil. And indeed, many expected that a man who had consistently reiterated his lack of ambition would step down once he lost his majority.

This, however, was not the way that V.P. Singh saw it. Shortly after Vajpayee told President R. Venkataraman that the BJP was withdrawing support, the Prime Minister made his own representation to the Rashtrapati. V.P. Singh's argument was constructed as follows:



THE SITE *Militant organisations fight over it while security forces guard it. But it may not save VP, the BJP or the Muslim fundamentalists*

- He had been called on to form the government last year after Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the largest party in Parliament, had turned down the job. The invitation had been extended to him as the leader of the second largest party.
- Only after he had accepted the invitation had the BJP submitted a letter promising support.
- Therefore, the withdrawal of support did not mean that he had to resign.
- Yes, it was possible that he no longer commanded a majority in the Lok Sabha, but this was best tested on the floor of the House. Until that happened, he was entitled to argue that there was no proof that he had lost his majority.
- Parliament was meeting on 24 November, and he was willing to face a motion of confidence then.

The argument had a superficial plausibility, but was deeply flawed. First of all, he had not been called to form the government only because he was the leader of the second largest party in the Lok Sabha. The President calls upon a person *most likely to command a majority* in the House to try and form a government.

He doesn't actually swear him in until *after* he has demonstrated his majority. So, had the BJP *not* agreed to support the Raja, he would not have been Prime Minister—the first invitation was to see *if* he could cobble together a majority.

It took all of one day for V.P. Singh to realise that the compromise formula and the subsequent ordinance achieved nothing. As Advani's *rath* continued to rumble through the Bihar countryside, the Muslim leadership threatened to agitate—starting with the Bharat *bandh* on 30 October.

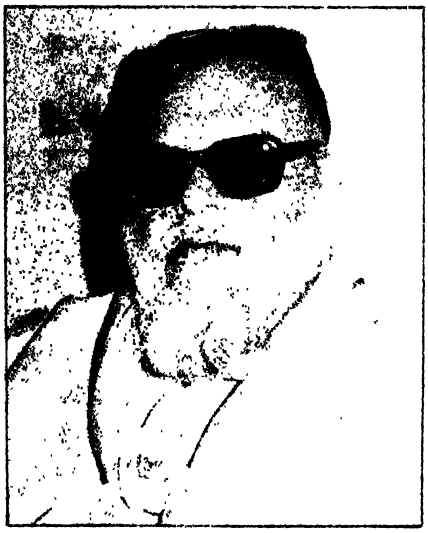
So, the Prime Minister changed his mind again.

On 21 October, the Centre stayed its hastily-promulgated ordinance. The BJP had welcomed it, but had insisted that the *rath yatra* would proceed on schedule. And the Muslims had been outraged by the expediency that had led to its promulgation. Consequently, the Raja abandoned it and formulated a new strategy.

Now, he called a meeting of chief ministers in an effort to give a non-partisan colour to his efforts. Initially, the Congress seemed unwilling to go along with this, but then V.P. Singh asked Jyoti Basu to step in. The West Bengal chief minister met Rajiv Gandhi at Congress MP Dinesh Singh's residence and got him to promise that Congress chief ministers would attend.



JAGDISH YADAV



THE IMAM

Syed Abdullah Bukhari called for peace talks, felt betrayed by their breakdown and is now reduced to doing not much else but watching

But even as these consultations were going on, the master magician of Indian politics seemed to have run out of tricks. There was no way in which V.P. Singh could persuade Advani to call off the *rath yatra*. Yet, to stop him would be to lose the support of the BJP.

However, even if the Raja once again chose the politically-expedient course and did nothing, he still had a problem on his hands. If he did not arrest Advani and disrupt his *yatra*, then Mulayam Singh Yadav was certain to do so. Yadav had been livid when the ordinance was passed without consulting him and had made it clear that he would stop Advani regardless of what V.P. Singh might desire.

In effect, the Raja now had no choice but to arrest Advani. Yes, it would lead to a crisis, but perhaps that could be managed. The alternative scenario was much more depressing: Mulayam would stop Advani and become a hero with the minorities. The BJP would withdraw support and the central government would lose its majority. At that stage, one of two things would happen. Either Chandra Shekhar and Mulayam (along with Devi Lal) would distance themselves from the Raja and declare that the Dal had an alternative leader (ie, Shekhar) who should be Prime Minister. Having lost his majority, V.P. Singh would resign. Shekhar would take over and the Congress would support the government. This scenario received a new credibility when Rajiv Gandhi declared on 20 October that the Congress would back any Janata Dal leader who was not V.P. Singh.

The second prospect was as terrifying. Having lost his majority, the Raja would have to call elections. (Assuming that the President agreed.) At that stage, Mulayam and Shekhar (and again, possibly Devi Lal) would split the party, take the credit for the arrest and deprive V.P. Singh of his Muslim and backward vote-banks.

If either alternative went through, the Raja would be history.

This view was forcefully conveyed to the President by a series of legal luminaries and by a succession of politicians. The Congress believed that V.P. Singh should be asked to step down. The Shekhar camp said that he should be asked to submit a list of MPs who supported him and that if this fell short of a majority, then he ought to be made to resign.

What then? The Congress did not want an election right away. It preferred keeping another Janata Dal Prime Minister (perhaps Chandra Shekhar) in office till it was ready for the polls.

It was precisely this eventuality that V.P. Singh sought to avoid. His advisers propounded the following scenario:

- As soon as Parliament reconvened, the Raja would talk about the need to put secularism first.
- Then, he would ask for a vote of confidence on his decision to arrest Advani.
- Obviously, the BJP would vote against him, but the Congress would have no choice but to vote for him or—at best—abstain.
- Having demonstrated majority support, V.P. Singh would call an election with himself as caretaker Prime Minister at the head of a united Janata Dal.
- Such a scenario would not only keep Shekhar out and ensure that V.P. Singh retained a grip on the party, but it would also allow him as caretaker Prime Minister to make sure that his backward caste supporters were able to vote.

As this option was discussed, the Raja's men told lies to keep their morale up: they already had the support of 249 MPs; 70 Congress MPs from the backward castes were ready to defect; the Janata Dal dissidents had lost their will, etc.

But the fact remained that even V.P. Singh's best case scenario was misconceived. First of all, the Congress could move a no-confidence motion that would be taken up before his confidence motion. And secondly, the notion that the Congress would not vote with the BJP was also bogus: Rajiv Gandhi suggested that he would dismiss the Raja's attempts to turn his confidence motion into a referendum on Ram Janmabhoomi as fraudulent and vote against him anyway.

Either way, it was difficult to see how V.P. Singh could survive.

As SUNDAY went to press, only two things remained unclear. Whether India would get a new Prime Minister or whether there would be a poll. And two: the timing of the denouement. The betting was that the normally cautious President R. Venkataraman would not fire the Prime Minister. But nor would he wait till the end of November. Instead, he would call an emergency session of Parliament and settle the issue swiftly.

The sooner the uncertainty ended, the better it would be for India. •

Vir Sanghvi and Mukund Padmanabhan with reports from SUNDAY's Delhi bureau





The Valley in flames

Security forces fight fire with fire

Sangrama was just another picturesque Kashmir town on the Sopore road. Until the day a portion of it was burnt down. On 15 October, militants opened fire on a Border Security Force (BSF) picket. The paramilitary personnel retaliated by setting fire to the main market and some houses nearby. The next morning, Mahmood Subhan Sheikh, 68, rummages through the debris to salvage whatever little he can from his family's three shops. "We have all fled from here, or they will burn us," he cries. Tears roll down his cheeks as he loads charred quilts and pieces of corrugated sheet onto a pony-cart. "I have lost Rs eight to ten lakhs worth of merchandise! Where do we go now?"

Basheer Ahmed, a fruit-seller who lives across the street, has large blisters on his feet; he couldn't escape the devastating blaze in time. It was around 11 in the morning when the men, women and children of Sangrama hurriedly left their homes, some of them fleeing to nearby Choorba for shelter. "They didn't even spare our cattle," says Abdul Khalik. "What have we done to deserve this? Even in war, they spare the old, the sick, women and children. But these so-called security forces are worse than animals," he despairs.

The nightmare did not end there. The day after the Sangrama incident, the paramilitary men gutted the market at Sopore following a gun-battle with the militants. The little shops with residential quarters on top of them were torched—the remains of melted television sets, burnt typewriters and a kiosk that once housed a tailor's shop bear mute testimony to the mindless act. Altaf Hussein, an eyewitness, swears he saw CRPF men sprinkle gunpowder on the shops and set them aflame. The timber logs in an adjacent saw mill were also set on fire. Abdul Rashid Dar says this is not the first time that such a thing has happened—some months ago, the Iqbal Market down the road was gutted too. "This is a new form of warfare they have started," says Ghulam Nabi, a tailor, whose shop was looted before it was reduced to ashes. "They even took away packets of salt from the provisions store."

Destroying suspected militant hideouts seems to be the only option left for the security forces now. And the easy way out is to set them on fire—at random mostly. "Our men are demoralised," admits a CRPF commandant. "Everybody here seems to be a militant, and they sometimes shoot at us from the most harmless looking houses. Our men don't have either the weaponry or the training to deal with such guerrilla tactics." Asked whether the Disturbed Areas Act actually empowered the paramilitary to set fire to houses and shops which could be harbouring militants, the commandant corroborated that the Act did give them some powers. Governor Saxena, however, denies this (*see interview*), and says he has ordered enquiries into the incidents. Senior paramilitary personnel, however, are confident that the administration will not come in the way of any action taken by them. "Whatever the Governor might say, we are clearly on the defensive," says a BSF commandant. "There may be arrests all the time, but there are an estimated 50,000 trained men in the Valley," insist army and police sources. That is over ten times the number that Governor Saxena estimates, officially at least.





KASHMIR BURNING

(From far left) The Islamia College on fire; gutted shops in Sangrama; houses destroyed by the security forces in Handwara; paramilitary men frisking people: the nightmare continues

Faced with mounting odds, the security forces have chosen to retaliate in the most barbaric way. Consider what happened in Handwara on 1 October. Two BSF personnel were shot dead while they were buying vegetables in the market. Soon after, a BSF convoy was ambushed while passing through the main town bazaar. The paramilitary men returned with an entire contingent and set fire to the shops and houses on both sides of the bazaar. The blaze that raged for the most part of the day gutted 412 buildings, including 31 houses, 55 commercial establishments, 256 shops, four cowsheds, 50 granaries, two trucks, a bus, three taxis and a scooter. Over 25 people died in the fire; many more must have been trapped under the debris. The BSF even refused to let fire tenders enter the town for over two hours. Even the special commissioner of Baramulla and Kupwara, P. Phonsong, admitted that the firemen were prevented from entering Handwara, and that the "victims were mostly innocents". The police, however, laid the blame entirely on the militants, claiming that the fire was a "result of firing and the use of hand grenades by the militants".

Two weeks after the incident, Handwara still seems like a ghost town. Its inhabitants are yet to overcome the shock. Some of them dig around the piles of rubble, looking for whatever may have survived the fire. The people point out that the only section of shops that have not been gutted display a board saying that it belongs to Kashmiri Hindus. "The militants fired and ran away, and our houses and people were burnt," cries Abdul Razak. "Do they plan to kill us all and take our land? Why don't they bomb us all at once?"

Governor Saxena admits that "some bad heads" among the paramilitary may have been responsible. He was prompt enough to institute an enquiry. On 7 October, a deputy commandant of the CRPF was shot in the head (he died later in hospital). An enraged CRPF battalion again went through their routine of setting fire to a crowded place. Nearby, at Noor Bagh, a stretch of over four kilometres has been completely razed to the ground. This incident took place on 10 October. The firing continued for over eight hours, and the blaze that followed could not be contained till the next day. A hotel nearby provides temporary shelter to the homeless.



Destroying suspected militant hideouts seems to be the only option left for the security forces now. And the easy way out is to set them on fire—at random mostly

On 16 October, fire tenders were pressed into service to combat the blaze that erupted at the Islamia College. Some part of the building had already been burnt in an earlier fire—this time, the college library was completely gutted. Since the institution housed paramilitary personnel, it is quite likely that the security forces were not responsible for this particular fire.

"Let Kashmir become a desert, but we won't give up the struggle," swears Aasiyeh Andrabi, head of the Dukhtarane Millat, a woman's organisation. Andrabi nowadays is busy organising relief work among the homeless families; there is no sign of official relief forthcoming, though the Governor has promised to compensate the affected people. The Dukhtarane Millat's *chhaapa maar* team even visits houses where weddings are taking place to convince the bride to part with most of her valuables. "In difficult times like these, we cannot enjoy new sofa sets while others have no place to sit," argues the petite young leader.

It is this sense of camaraderie that is helping the Kashmiris to weather the storm in these trying times. •

Shiraz Sidhva/Kashmir

"There is a definite change of mood"

Jammu & Kashmir Governor **GIRISH SAXENA** on the situation in the Valley

INTERVIEWED BY SHIRAZ SIDHVA

SUNDAY: What is your assessment of the situation in the Valley?
Girish Chandra Saxena: The situation is both serious and messy, though we have had very many notable successes. We have increased the pressure on the militants and contained the situation on the ground. But their (militants) numbers are very large, and a lot of weapons are available to them, so they have considerable capabilities to make strikes. And yet the militants have not been able to change the situation on the ground. This has set them thinking. They are nowhere near their objective, and that is what has made them consider whether they should change course.

Q: Do you have evidence of this change of attitude? The militants including JKLF chief Javed Mir, still talk of intensifying their attacks.
A: Yes, they can keep on striking, but there is a limit to what they can withstand. Their offensive is not hurting us very much, but they keep losing a large number of people. We have killed nearly 400 militants this year, and arrested over a thousand. The militants have now begun to realise that it's going to be a long and bloody affair. There is no way they can get the better of the security forces

Q: But the administration's excesses is responsible for drawing more and more youths into the militants' fold. What is being done about this?
A: There have been incidents of excessive use of force, or some stupid person humiliating somebody or putting fire to something...

Q: Putting fire to entire settlements in Handwara, Sopore and Sangrama. Do you think these are "stray incidents"?
A: I am not saying that it has not happened, and we have instituted enquiries to identify the culprits. But many times, they (the militants) have been responsible for the fires, and are putting the blame on the security forces.

Q: Do you believe that the militants are destroying their own houses and wiping out entire colonies, like Noor Bagh and Kawdara?
A: They don't set fire to their own houses as such... We are enquiring into such incidents. Wherever there is evidence that some of our chaps may have been involved, we have agreed to pay compensation.

Q: Doesn't the Disturbed Areas Act permit security personnel to destroy or set fire to militant hideouts?
A: No, it certainly doesn't. Hideouts are not shops and houses. Hideouts are entrenched positions, or bunkers, or structures which are being used for firing at the police.

Q: In Srinagar and other parts of the Valley, houses and shops are being used to fire at the security forces. Are you admitting then that hideouts can be destroyed?
A: No, sometimes the militants are setting fire to these places and blaming the security personnel. Why do you say it cannot be the work of the militants? Of course, we are saying it could well be our chaps also. We cannot prejudge the enquiry report which is coming out in the next few days.

Q: Is it the Government of India's latest strategy to burn down the place to weed out militants?
A: How can it be? Why are we paying compensation and why are we instituting an enquiry? How can it be a course of policy when it is really setting you back?

Q: The people believe that the security forces are doing this to break their backbone...
A: No, it's not true. Because in a society and polity that we have in India, there is no way that an administration can think of tyrannising the people into submission.

Q: In the rest of India that might be the case, but in Kashmir, it seems very different...
A: No, it can't be different. Because if that was the case, we would not give compensation. We would just keep a stiff upper lip and say, 'No, no, it's the militants that did it'. We really feel for the people and we do want to give them relief. And you can't allow your men to burn the place down and then open up the treasury. Moreover, this gives us no advantage. It has set us back. Our effort to woo the people suffers by such incidents. So why should that be a policy? And in case, some fires were started by the security people, this is a very crude and foolish action on their part.

Q: Have you as the Governor tried to ensure that more places are not set on fire?
A: It is my effort. I have been telling my people that we should not allow the militants to bring about a situation where such things become possible.

Q: But are you saying that the militants set Handwara, Sopore, Noor Bagh on fire?
A: I am not prejudging the situation. You see, in such a



JAGDISH YADAV

The situation may appear to be hopeless when you see one side of it, or judge it at a particular moment of time. But there are many hopeful signs also

wide action, what happened is that hundreds of thousands of rounds were fired in Handwara and Sopore. Some people (of the security forces) are lying dead, some of your comrades are lying injured, blood is rushing to your head. Unless you are very disciplined and the officer's leadership is effective, you can end up by reacting foolishly. It is our effort to contain this. And that is why I have been addressing not only senior officers, but officers at the level of commandants as well. To tell them that we have to ensure that the people get the message and are convinced of our sincerity that we are not fighting them. We are not only fighting the militants, we are fighting the terrorists, and that also is a temporary thing. It's not a fight to the finish. We should not look at them as enemies.

Q: But as things stand, the people are being crushed between the militants and the military. They feel that the security forces are perpetrating excesses...

A: Unfortunately, they do get caught in between But despite what you've heard—people come and meet me too—the masses are fed up with the militants. They are not too happy with what the security forces are doing, but they want normalcy to return. They are putting pressure on the militants, saying, 'Look, you have been able to achieve nothing. You have caused us this economic hardship, and we don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. For God's sake do something or give up'. Now, that kind of mood is there, and we would be able to build upon this mood if we could contain the resentment of the people against the security forces. In short, we really need to get our act together and do things according to law as far as possible.

Q: But the situation seems rather hopeless. Are you going to allow it to continue like this?

A: The situation may appear to be hopeless when you see one side of it, or judge it at a particular moment of time. But there are many hopeful signs also.

Q: Could you be more specific?

A: I am not going into the details, but even the militants are keen to change things. If we keep the door open and if we are willing to consider fulfilling their aspirations, then the militants have indicated that they would be ready to come more than halfway to respond. And, as I told you earlier, people are fed up with the militants They have begun to realise that we want to help, it is the militants and the bank employees who are in the way. There is a change in the mood of the people, and a section of the militants have begun re-thinking their strategy If the incidents of fire hadn't happened, people would have come out on the streets against the militants.

We can't control the situation by resorting to strong measures only. That is only meant to create a situation where other meaningful things are possible. In the final analysis, it is the people who matter and we will have to reason with them I am certain that the gun alone cannot decide the future.

Q: The present government sometimes gives the impression that the Kashmir problem has ceased to matter for them...

A: That is not the case. Kashmir is very high in their agenda. Not only the government, but the whole country is concerned. I must say we are very sincere to have the people on our side, and there is no intention to subjugate them militarily, or through fear. That just would not work. It would be the most foolish thing to try. ●

V. GANGADHAR

Chilling realism

Does College Girl *exploit a true life happening for commercial gains?*

There is allround condemnation for the Hindi film, *College Girl*. Critics have blasted the film, social and women's groups are clamouring for a ban on it and political leaders have joined the chorus.

College Girl, claim its makers, is based on a 'true to life' incident. The reference, obviously, is to the gang rape about a year back of a girl student of Bombay's once-prestigious Elphinstone College. Certain VIP students with high political connections were involved in the outrage, and the college authorities initially tried to hush up the affair. Fortunately, the media as well as social and women's organisations protested vigorously. Finally, one of the students was rusticated but police investigation is still dragging on.

The film, according to its critics, is not about a rape case in a college. It seeks to exploit the incident, projects a perverted view of college life and girl students and its main theme is titillation.

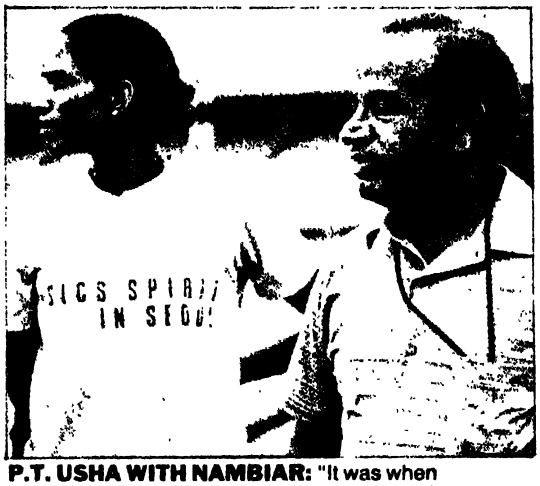
Some people have even questioned the wisdom of making a film based on a controversial, true life happening. This argument is not valid. Human tragedies, individual or mass, all over the world have always lent themselves to be written about and then filmed. American author Truman Capote immortalised the killing of the Clutter family in his famous book, *In Cold Blood*. The movie, based on the book, was chilling in its realism.

Usha's hurdle

Suresh Menon in *Indian Express* magazine has several interesting points to make in his piece *Pity Usha*. Would she have performed better by going over to the West and training there? Though making a mark in the 400 metres hurdles, why didn't she concentrate on this but made to run in too many events?

Menon's comments on the Usha-Nambiar relationship are revealing. "It was when Nambiar crossed the line that separates a well-wisher from a professional coach that the trouble began. It took, for instance, Edwin Moses at Los Angeles to point out to Usha the discrepancy in the number of strides between hurdles that might have cost her a medal. Clearly, Nambiar was not trained to notice such things. He also lacked the confidence to tell Usha where her priorities lay with regard to the number of events she would be asked to participate. At best he was a trainer, with a stop clock in one hand and a whistle in the other, timing sprints and noting them down. He lacked the strength to tell Usha that he was of limited use to her, and that she would have to move on to something bigger if she had to keep her date with destiny.

That is the tragedy of both Usha and Nambiar. She won medals by the dozens, yet was a failure by international standards. As Menon puts it, "As a nation which could not look after its best athlete, we should all hang our heads in shame."



P.T. USHA WITH NAMBIAR: "It was when Nambiar crossed the line that separates a well-wisher from a professional coach that the trouble began"



M.J. AKBAR: He covered more communal riots than anyone else in the business. And he wrote with pain, precision and passion

Silence speaks

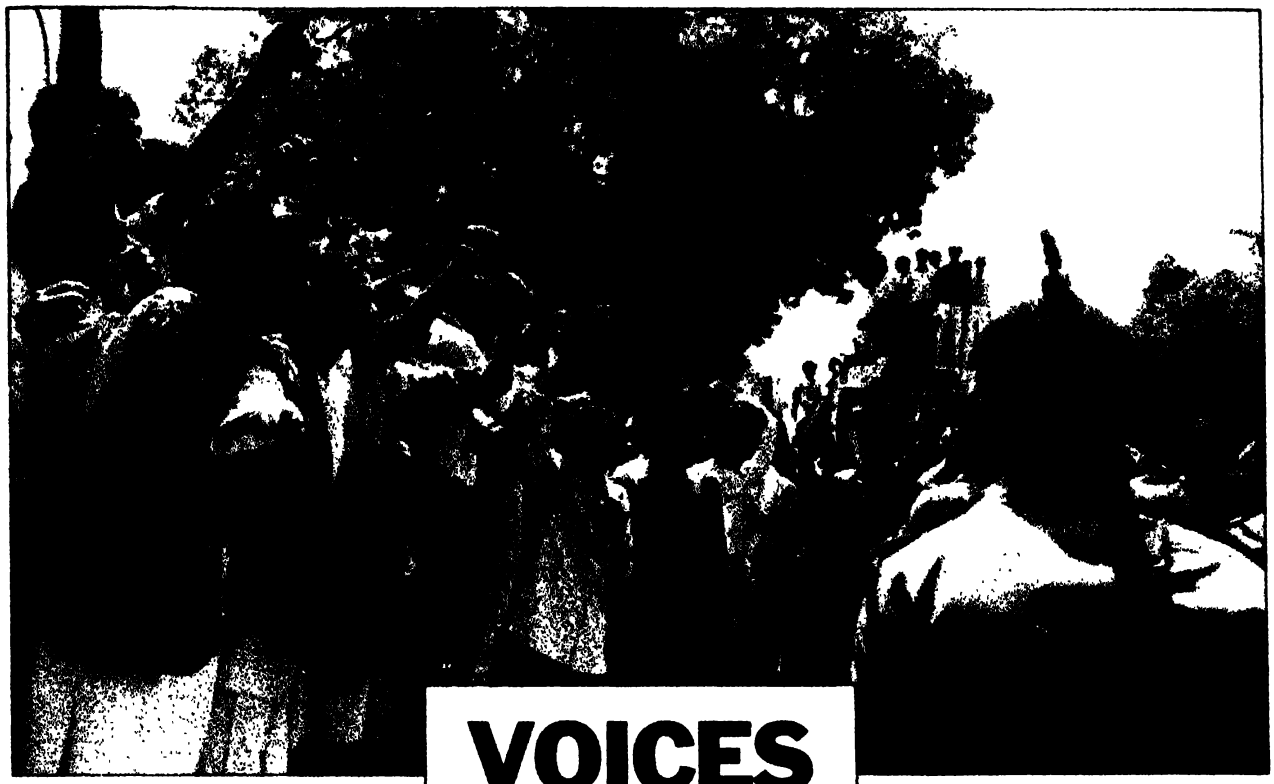
M.J. Akbar was never an ivory tower editor. Functioning more as a reporter-editor, he covered more communal riots than any one else in the business. And he wrote with pain, precision and passion.

The young Congress MP, thank heavens, has not lost his eye for details on his reporting skills. His *Byline* column is generally devoted to V.P. Singh bashing. But *The Bonfires of the Heart: Notes From the Shadows of Ayodhya* is vintage Akbar.

He writes once again on communal killings, this time at Kanje Man village near Ayodhya. The carnage is horrifying and though the official figures listed only 37 as killed, the actual toll was much higher. The massacre was the work of *trishul*-waving cadres of Hindu militants egged on by the BJP-RSS-VHP-Bajrang Dal fanatics after a Dusserah procession had been stoned by some irresponsible miscreants.

The retaliation was terrible, ghastly. Among the dead was a young man, who was doused with kerosene and torched in the presence of his aged father. "Those who do not weep haunt you more," writes Akbar. "A frail, bearded, gaunt, middle-aged labourer of the fields, his body rib streaked, his face hard, taut, standing in your way as you step across another cluster of burnt rubble, his hands fully outstretched and his palms cupped to hold black, burnt wheat. He says nothing, you say nothing."

Can anyone say anything? ●



VOICES OF MANDAL

What the students of Delhi are chanting

● Meet VP, Raja of Mandal
Every single thing he does, he bungles.

● VP tere raaj mein
Bachche khele aag se.

● Raja nahin, vyapari hain
Sirf gaddi usko pyari hain.

● Unke paas Mandal hain
Hamare paas kamandal hain.

● Jamnaji ke ghat par, mila ek insaan
Humne poochcha naam to bola, main Mandal beimaan.

● V.P. Singh hai hai
Time to say bye bye.

● Mera Bharat
Fifty per cent mahaan

● Raja nahin hatyara hain
Sirf Mandal usko pyara hain.

● Jalne ki tayyarri hain
Ab VP teri bari hain.

● VP baitha jhoole pe
Bachche jayen choolhe main.

● Raja nahin Shakuni hain
Hamare bachchon ka khooni hain.

● Gali gali main jhandi hain
V.P. Singh Shikhandi hain.

● Aey ki hoya?
VP moya

(Students carrying an effigy of the Raja on a hearse)

● Kitne baazoo, kitne dam
Sun le dushman jaan ke.
(Song from Main Azaad Hoon, sung by students as they link arms to stop traffic.)

● V.P. Singh ki antim ichcha
Brahmin Thakur chalaye riksha.

● V.P. Singh ki antim ichcha
Brahmin Thakur maange bhiksha.

● VP ko jalao
Apna bhavishya ujjwal banao.

● Atyachar ke teen naam
VP, Sharad, Paswan.

● Hey, hey, hey, hey, V.P. Singh
How many kids did you kill this evening?

● Inky pinky ponky
V.P. Singh is a donkey

● Jab tak VP gaddi par hain
Tab tak shamat Bharat ki hain.

● Jaat paat sab bhool chale the
Mandal ne yaad dilayi hain
Par ham yeh kaise bhoolein
Ki yeh aag VP ki lagaye hain

GUESS WHO IS COMING TO DINNER?



Gandhi with Khushwant and Rahul Singh: pulling surprises

He keeps doing the most surprising things. When Rajiv Gandhi is not firing chief ministers or backtracking on Mandal, he spends his time astounding his friends.

Two weeks ago, it was the turn of Rahul Singh, the Doon-Cambridge contemporary of the former Prime Minister and a distinguished journalist in his own right. (Singh has edited the *Readers' Digest* and *The Sunday Observer* in his time.)

In Delhi to celebrate his 50th birthday, Singh left a message at 10 Janpath for Rajiv, informing him that there would be a party at his father's (Khushwant Singh) flat and thought nothing more of it.

Then, just as the festivities were getting under way, Singh got a call from the Congress president's office. Rajiv would attend, but he would stay for only half-an-hour.

In the event, he stayed for over two hours, mingled easily with the guests and received the attentions of a steady stream of female admirers. But the most touching moment came when Khushwant Singh told him, "You are the only member of your family who had never been to my house. And now you've come."

Then, as he always does, the Sardar said good night to his son's guests and went off to bed—at 9.30 pm.

Says Rahul Singh: "I never thought he'd come. I left the message only because Camellia Panjabi, who was with us at Cambridge, insisted. But he surprised us all."

CAMERA, LIGHTS, NACHAPPA!

It is a matter of some dispute as to why Ashwini Nachappa has been chosen as the subject of a feature film—the first to be made on a sportsperson in the country. Is it because Nachappa's colourful one-piece track suits and her poor man's-Flo-Jo image make for interesting viewing?

Or is it because she is seen as the deserving successor to P.T. Usha's throne?

Whatever the answer to that one, newspaper magnate Ramoji Rao (of *Eenadu* fame) has chosen Nachappa to star in his forthcoming Telugu film, to be made at an estimated cost of Rs 35 lakhs. The movie, depicts Ashwini's gruelling struggle to make it to the top.

If Ashwini sizzles on the screen just as much as she does on the track, then the film should make for compulsive viewing.

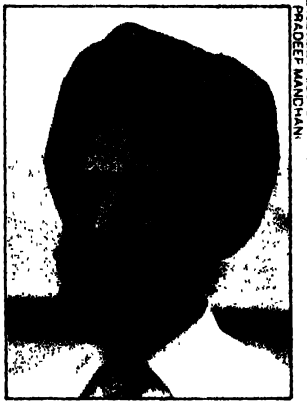
Ashwini Nachappa: now on celluloid



THE ARMY KNOWS BEST

While everybody decried the abysmal performance of India at the recently-concluded Asian Games in Beijing, it was left to Milkha Singh to come up with a way out of the morass Indian athletics finds itself in.

According to the



PRADEEP MANDHAN

Milkha Singh: ingenious suggestion

Flying Sikh, who'd broken the world record in the 400 metres in the Rome Olympics (1960), clocking 45.6 seconds, the situation could only be set right if the army was asked to take over the running of all sports federations in the country. Of course, this should only be done after the sports bodies had been consulted and a consensus evolved, clarified Singh.

Once military discipline was imposed on all athletes, said the former track star, standards would improve miraculously. And we'd no longer be the eternal losers at international sports meets.

MAD AS A HATTER

The art of managing contradictions has landed the Prime Minister in trouble. For, citing the various contradictory statements of the Raja on issues such as Punjab, Kashmir and the Mandal Commission, O.P. Saxena, president of the Lawyers Forum for Civil Liberties, has filed a petition against V.P. Singh under the Indian Lunacy Act.

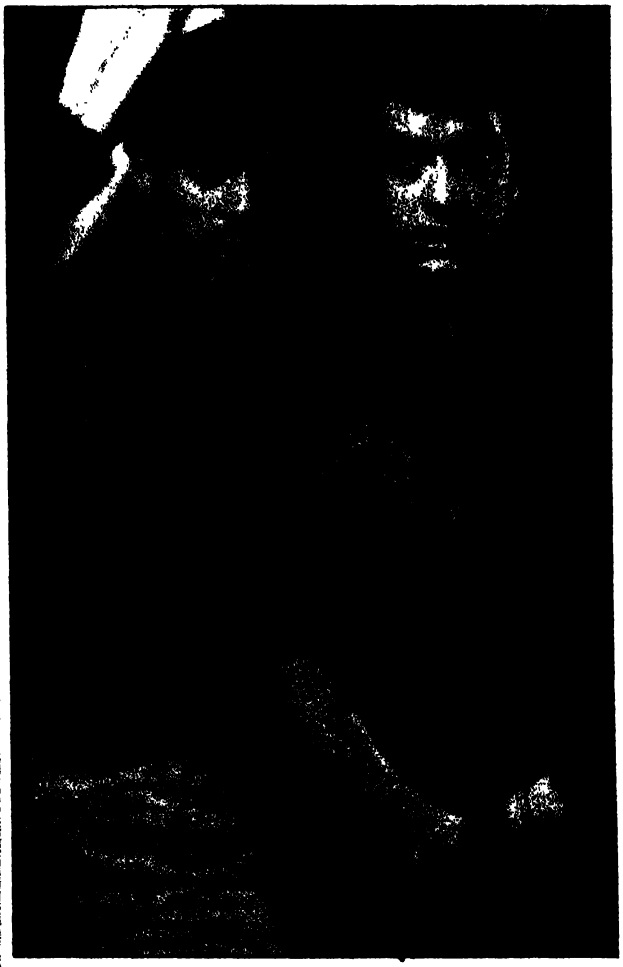
The petitioner recalled that Rani Sita Devi, Singh's wife, had declared in 1952 that her husband was of unsound mind and that he should be restrained from gifting away all the family property. If the Raja's Rani herself was convinced of his lunacy, argued Saxena, there must be something to it.



V.P. Singh: touched in the head?

Hence the court should make arrangements for the medical examination of the Prime Minister to establish the truth once and for all.

Preliminary hearings begin soon. And should provide some laughs, if nothing else.



Aamir and Salman Khan: proving a point

YES, THEY CAN KHAN KHAN

The *filmi* press made much of the purported rivalry between the two Heartbreak Khans, Aamir and Salman. But it now turns out that there was nothing to the story other than media hoopla. And just to prove that everything is well between them, the Khans have decided to co-star in a film: Raj Kumar *(Ghayal)* Santoshi's forthcoming release.

The two diminutive Khans play buddy-buddy. And thankfully, Sangeeta Bijlani isn't one of the heroines.

So, with luck, the shooting will progress without incident. And the film prove a top grosser, what with the impressive initial draw of the two teenyboppers.

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

His massive public relations drive to convince the southern states that he wasn't keen on imposing Hindi doesn't seem to have succeeded too well. And if it did, Mulayam Singh Yadav has managed to ruin the impact by writing official letters to southern governments in his *matribhasha*.

Not that Kerala chief minister E.K. Nayanar was in the least fazed by this tactic. He promptly sent back the offending document to the Uttar Pradesh CM, on the grounds that nobody could understand what it said.

Mulayam Singh Yadav: the boomerang effect



The covering letter (in both Malayalam and English) said: "If we followed your insistence on using the mother tongue we would have to reply to your letter in Malayalam. But...we consider such insistence on matters of language as narrow and...we know that it will cause inconvenience to the states where Malayalam is not spoken."

In future, Yadav was informed, it would make better sense to avoid Hindi while communicating with non-Hindi speaking states. But will Mulayam Singh oblige?

By helping shield livestock from disease, we're giving breeders better yields and deals



Poultry farming is a business fraught with risk. If the breeding areas are'nt thoroughly germ-free, the livestock get infected and perish en masse. Then SM Dyechem successfully changed the picture by diminishing the risk. With import-substitute speciality formulations that go into hi-tech disinfectant shields.. **Critical involvement, core contributions.** We're intimately involved with several core industries offering new generation inputs, import-substitute chemicals . helping in their export drive. We've tied up with 4 of Europe's technology leaders. Acquired know-how that compresses gestation periods Turned start-up projects into profit-centres in record time. In the process, we've doubled our profits each and every year. And became one of the most sought after scrips in the stock market. **A chain reaction of successes.** Achievement breeds its own ambition. From our pinnacle in the speciality chemicals market, we're taking off in diverse directions Our vision of the near future encompasses projects to manufacture Methanol, Pig Iron, Carbon Black and a world-class Beer. **On the anvil is a agro-based Petrochemicals project. To each of these projects we'll bring our unique touch of Value Multiplication. Spread the benefits... and share the rewards.**



High-value addition for high profitability. High-tech inputs for high-growth areas.

- Animal Health Care
- Textiles
- Man-made Fibres
- Leather
- Detergents and Toiletries
- Pharmaceuticals
- Processed Food
- Pesticides
- Fertilisers
- Oilfield chemica

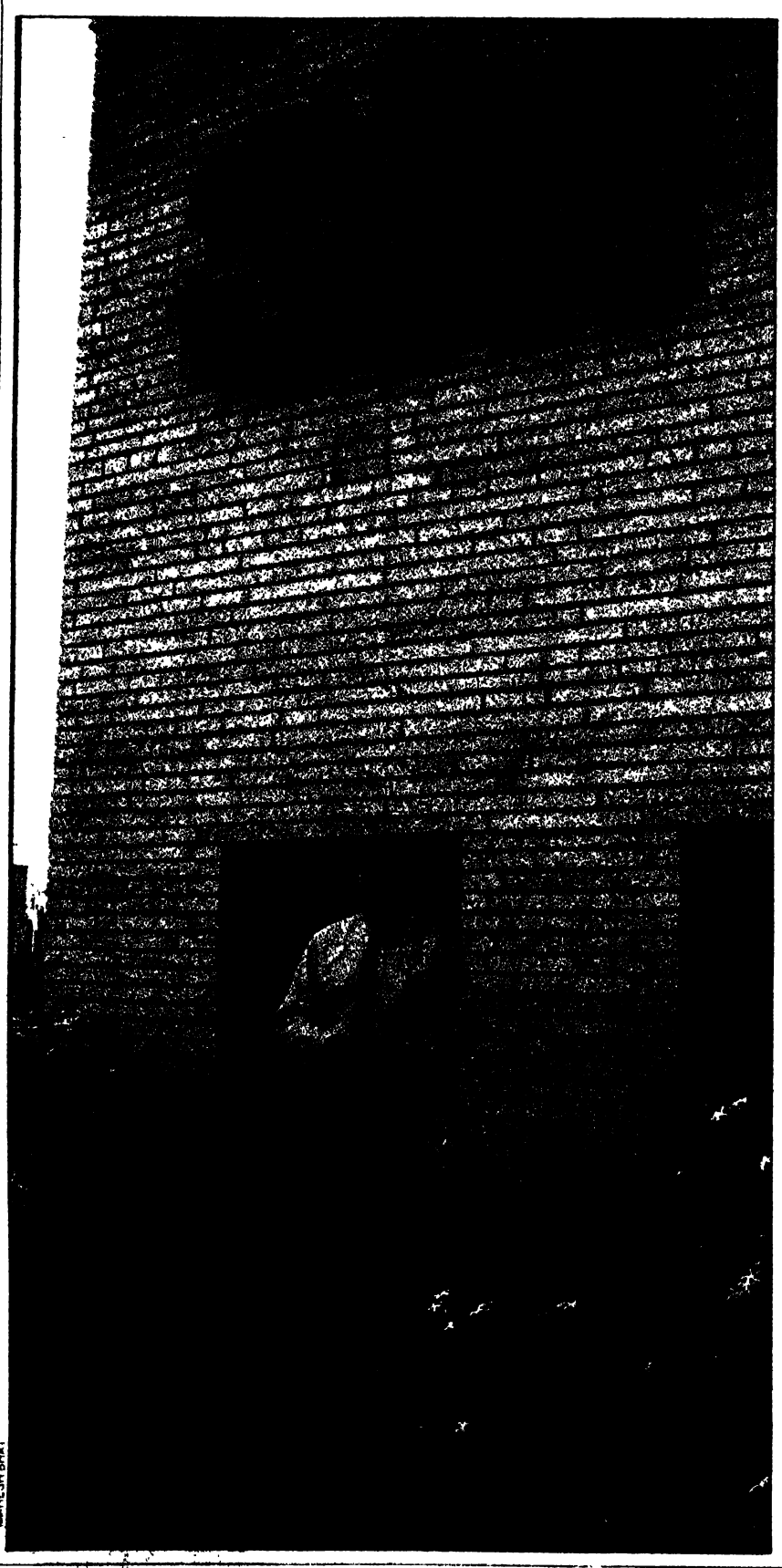
SM

SM DYECHEM

SUCCESS THROUGH VALUE MULTIPLICATIO

SM Dyechem Ltd. SM House, 11, Sahakar Road, Vile Parle (E), Bombay 400 05

Adfactors/SMDL/2



MAHESH BHAT

COMPANIES

Métier, Mettle, and Moves

Birla 3M may have all three, but the future is wide open

Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing. That is what 3M *used* to be. Today, the Fortune 500 company has moved out of mining and entirely into manufacturing—and marketing, the last more than filling the gap left by mines. US $10 billion (Rs 18,000 crores at current exchange rates) in sales, a product range—from spiffy self-stick note pads to speciality chemicals—of one lakh, 70 divisions, and a management style that is as *de rigeur* as it can be for course work in international management schools.

But it is a low-key company. So low-key that when it kicked off operations in India two years ago as Birla 3M, a venture with recently deceased industrialist Ashok Birla, it received the customary—though brief—media attention. And then, retreated to do what it does best: work.

The result. End-March 1989: year one, Rs 2.5 crores in five months of operations. End-March 1990: Rs 10 crores. And, says William Scrivens, Birla 3M's managing director, "we believe we can reach Rs 100 crores within five years". In essence, adds Scrivens, "we are a small company here, but it is just the beginning of a company that will address all 3M businesses". A strong assertion—some would even say a trifle over-

Scrivens: "It's just the beginning"

confident. But the thing is, nobody really disputes it. As elsewhere, the 3M tag is enough to do the trick.

Not just the tag, however, but also the potential. "Confusing" is how a senior Birla 3M executive terms the multinational's product list, all of which the Indian company has access to. And Scrivens, despite saying that in India, "we are essentially selecting products" which have to be "commercially viable", is actually talking about areas that are as money-minting as they are wide. "Communication, power distribution, packaging and health care," says Scrivens, a Briton who was earlier the chief of 3M's Kenya operations. "All priority areas with the government."

The department of telecommunications (DoT) already buys telecom cable connectors from Birla 3M; perhaps it helps to be based in Bangalore, home to two premier DoT operations: the Indian Telephone Industries, and a crucial electronic exchange facility. Power distribution, almost as large an area as power generation (at present levels of demand, worth more than Rs 10,000 crores a year), is on the anvil.

The company manufactures all kinds of tapes—for packaging, insulation, surgical uses, and of course, as that key ingredient in any stationery stock: cello-tape. It is not for nothing, joke 3M executives, that tape means Scotch (like photocopying still means Xerox, and in India, washing powder for clothes means Surf).

More on Scotch tapes: "We may come into the electrical tape products market," says Kishore Rao, Birla 3M's general manager for engineering and production. "It's not on the agenda for the moment, but definitely in the future." When that happens, it could blow the market sky-high. 3M is one of the world's largest manufacturers of audio tapes, both for cassette and spool players. More importantly, 3M pioneered the video tape technology, and is the world's largest manufacturer in this segment. In addition, Birla 3M makes adhesive strips for diapers for all Indian brands, Snuggies, Wraps, the works. (Eighty five per cent of all diapers made in the world use 3M strips.)

The list goes on: protection suits complete with masks and tube breathing units; specialised masks for doctors as well as spray painters; electrodes for high-tech, precise applications such as in ECG, or electro cardiogram machines to monitor heart patients. Not to forget stationery items, the high-profile products that signify 3M worldwide, and now, in India. "We tend to operate in small segments in the market," says Ajay Nanavati, general manager, marketing and development with Birla 3M, in the company's typical, understated bluster style. "But in that segment we have an overwhelming presence."

will be opening up." He adds: "This makes for a very stable company." Perhaps, but India, as any multinational operating here should know by now, is a different ball-game altogether. A market that is as susceptible to demand and supply equations as it is to government policy. "And people talk of encouraging foreign investment and wooing foreign investors," says Rao, the production man. "It's tough—especially for a foreigner—to comprehend, and difficult to reconcile to red tape."



Stationery: only the tip of the 3M-berg

Certainly, if 3M's international business style is anything to go by, especially as a reference point to the company's Indian future. A style which dictates that as the company has such a varied product range, use it in a way that negates stress on any particular product. Says Scrivens: "If a particular market is depressed, another

If Birla 3M unloads even a fraction of the one lakh 3M products it has access to, it could blow the market sky-high

In a way, India is not exactly uncharted territory for 3M. Since the early 1980s, 3M worked the Indian market out of its Asia headquarters in Singapore, supplying speciality chemicals, among other things. (To see 3M scouring pads for kitchen use, and Scotchgard, the cleanser which claims to wipe off the most stubborn stains—now available through Birla 3M—in up-market, urban households was not an entirely unheard of phenomenon, brought back in bagfulls from trips abroad. Ditto with Post-its and rolls of cello-tape.)

"The rationale to set up a local unit," says Nanavati, "was to service the consumer, expand in terms of product range and in terms of geographic presence, as well. It strengthened our sales and marketing efforts."



MAHESH BHAT

Nanavati: "we have an overwhelming presence" in a market segment

And formed a link with Ashok Birla. Not that other top names were not interested. The would-have-beens, culled from the grapevine, read like a who's who of India's corporate kettle: Vijay Mallya, Lalit Mohan Thapar, the house of Kirloskars and pharmaceutical heavyweight Ranbaxy, among others.

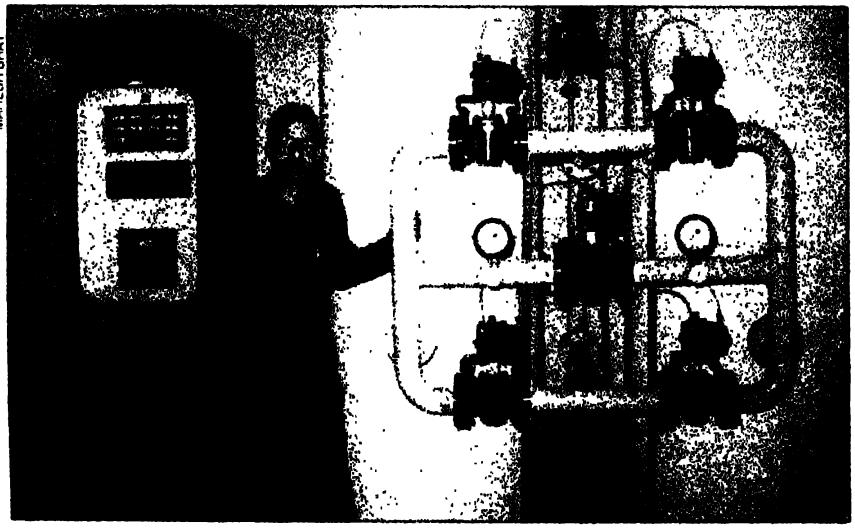
3M holds 40 per cent equity in the Indian venture, which accounted for an initial investment of Rs 12 crores. This is contrary to the US company's usual practice to go in for majority stakes. Then again, it keeps the company within the government's Foreign Exchange Regulation Act boundaries, and if PepsiCo can stick by it, so can we, appears to be the 3M logic. After all, the Indian market is too large to be ignored. So much so, that Birla 3M has been accorded subsidiary status, despite technically being an affiliated venture. Ashok's Zenith group—a little cash-strapped right now—holds 24 per cent of the equity, with other group companies accounting for 16 per cent more.

The remaining 20 per cent will be handed over to the public in a share issue later this year. (The public issue is already delayed. Initially slated for June 1988, the launch was later pushed to spring this year, to coincide with Birla 3M formally opening its Keonics City plant in the outskirts of Bangalore. As of now, the launch date appears to be wide open, with Indian share markets in a wild roller-coaster mood, too many economic imponderables, and a primary—or new issue—market in a trough. The Birla 3M issue will perhaps hinge on how equity offerings from other companies do, say stock market analysts.)

3M

Ashok's tragic death has not dulled the company's link with its Birla parent...or 3M International

Rao: "difficult to reconcile to red tape"



MAHESH BHAT

Perhaps 3M felt a little reassured when Ashok offered them management control: hence, Scrivens' presence in India, a rarity when a business house is in the picture. 3M executives acknowledge Ashok's professional outlook, a simple—and laudable—case of recognising the fact that people who know the business should be left to run it. Also, they acknowledge that Ashok's drive helped. "Ashok Birla was closely associated with the project," says Rao. "Birla 3M was his pet project. His greatest wish was to see it become a reality (Ashok, in numerous press interviews, said that he expected Birla 3M to become one of the star performers of his group). It was very, very unfortunate that he died in the crash (in the 14 February Airbus A320 accident, while on his way to Bangalore to receive 3M International chairman Allen Jacobson for the formal opening of the factory)."

Ashok's tragic death has not dulled the company's link with its Birla parent. "Though 3M is involved in the technical and management part of it," continues Rao, "on the Indian side we are drawing on their (the Birlas') entrepreneurial zeal, drawing on the Birlas' resources—particularly with government agencies." He adds: "Now we are glad that his son (Yashovardhan) is involved as chairman of the company (Birla 3M) and to that extent, Ashok Birla's spirit continues."

If there is still a close link with the Birlas, the link with US parent 3M is equally close. For starters, 3M has management control—Jacobson in-

sisted on it, and Ashok agreed—and the working relationship Birla 3M shares with 3M is unusual for multinational outfits in India. "Our relationship has been outstanding," says Nanavati, Birla 3M's marketing man, "and they have helped us get off the ground." For instance, say company officials, more than 60 3M International staffers have visited India this year to review work and help develop the Indian venture's business plans. In turn, Birla 3M executives have winged their way to the US parent's Minnesota headquarters and Asian hubs for training.

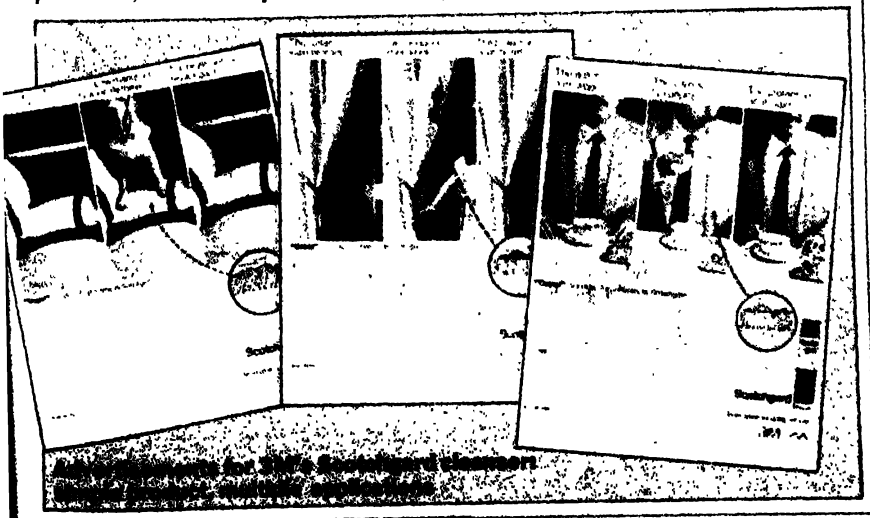
The result, say Birla 3M executives, is an environment that is uniquely American: a laid-back, approachable style, first names; on the other hand, slip up on work and hell begins to seem like a very pleasant alternative. "We often have people wanting to join us, who tell us" says Rao, "'we have heard a lot about the work environment and like to be a part of it.'" Perhaps, as a place where work is appreciated *first* is welcome in a bureaucratically,politically befuddled India. Then again, any company would like to assuage its ego by claiming work environment superiority. Rao's assertion is believable only on one count: the 3M tag, again—the international conglomerate is simply too well known for some of its management magic not to have filtered down to India. "I think we scare our competition," says Rao. "We have a formidable reputation." Give us a break, one might say. Besides, Scrivens' five-year, Rs 100 crore deadline is yet to come true.

Magic or not—and its "indomitable" claims apart—Birla 3M has problems, too. A key one: distribution. Scrivens admits it flatly: "It is a problem in India, (being) in Bangalore, for instance, you don't realise there are certain things available in Bombay and Delhi." This works both ways: while it creates a problem to obtain supplies, it also creates hurdles for getting finished goods out. A major obstacle, says Scrivens, when "there is a lot of regional distribution". This brings out Rao's observation about foreigners finding India a tough workplace—and marketplace - to be in. With terrible communication facilities, unpredictable and costly road transport and an entirely washed up railway service. Both Indian companies, and numerous foreign ones, have found it easier to just put their heads down and take things as they come, to make the best of a frequently unnerving situation. If Birla 3M neglects to follow suit, it is in for trouble



Ashok Birla: professional enough to hand over management control

Indian companies, and numerous foreign ones have found it easier to just put their heads down and take things as they come, to make the best of a frequently unnerving situaiton. If Birla 3M neglects to follow suit, it is in for trouble



But the 3M-- and now, Birla 3M—strength lies in its ability to adapt to a region's special demands. And, as always, *always*, to adapt a product to consumer needs. "That's what makes us different from other companies," claims Nanavati. "We know who our customers are," adds Scrivens. "and we work with them to develop and manufacture according to their needs. If you are close to them, you don't need to be high profile."

Fine, Birla 3M *has* what it takes to get where it wants to. Then again, there are absolutely no givens in business. Same time, same place, five years down the road? ●

Sudeep Chakravarti with Subadhra Rangamani/ Bangalore

INTERVIEW

"I was made a scapegoat"

Calcutta jute baron Arun Bajoria on his land and FERA scandals, and his jute successes despite an industry slump

Arun Bajoria tries very hard to stay away from controversy. Unfortunately, controversy has a way of finding him. For the past five years, the Calcutta based entrepreneur has blundered his way into scandals—the Rawdon Square land development scam that for a while, even shook up West Bengal's die-hard Marxist government.

Then, he bought a series of jute mills nobody would touch, at a time when the industry was—and still is—going through its worst ever slump. The five mills he picked up all show profits. Strange, at a time when economics dictates that none should. A thriving jute baron at at time when all other barons are a distant memory.

Then, last March, sleuths swooped down on Bajoria, accusing him of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) violations, and of holding an unauthorised Swiss bank account.

Bajoria bailed out, expectedly —his political contacts are legion.

This, then,is the man who runs a Rs 500 crore empire—and allegedly holds foreign currency assets worth Rs 35 crores and nobody knows how. No bank loans, either. No chatting up the media. Ever.

Bajoria broke his silence to speak to SUNDAY *on various issues. His responses were mostly evasive, some self-congratulatory, and few, insensitive. Excerpts from an exclusive interview.*

On why he kept buying jute factories at a time when most owners would gladly be rid of them:
We already owned the Hooghly Mills (since 1957) and that was doing well. Besides, I got the other mills dirt cheap. Say, Gondolpara. I bought that for Rs 2.25 crores plus a Rs 7-8 crore gratuity liability. I bought all the



others at similar prices, all within Rs 3-4 crores. It takes about Rs 60-70 crores to set up a unit. The mills were all losing money when I bought them, but then on, they have been showing profits.

On how he managed to show profits given the industry slump:
I would put it down to good personnel management, and a dedicated effort on the part of all concerned. Some of the bigger houses have not been doing too well because they have varied interests. Unlike the Birlas and the Singhanias, I deal solely in jute.

On how he managed to buy all the mills without taking a single bank loan.
The Hooghly Mill was showing profits, and I invested these funds in other units and kept rolling the profits. In the space of three years, starting 1985, I owned Gondolpara, Weaverly, Anglo-India (Lower) and Hukumchand.

On how that is possible as the Hooghly unit does not look like a great profit earner:
Well, that is the way it happened...

On allegations of jute 'juggling' against industrialists:
Speculation is rife in the industry, that is true. But this kind of juggling does not benefit the mill owners in any way. Most of the mills are in the red. If they benefitted from juggling, then surely, they would show profits.

On whether this is how Hooghly managed to show profits:
Hooghly has always showed profits.

On diversification, research, or the lack of these:
The Indian jute industry leaves all research to the government agencies—IJIRA (Indian Jute Industries Research Association). JTRL (Jute Technology Research Laboratory), etc. The industrialists themselves take no interest. We are content to produce conventional jute goods: sacking, carpet backing, etc. The only unit which has tried and succeeded somewhat in diversifying is Champdany, hats off to them. If their performance reflects genuine potential in diversified jute products (decoratives, linens, cloth), then others will surely follow. But that hasn't happened as yet.

On why Bangladesh has a larger share of the international export market:
This is primarily because eleven months a year Bangladesh jute is cheaper than Indian jute. We get only the leftovers of the market. The finished goods we sell at Rs 12,000 a tonne,they sell at Rs 6,000 in the export market. Naturally, we don't stand a chance. Rs 6,000 barely covers our production costs. They are aided by heavy government subsidies. You see, jute is their only foreign exchange earner.

Our exports are mainly to Russia, not because we can compete with Bangladesh but because of the existing trade protocol. Russia buys jute from us irrespective of the price Bangladesh is offering.

On the abysmal living conditions of jute mill workers:
There is very little an industrialist can do about it. It is the workers who are at fault. If there is accommodation for 2,000 people, they bring in another 10,000. They earn rents by sub-letting

the quarters. There are *khataals*(cow sheds) and liquor dens and brothels. The industrialist cannot be expected to clean up that kind of a mess. It is the workers who have to change their mentality.

As for working conditions, the current conditions have existed ever since the British period. Nobody around here bothers about noise or air pollution—it has just been recognised as part and parcel of the industry.

On the degeneration of the once plush mills:
It is all very well when an industry or unit is doing well. We can spend money on it. Likewise, we can't when it is not. If you look at Gondolpara, it is in great shape. As for the others, the previous owners of say, Hukumchand, were the Birlas and if *they* couldn't manage proper upkeep, how can you point a finger at me?

On whether that is contradictory, as working conditions at the Hooghly unit—the major profit earner—are particularly bad:
The Hooghly unit has always been run this way. And anyway, we can't spend too much on these things.

On the role of the Jute Corp. of India (JCI) to stop speculation, and control the price of raw jute:
JCI does not buy sufficient raw jute to be able to regulate price. It is only when prices fall very low that they buy, and at their price they find it very difficult to dispose of their stock.


AMIT DUTTA

Inside a jute factory: "most of the mills are in the red"

On the 1987 Rawdon Square issue, when Bajoria was accused of illegally landing a contract to build a commercial complex on prime Calcutta real estate:
If you really want to know, I was made a scapegoat. I had nothing to do with it. It was a state government move to convert the Rawdon Square park into a multi-storey business and shopping complex, and the construction contract was awarded to one Dr H.K. Sen's company. My cousin Gopal Bajoria, in collaboration with Dr Sen, had undertaken the contract. But they required some financing and Gopal approached me, asking if I was willing to invest about Rs five crores, or at least *say* I was, because *The Statesman* was already screaming: "How can a Rs 2,000 company handle a Rs 20 crore project?"

Then, the Congress(I) started demonstrating against the project and it became a political issue. So, though I had not invested a single paisa I was victimised, and false allegations of my having given a bank guarantee were made. I did no such thing.

On his alleged FERA violations, and subsequent arrest on 16 March 1990:
This was also made out to be a big issue because it was politicised. The allegation was that I held accounts in a bank in Geneve, Switzerland. That is all rubbish—*pata nahin kahan kahan se aate hain yeh log* (I don't know where these people come from). They can slap anything onto anyone.

Anyway, they arrested me on the evening of 16 March and subjected me to every kind of torture and I was forced to give them a 'confession'. But after I was bailed out on 18 March, I contacted the bank, but they said they could do little about it. I had to get a written statement from the bank saying that I did *not* hold an account there. So, I got in touch with a Geneve lawyer who sorted the mess out somehow. The papers are all with the investigating agencies. •

Interviewed by Avirook Sen/Calcutta

A typical mill workers' locality: "we can't be expected to clean up that kind of a mess"


AMIT DUTTA

INDUSTRY/ PLANTATIONS

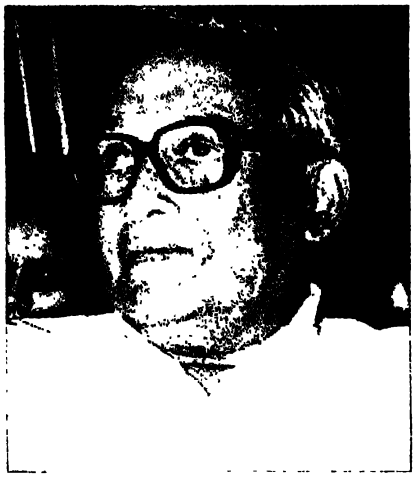
First, the bad news

No way out of a coffee crisis, a few cheers for tea, and some sunshine—barely—for spices and rubber. That is the planters' punch for 1990

It has been almost two months since the United Planters Association of South India (UPASI) met for their 97th annual conference, to share tales of woe. The planters managed some words of praise for the tea industry, a mixed bag of blessings for rubber and spices, and almost nothing but bad times ahead for the coffee sector.

The assessment still holds true. The organisers laid on an international coffee convention before the UPASI show, and paraded the executive director of the International Coffee Organisation (ICO)—the coffee world's De Beers—A.F. Beltrao, as a big name draw. Only, Beltrao dropped a bombshell India is still reeling from. He announced that the organisation was trying to rope in Soviet Bloc countries, which basically means that Indian coffee exporters would end up losing their captive—and hugely profitable—markets. Plans are at an advanced stage, said Beltrao. And that was enough to shake people up, no matter that the convention was in Coonoor, in the Nilgiri Hills, and the weather marvellous.

With reason. The USSR, for example, buys 55,000 tonnes of green, or uncured coffee from the Indian Coffee Board, plus 6,000 tonnes of instant coffee every year. Poland is another major buyer, picking up anything between 15,000 to 20,000 tonnes a year. India's trade protocol with these nations, and others in the Soviet ambit, is what keeps the trade going. Because, India cannot match prices that its competitors—Brazil and Colombia, among others—offer, and the only way it can cash in is by hanging on to the Eastern Bloc trade agreements. But East Germany does not exist any more. And if others find that international trade organisations are opening their doors to them, then the first thing to be dumped will be the higher-priced imports from India, rupee trade or not. And, as India does not have a seat on the ICO, it lacks the necessary clout to push through with its demands.



Minister of state for commerce A. Shreedharan is not much help

Worse, coffee exports are already dropping. From a high of Rs 370 crores in 1986-87, it slid to Rs 310 crores for 1989-90. This year—thanks to low prices internationally and a worldwide coffee glut, it could drop still further. And if the captive markets pull out, more crores of rupees than the industry would care to count would be lost. The commerce ministry is already going about issuing warnings—"don't put more than half of the production in the Soviet Union's basket," "this is the time for prudence," etc.—but the point is, there are almost no places that India can divert its exports to. At the UPASI conference, it hardly helped much having Union minister of state for commerce Arangil Shreedharan around. The minister—who has come a long way since his days as a plantation labour union leader—hardly said much to assuage fears.

When UPASI president R.K. Krishna Kumar said "the crisis in the coffee industry continues", that was perhaps the understatement of the year as far as coffee producers were concerned. Krishna Kumar, who is also vice chairman of Tata Tea Ltd—the company that is planning to buy out the country's largest coffee plantation firm, Consolidated Coffee Ltd., pending official clearances—has reason to be worried. For his company, and the country, the twist is ironical: the coffee scene has never been worse.

And tea, never better, in spite of myriad problems. In fact, the tea scene can get better still, if promises hold out. The government says it will take a "positive view" on the industry's request that the Centre slash excise, currently at Rs 1.10 for every kilo of tea. And that it is "alive" to the United Liberation Front of Assam-fomented trouble which is giving every tea company with plantations in the state nightmares. Extortion demands that run into crores of rupees, and threats of death if they refuse to pay up, the list goes on. Till now, the Centre, or the Assam administration, has done precious little to solve the crisis. And this seems to be the major bugbear for an industry otherwise buoyed by rising exports—a record Rs 1,000 crores-plus for the year-ended March 1990, and a possibility of doubling it within the next two years, and one of the best crops in recent memory.

The tea industry has more than done its bit, goes the refrain, and it is time the government helped out, too. After all, says the industry, it *has* responded to the government's request to flood the market with packaged tea, about five million kilos worth, at a low-priced Rs 40 per kilo plus taxes.

Attempts to tackle the Assam militants are washed up, to put it mildly. It is very unlikely that any administra-



The ULFA threat, and the government's inaction and clumsy plans are slowly killing off the tea industry



While US soldiers pray in the Gulf, Indian spice traders are praying for a return to that lucrative export region

tion will be able to do anything at all. Shreedharan amounts to practically nothing in the pecking order, finance minister Madhu Dandavate will have to be content with emotional speeches, and Prime Minister V.P Singh, well, that is another story altogether. The tea industry will have to establish its own *status quo* with them. This is a given. Tata Tea's Krishna Kumar let out the inkling of a plan when he told UPASI delegates about how "insularity has been our chief weakness. ..In public perception, plantations are seen as islands of affluence in the midst of rural poverty". So, get involved in community development. This is way up the militants' street, they have been demanding economic and social parity for Assamese workers on plantations and surrounding areas for months. The industry, obviously, is trying to find its own level, no thanks to government.

On the other hand, the government is trying to help out by easing its pricing policies. It has already withdrawn two informal price control measures. On the other hand, it is *not* Minister Shreedharan dropped a bombshell of his own, following in international coffee boss Beltrao's footsteps, when he suggested that the government will not object if anyone decides to import tea for value-added exports. If that happens--and tea from Sri Lanka or Kenya is cheaper than the average Indian varieties--domestic producers are in for a rude shock. As it is, the industry is livid that the minister should have made such a statement without consulting them in the first place. Besides, the move could lead to complications which the government may not have considered. For example, when a leading tea exporter such as India enters the world market to buy tea, prices could soar. As a result, the move could easily backfire, with the importer with value-added intentions buying tea at increasingly higher prices.

The coffee and the tea trade were uptight and cheerful in turn. But the rubber growers went home from the UPASI bash, smiling all the way. Shreedharan was not much help to the others but he assured the rubber trade that the commerce ministry is willing to jack up the floor price of rubber at the first opportunity. This would help, as cost of production is fast catching up with returns, and, in the near future could actually outpace the latter. The windfall appears to be purely political in nature. Shreedharan is from Kerala, home to India's rubber plantations. Besides, when this government says it will hike procurement or floor prices, it actually does it, contrary to its usual stand of dithering endlessly.

On the spice front--again, the Kerala factor creeps in--the government expects to step in. The Gulf crisis has knocked off export figures for the spice industry. And clandestine cardamom imports from Sri Lanka have knocked some wind out of the trade's sails. The industry hopes that the Gulf will soon return to normal—though, as most analysts see it, equations there are changed forever—and the "relatively important export region" will be back in its books. However, pepper prices are low, and all gains after last year's disastrous cardamom crop are being eroded because of smuggling.

Quite a planters' punch. And all said and done, nobody wants a repeat. There is simply too much at stake. The UPASI realises it. If the government would only try to understand. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

(East) Germany has scrapped rupee trade coffee imports from India. What is left of the Soviet bloc could follow



■ Band on the run

Actually, band on bail. A corporate PR man and his bugler, who allegedly teamed up to play a death-march to Bombay Dyeing chairman Nusli Wadia, are out of judicial custody. Kirti Ambani, cousin to Dhirubhai, chairman of Reliance Industries Ltd, and Arjun Babaria, the *meister* of an obscure Bombay band, were said to have got together more than a year ago to kill off Wadia, and thus, went the prosecution's argument, remove the biggest thorn in Dhirubhai's side.



Nusli Wadia: music? No thanks

Only, two Reliance employees who earlier swore they recognised Kirti's voice on tape, passing the orders, failed to do so at a recent bail hearing. The judge declared, therefore, that the prosecution's evidence was insubstantial and turned the duo loose on bail. Rumours are flying: did Dhirubhai have a hand in it? And does that explain why two "impeccable" witnesses suddenly lost their power of hearing? The Central Bureau of Investigation says it will keep a close watch on Kirti and the bugler, court order or not. And Wadia, too, is certain to keep a lookout, though a recurrence of paranoia is unlikely. For now, it seems like business as usual. Dirges, anyone?

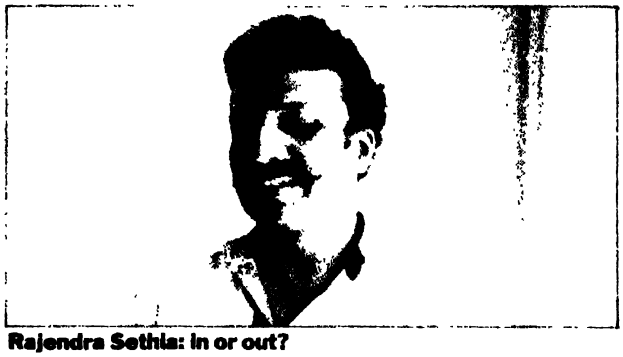
STOCK QUOTE

"Madhu Dandavate is about the only minister people still believe in. But that can change easily enough."

A senior New Delhi bureaucrat, at a Vasant Vihar cocktail-circuit bash.

■ Jokai jokes

No jokes, really. Not with the latest line-up in Jokai India, the one-time money-spinner for non-resident Indian (NRI) businessman Rajendra Sethia, now bankrupt and hurt. It appears that a consortium led by Narayan C. Pohani, a US-based NRI and real estate developer who owns Rossel Estates, has bought into Jokai Holdings Ltd, which has a 74 per cent stake in Jokai India. Pohani, Govind Chandak, another US-NRI real estate developer like Pohani, and P.K. Kaul (yes, you read right, *the* Kaul, former cabinet secretary and India's ambassador to the US) will be moving onto Jokai India's board. Rossel has undertaken to pay US $ 32 million (about Rs 575 crores at current exchange rates) to Punjab National Bank, which holds the 74 per cent of Jokai India as a pledge; Sethia had handed over control when he went bankrupt.



Rajendra Sethia: in or out?

The way is clear, as the Company Law Board has withdrawn restrictions on appointment of directors. The government will nominate some of its own, but the real clout will remain with the consortium bosses. Actually, the real control will be with Pharaoh Holdings Plc, a UK-based company which in turn holds interests in Rossel. Who is what, exactly? It will take some time to work the links out. And, is Sethia really out?

■ Farm on

The way things look—and the industry may not like it, having its thunder stolen—farmers may come to India's economic rescue. Monsoons have been more than good, bountiful, to be exact. The *kharif*, or winter harvest is set to break records, way past the government's estimate of 95 million tonnes of foodgrains. Everything except oilseeds—thanks to late rains in Gujarat's Saurashtra region—should show bumper gains. For 1990-91, crop estimates are almost at 190 million tonnes, way over the Centre's production targets of 176 million tonnes. The showing will help replenish India's battered stocks, and hopefully, release more in the market. And create a market, thanks to increased agricultural incomes. ●

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

George Fernandes

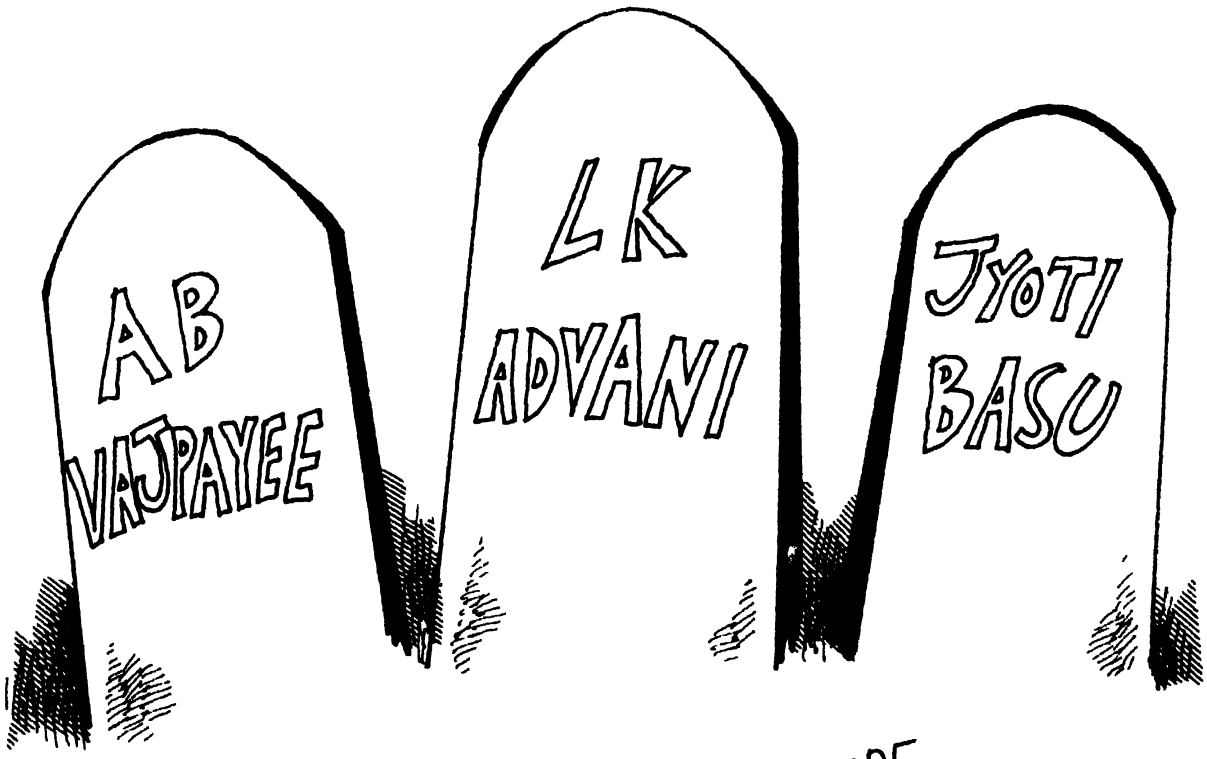
Union minister for railways



And now, a rail hike. Yes, it will help cut subsidies. But it will also help drive prices through the roof. Minister Fernandes says diesel is now too expensive, what with the Gulf crisis. So, he wants a supplementary budget to announce increases in both passenger and freight charges. The first is politically sensitive, as the electorate screams every time fares are hiked; therefore, keep the low fares low and raise tabs on first class and air conditioned travel. Freight charge increases will affect industry and the economy, but who cares. I certainly don't, says Fernandes, I have losses of Rs 100 crores to make up, because you folks have been stopping and burning trains. It isn't really oil-related, is it, minister? Your government wants *money*, doesn't it? But if you take more of it away, you get less the second time round. Oh, and don't forget inflation.

RAVI SHANKAR

THEY SACRIFICED THEIR POLITICAL LIVES FOR VP SINGH



DEATH, WHERE IS THY SINGH?

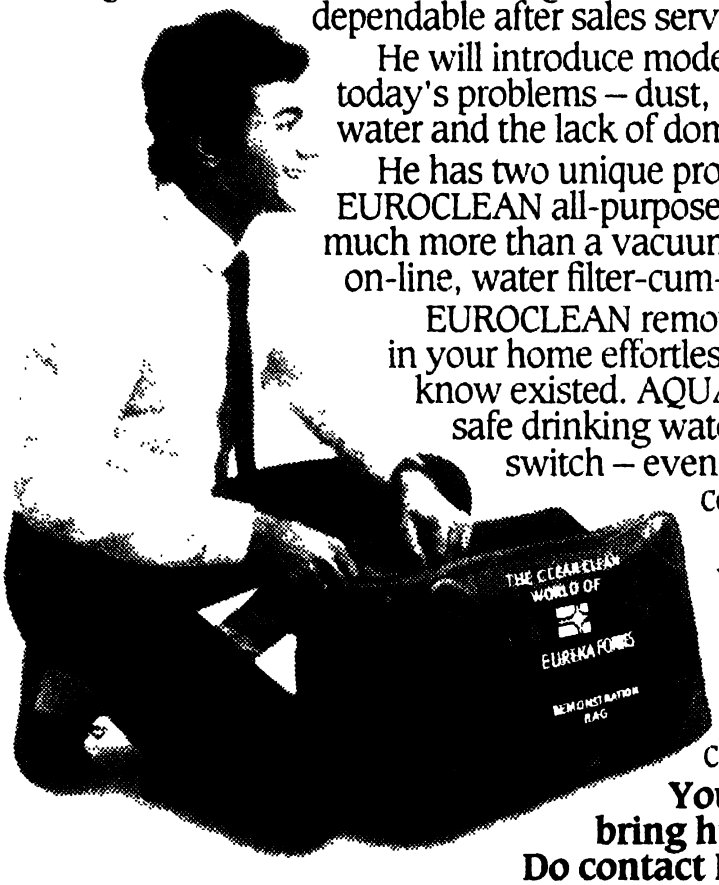


SUNDAY ©OBSERVER INDIA LTD

The friendly Man from Eureka Forbes is about to demonstrate the most convenient way to keep your home free of dust and dirt.

One of these days the friendly Eureka Forbes salesman will ring your doorbell and introduce himself with his identity card.

This man inspires confidence – which is only natural. Because he is a member of the largest, most successful sales organisation of its kind in India. Backed by dependable after sales service.



He will introduce modern home products to cope with today's problems – dust, pollution, contaminated water and the lack of domestic help.

He has two unique products to demonstrate: EUROCLEAN all-purpose cleaning system, which is much more than a vacuum cleaner, and AQUAGUARD on-line, water filter-cum-purifier.

EUROCLEAN removes minute specks of dirt and dust in your home effortlessly. Even dust you didn't know existed. AQUAGUARD gives you clear, safe drinking water on tap – at the flick of a switch – even if the raw water has high bacterial contamination.

The Eureka Forbes salesman will show you – in your own home – how these products can bring the advantages of modern cleanliness and hygiene to your family. Making it a cleaner, safer world for you.

You need not wait till his rounds bring him to your doorstep. Do contact Eureka Forbes at any of the following locations for an early visit. Or, write to Eureka Forbes Limited, P.O. Box 936, G.P.O., Bombay 400 001.

Euroclean Mitey Vac Sales & Service Centres are located all over the country. Check the list for the one nearest to yo

BOMBAY*: Head Office: Forbes Building, 4th Floor, Charanjit Rai Marg, Fort. Tel. 2047870 (5 lines) • **DELHI*:** 401/402, Archana Commercial Complex, Greater Kailash Part I Tel: 6416143, 6463606 • **CALCUTTA*:** Priya, BD-9, 1st Floor, Sector 1, Salt Lake City. Tel 347799 • **MADRAS*:** Mount Chambers, Block No. A, B, F & G 1st Floor, 756 Mount Road. Tel 8250854 • **BANGALORE*:** Parvathi Plaza, 204/205 Richmond Road. Tel: 211738, 213125. • **AHMEDABAD*:** 15, Madhuban Society, Opp. Gujarat Vidyapith, Ashram Road Tel: 446982, 466821, 465320. • **ALLAHABAD:** United Tower, 2nd Floor, 53 Leader Road. • **CHANDIGARH*:** Sector 7-C, S.C.O. No. 14, 2nd Floor, Madhya Marg. Tel: 26735 • **COIMBATORE*:** No 61 West T.V. Swamy Road, R.S Puram Tel: 43180, 49648. • **HYDERABAD*:** 101 Kala Mansion, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad. Tel: 844128, 840183, 840206. • **JAIPUR*:** 22-23 Central Market, Bapu Nagar. Tel: 70205. • **JAMSHEDPUR:** Talwar Building, Flat D, 1st Floor, 1 Inner Circle Road,



Euroclean Aquaguard

EUREKA FORBES LIMITED

Pioneers in modern cleanliness and hygiene.

The all-purpose cleaning system which is much more than a vacuum cleaner.

On-line, water filter-cum-purifier.



Aquaguard is also available at the locations marked with an asterisk.

C Block, P.O. Bistipur. Tel 24470, 25351 • **KANPUR:** 306/307, 3rd Floor, City Centre, The Mall. • **LUCKNOW*:** C-414 Sector B, Mahanagar. Tel 77296 • **MANGALORE*:** 3-33-2951/52 Pintos Lane, Kadri Kambla, Ground & 1st Floor. Tel: 32445. • **NAGPUR:** Paul Commercial Complex, 4th Floor, Ajni Square, Wardha Road. • **PATNA*:** No. 103 A/1 Ashiyani, Ground Floor, Off Boring Road, Nageshwar Colony. • **PUNE*:** Mubarak Manzil, 2nd Floor, 1 Dhole Patil Road. Tel: 667968, 668773, 667016.

• **RANCHI:** Shyam Lila, 1st Floor, 59/B Circular Road, P O Lalpur Tel: 27681. • **ROURKELA:** Ground Floor, Flat No D/237, Koelnagar, Dist Sundergarh • **SILIGURI:** 521 Ward No. 16, Swamiji Sarani, 1st Floor, Hakimpara, P.O. Siliguri, Dist. Darjeeling. • **TRIVANDRUM*:** T.C. No. 42/88 Pankaja Bhavan, Kalipankulam Road, Manacaud, Tel: 79570 • **VIJAYAWADA*:** 33 13-14 Venegellavari Street, Seetarampuram, Ground Floor, Tel: 475964, 476742.

everest/90.EFL/213.CAL.SNU



Express battle

M. Karunanidhi takes on the Indian Express

To the thousands of DMK followers in Tamil Nadu, *Murasoli*, the Tamil party organ edited by Union minister Murasoli Maran, who is also a nephew of chief minister Karunanidhi, is more than just a newspaper. Every morning, editorial writers with interesting pen-names make impassionate pleas to party workers, spelling out the DMK's stand on numerous burning issues. On 16 October, one of them, writing under the pseudonym 'Sinnakuthoosi', flung an interesting poser at the executive director of the *Indian Express* at Madras, Manoj Kumar Sonthalia: "Is he willing to commit self-immolation in protest against the Mandal recommendations?" The editorial was a dig at the *Express*' stand on the Mandal report and the anti-reservation stir – which clearly clashed with the DMK's views on the matter.

Only a couple of days before, Sonthalia had penned a long letter addressed to the Tamil Nadu chief secretary, M.M. Rajendran, complaining that the DMK government was out to cripple the Express Group in the state. The complaint from the *Express* executive, who is a grandson of proprietor Ramnath Goenka, came in the wake of a series of violent attacks on the vans carrying the daily to the various distribution points across the districts over the last few weeks. Sonthalia also sent copies of his complaint to the powers-that-be in Delhi and had the full text published in the Sunday edition of the *Express* on 14 October.

Sonthalia's letter had distinct political overtones: he alleged that there was a "political conspiracy inspired by powerful elements in the ruling DMK to cripple physically" the publication

***Indian Express* van ransacked by a violent mob**

of the Indian Express Group of Newspapers in Tamil Nadu and that "certain political elements like the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) and the Pattali Makkal Kazhagam (PMK) and other extremist groups are planning large-scale mob attacks and violence on the offices of the *Indian Express* and *Dinamani* (Tamil morninger from the group) at Madras, Madurai and Coimbatore".

More serious perhaps was Sonthalia's accusation that chief minister Karunanidhi was instigating his party workers. Substantiating his charge, the *Express* chief executive referred to the speech of Karunanidhi on 3 September, in which the chief minister came down heavily on the paper without actually naming it.

In all, Sonthalia listed around ten instances where his paper came under attack from the DMK and its allies—directly and indirectly. On 4 September, for instance, volunteers of the PMK led by its founder president, S. Ramdoss, burnt copies of *Indian Express* in front of the paper's office in Madras and shouted slogans against Goenka and editor Arun Shourie. "Down with the newspaper of shameless Brahmins, down with the blackleg newspaper," the agitators shouted. On 2 October, chief minister Karunanidhi charged the English newspaper with being anti-Mandal and exaggerating the anti-reservation agitation reports. The very next day, PMK volunteers stopped a van carrying *Indian Express* and *Dinamani* at Madurantakam, about 60 kms south of Madras, and burnt over 12,000 copies of the dailies on the highway.

Two more vans of the *Express* were damaged on 10 and 12 October. "The pattern is clear. Every day the attack takes place in a particular area. The police officials who have been assigned to protect stand as onlookers, as, according to them, they are outnumbered by the violent mob. Our complaints and FIRs have met with no response," Sonthalia said.

The *Express* executive went on to allege that police officials at the district level were "tight-lipped" about why they could not stop the attacks on *Indian Express* vans. "The sympathetic ones indicate that they are helpless as the attacks are centrally monitored by ruling party circles and, therefore, they could do precious little in the matter." Which meant that even though the attackers identified themselves as DK-PMK volunteers, the whole episode was being masterminded by the DMK leadership in Madras.

In fact, during one of the attacks, the DMK legislator from Tindivanam had personally led the violent mob, giving credence to the *Express'* allegation that the ruling party was merely using the DK and PMK as fronts for attacking the newspaper.

While the DK and the PMK were angry with the *Express* for siding with the anti-reservationists, the DMK had its own reason for being hostile to Goenka's outfit. Of late, the *Indian Express* has been quite sympathetic to the AIADMK general secretary, Jayalalitha, the arch-rival of chief minister Karunanidhi, and even frontpaged an interview with her on 4 October. The newspaper also gave an excellent coverage to the 7 October AIADMK rally in Madras, held to unveil an MGR statue. "AIADMK rally does MGR proud," the *Express* headline screamed. "Significant is the fact that the state government banned, the very day after the rally, all state government advertisements to the publications of the group," Sonthalia alleged in his letter.



The *Express* alleged that the DMK was using the DK and the PMK as fronts for attacking the paper's vans

Chief minister Karunanidhi reacted sharply to Sonthalia's charges. The same day (14 October) the *Express* carried Sonthalia's letter, Karunanidhi issued a statement denying that the DMK regime had anything to do with the attacks on the newspaper and its property. The CM clarified that even though he had openly criticised the policy of the paper, at no point of time had he either advocated violence against the morninger, or encouraged hooliganism against the media. The attacks on the paper were "only because of those who were really affected or agitated over the publication and the move of the *Indian Express* against the interests of the backward classes and Scheduled Castes. Without realising this, there is no use in finding fault with the DMK rule", argued the DMK chief.

The war of words continued with the *Express* publishing a rejoinder from Sonthalia. It said: "The laboured statement of the chief minister only goes to show that he justifies the acts of vandalism against *Indian Express* as the legitimate reaction of the oppressed classes, angered by the campaign of the paper against the Mandal Commission Report. To that extent, the chief minister has admitted the charge of *Indian Express* that the DMK government is hostile to the paper." Sonthalia also clarified that the *Express* always advocated peaceful agitations against the Mandal report.

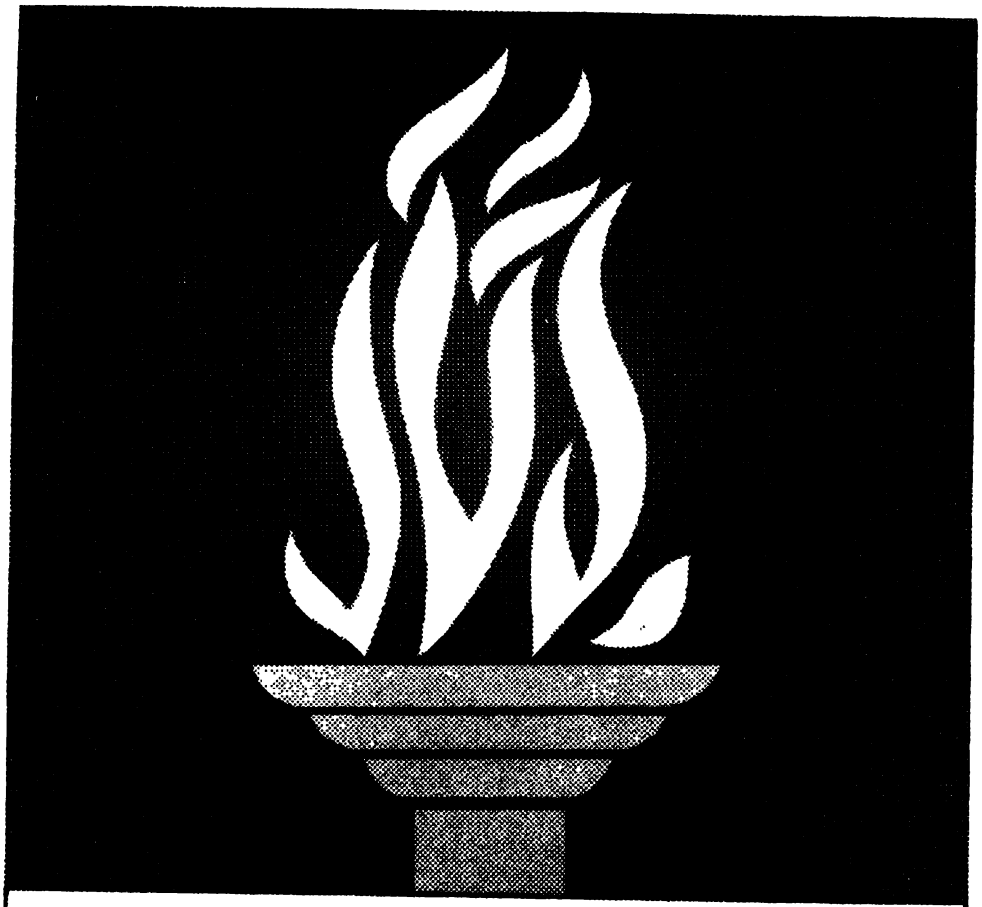
Even as the trading of charges continued, two more vans of the *Express* were burnt in Madras on 15 October. Perturbed by this raging battle, Union home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed sent a terse note addressed to Karunanidhi's office saying that adequate security should be provided for the *Indian Express* property in Tamil Nadu. Said an *Express* staffer: "We also hear that Delhi has told Karunanidhi that it would not be in the best of his interests to rub us the wrong way. We hope now there will be a change of attitude on the part of the DMK leadership."

And the change came a bit too early than expected. The Tamil Nadu secretariat sent feelers to the *Express* in Madras, indicating that the chief minister would like to bury the hatchet. Said Sonthalia: "There were no more attacks on *Indian Express* vans, though some papers were set on fire in one incident." And, the ban on handing out advertisements to the Express Group was lifted. What is more, in a gesture of goodwill, the Tamil Nadu government okayed the paper's request for installing a printing press—something which was pending for quite sometime now.

The battle is clearly over, but for how long will the truce last? •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

THIS LIGHT WILL BRIGHTEN UP
YOUR LIFE YEAR AFTER YEAR



IND JYOTHI

7 YEAR INCREMENTAL GROWTH FUND

Provide for the coming years. Make the future secure, for yourself and your family. With Ind Jyothi, the unique Growing and Assured Income Scheme.

It's unique because it gives you a minimum assured return of 12.75% from year one. And progressively increases it year after year. So, in the 7th year you get an assured income of 15.25% p.a. Plus bonus too.

Nothing's left to chance. Your gain is specified in the chart.

Special Incentive for early subscribers

Application received during the period	Incentive for every Rs. 1000 of subscription retained
• 1st October to 15th October 1990	Rs. 20/-
• 16th October to 31st October 1990	Rs. 15/-
• 1st November to 15th November 1990	Rs. 10/-
• 16th November to 30th November 1990 or such extended date	NIL

MINIMUM ASSURED INCOME

Year	Income	Period	
		From	To
1	12.75%	Allotment Date	31.3.92
2	13.25%	1.4.92	31.3.93
3	13.75%	1.4.93	31.3.94
4	14.25%	1.4.94	31.3.95
5	14.75%	1.4.95	31.3.96
6	14.75%	1.4.96	31.3.97
7	15.25%	1.4.97	31.3.98

Choose from either of two plans.

Plan A: Assured return is payable annually.
Plan B: Assured return declared annually, will be added back to the investment and accumulated sum will be paid on maturity

Highlights of the Scheme

- Ind Jyothi is yet another winner from Indian Bank Mutual Fund. The people who brought you Ind Ratna and Swarna Pushpa.
- It's totally safe. And assures high returns. From 12.75% in year one to a high 15.25% in the 7th year.
- Plus Bonus.
- Allotment is assured.
- To be listed at Bombay and other stock exchanges after one year.

Application forms available and accepted at all branches of Indian Bank.

Indian Bank
MUTUAL FUND
Principal Trustee: Indian Bank

D.G. Chambers, Nanak Motwani Marg,
Fort, Bombay 400 023.

HELPS BUILD YOUR FORTUNE

ISSUE OPEN

2.2436

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Black Diwali

The nation had nothing to celebrate this year



I write this on the morning of the festival I most enjoy celebrating. But there are going to be no *diyas* lit this evening round my house. I shan't hear the crackle of the *phool-jhari* or the rattle of the *patakas* bursting in a brass bucket, nor the whoosh of the 'rocket' nor the delighted whoops of my children as the *anaar* goes up in a cascade of sparkles. For, my teenagers have decreed that ours is to be a black Diwali, because and I quote from a handbill they have written, had printed and spent much of last week distributing at street-corners and the market of the colony we live in (that is, when they have not been seeing the insides of the Parliament Street Police Station)—

> "At a time like this, when the families of the martyred students are steeped in sorrow and the whole country is facing a crisis, does your conscience allow any form of celebration? The triumph of good over evil is yet to take place. The light of justice is yet to shine. Don't mock yourself by celebrating the Festival of Lights this year."

It was not like this last Diwali—remember?

Diwali fell last October just as the election process was getting into full swing. A Brave New World, we were told, was being put together, a new politics of coalition to replace the tired tyranny of one-party domination. Former land donors of the Bhoodan Movement began coalescing to "electoral adjustments" with the BJP. Communists beamed benevolently at communalists. Caste-neutral socialists discovered the congenial company of caste-rooted social engineers. 'Values' and 'issues' were all set to replace the 'personality cult' as the centre-piece of our political life.

The Congress was comfortably complacent that it would get a renewed mandate. It was, therefore, a time for celebration, a time for the lighting of *diyas*, a time for putting on new raiments, for stuffing your mouths with *pedas* —and filling your hearts with hope.

In a year it has come to this—this Black Diwali!

For what can they do in Kashmir but remember that where last October the golden Chinars were gazed upon by more tourists than ever before, the falling leaves fall now only upon the helmets of sullen jawans and the Kalashnikovs cocked in the arms of angry men, hatred smouldering in their eyes?

And what can they do in Himachal but mourn the dozens of young men killed in caste clashes and police firing as the NF government they returned to Delhi—in replacement of the Congress —and the BJP government they returned to Shimla—in replacement of

DELHI: The darkness of Diwali is dark and thick. Monica Chaddha is dead and Rajeev Goswami (below) struggles for life at the Safdarjung Hospital. What is there to celebrate?



KASHMIR: Falling leaves now fall only upon the helmets of sullen jawans and the Kalashnikovs cocked in the hands of angry men, with hatred smouldering in their eyes



RAJESH KUMAR

the Congress—gnash their teeth at each other and young men die over reservation, *raths*, and Ram Janmabhoomi?

And what is there to celebrate in Punjab where, at this time last year, over half the police stations in the State had reported no incidents of terrorism in the previous 24 months—and now find every inch of the state quite as much the prey of murderous fanatics as only the two and a half districts bordering Pakistan were last Diwali?

And who can celebrate Diwali in Haryana? The contrast with last October is too painful. For, last year, the Tau was the worshipped patriarch. At his gnarled feet gathered the acolytes - the V.P. Singhs and the Mulayam Singhs, the Chimanbhais and the Laloo Prasads. "Oh, Master," quoth they, "teach us how to cobble ourselves together—for the *Manzil* beckons and we needs must have ourselves a merry Diwali."

And the Tau showed them. And for his pains spends this Diwali alone on his *khatiya*, humiliated by the party he brought into being, kicked out of the Cabinet he wrought with all his artistry, self-exiled from the Lok Sabha he delectably crafted after his fashion, disinherited even from his *ludli bachcha*. It would take a Sophocles to do justice to the epic tragedy!

Meanwhile, in Rajasthan, the Harijans of Chittorgarh rake among the ashes to retrieve, if they can, one uncharred strip of cloth for themselves, one unburnt toy for their children, one undamaged cooking-pot for their wives—from what was once their *jhonpdi*, humble, modest but *theirs* Fortunately, their community television set was also reduced to cinders—so they have been saved the agony of listening to the Prime Minister go whinnying on about how social justice means "every hut must be a home"

And in Delhi the darkness at Diwali is deep and thick. Monica Chaddha—all of 19 Diwalis old—is dead and Rajeev Goswami struggles for life in the burns unit of the Safdarjung Hospital. What is there to celebrate?

In UP's Gonda district, terrified Muslim families tell tales of a Janata Dal MP--a true buddy of the chief minister's, moreover—and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activists—with intriguing links to Delhi (get the details from Vishwa Bandhu, the income tax officer sacked by Madhu Dandavate for presenting a tax-bill to the VHP: by the time you read this he would have started polishing shoes outside the finance minister's residence to keep his family in *dal* and *roti* since he has been denied all pay since that day six months ago when he told the VHP to pay up—or else!)—coming together from opposite directions to find common cause in raising tension to a pitch where carnage, mayhem and cold-blooded cruelty inevitably follow. Not since 1947—not even in 1980 when chief minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh let Moradabad burn—has communal harmony in the largest state of our Union been as brittle as it is today Are we to light our *diyas* at the funeral pyres of the victims?

And, in Bihar, transport is at a standstill. No, not because of the usual reason that some Transport Officer has gone off to have a *beedi* with a well-met caste-mate, but because, in every mofussil town, truck drivers are being pre-emptorily stopped by rampaging gangs and asked to reveal their caste. If the caste is right, the truck driver is allowed to proceed. If the caste is wrong, he is dragooned out of his truck and belaboured to a pulp. The lucky ones who are allowed to go forward are, in turn, turned into pulp when they unwittingly enter an area controlled by the 'other' side. Candles anyone? To light from the forward end or the backward? Or, possibly at both ends for the country to melt like a wax-work?

In Bengal, democracy acquires a new dimension as Congress youth leader Mamata Banerjee (never forgiven for having thrammed VP's

UTTAR PRADESH: In Gonda district, terrified Muslim families tell tales of how a Janata Dal MP and the activists of the VHP came together to organise a carnage



KISHAN SAITH

PUNJAB: At this time last year, half the police stations in the state had reported no incidents of terrorism. Now every inch is the prey of the terrorists



JAGDISH YADAV

brand new Tau, Somnath Chatterjee in the Diamond Harbour constituency in 1984) is beaten unconscious for protesting the excesses and atrocities of the world's last remaining Stalingrad. *Patakas* anyone?

And in Assam, it is a football Asiad: tribals vs non-tribals, Assamese vs Bengalis, minorities vs the majority, thugs vs Marwaris, the ruling party vs its own students' wing, the Brahmaputra vs the Barak, the Assam Police vs the Nagaland Police, the ULFA, vs Everyone Else – and, of course, The Greatest Show on earth, chief minister Mahanta vs home minister Phukan. Whose victory are we to celebrate? Ram's? Or Ravan's?



V.P. SINGH: Not since 1947—not even in 1980 when he let Moradabad burn as the chief minister of UP—has the communal harmony been as brittle as it is today

Across central India, the games continue—with the chief minister of Orissa falling off his bicycle when he is not up to persecuting his predecessor (which is almost all the time) or railing at the chicanery of the Centre's policies on reservations or plotting the downfall of the man he made Prime Minister. In Madhya Pradesh, the Janata Dal sits stunned in bemused silence as BJP chief minister Sunderlal Patwa continues his antics—notwithstanding the occasional rap on the knuckles from Atal Behari Vajpayee—and the *rathyatra* rolls on. And betimes, in Gujarat, ministers of the state government (the saffron ones rather more than the mixed-dye JD types)—particularly the one to whom the health of the state (if not the condition of its soul) has been entrusted—instigate, abet and even, it is alleged, participate in the ongoing revenge on the Mahmood of Ghazni.

Such comfort as there is comes only from the Deccan. Maharashtra—even under the wafer-thin majority of the Congress and despite the snarling of the Shiv Sena and its conspiracies with the BJP/RSS—is at peace. In Andhra Pradesh, NTR (offscreen) provides much-needed comic relief for in his guise as Vishwamitra he backs Advani's chariot and as National Front chairman condemns it! And in Karnataka, we have a value-based Governor who, on the authority of his value-based instructions, has established the impeccable democratic credentials for which he himself and his leader are renowned (for this Governor is no neutral representative of an Olympian President but a minor party hack out to prove to his Prime Minister that an *Upapradhan mantri* is not needed for the Dirty Tricks Department to function). If you want to let off a cracker this Diwali, the only place to do it in is Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka. Not surprisingly, all three are Congress strongholds!

But as we dip down from the Deccan plateau to the palm-fringed coasts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the tale of woe begins again as Nayanar threatens to tell it all in Malayalam while returning unread to Mulayam Singh Yadav (hereinafter referred to as Malayalam Singh Yadav) the UP CM's letter penned in Hindi (actually in Etahwese—but Mulayam knows not the difference) begging the northern smoothie to desist from converting the three-language formula into a Tower of Babel. No Diwali greetings from Nayanar to Mulayam this year—for what language is he to send them in?

And in Tamil Nadu, Deepavali is snuffed out as the Tigers show their stripes, Mandal revives caste-baiting and Karunanidhi finally discovers an Aryan hero in V.P. Singh: a touching Odd Couple, both of whom know that the last election they won is the last they are ever going to win! So what have they to celebrate?

And in the country as a whole, Diwali is observed by motorists shelling out of Gulf surcharge for the pleasure of waiting in hour-long queues, the Mandal Commission being deftly substituted by the Mandela Omission, the right to Work being translated into a constitutionally-guaranteed Right to Unemployment and the biggest harvest in our history producing the highest rise in prices in a decade. Today's newspapers report that one Shri O.P. Saxena has filed a plaint against the Prime Minister under the Lunacy Act!

No matter. For we Tamils traditionally light our *diyas* again at the Festival of Kartikeya at the beginning of December. And we keep our fireworks in stock to celebrate on that day the birth of Lord Subramania—by which time, by the look of things, this ghastly era of V.P. Singh should ground to an end:

Jab tak suraj chand rahega
VP thoo badnam rahega!

Let us then thank a benign Providence for ensuring that we have to stomach only one black Diwali, not endure another four more! And to comfort the Raja of Manda as his *mahal* crumbles, this column offers him its only Diwali gift of the season: a little lullaby specially composed for the *Aashiqui:*

Voton ki zaroorat hai jaise
Kursee ke liye
Bas ik Mandal chahiye
V.P. Singh ke liye!

Happy Diwali 1991! ●

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.

Courting perfection

Davis Cup ace Naresh Kumar runs a new, 'tough' tennis training camp

Practice makes perfect. And coaching camps, even when they last only a fortnight, go a long way towards improving expertise on the tennis courts. Especially, when they are run by former Davis Cup ace Naresh Kumar in collaboration with Harry Hopman/Saddlebrook International Tennis, the coaching programme which has benefited such greats of the game as John McEnroe, Vitas Gerulaitis, Andrea Jaeger, Ramesh Krishnan and the new wonder girl Jennifer Capriati.

It was left to Naresh Kumar to take the initiative on one of his visits to the Florida Hopman centre. And Lucy Hopman, now in charge of affairs, readily fell in with the idea of a coaching camp in India for junior-level players. Sponsorship came from Power (Bata), with Kumar making good the shortfall and two coaches came down to the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association from Florida to put Indian 12-17-year-olds through their paces. The Hopman camp was on.

In attendance were junior top-ranking players from all the state associations, including such potential champions as Sandip Kirtane, Anand Sukumar and Gaurav Natekar—formerly of Britannia Amritraj Tennis (BAT) —and sundry Sports Authority of India (SAI) coaches who were slated to learn a new trick or two watching Rick Crockette and Scott Brook in action.

The regimen laid out was strict. Two and a half hours of tennis every morning and afternoon, interspersed with work-outs, which included stomach-strengthening exercises, sprints and stretching exercises. Four players were assigned to each of the nine courts (both clay and grass), and closely-supervised tennis followed, with special attention being paid to drills. Said Leander Paes, the Junior Wimbledon champ, just back from the Beijing Asiad: "From the moment you step on the court here, there's no fooling around."

Agrees Naresh Kumar, the moving spirit behind the entire exercise: "In all, we have about 105 dozen balls in play. These boys and girls will have hit more balls in a fortnight than they have in the last six months. Some of the participants come from such small towns as Badaun and Meerut and have made spectacular progress." Special attention was paid to ensure that the players had the best of food, fresh juice and milk. And, in keeping with the no-cutting-on costs attitude, they were paid first class fare to and fro.

Kumar agrees that such on again-off again efforts, however, are not enough to make a substantial difference.Hence, the decision to hold four such camps every year from now on. This, says the former tennis ace, along with the coaching exercise mounted by the local associations, will go a long way towards improving standards.

Crockette and Brook, the Hopman coaches, are convinced that the camp will be a "positive experience", exposing the kids, as it does, to international standards. What Indian juniors lack in stamina and skill, say the coaches, they more than make up in enthusiasm: "They have some of the best attitudes we have seen."

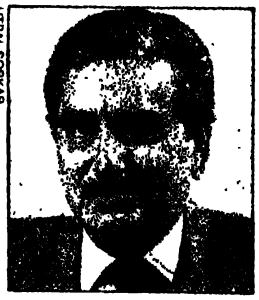
But, the pick of the lot at the camp was, without a doubt, Leander Paes, on the courts to improve his game after his long lay-off from the circuit, thanks to the controversial BAT decision not to expose him at the international level. Paes, however, has nothing but positive things to say about the BAT experience: "It's been great for me for the last four and a half years. I left only because it was time for me to move on to something else."

And in two weeks, it was time for the participants to move on. With luck, they left as better players. ●

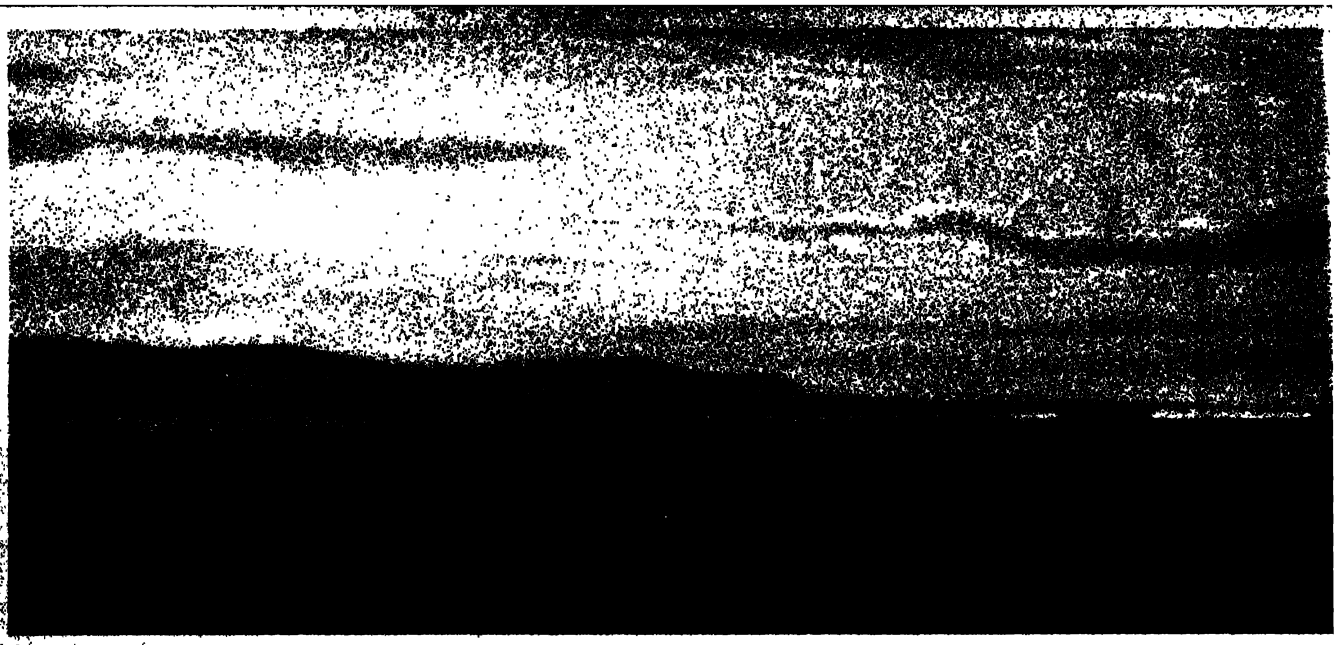
Seema Goswami/New Delhi



UTPAL SORKAR



(Left) Junior Wimbledon champion Leander Paes: "from the moment you step on the court here, there's no fooling around"; Naresh Kumar: the moving spirit behind the coaching camp



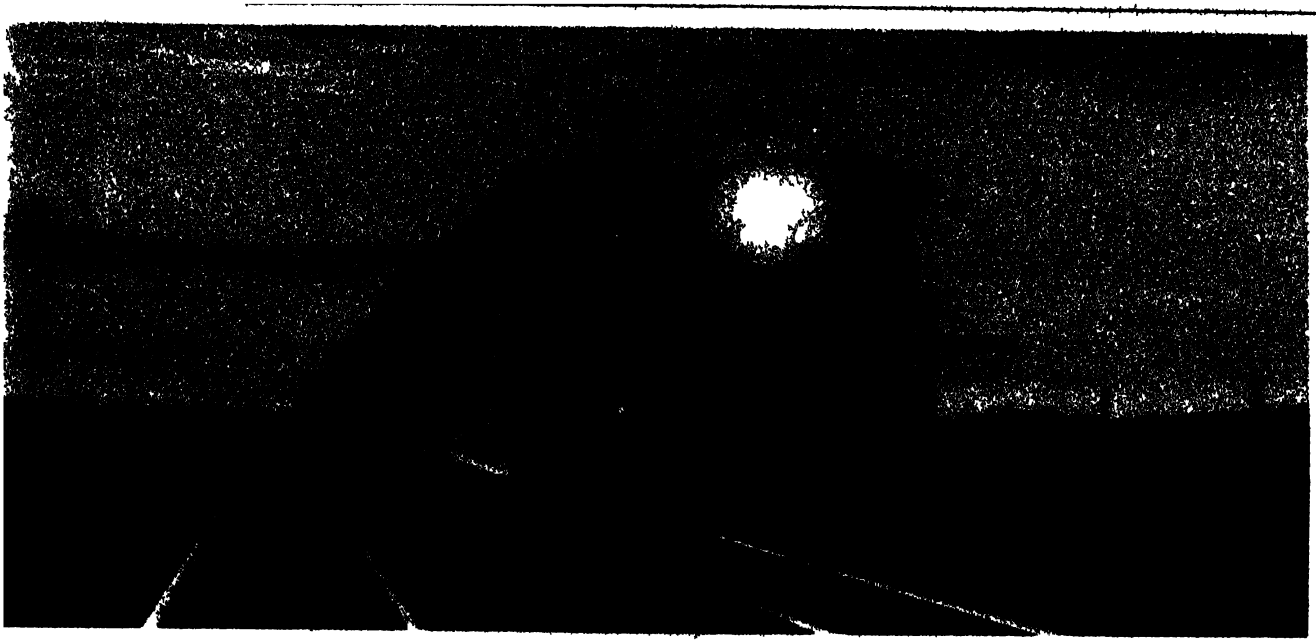
Across thousands of miles of Indian railroads. Across the icy deserts of Siberia. Where ordinary steel is no match for the weather.

Mukand does it.

Mukand's Castings Division manufactures cast steel bogies that rock and roll across continents. Keeping nations on the move. Mukand manufactures the widest range of alloy steel castings, for the widest range of applications. For mining. Mineral processing. Petrochemicals. Power. Construction. Defence. The railways.

HOW TO MAKE STEEL ROCK 'N' ROLL.

CASTINGS SPECIALITY STEELS



The automotive industry. And it's made Mukand India's largest steel foundry in the private sector.

Mukand is also India's largest producer of the widest range of stainless and speciality steels. It leads in exports of alloy steel castings; designs and builds some of India's biggest, most complex cranes and machines; and undertakes execution of major turnkey engineering projects.

Making it a multi-product, multi-division, Rs. 500-crore conglomerate.

The commitment of Mukand's people to technology, innovation, research and development has given them a rare insight into steel and its applications. Mukand knows how to make steel, engineer it and use it effectively.

In 50 years, Mukand has truly become a mastermind in steel.

MUKAND LTD.
(Formerly Mukand Iron & Steel Works Ltd.)
L B S Marg Kurla Bombay 400 070

MUKAND. MASTERMINDS IN STEEL

BUILDING ENGINEERING CONSTRUCTION

And now, Bangla rock!

Say it loud, I'm Bengali and proud



R NEUSCHUL

The Joi Bangla band: playing the music of the third generation Bengali brought up in the West

Move over Disco *bhangra*, Bangla rock is here. And the kids on the block are rocking, rapping and moonwalking to the sound of the Nineties: sitar, synthesiser, Kishore Kumar film songs, *ghazals*, *qawwalis* and *baul* songs fused into a sound that's the latest from the East End of London. A music that's funky, strongly political and is to East Enders what rap was to Black New Yorkers in Harlem. This is a voice that is demanding racial equality and basic human rights, not at rallies and demonstrations but at night clubs, discotheques and open-air concerts. And even the Whites are rocking to the beat which tells what it's like being coloured in Britain.

But the sound, evolved by such groups as Joi Bangla Sound, is primarily aimed at evoking the racial pride of the Bangladeshi immigrants in England. Explains Mark (Mahmuddin) of Joi Bangla Sound: "Bangladeshi kids in the East End have nothing to look forward to. It's a depressing scene of racist attacks and homelessness. The country of their origin is painted as one ravished by poverty, corruption and yearly floods. We want them to be proud of their culture, tell them they come from a country of poets, writers and musicians. And we want to bring it to them in a language they understand."

The rock group evolved from the Joi Bangla Bangladeshi youth movement, which took an active part in community work and the anti-racism campaign. Somewhere along the line, the members realised that they'd have a greater impact on their target audience if they resorted to music. Hence: Bangla rock. Says Mark: "We thought we'd bring the message to the people through music. These kids have been brought up in the West and want to be part of the mainstream. This music gives them something to identify with: it's modern and at the same time, it tells them something about their roots as well."

The moving spirit of the band, however, is Haroon (24), who along with his younger brother Farooq, dreams up most of the arrangements. Haroon maintains that he doesn't want to do the Asian for the Asians stuff. Instead, he'd rather go mainstream, bringing his group's music to everybody—both Black and White. "We don't want to be a Flash in the Pan Bros kind of band, with one hit and one video and out," he says. "We want to stay. We hope to be the next Soul to Soul."

Describing themselves as more a sound system than a band, Haroon and his group have appeared at nightclubs like the Hippodrome and Limelight in the West End, have played at shows in Cardiff, Liverpool and Leicester and everywhere the response has been quite terrific, with such numbers as Funky Asian and Taj Mahouse which have rap, rock and jazz combined keeping teenagers on their toes at every gig. The band which started off by blending Bengali music has now got proficient enough in mixing various sounds, ranging from reggae, rap and West Asian music and promises Haroon: "Our first album (soon to be released) will be a mixture of the East and West."

Not for these rockers the pandering to stereotypes of the Disco *bhangra* bands. Hence the absence of the jazzy sequinned outfits and the usual razmatazz. Says Mark, who is half Irish: "We'd like to be ourselves. We couldn't appear in all those glitzy outfits because that's just not us. When we cut our album, we'll do it the way we like to. We'd like people to accept us this way and I think they do." The attitude is a trifle reminiscent of singers Tanita Tikaram and Sinead O'Connor both of whom have refused to go girlie for the benefit of the record companies. But if the reaction of the crowd that turns up at the Hippodrome is anything to go by, their fans don't mind in the least. And Haroon

and Mark are well on the way to becoming the idols of teenyboppers.

But their appeal to the serious music lover is just as potent. For their lyrics don't talk of romance, eternal love, green fields and the full moon. Instead the content is fiercely political:

The time has come
For us to live as one
White or Black
There's no gap.

Thus Haroon sings while the funkiest blend of Asian music plays in the background. "I think the youngsters are beginning to stir," he says. "Today the kids in the East End aren't the same as their fathers were. They're not going to sit around and get beaten up. They're here to fight."

And to make music. For, with the success of Mark and his men, other Bangla rock groups have come into being, most prominent among them Joi Bangla Band. The uncannily similar name because both groups originated from the Joi Bangla youth movement. Though the group has performed on television and in community functions, it lacks the sophistication of the pioneers. But the group is not short on enthusiasm. Says Ansar Ahmed, one of the lead singers: "The average age is about 17 with the youngest kid being only 11. All of them write their own rap."

SHRABANI BASU



Teenagers waiting to enter London's Hippodrome disco: Bangla rock is catching on

Their music, however, is not the regular East-West fusion stuff. Instead they use only Western instruments: keyboards, drums and electronic guitars. Explains Ahmed: "The fact that we are Bengali comes through from our music, but we are playing the stuff we understand: contemporary music. It is the music of the second and third generation Bengali brought up in the West."

But in the end, Bangla rock's greatest contribution has been to inculcate racial pride in the Bangladeshi kids and provide them with role models they could emulate and even look up to. Says Ahmed: "Both Indian and Pakistani kids in the West have their film and cricket heroes. Only the Bangladeshis had nothing. We are trying to give them something they can feel proud about."

Ansar Ahmed's rap has the same element of pride:

Lost, but I know
what I'm looking for
And if I don't find
out the answer
For—the problem of
colour and race
Cause of the colour
of my face
There are people
who would ignore me
They wouldn't talk to
me
And I wouldn't find
what I'm looking for

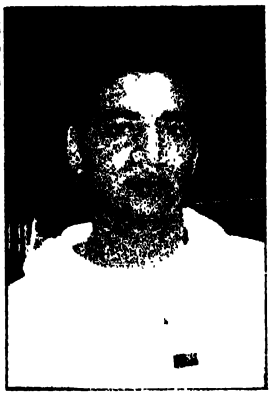
I'm looking for love,
peace and harmony
Between man and
man
I wonder if I can
I can stand up in a
crowd
And say that I'm
proud
To be a Bengali

And it is this pride that carries Bangla rock groups through, even though they have no rich promoters, no nifty studios and have to practise in community centres or their own sitting rooms. But it all seems worth it when their music gets the East End on the move. ●

Shrabani Basu/London

Joi Bangla Sound's Haroon and Mark

SHRABANI BASU



"Only the Bangladeshis had nothing. We are trying to give them something they can feel proud about," says Ansar Ahmed of Joi Bangla Band

SHRABANI BASU



To the world
your stride.



dinesh

Exclusives ▲ Suitings ▲ Co-ordinates ▲ Safaris

The choice of leading fashion houses, internationally.

Authorised dealers: **DELHI:** Jainsons • Jainsons Westend • Sri Ram & Sons • **CHANDIGARH:** T. R. & Sons • **KANPUR:** Gopaldas Sarab Dayal • Mohan Bros. • Pahoolal Vedprakash • **LUCKNOW:** Bhasin Agencies • H. Sugnamal & Co. • Sahu Cloth Emporium.

(SUIT)

Jashan passion

Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla are India's hottest designers

In the beginning there was nothing to indicate that Sandeep Khosla and Abu Jani were anything special. While Khosla spent his time dressing Delhi's socialites, Jani's creativity was devoted to designing for the occasional model and the rare fashion show. Their clothes were put together with care, but lacked that extra something that transforms good craftsmanship to *haute couture*.

Nobody was more dissatisfied with the state of affairs than the designers themselves. And when they discussed their fashion passion at their first meeting at a Bombay party, they realised that they could do wonders together; with a little help from India's traditional arts and crafts. It didn't take long for the duo to get started: in 1987 they launched their white on white khadi collection, with art stitched in from collar to cuff. Fulsome praise from patrons followed while the clothes proved a runaway hit on Bombay's fashion scene. Under the brand name Jashan the duo began exhibiting at the Bombay boutique Ensemble, where their crushed silk look created a sensation of sorts.

Heartened by this success, the duo went in for further innovation. "We were the first ones," says a proud Sandeep, "to develop the regular Gujarat mirror work into something really glamorous using *kutchi* with gold and silver zardosi." The line was displayed at Joseph's in London, and pop star Tina Turner was among the international celebrities who bought one of the scarves in the collection.

Khosla and Jani got even more adventurous in time, taking small pieces of glass, cut into various shapes and sizes, and embroidering with them. Says Jani: "We inserted these pieces into our outfits in such a way that you could even dry-clean them and nothing would go wrong." Their best-known such effort was the Radha Krishan *jodi*. But the partners soon realised that it didn't make commercial sense to make just two or three outfits of a kind, as they proved to be prohibitively expensive. And not too many people could afford them at those prices.

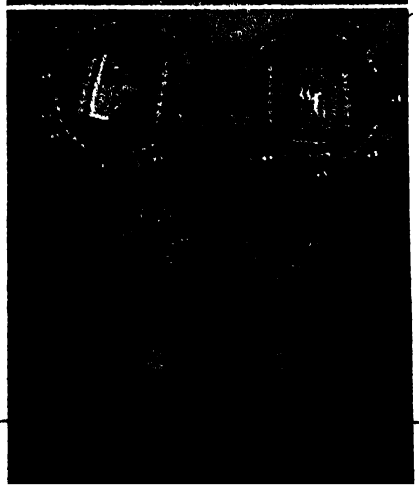


Jani and Khosla: working a new ethnic-wear wave

"So," says Jani, "we decided to create looks, not just one piece. We embroidered these miniatures as necklaces, we had it on the collar and the sleeves. We took them even at the back, stitched as if it were a broken *mala*, falling over the woman's back."

That was in the winter of '89. Soon after they launched their line of kilim zardozi jackets-inspired by Afghanistani outfits—in earthy browns and oranges. By then they had left Ensemble, preferring to sell their own stuff. Says Khosla diplomatically: "The arrangement was not working out." Jani is slightly more forthcoming, though just as cryptic: "There was too much borrowing."

A *kurta* design sample: drawing on history



Out of the glitzy Ensemble interior, the duo launched the double *dupatta*, the double sari (worn with one *pallav* over each shoulder) and jackets replete with hand-rolled threads, in dark maroon and black, the colours worn by Mehmoni women. Says Sunita Pitamber, high priestess of jewellery design: "They really proved themselves. I introduced them to my friends all over the world and everyone of them bought their stuff. They don't mimic and copy, they take ideas from things around them." The duo now display their creations at a boutique provided by Pitamber, and hope to do the same at Beauchamp Place in London (near the fashionable Sloan Street) soon.

Say the designers: "We are tired of the West having an image of India with a begging bowl. We want to show them, in our little way, what our culture is all about. Our clothes have a story, they have something to say."

Yes, but until they introduce an affordable line, only the rich will read their tale. •

Cyrus Merchant/Bombay

There was a time when one was proud to be a Bengali in Bollywood. But the days of Raakhee, Jaya and Sharmila are over.

Bengal is now represented by Moon Moon Sen, who is better known for her activities offscreen than she is for the few films she makes. What nobody can work out is why she shifted to Bombay last year when her career had already packed up. And considering that she has hardly any movies on hand, how does she keep herself occupied?

Rupa Ganguly is marginally more successful—or at least she was before *Mahabharat* ended. But such is Rupa's reputation in the film city that she makes Moon Moon seem like a Sunday school teacher.

And while Moon Moon at least bothers to tell lies to the film magazines about her happy marriage, Rupa flaunts her affairs with married men.

Good old Shatrughan Sinha. A while ago the Bihari scarface declared that he would build a nine-storey office complex in



N. PRASAD

Shatrughan Sinha: immortalising papa

Patna in memory of his father. Everyone was most impressed, though some people wondered why the senior Sinha should be immortalised by an office block—why not a temple or a museum instead?

Now, the doubts are of only academic interest. Shatru's megalomania has got the better of him again. The building is 90 per cent complete and it is called—you guessed it—Shatrughan Sinha Movie Tower.



Rekha: back to toy boys

Isn't it amazing how nobody in the film industry has come to Rekha's aid? While the press has given the unfortunate actress a rough ride, many had hoped that the industry would stick by her. After all, it wasn't her fault that Mukesh Aggarwal was manic depressive. He had attempted suicide much before he ever met Rekha—so why blame the poor woman for his death?

But instead, the film industry has ganged up on her. The hot rumour in Bombay concerns her love of toy boys. Remember Sunju Dutt? And how about Shekhar Suman?

Well, the latest gossip is that the dusky temptress is now involved with Salman Khan, the pint-sized, super-brat son of the twice-married scriptwriter Salim. According to Salman's friends, Rekha was planning to tour the US with her transistorised toy boy when Mukesh killed himself.

This may or may not be true but Rekha had already served divorce papers on Mukesh and little Salman is unmarried. So is it anybody else's business what the two of them get up to?

And why try and link Mukesh's tragic death with Salman's gymnastics?

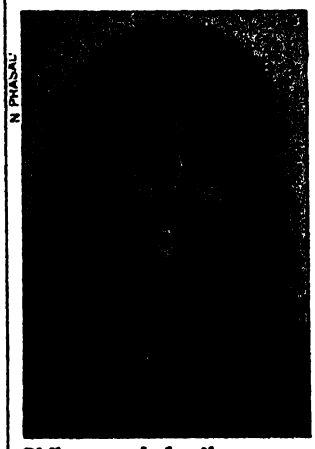
Gulshan Kumar and Anuradha Paudwal are making beautiful music together at the paunchy Punjabi's music company. Gulshan owns the joint and Anuradha is a director. "Ours is a strictly professional relationship," purrs Paudwal demurely.

Who cares, fatties, even if you are having an affair? Even gossip columnists have some standards.

What does Shilpa Shirodkar have in common with Shabana Azmi? No, it isn't acting ability. And no, it certainly isn't buck teeth.

What they share is a readiness to get raped—on screen.

In *Bhrashtachar*, Shilpa was raped by Anupam Kher. In *Kishen Kanhaiya*, Dilip Tahil did the honours. In *Paap Ki Kamaee*, she came in for the same treatment. In *Nyay Anyay*, she attempts a slight varia-



N. PRASAD

Shilpa: ready for the rape routine

tion and gets raped by three boys. But in the forthcoming *Yodha*, it's back to the old one-on-one routine.

Could it be that when she says no, she means yes?

Of sacrifices and legends

The authorised biography of Nelson Mandela says it all

When Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in 1964 at the age of 46, he was a struggling political activist. When he was released more than 25 years later at 71, he had become a symbol of courage and sacrifice, a towering and even legendary figure. Memoirs written by him would be more appropriate and interesting or even better would be a jail diary if he had kept one. To write a biography about such a person is difficult.

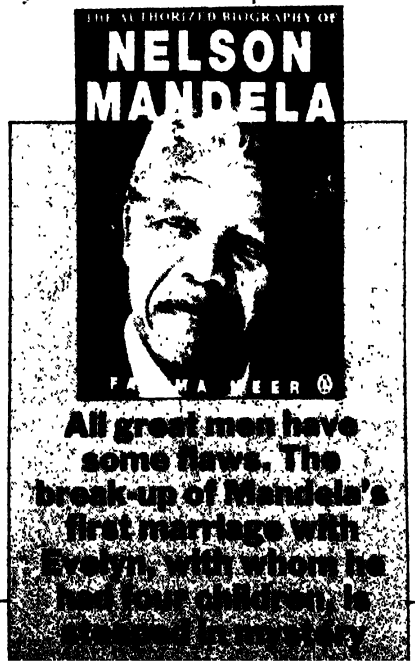
Considering this, the author Fatima Meer has done a commendable job. She has painstakingly collected details of his early life by travelling over a thousand kilometres and interviewing various people. This is even more creditable considering the hostile environment of South Africa. Fatima Meer was part of the struggle and she and her husband Ismail Meer were close associates of Nelson Mandela. She got Mandela's permission to write the book, which explains the unusual title *Authorised Biography Of Nelson Mandela*. Mandela himself spoke to her at length.

His early life and how he came to become a political activist form the first few chapters of the book. To a political reader, his childhood details in South Africa's countryside are boring. His coming to Johannesburg, starting law practice and getting involved in political work are all described in detail. He chose to join the African National Congress. His aversion to Indians was as much as to Whites but was gradually replaced by trust and warmth so much so that his other colleagues did not quite approve of the change.

He was arrested and tried for treason but after five years, he was acquitted in 1961. This period was enough to make him resolute in his mission, but his legal practice suffered a set-back. When Mandela went to Addis Ababa to attend the African Conference in 1962, he was arrested on his return. He was given life imprisonment in 1964. During his years of imprisonment, his family was oppressed and even tortured. He, however, remained undaunted and even his wife did not wilt under pressure. In fact, she reacted by supporting small militant black groups who believe in answering violence with violence. These groups were not part of the African National Congress. Mandela repeatedly tells the author that whenever violence is indulged in it has been forced on them by the various acts of the government.

All great men have some flaws. The break-up of Mandela's first marriage with Evelyn, with whom he had four children, is steeped in mystery. Though the author tries to soft-peddle the issue, the fact remains that Mandela was attracted to other women and his romance with Winnie ended in marriage in 1958. Whether this was inevitable in the wake of the political struggle as the author would have us believe is open to question. The author's description of the romance and marriage betray her subjective adoration of Mandela.

In the trial and prosecution following the arrests on 11 July, 1963, at Rivonia, the charges by the State were familiar—". .the accused deliberately and maliciously plotted and engineered the commission of acts of violence and destruction...the planned purpose thereof was to bring in the Republic of South Africa chaos, disorder and turmoil ..and it was planned by the accused to set up a Provisional Revolutionary Government to take over the administration and control of this country". The defence by Mandela, accused No. 1, was in the highest Gandhian traditions - " .My Lord, I am the first accused...I admit immediately that I was one of the persons who helped to form...I have done whatever I did because of my experience in South Africa on my own proudly-felt African background, and not because of what any outsider might have said.. I did not plan it in a spirit of recklessness nor because I have any love for violence. .a government which uses force to maintain its rule teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it...I have always regarded myself in the first place, as an African patriot.. I regard the British Parliament as the most democratic institution in the world .We want to be part of the general population and not confined to living in our ghettos...I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society ..It is the ideal for which I am prepared to die..."



In the end, the judge, Justice de Wet, sentenced Mandela and his colleagues to life imprisonment and gave reasons why he was not sentencing them to death! The scene outside the court has been recorded for posterity and is again a familiar one--the accused quite happy and contented, their relatives proud and resigned, the police shocked but helpless and the general public admiring and reverential

Indeed, Mandela's long years of incarceration has no parallel and there is no living personality who can claim to equal the privations suffered by him It is therefore natural that he should be looked upon as some sort of a messiah.

In fact, the release of Mandela became synonymous with the removal of apartheid and herein lies the danger. As Mandela has said after his release, there should be no complacency; everything is and remains as unacceptable and discriminatory as before and nothing has really changed ●

Kamal M. Morarka

Higher Than Hope: The Authorised Biography Of Nelson Mandela by Fatima Meer Published by Penguin Books Price: Rs 120

The American view

Are we over-sensitive about US scholarship on India?

Drawn by India's complex paradoxes, US scholars have, over the last half-century, taken over the mantle of Percival Spear, Max Mueller, Ibn Batuta and Hsuein Tsang.

Academics and intellectuals from the US have written definitive biographies of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, lived for years in Indian villages, translated the most esoteric of Sanskrit and regional literature, analysed the politics of caste in north India and the unravelling of the Congress party, mapped the geography of South Asia, and often predicted the apocalyptic break-up of India. Some have represented the US in the insulated luxury of embassy and aid offices.



FRANCINE FRANKEL

BELIEVED that India was an extraordinary alternative to US society



MYRON WEINER

CONCERNED that Indo-Pak tensions could lead to a major conflict



ROBERT HARDGRAVE

UPSET by Indian accusations that he worked for the CIA

Others have been accused of instigating the assassination of Indian political leaders as CIA saboteurs.

Their work and views have nearly always been decisive in shaping US policy towards India. They have been read by hundreds of South Asians studying at US universities and, for much of the past 50 years, have dominated scholarship on India, including that of Indian academics.

Francine Frankel, slim, patrician, a child of New York city, reached Bombay by ship in 1959, aged 22. "Being very interested and naive, as young people generally are," recalls Frankel, "I wanted to ask the people around Gandhi whether they actually believed in non-violence or had used it as an expedient in the freedom movement. It was a naive question, but the best one I could have asked." Frankel's question took her to Gopinath Dhawan, an ascetic Gandhian professor in Lucknow, and then to interviews with Nehru, Morarji Desai, Vinoba Bhave and others close to Gandhi. Now professor of political science and South Asian studies at the University of Pennsylvania and author of several comprehensive books on Indian agriculture and political economy, Frankel preserves the neatly handwritten notebook which records her first reactions to India.

For Frankel, as for many Americans whose interest dates back to the 1950s, India was both the great hope for democracy amongst the newly-independent nations as well as an extraordinary alternative to their own country. Gandhi's non-violence and Nehru's erudite socialism drew the brightest and most idealistic US intellectuals to India. "Gandhi and Nehru were the good nationalists," recalls

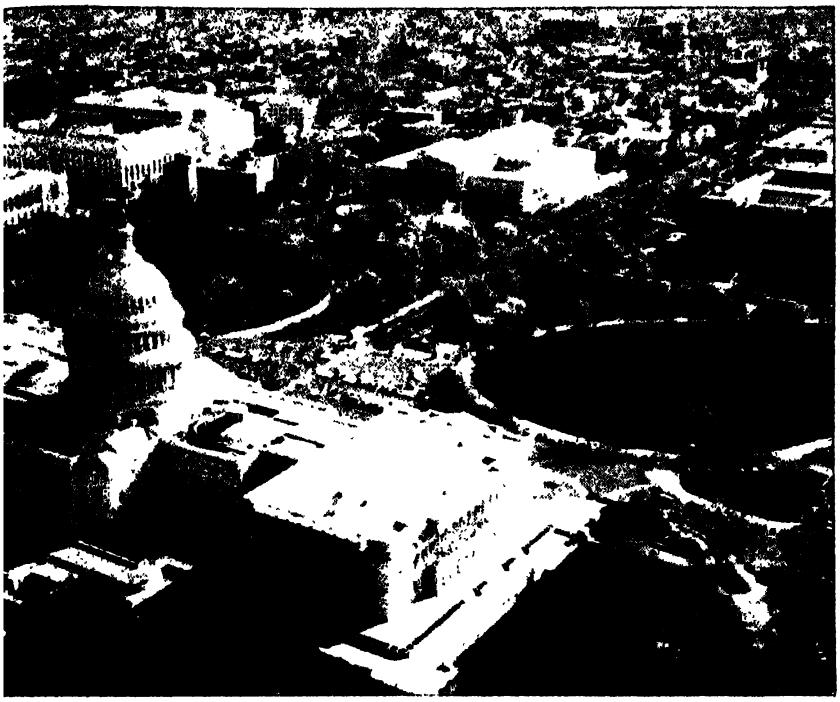


Susanne Rudolph, co-author with her husband Lloyd of the seminal *Gandhi The Traditional Roots of Charisma*.

"If you are looking for the heroes of the independence movements, they were it, Gandhi and Nehru."

India remained the shining ideal for US scholars—and for most US policy-makers upto the early 1970s. "India's non-aligned foreign policy attracted a lot of people who were disillusioned with US foreign policy," says Susanne Rudolph. Social democrats like the Rudolphs were drawn to India's experiment in combining state and private industry within democratic politics. Before the rift in US-India relations, notes Francine Frankel, "We felt we were on the side of a noble experiment. That we were supportive of what India was trying to do. The US' good intentions towards India were much more readily accepted in the Nehru era than they are now."

The subsequent disenchantment with India perhaps had as much to do with naive, ethnocentric blueprints of how India should develop as with India's own failures. The 1950s and 1960s were the heydays of "modernisation theory," and US specialists on India posited a grand theory that literacy, mass media, urban population, and industrialisation only needed to be increased to make India a rational, developed democracy. India and the other ex-colonies would then guard against the spread of Soviet-



exported Communism.

India failed to comply. Politics did not become secular. Allegiances to caste, region and religion strengthened despite extraordinary growth in "political mobilisation" and industrialisation. Indian politics did not become rational nor issue-oriented.

Frankel was one of the few US scholars who broke early with modernisation theory. "It was a model which defined the way in which India would become modern," says Frankel. "The problem was it didn't work in many ways." The 1970s saw the end of writing on "India as a society undergoing change," notes Frankel. "This was because there were no models left that predicted what the outcome of change would be."

The mid-1970s also saw India becoming a regional power with very real political goals and the ramifications of this were resisted by US scholars used to an India that espoused non-violence and non-alignment. In 1978, a book titled *India: An Emergent Power?* brought home what US policy-makers had suspected but most academics had been reluctant to accept. "It may come as a surprise to readers of this study to realise that military defence, aspirations for regional and global influence, leadership in the building of a new international economic order, and the gradual curtailment of superpower dominance over world affairs have been central policies of the Government of India since its founding in 1947," Stephen P. Cohen and Richard L. Park, the authors, note in the opening sentence of the book. "The critical role of defence policy in shaping India's relations with its neighbours, as well as with the super, great, and middle powers has not had the same sharp focus for observers abroad that economic and political development have had...Few abroad, including the United States, take India seriously as a world power, and this is a regrettable mistake."

Cohen's book, and others that followed, marked a crucial break in US academic writing on India. "The pendulum has swung from India being a poor, struggling country to viewing it as a major country with a tremendous asymemetry of power in the region," says Maya Chadha, professor of international relations at New Jersey State University.

A major concern of US-South Asia scholars currently is that Indo-Pak tensions will lead to the next regional crisis after the current trouble in the Middle East. Myron Weiner, director of the Center for International Studies, says, "There is a concern that India and Pakistan have not been able to reach a rapprochment after 40 years of independence. Each has severe internal regional conflicts, and each plays in the others' internal weaknesses. This can escalate into a major conflict. As they are well-armed and possess nuclear arsenals, it remains a major concern here."

The Indian government's relations with US scholars—much like relations with the US government—have been increasingly troubled over the years. Stereotypical images of the 'ugly American' have prejudiced Indian officials against scholars who, for the most part, have a very real rapport with India and are virtually always first-rate in their scholarship. And though the Indian government currently bemoans the fact that Pakistan has more friends on Capitol Hill than India, Indian embassy officials have failed to see that US academics have a strong influence in shaping this country's foreign policy.

Relations reached a historic low in 1984 when Robert Hardgrave, professor at the University of Texas, was accused by Indian authorities of having instigated the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Hardgrave, a widely-respected scholar and then consultant to the US State Department, was subjected to the entire rigmarole of investigations by the discredited Thakkar Commission. "The whole thing for me was tremendously painful," recalls Hardgrave. "The book in which I had discussed the question of 'After Mrs Gandhi, who?' was very positive towards India. In four out of 250 pages, I discussed succession, not assassination. Hardgrave notes that he was accused in the Indian press of having prepared secret reports for the US Central Intelligence Agency, even though his research had already been published in May 1984.

India seems different from the outside and the government's continuing hostility to foreign scholars will only result in the loss of complementary interpretations of itself. Worse, the mistrust comes at a time when foreign scholars are becoming more levelheaded in their analyses. And outsiders can sometimes see things that may be hidden to Indians caught up in the difficulties of everyday life. Susanne Rudolph, who drove to India over the Khyber Pass in 1956 and has since educated several generations of American univesity students on Mohandas Gandhi, says that India's mixed economy may soon prove to be the only credible option given the world's disenchantment with both communism and capitalism. That's surely not a common thought in India today. ●

Siddharth Dube/Washington DC and Boston

The visit

Mandela misses the cheers in Delhi, but gets a standing ovation in Calcutta



SOLIDARITY

It was a tale of two cities. While Delhi was bureaucratic and devoid of popular warmth in receiving Nelson Mandela, in Calcutta, the enthusiasm was infectious. When Mandela, deputy chief of the African National Congress (ANC) was released by the racist South African regime on 11 February after an incredible 27 years of imprisonment, the government of India announced that the African leader would be given a welcome to remember when he visited India. But when he did come months later on 15 October, Delhi lacked the euphoria that Mandela's visits have evoked elsewhere. Even in Calcutta, a city beset with crippling civic problems, the mood was markedly different. There was an air of expectancy as hundreds of thousands of people lined the ten-kilometre route along which Mandela's motorcade was to pass. And as the convoy of vehicles approached, led by outriders of the Calcutta Police, songs and slogans rent the air. In Calcutta, it seemed, Mandela was on home ground.

Mandela's visit to India was announced as early as April. But unfortunately, little planning and groundwork seem to have been done by the Centre to make it a memorable event. The government had formed an omnibus reception committee, headed by Prime Minister V.P. Singh, around April itself, but nothing came of it in the end. The committee had almost a hundred members, including representatives from all political parties and specialists on African affairs. It was to chalk-out Mandela's programme and ensure an emotional build-up to match the occasion. But despite its enormous size, the committee failed to assert itself, and bureaucrats in the ministry of external affairs (MEA) monopolised all decisions.

Many of the committee members (such as Chandrajit Yadav and Swami Agnivesh) insisted that a large public reception be organised for Mandela either at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (JNS) or at the Ramlila Grounds. But the suggestion was shot down by the bureaucrats who were sceptical about a large turnout.

In a meeting on 6 October, the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, which has a capacity of 20,000 against JNS's 1.3 lakh, was selected as the venue for the public reception. The bureaucrats had argued that it would be impossible to give adequate security cover to Mandela in an open stadium, though he has been given such receptions in many of the frontline African states where the threat to his life is all the more real. The 16 October reception was to be the climax of Mandela's visit. But, unfortunately, entry into the Indira Gandhi stadium was restricted to invitees only, and at no point during his three day-stay in Delhi could the general public come close to the ANC leader.

Besides the immensely disappointing public reception, Mandela's programme was packed with routine, if not inane, functions and appointments. But the government did, however, pull off a surprise on the eve of his visit. Earlier it had been announced that Mandela would be given the prestigious Jamanlal Bajaj award in Calcutta, but just prior to his arrival it was declared that he would be awarded the Bharat Ratna as well. With that, Mandela became the second foreign national after the Pakhtoon leader, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, to receive India's highest civilian award.

But more than the Bharat Ratna, Mandela's Delhi visit will be long remembered for his controversial statements on the Mandal Commission recommendations. Mandela was reported to have praised V.P. Singh's decision to introduce job quotas for the backward classes and invited unsavoury comments from the press and the people.

However, it appears, that the National Front government drew Mandela into the unseemly controversy. The MEA had sent a background paper to the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg on the Mandal report which compared the anti-reservation agitation with apartheid in South Africa. The paper gave the impression that the central government was trying to fight deep-rooted prejudices and discriminations based on caste differentiations akin to apartheid.



On the morning of his arrival, when Mandela met V.P. Singh, the issue cropped up in the discussions. It is not clear who brought up the subject, but Mandela was reported to have said: "This (the reservation issue) strikes a sympathetic chord in us."

And that was enough for the government. Though no official communique was issued after the talks between the two leaders, the government's principal information officer leaked Mandela's remark to the press and it was highlighted in the television that evening. Commented Anand Sharma, Congress(I) MP and chairman of the World Youth Action Against Apartheid: "To make a selective leak and plant the discussion between Mandela and the Prime Minister was an act of diplomatic impropr e-ty."



JAGDISH YADAV

Nelson Mandela being received by President R. Venkataraman (left) and Prime Minister V.P. Singh (right): a quiet welcome

The following day the government persisted in its indiscretion by raising the issue again in a television programme in which Mandela was in conversation with Delhi students. Rajmohan Gandhi, the Janata Dal leader, was the moderator and had, apparently briefed Mandela. It was no coincidence either that most of the participating students had Marxist leanings and when they asked Mandela about the reservations, he went right ahead and supported them.

The TV programme was recorded around noon. And soon afterwards, he met senior newspaper editors and politicians over lunch at Hyderabad House. There he got an inkling of the mess the reservation policy had created: that nearly a hundred students had attempted suicides in protest against the government's decision and large parts of northern India were still being rocked by violent unrest.

At a press conference later that day Mandela tried to make amends. He clarified that the Mandal issue was entirely an internal affair of India and hoped that "India has the wisdom to resolve the matter". But it was more than apparent that this counter statement was a face saving device.

In Calcutta, on the other hand, the ruling Left Front provided lavish spectacles. A welcome to "comrade" Nelson Mandela was perhaps a perfect exercise in image-building, and the Front bathed in the reflected glory of an acknowledged anti-imperialist, a Black freedom fighter unfairly imprisoned for 27 years.

The Left Front leaders had ensured a full house. Crammed inside the Eden Gardens stadium were 75,000 exuberant people, a majority of them members of the SFI and the DYFI, student and youth organisations of the CPI(M). The faithful had their orders: the day's edition of *Ganashakti*, the party newspaper, had instructed readers when to clap and cheer the ANC leader.

And Mandela did not disappoint. After meandering through a prepared text, peppered with elaborate tributes to Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose, and expectedly, praise for Calcutta as "a city of revolutionaries," Mandela turned to the crowds. "I want to speak to you from my heart...our people are dying in large numbers...there is an attempt to derail the peace process, but nothing can stand in the way of the people," he said in a stirring display of emotive oratory.

Since 22 July, said Mandela, 5,000 Black South Africans in Natal and Transvaal, all of them innocent men, women and children have been indiscriminately slaughtered by death squads run by the security forces of the government--the National Intelligence Service and the military intelligence. The racist press attributed the killings to tribal vendettas and rivalries among black organisations. "This is not the case," Mandela said firmly.

"Your heroes are our heroes," said Mandela referring to the ties between the freedom movements of both countries and also, the older ties of blood. Fifty one percent of the slaves brought by the Dutch settlers to South Africa in the 17th century were from Bengal. "They played an important role in the development of the Afrikaans language and the development of South African culture. "Their descendants are very much a part of the African National Congress."

Mandela takes back with him the goodwill of the Indian people, and just as important, five million dollars in foreign exchange, a gift from the Centre, as well as an offer from the government he could not refuse. "The government is ready to train ANC workers. Our people need training in economics and international relations," he acknowledged later.

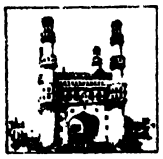
The crowds, chanting "Vi-va Mandela" rose to a man as the strains of "We shall overcome" wafted through the air, and Mandela in a dark suit and an enormous figure next to the diminutive chief minister Jyoti Basu, in a sparkling white *dhoti-kurta* linked arms and waved. Crackers burst, little flashes of sparkle in the soft evening light and ANC flags waved. The perfectly orchestrated spectacle was marred only by the rumble of boos when the former central minister, Ajit Panja of the Congress(I) praised former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi for their fight against apartheid.

Slowly, the crowds melted away, and the Left Front ministers returned to Writers' Buildings, to tinker with the state's ravaged economy. The party was over. ●

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi and Srinjoy Chowdhury/ Calcutta

Mass murder

Alleged pro-reservationists burn eighty train passengers to death



ANDHRA PRADESH

It was the worst carnage in the on-going agitations over the Mandal Commission recommendations. While in north India, young men and women committed self-immolation in protest against the Centre's decision to implement the Mandal proposals, pro-reservationists burnt to death 80 odd train passengers, near Hyderabad, early this month.

When the Warangal-bound Kakatiya Fast Passenger, a shuttle between Secunderabad and Warangal, halted at Charlapalli, no one foresaw an impending disaster. Charlapalli, about 30 km from Hyderabad, was the train's first stop on the way to Warangal, and as it pulled to a halt a dozen young men boarded a compartment towards the end of the rake.

The group raised pro-reservation slogans and exhorted the passengers to make the *bandh* called by the People's War Group (PWG), a militant Maoist organisation, a success.

Soon after the train started, the activities of the gang became sinister. They locked the three exits, began distributing leaflets, and herded the passegers to one end of the coach. While the agitators kept assuring the suspicious passengers that they were protesting against the Supreme Court stay on the implementation of the Mandal report and that the passengers would not be harmed, one of them began to douse the compartment with kerosene. As the train slowed down on the outskirts of Ghatkesar, the next station, the members of the gang began singing "revolutionary songs" and jumped off the train one by one. And the last man did what even a medieval barbarian may have balked at doing: he lit the kerosene-soaked seats of the compartment.

Driven back by the leaping flames, the hapless passengers were trapped inside the burning compartment. The only door that provided exit had a wall of fire before it. Even then, some dared to jump through the fire and save themselves, others threw children out of the windows in the hope that they would survive.

The train ground to a halt when Ghatkesar was only a kilometre away. Fire tenders were rushed to the spot from Lallaguda and Nalagarda and the blaze was put out. But by then about 45 people had perished.

Police and railway officials who supervised the rescue operations found the bodies—especially those of children—charred beyond recognition. The death toll was totted up from the number of skulls recovered.

Mohammad Mahmood, one of the survivors being treated at Hyderabad's Gandhi Hospital, said that there were nearly 150 people inside the compartment. According to his version, the "radicals" had asked the passengers to jump off the train after they set the coach ablaze But while some like Mohammad were lucky, others were not.

A divisional manager of the railways supported the police view that the "radicals" were behind the incident. The Union deputy minister for railways, Ajay Singh, also held the Naxalites responsible for the "inhuman act". Singh promised to hold a departmental enquiry but added that the responsibility of preventing such acts lay with the state government.

Chief minister Chenna Reddy, however, announced in the Assembly the state government's decision to hold a judicial enquiry. He said that leaflets recovered from the surviors did point to the PWG. But there was no way of identifying the culprits, he admitted.

Opposition leaders such as Nageswar Rao (CPI), Venkateswara Rao (CPI-M), Vidyasagar Rao (BJP) and N.T. Rama Rao, the Telugu Desam Party chief, doubt the versions that link the PWG with the incident. On the other hand, some Congressmen also feel that there is more to the incident than meets the eye. They feel that the incident was engineered to give the Congress(I) regime a bad name.

The PWG, for its part, has denied that its activists were in any way involved in the carnage. It has demanded a thorough enquiry, saying that the episode was an attempt to malign the Naxalite movement. The organisation alleges that certain political parties may have hired anti-social elements to commit the crime and were now blaming the Naxalites.

However, despite the PWG's strident protests, the party's name has come to be inextricably linked with the macabre incident and it will be quite a while before it can hope to clear itself. If it is truly innocent, that is. •

Jagadish Prasad/ Hyderabad

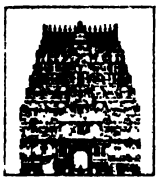


COURTESY: NEWS TIME

The burnt compartment: gruesome violence

Still going strong

The AIADMK holds a massive rally in Madras



TAMIL NADU

After a long, long time Madras was swept by a pro-AIADMK tide this month. On 7 October, Jayalalitha showed that she still mattered—and in a big way too—when the AIADMK organised a mammoth rally on Anna Road, where Congress(I) president and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was invited to unveil a statue of the late M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), the founder of the AIADMK and former chief minister.

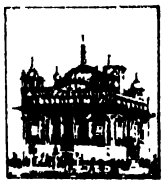
Despite complaints that the "vindictive" DMK government, headed by arch-rival M. Karunanidhi, was doing everything to prevent private bus operators from ferrying enthusiastic AIADMK partymen to participate in the unveiling ceremony, several thousand people turned up in lorries and tractors. Songs from MGR, Jayalalitha films blared on loudspeakers attached to vehicles and soon men, women, and children turned the whole affair into a carnival. The gathering certainly dampened Karunanidhi's spirits, who regaled over the impressive turnout at a rally organised by his own party almost at the same site a few days earlier.

If the DMK rally was massive, the Jayalalitha-Rajiv show was twice as huge. In an impressive speech befitting the gathering, the AIADMK chief drove home the point that it would be futile for her rivals to assume that MGR's party had become a spent force. She pointed out that the turnout was proof enough of the support enjoyed by the AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance. And Karunanidhi now certainly has causes for worry. With the National Front government at the Centre growing unstable by the hour, and a mid-term poll seeming unavoidable, a comeback by the Congress(I) could spell disaster for the DMK. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Not amused

Sikhs want an elected government and not an advisory council in Chandigarh



PUNJAB

There are no shortcuts to peace in Punjab, but the purblind government of Prime Minister V.P. Singh is desperately seeking one. Recently, soon after it extended President's Rule in the state by another six months in the face of a strident opposition from the various Akali factions, the Centre announced a package deal to placate the Sikhs. And one of the important decisions it took was regarding the formation of an advisory council made up of representatives from different political parties to advise the state Governor on the administration of the battered state.

Bimal Khalsa feels that the V.P. Singh regime has done little to assuage the feelings of the Sikhs



But politicians are sceptical about its usefulness. "There is no point in setting up a council," says the prominent CPI leader Satyapal Dang, "if it is going to become a fighting shop." Feels Amrinder Singh, a former agriculture minister of Punjab: "The confrontation in Punjab is increasing and this will only aggravate the situation."

The idea of the council was first mooted by the Prime Minister in March, during his trip to Chandigarh. However, what V.P. Singh had suggested at that stage was an advisory committee and not a council. "The committee," the Prime Minister had said then, "would aid the Governor of Punjab in all political developmental issues." But when the formation of the advisory council was announced simultaneously with the extension of President's Rule, it was evident that the body would have statutory rather than executive status. Judging from the circumstances under which the setting up of the council was announced, it was clear that it was conceived as a sop for the people of Punjab who were denied popular rule.

According to the official notification, all MPs from Punjab, and two representatives from each of the nine recognised political parties would be invited to be on the council. S.L. Kapur, chief secretary, Punjab, would be the council's member secretary.

Amrinder Singh, member of the Akali Dal (Badal), is of the opinion that with the wide representation that has been proposed, the council would be able to achieve little. "Can you imagine the Akali Dal (Mann) and the BJP or the Akali Dal (Badal) and the CPI sitting across one table and deciding issues on Punjab" I am sure the council will not be able to reach a consensus on any important issue" he feels.

Bimal Khalsa, a MP from Mann's party agrees with this view. In her opinion, the V.P. Singh government, like the previous Congress(I) regime has done little to mollify the Sikhs. "The government thinks that all Sikhs are terrorists. This latest package announced by them is an attempt to wipe our tears and not solve anything," she says.

The advisory council is merely a shortsighted measure. With the Akali leaders staying away it is unlikely to bring concrete results. But while in existence, it will further curb the powers of the state's Governor, Virendra Verma. •

Ritu Sarin/Chandigarh

Power to the people

Naxalites catch the administration napping and stage a show of strength in the capital



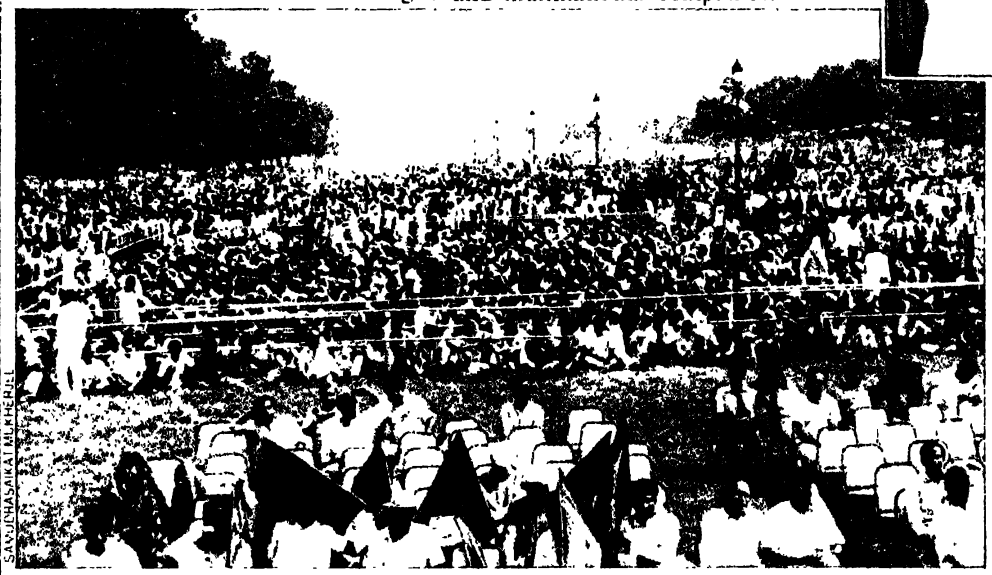
DELHI

Peasants puffing their *hookahs*, tribal women with babies slung around their waists, and impoverished *khadi*-clad youths bubbling with enthusiasm, trickled into the capital on 5 October. They had few belongings: red flags and meagre rations was all they had brought with them for a three-day stay in Delhi. And by 8 October—the day of the Indian People's Front (IPF) rally at the Boat Club—the trickle turned into a torrent, with two lakh rallyists from Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh thronging the city.

It was the first major show of strength by the IPF, a mass organisation that has distinct Naxalite leanings and maintains close links with the CPI(ML) faction led by Vinode Mishra. Even the Delhi Police were caught unawares by the huge turnout. "We weren't expecting such a massive crowd and therefore did not divert traffic or anything," a senior police officer told SUNDAY.

The star attractions of the rally were the IPF chief, Nagbhushan Patnaik and the sole IPF MP, Rameshwar Prasad. But it was the charisma of Patnaik, a veteran Naxalite leader and one-time compatriot of the Naxalite ideologue, Charu Mazumdar, that lent the rally a militant aura. All the leaders, including Ram Naresh Ram of the CPI(ML), launched a scathing attack on the National Front government at the Centre for failing to make any significant social changes since it assumed power last November.

"*Dam bandho, kam do, varna gaddi chhod do* (check price rise, give jobs or else quit office)," chanted the rallyists, waving thousands of red flags, turning the Boat Club lawns crimson. Patnaik blasted all political parties, saying that they were working against the interests of the country. "They can see nothing beyond their narrow political gains," he said. In his hour-long speech, he was particularly acerbic about the National Front's industrial policy which, he felt, mortgaged the country to the World Bank and multinational companies.



SANJIBHASHKAT MUKHERJEE



SANJIBHASHKAT MUKHERJEE

The police were caught unawares by the huge IPF rally at the Boat Club (left), which was addressed by the veteran Naxalite leader, Nagbhusan Patnaik (above)

The ageing leader claimed that the IPF was the only party to have sent a delegation to strife-torn Kashmir, while the Centre ended up by appointing Girish Saxena, whose administration was no less notorious than that of Jagmohan, his predecessor. And clarifying his organisation's stand on the Mandal Commission controversy, Ram Naresh Ram said that though the IPF supported reservations, the Centre's move to implement the commission's proposals was a "calculated manoeuvre in the Prime Minister's narrow political game".

As an alternative to the National Front and the Congress(I), the IPF suggested the formation of a broad left confederation to pursue the Marxist goal of "liberating the downtrodden". But the two major left parties—the CPI and the CPI(M)—do not attach much importance to the IPF proposal. But they were cautious not to criticise the IPF openly despite the ideological chasm existing between them. "It is better not to denounce each other," said CPI leader M. Farooqui, while the CPI(M) central committee member Prakash Karat said, "We don't agree with the politics of the IPF."

But the IPF, notwithstanding this rebuff from the larger Marxist outfits, has emerged an emboldened force following the success of its national rally. The activists have pledged to return to their rural bases and build up a campaign against communalism. And with the BJP Ram *rath* rambling along towards Ayodhya, the IPF might put up obstacles on its way as it enters its areas of influence in north and central Bihar. ●

Minu Jain/Delhi

Poachers' paradise

Ivory smugglers are active in the Simlipal National Park



ORISSA

The Indian elephant continues to be ruthlessly hunted. Last year, there was a lot of cheer in conservationist circles when the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) voted to include the African elephant in Appendix I of its schedule of endangered species to halt elephant poaching for ivory. Of the 103 CITES countries, 91 voted for the elephant, and it was believed that the resultant squeeze on the ivory trade would brighten the prospects of the Indian elephant as well.

But the ban has not worked in practice. The international ivory market has not collapsed and the threat to the Indian elephant has not been minimised. And the impudence with which tuskers are felled at Simlipal shows that poachers and ivory smugglers continue to rule the roost.

The Simlipal National Park in Orissa is one of the finest elephant habitats in the country and offers the finest gene pool of species in the wild. But tuskers in Simlipal continue to remain gravely imperilled. At least two recent incidents indicate that ivory hunters are still on the prowl.

In one incident, a joint raid conducted by the officials of the Simlipal Project Tiger, the state-owned SFDC (Simlipal Forest Development Corporation) and the Territorial Forest Division on a poachers' den led to the seizure of a pair of highly symmetrical and magnum-size tusks. Priyakanta Mohanty, assistant field director of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve, led the raiding party and conducted the searches. The 185 cm-long right tusk weighed 33 kg., while the 190-cm long left tusk weighed 31 kg.

Conservationists believe that 'illegal' ivory sells at a little over Rs 3,000 per kg. So the seized ivory, weighing nearly 63 kg in all, could fetch the smugglers about Rs two lakhs. Suna Singh, a tribal poacher, was arrested by the Project Tiger officials during the raid.

In another incident, a group of nearly one hundred villagers from Dangadiha and Chaturisahi attacked an elephant herd, grazing on the foothills of the Simlipal National Park. The herd comprised two females, one tusker and a calf. Reports say that the villagers showered arrows on the animals, killing one female and injuring the rest. The real target of the villagers was, however, the tusker, which, despite being injured, managed to disappear into the forest. About ten persons were held in connection with this incident.



Giant-size tusks recovered by the police: trapping the trappers AMARENDRA BOSE

This was not the first such instance of an attack on elephants. About a year ago, poachers killed a tusker and carried off the tusks weighing nearly 30 kg. The forest department officials swung into action, arrested eight people and recovered the tusks from them. What was particularly abhorring about this incident was that the poachers had severed the animal's head from the carcass. The reason: they wanted to extract the tusks without causing the slightest damage to them.

The fact is, inter-state gangs of ivory smugglers have found Simlipal to be a convenient place for carrying on their operations. About 65 tribal villages inside the park provide them safe hideouts. In the Eighties, several tuskers were killed by the poachers.

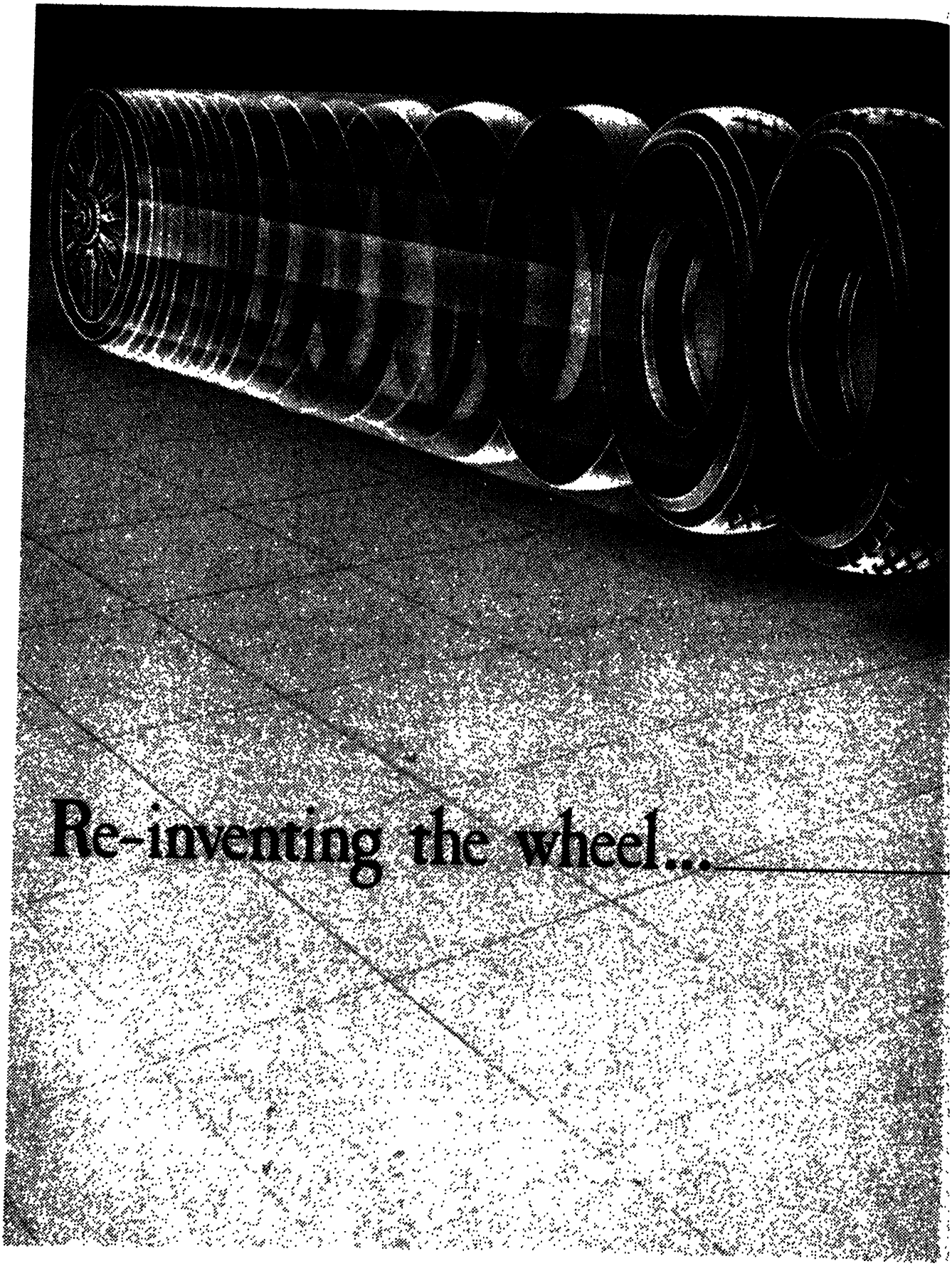
In a bizarre incident on 1 May 1987, at least six pairs of seized tusks, weighing 168 kg, were stolen from the Project Tiger office at Jashipur, on the fringe of the Simlipal forest. A case was registered with the Jashipur police station, but the culprits have not been caught yet.

Elephant poaching is essentially an inter-state activity. Poachers from one state go elsewhere, kill the animals, sell the ivory, and slip back to their home state. This makes the task of the forest officials and the police doubly difficult in tracking down the offenders.

The poachers adopt different techniques for extracting the tusks. Some use saw blades to cut the tusks from the base, others axe the nasal bone and remove the whole tusk. At times they also use boiling lime or acid to loosen the ivory sockets and pull the tusks out easily.

The amount the tribals and the villagers get in the poaching deals is a mere pittance. But as yet there is no indication to suggest that they can be weaned away from the illegal activity as poverty compels them to connive with the smugglers. But conservationists are hopeful. They believe that ban on the ivory trade will give the elephant a fresh lease of life. But certainly a lot remains to be done before that.●

Amarendra Bose/Baripada


Re-inventing the wheel...



with steel.

Vikrant pioneers India's All Steel Radial Tyres for trucks and buses.

The radial tyre technology swept in a dynamic change in the West as early as 1948. It took a responsible manufacturer like Vikrant to bring this state-of-the-art tyre technology to trucks and buses in India.

Five years of extensive research and development went into it. So did technological inputs from Avon of UK. Today Vikrant's All Steel Radials are rolling out in ever increasing numbers. An achievement that puts Vikrant way ahead of other tyre manufacturers in the country today.

Vikrant All Steel Radial. A tyre to give greater mileage and save fuel. To reduce downtime and maintenance losses. A tyre to fight punctures every inch of the way.

It's a tyre built tough – as tough as the people who live out their lives on the road. People who, come rain or storm, keep going on and on.

Carrying goods, carrying people, bringing the country closer together by a busy network of lifelines.

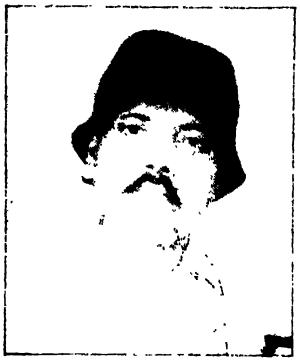
Vikrant dedicates its achievement to the truckers. And to the ever busy highways of India.

VIKRANT

The reliable tyre.
The responsible company.

MAA COMMUNICATIONS 1182

A dream come true



■ For the 35-year-old micro-calligrapher it was a dream come true. Bhaskar Bhowmik, a commercial artist from north Calcutta, earned a place in the *Guinness Book Of World Records* on 15 September in London for inscribing 689 letters on a single grain of rice.

Bhowmik, who started experimenting with micro-calligraphy out of "sheer fancy", was initially a commercial artist by profession (graduating from the Government Art College in 1977). But his liking for this novel art form soon developed into an obsession. In the past 16 years, not only has he perfected his skill—as the mention in the *Guinness Book* proves—but has also changed his profession—he is now a professional micro-calligrapher.

The *Guinness* record is, however, not the only feather in this talented man's cap. He had previously been invited by the Government of India to display his skills at the Festival of India in the US. Recalls Bhowmik, "The Americans showed tremendous interest in my work. They were fascinated by the fact that I was inscribing letters and words on minute objects without the help of magnifying glasses. Their response was most heartening."

Bhowmick is now busy trying to break his own world record by inscribing 900 letters on a single grain of rice.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Win Chadha



S. K. Singh

New status?

■ His heart attack proved to be a blessing in disguise for Lalit Suri, owner of *Delhi Mid-Day*. Suri was being repeatedly raided by tax officials, when he suffered a massive heart attack. After having undergone surgery at the Escorts Heart Institute in Delhi, Suri left for London for further treatment. Three months later, he has still not recovered and does not seem to have any intention of returning home.

If rumours are to be believed, he is trying to acquire NRI status. What lends credence to the story is the fact that Dr Naresh Trehan,of the Escorts Institute,has been saying that there was no need for Suri to go abroad for treatment in the first place.

So is Suri's extended stay simply an attempt to evade tax officials? Anyway, if he *does* acquire non-resident Indian status, Delhi could soon have its first NRI-owned newspaper.

MILESTONES

DIED: Om Shivpuri, noted theatre and film actor, on 15 October in Madras. He was 52.

DIED: Debkanta Barua, renowned artist, on 17 October at Tezpur following protracted illness. He was 76.

DIED: Kamlapati Tripathi, veteran Congress(I) leader, on 7 October in Varanasi. He was 86.

DIED: Arundhuti Devi, noted Bengali film actress, on 16 October in Calcutta. She was 65.

SEIZED: Three hundred and fifty two silver bars valued at Rs 7.74 crores, from Dubai on 15 October in one of the biggest seizures in Bombay.

POSTPONED: The civil services main examination, by one month, on 13 October by the Prime Minister's orders.

CLOSED: The holy shrine of Kedarnath from 20 October for the winter months.

SWORN IN: S. Bangarappa, veteran Karnataka politician, as the new chief minister of the state on 17 October in Bangalore.

APPOINTED: L. Ramdas, as the new chief of the naval staff on 13 October.

SWORN IN: Justice Ranganath Mishra, as the Chief Justice of India by the President on 6 October.

AWARDED: Nelson Mandela, African National Congress (ANC) leader, the Bharat Ratna on 16 October in New Delhi.

AWARDED: Mother Teresa, the Soviet Land Nehru Award for 1990 for her outstanding contribution to the cause of suffering humanity, on 10 October.

WON: Sachin Tendulkar and Kapil Dev the Pepsi Cup international double-wicket cricket tournament in Bombay on 14 October.

BEGINNING 28 OCTOBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



This week will be full of surprises for you. An unexpected journey is in store for you. Some of you might incur losses. Be patient with your colleagues. Your problems might come to an end. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 28, 31 and 3
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



You should be tactful and patient in all your dealings. Your elders might create problems, but do not let this affect your love life. A letter will bring good news. Women may receive gifts from their loved ones.

Good dates: 30, 2 and 3
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



This is a fairly good week for you. New ventures will boost your morale. The professional front looks bright. Your family member's health might cause concern. Do not get agitated over your domestic problems.

Good dates: 29, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: East

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



This is an extremely successful week for you. Important changes in your career and promotions are imminent. This is the time for lovers to look forward to a bright future. A favourable week for artists.

Good dates: 31, 2 and 3
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: South-west

LEO (21 July—20 August)



The time is ripe for going on tours. So take a small vacation, if you have been overtiring yourself. For those of you in love, this is a good time for matrimonials. Lawyers will meet with success.

Good dates: 28, 30 and 2
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: West

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



This is an extremely sociable week for you. Businessmen can make fresh investments. An outing is in the offing. This is an excellent week for those in love, and secret meetings are foretold.

Good dates: 1, 2 and 3
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This is the best time for you to strike new deals. However, you might face problems regarding property matters. On the professional front you can go in for the changes you were aiming to make.

Good dates: 29, 31 and 2
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: East

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



A favourable week for romance. A promotion is in the offing for those in service. Prospects are bright for speculators and investors. However, the domestic front will not remain peaceful.

Good dates: 30, 1 and 3
Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is not a favourable week for you. Businessmen should avoid embarking on new ventures. Romance is not in the offing. For the employed, there are chances of a transfer. But do not worry.

Good dates: 28, 1 and 2
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: East

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This week is full of fun and merrymaking for you. The social life will be hectic, with parties and pleasure trips on the cards. Check extravagance. Secret matters will make headway. A good week for businessmen.

Good dates: 31, 1 and 3
Lucky numbers: 6, 7 and 98
Favourable direction: North

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



Be careful in what you say and write. This applies both to businessmen and those occupying influential positions. Be cautious and discreet in your dealings. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 30, 31 and 1
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This week promises new things for you. Matters relating to property and litigation will be solved amicably. People of the opposite sex will be very helpful. For students, success is round the corner.

Good dates: 28, 31 and 3
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: East

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—AQUARIUS

The Scorpio woman's passionate nature might create problems in their relationship. The Aquarian man should be careful to reciprocate her feelings and emotions. Or else, they might find the going tough.

"My Master, Specially For You, I Have Brought DHANAVARSHA (2)"

DHANAVARSHA (2)
Option 2 – Deferred Monthly Income.
Higher interest: 16% to 21%.
Get 54 cheques in advance.

Invest a minimum of Rs. 5000. After one year get a regular monthly income for the next $4\frac{1}{2}$ years. The interest rate initially is 16% which increases to 21% by the end of the scheme. What's more you get all the income cheques in advance.

And that's not all...

You'll have 100% distribution of capital appreciation. Incentive for investing early. Encashment facility after 3 years. Loan facility from Central Bank of India. And also Income Tax benefits under Section 80L and Wealth Tax exemption under Section 5. NRIs too can invest on a non-repatriation basis.

You also have a choice of other options:

Option 1 – Immediate Monthly Income, wherein you get 12.5% to 14% interest and 66 cheques in advance.

Options 3 and 4 – Accumulated Income/Capital Growth, in which you get a lump sum of 103% returns plus your appreciated principal amount.

All payments have to be made only at designated branches of the Central Bank of India.

For more information, please contact any LIC branch or get in touch with your LIC Mutual Fund Agent.



DHANAVARSHA (2)

You just can't miss such an attractive investment opportunity.
Hurry! Scheme open: 1 October to 30 November 1990.

LIC Mutual Fund
We'll help you meet your goals



R K SWAMY/LMF/85

Paan and the man

Advani's not the only one on a collision course. So is Laloo Prasad Yadav, though the Bihar chief minister's case is slightly different.

The problem arises from the CM's fondness for *paan*, which he chews—much like a contented cow—throughout his waking hours. Even when he is riding through the streets of Delhi at breakneck speed, at the head of an impressive cavalcade.

But what happens when Yadav wants to spit some betel juice out? His car, the lead vehicle, comes to a



Laloo Prasad Yadav: collision course

sudden stop, no matter what speed it is travelling at. And the five-six cars behind it come to a screeching halt as well, one bumping into the other in the process.

Until now, the occupants have got off pretty lightly. But surely, Laloo realises that they won't always be so lucky.

Blood is thicker...

They may well be on opposite sides of the political fence, but the Gandhis observe social niceties all right—at least in public.

HEARD IN NEW DELHI'S STREETS

We've gone from the politics of the padayatra to the politics of the rath yatra.

A DISGUSTED CITIZEN





Priyanka and Maneka Gandhi: hugs and kisses

And good manners were much in display at the VIP lounge of the Indira Gandhi International Airport, where Maneka and Priyanka met last week. The environment minister was off on an official visit, while Priyanka had come to receive mother Sonia who was on an incoming flight. The minute Priyanka saw Maneka (who'd arrived earlier), she rushed towards her, and the two fell dramatically into each other's arms. Then it was Feroze Varun's turn to get the treatment, with Priyanka smothering him with affection. The next half-hour was spent in presumably pleasant chit-chat.

But no, Sonia and Maneka Gandhi didn't meet. Sonia's flight landed after Maneka's had taken off.

CHECK-LIST

The little big men of the ministry

■ **Subodh Kant Sahay:** With Mufti turning into the invisible man, Sahay has become home minister by default. And is enjoying every minute of it, issuing flats on Punjab, Assam, Ayodhya, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and paramilitary forces. The daily report on the law and order situation is sent to him before the Mufti gets a look-in and the minister of state has the rare privilege of liaising with the PM directly.

■ **Anil Shastri:** Virtually runs the finance ministry, with such departments as revenue, banking, customs and excise under his direct charge. In such matters, Shastri does not see fit to brief Madhu Dandavate about his decisions. Instead he sends his report directly to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

■ **Ram Poojan Patel:** is an Allahabad buddy of the Prime Minister's and this association is standing him in good stead in the food and civil supplies ministry. He runs the affairs of all corporations and government undertakings and decides on appointments and the grant of licences; leaving Nathu Ram Mirdha with very little to do.

■ **Bhajaman Behera:** Has gained the most from the on-going battle between the Raja and Orissa chief minister Biju Patnaik. Ever since Patnaik came out openly against V.P. Singh's Mandal initiative, the PM has begun giving Behera—an aspirant for the Orissa chief ministership—more importance in the petroleum ministry in order to build him up as an alternative to Patnaik.

A new alliance?

Both have roughly the same opinion of PM V.P. Singh. Yet they had never met.

So it was something of a surprise when Janata Dal strongman Chandra Shekhar and movie star Amitabh Bachchan met up in Bombay last week.

Shekhar was visiting friends in Juhu Parle Scheme and Bachchan dropped in to see him.

"Where are your parents?" Shekhar asked the star.

"Right here in Bombay," said Bachchan.

"Why are we wasting time sitting here?" said the Janata Dal leader. "Let's go."

Shekhar then hopped into Bachchan's DCM Toyota and drove to Pratiksha—Bachchan's Juhu Parle residence.

He spent half-an-hour with Dr Harivansh Rai Bachchan before returning to his suite at the Ritz Hotel in south Bombay.

A political alliance in the making? "Not at all," says Bachchan. "I have nothing to do with politics any longer. But I must say that I was very impressed by Chandra Shekharji..." ●

What about mummy?

Now that he's got this tremendous response from the public on his Sadbhavna Yatra, Rajiv Gandhi's becoming far more confident in his dealings with the party.

On the way back from his tour of UP, the Congress president was being briefed by party leader Rajendra Kumari Bajpai as to how Deepa Kaul had proved such a brilliant organiser and had ensured that the Ghaziabad leg of his tour was a great success.



Rajiv Gandhi: regaining confidence

Quipped Rajiv: "Yes, but I'd wish she'd convince her mother (Gandhi's grand-aunt Sheila Kaul) to do some work in Rai Bareli as well."

Two is better than one

Nilamani Routray and his minister of state, Maneka Gandhi, shared a rare togetherness last fortnight. No, it wasn't as if the two doughty warriors had finally sorted out their differences, environmental or otherwise. But a government decision that they jointly attend an environment conference in Bangkok, and even share a private assistant (Nilamani Routray's nephew, much to the other Mrs G's chagrin), threw them into close—though involuntary—proximity.

Not before a drama of the absurd was played out in the corridors of power, though.

Initially, PMO sent out an order asking that Gandhi attend the Bangkok conference, as her participation had been specially asked for by the former Norway Prime Minister Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland. Which was all very well, except that the order had Maneka down as leader of the delegation while her Cabinet minister Routray was a mere member.

As expected, Routray had an apoplectic fit when he saw the order. And promptly charged off to Arun Nehru's to threaten to resign. A Cabinet minister was asked to intercede with PMO to get Routray's griefs redressed.

And sure enough, when the delegation finally left, Maneka had been demoted, while Routray was in command.

HEARD AT THE CONGRESS(I) OFFICE

Maybe V.P. Singh was serious when he said that Rajiv would always be his leader. After all, isn't he doing everything he can to bring Gandhi back?

A PARTY WORKER



Routray: a victory, at last

THERMOMETER

Who's soft on the BJP—and the VHP

■ **P. Upendra:** The government should be saved at all costs is his credo, and secular credentials be damned. Compromise with the BJP-VHP combine is not as bad a deal as made out by the media, and if it can keep the Raja in power, there's really no harm in it. Upendra is, therefore, running circles around Advani and Vajpayee in an attempt to effect a reconciliation.

■ **N.T. Rama Rao:** With his interest in mythological mish-mash, it should come as no surprise that the former Andhra Pradesh chief minister is one of the more religious-minded leaders of the National Front. And if there were any doubts about where he stood, his statement, expressing support for the re-location of the Babri Masjid, would have set them to rest.

■ **Arun Nehru:** While there's no way of substantiating this allegation, most Muslim leaders believe that Arun Nehru was instrumental in getting the locks of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple opened in 1986. But it is beyond dispute that Nehru was among those who insisted on a tie-up with the BJP in the run-up to the last general elections. It now appears that Advani and Co. would be more amenable to supporting the National Front government if Nehru was PM.

■ **Chimanbhai Mehta:** He believes that everyone should try to bridge the gap between the BJP and the Janata Dal in the national interest. For, if the situation is allowed to deteriorate, the Congress would come back to power. And Rajiv Gandhi's outfit is far greater an evil than the BJP/VHP.

Please, not me!

How can you best blackmail a Union minister?

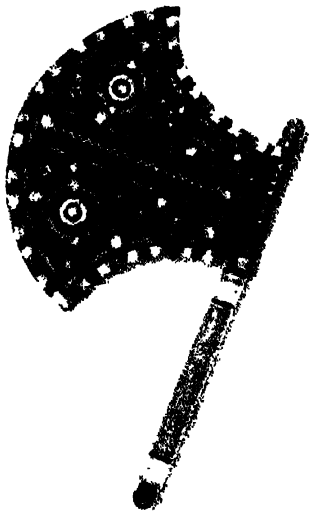
By asking him to appear on *Khula Manch*.

Apparently, now that the programme has become a byword for controversy, none of the ministers is too keen to feature on it. Everytime one of them is approached to go on the air, he stands off asking that the person next in line be asked instead. Even Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan, the two most publicity-hungry of central ministers, are leery of appearing on the show, after the disastrous performances of their more media-savvy colleagues.

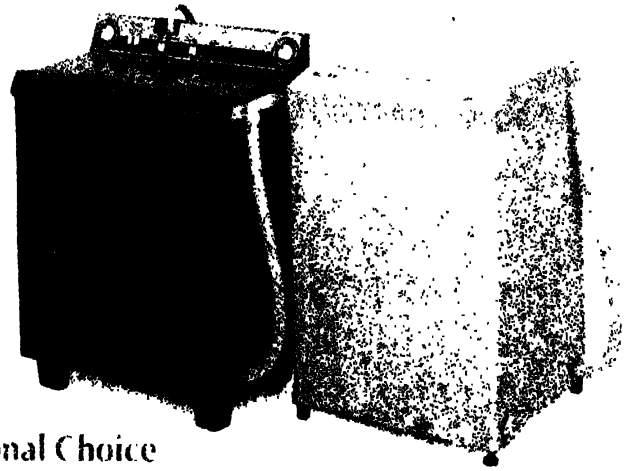
But that's not all. The organisers have yet another problem. Nobody is too sure who should be asked to represent the home ministry. While none of the viewers, it is thought, will recognise the home minister, it would create too many protocol problems if Subodh Kant Sahay was invited on the show instead. ●

When it comes to choosing the best Washing Machine technology in Japan or India...





There's no difference!



The National Choice

Videocon Washing Machines are manufactured in technical collaboration with MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC INDUSTRIAL CO. JAPAN, owners of the famous 'National' brand name whose International reputation for quality and reliability spans over five continents.

This exciting collaboration with India's leading consumer electronics company, VIDEOCON, has resulted in products that have already become 'National' favourites.

Twin Tub Washing Machine With Spin Drier V-NA-200T

Features · ● Wash load capacity - 3 kg of dry clothes. ● Tough sturdy motor with thermal fuse ● Automatic shut off for 100% safety ● Reversible motor action for better cleaning. ● Spin drier to ensure fast and even drying ● Special facility of using spin drier for very efficient rinsing ● Draining possible from left or right to suit your home ● Tough on dirt and very gentle with all types of clothes, will not tear off buttons etc. ● Very low power consumption. ● Two year warranty. ● Well established, prompt after sales service. ● Available in three colours.

Micro-Computer Based Automatic Washing Machine V-NA-811

Features ● Wash load capacity - 4 kg ● Needs no manual attention after initial start ● Choice of wash programmes - strong gentle speedy normal ● Tough on dirt, very gentle with clothes ● Can wash blankets, rugs, carpets etc. ● Facility for using fabric softener ● Special bleach holder ● Lint filter to collect loose ends ● 100% safe ● Two year warranty ● Well established prompt after sales service ● Available in two colours

VIDEOCON

Washing Machines

EXCEPTIONAL • SENSATIONAL • SO NATIONAL

Manufactured in technical collaboration with Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Japan, owners of the brand name 'National'.

SJAS 90085 2

Does your office remind you of a match factory?



Fire !

The atmosphere fraught with endless possibilities. And the guilt sneaking up, knowing that the partitions and the ceiling can only fuel it.

It's amazing how many offices still work under threat.

The '90s office of Noorani Biswas & Kumar Associates, Bombay, fabricated with Gypboard



The world over, offices are being designed around the sophistication, durability, and economy of Gypsum board partitions and ceilings.

Because Gypsum boards are fire resistant, besides offering greater flexibility in workmanship, making it easy to make your office partitions and ceilings.

Gypsum boards are extremely lightweight, yet solid — of course, if you insist, you can have hollow Gypboard partitions too !

And Gypsum boards allow you to control the noise level in your office because they provide sound insulation.

It's superior, smooth and seamless finish lets you dress it up — with paint, wallpaper, even ceramic tiles !

To put the icing on the cake, you save 20% on Gypboard ceilings and 30% on partitions, over most other materials.

So make yours a Gypboard office. And go ahead—strike that match !

GYPBOARD
PARTITIONS AND CEILINGS

Isn't yours a Gypboard office — yet?

INDIA GYPSUM

India Gypsum Limited

815 Tolstoy House. 15-17 Tolstoy Marg
New Delhi 110 001

Madras :
PRODUCT TRAINING CENTRE
67 Spurtank Road, Chetput
Madras 600 031 Tel 471970

Bombay .
96 Bajaj Bhawan, 9th Floor, Nariman Point
Bombay 400 021 Tel 2021035, 2027852, 2021125

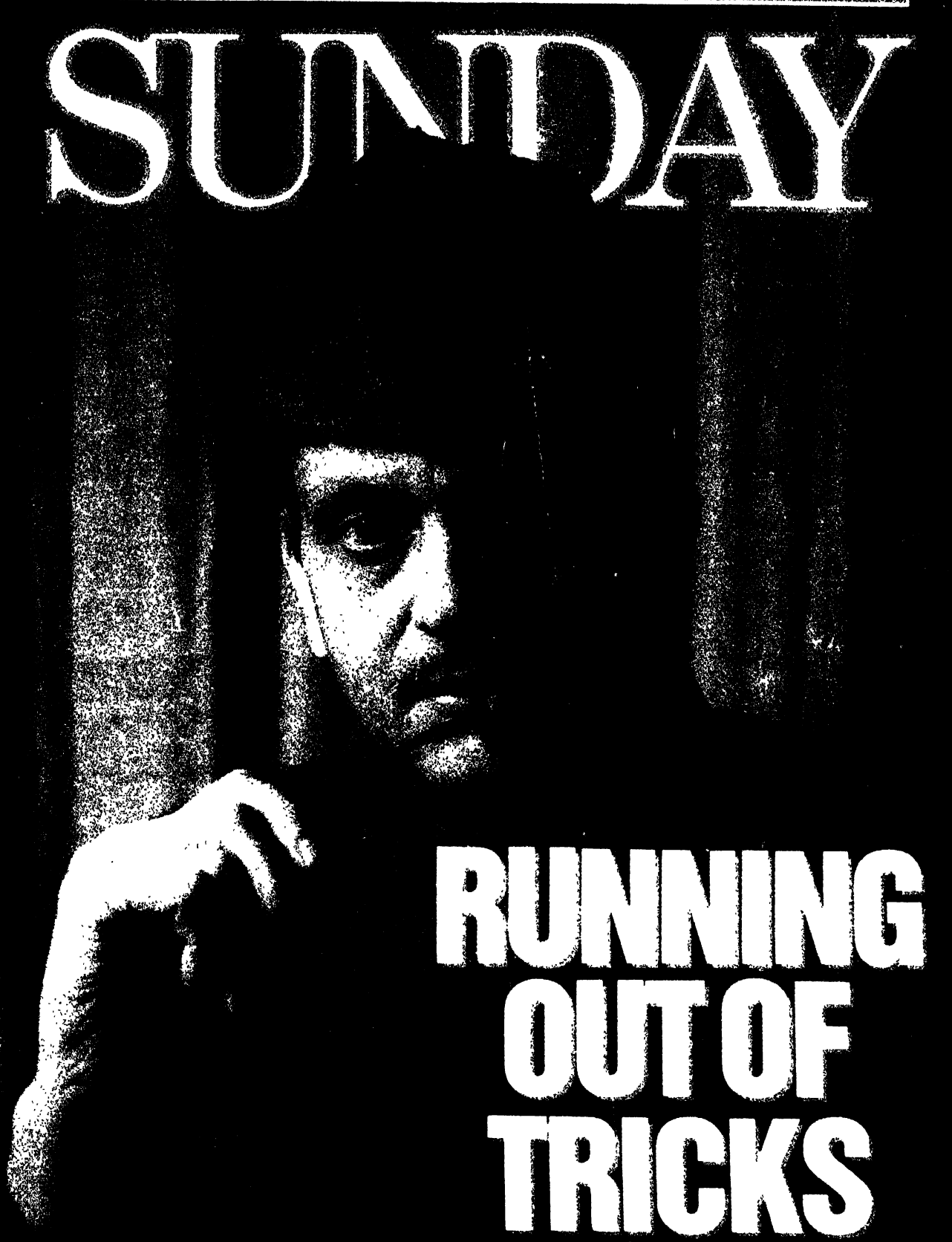
Calcutta :
Birla Building, 11th Floor
9/1 R N Mukherjee Road, Calcutta 700 001
Tel 284168 205550

R K SWAMY/IC/5946

4—10 NOVEMBER 1990 □ AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION □ RS 7.00

PAKISTAN: BENAZIR'S DEFEAT

SUNDAY



RUNNING OUT OF TRICKS

Is this the end for V.P. Singh?


WOOLMARK
SYMBOL OF THE PUREST WOOLS.
OF KNITWEAR THAT'S STYLISH
AS IT IS SENSUOUS.
OF NATURAL BEAUTY WHICH ENDURES
COMFORTABLE, EASY TO MAINTAIN AND
GUARANTEED INTERNATIONALLY.
LOOK FOR WOOLMARK
AND LOOK SO FURTHER.

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 43 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
4–10 NOVEMBER 1990



24
COVER STORY
Running out of tricks
Is this the end for V.P. Singh?

12
NEWSWATCH
Tussle for the temple
The Marxists in Kerala are trying to gain control of the Hindu places of worship in the state.



39
FOCUS
Suicide fever
What led so many students to burn themselves in protest against the Mandal report?

49
TRENDS
Fightback
Consumer consciousness is catching on in India.

64
SPECIAL REPORT
Benazir's defeat
The post-poll scenario, the ouster of the PPP and its implications for India. An on-the-spot report from Islamabad.

72
HERITAGE
The Raj curry
An art and objects exhibition at London's National Portrait Gallery evokes British India like never before.

82
INDEPTH
Guns for drugs
Recently unearthed evidence suggests links between Colombian drug barons and Tamil Tigers

86
SPORTS
Losing Paes
Leander quits Vijay Amritraj's tennis academy.



LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
MEDIA MUSINGS 15
SOUTH BLOCK 18
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 19
SPOTLIGHT 42
EVENT 45
Washout!
BUSINESS DIARY 61
GUEST COLUMN 62
KHAAS BAAT 71
NEWS 76
THIS INDIA 85
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise; North-eastern states 30 paise



Master of the game

The cover story (*Toppling the Raja*, 14—20 October) was timely and forthright. It clearly projects that ever since the National Front government came to power, there has been an element of uncertainty about it. Given the present situation, there is no gainsaying the fact that the Prime Minister will continue to enjoy the same credibility. But the rival camp led by Chandra Shekhar is steadily gaining ground. Therefore, V.P. Singh should be on the alert about the dissident factor. For, Chandra Shekhar is a seasoned politician and an old master of the toppling game.

Subhashis Ray, Rourkela (Orissa)

■ Chandra Shekhar is right when he says that the government has done nothing to its credit. The Kashmir and Punjab problems, the price rise and the Bofors scandal are the four issues on which the National Front government was elected to power.

Today, Kashmir is going adrift and in Punjab, terrorism has spread to all the districts of the state. V.P. Singh has also failed to bring to book any of the middlemen involved in the Bofors payoffs. And price rise has not been tackled firmly. All this shows that V.P. Singh has been a failure on almost all fronts

L. Rohini, Trichy (Tamil Nadu)

■ The change from a vibrant, aggressive and ideal Young Turk to a cunning and capricious schemer is certainly a trgic metamorphosis. The pity is that we expect too much from the so-called "cleans" and then when things go awry we cry over spilt milk. This has happened in the case of both V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar. In Indian politics, there is a yawning gap between perception and practice. V.P. Singh may be honest on many fronts, but morally he is in the wrong. He may be timid, but he is tough as far as obduracy and doggedness are concerned. But it is doubtful whether the situation is going to change for the better with Chandra Shekhar at the helm of affairs

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)



Chandra Shekhar: waiting in the wings

■ The political philosophy of Chandra Shekhar is diametrically opposed to that of V.P. Singh. It is certain that V.P. Singh no longer has a strong base in the party. And since the country is in deep trouble, the Prime Minister has to devote all his time to the nation and its problems. The chaos let loose by the implementation of the Mandal report needs utmost attention. But Chandra Shekhar, who does not hold any political office, can indulge in his old game of wheeling and dealing. Whereas, the PM has the welfare of the nation as his topmost priority.

R.K. Gulati, Siliguri (West Bengal)

■ In his interview, Chandra Shekhar has thrown light on vital issues of national importance. Morality in politics is a thing of the past. But Chandra Shekhar's adherence to morality and ethics in times of stress and strain is highly admirable. In spite of his drawbacks, he is still a force to be reckoned with.

Shekhar is a man who has some principles and is never afraid to call a spade a spade. He has been bold enough to state that the present government has bungled in almost every sphere. The National Front is plagued with insurmountable problems. Therefore, the prospects are bright for the man from Balia to take over the reins of the nation in this hour of crisis.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Spreading lies

The letter, *The other side of Mamata* (23—29 September), is patently motivated and has clearly been inspired by persons bent on opposing Mamata Banerjee. The blatant lies the letter abounds in were nailed long back but disciples of Goebbels are apparently tireless. First, the fake degree canard. Her critics, who continue to fear Mamata's growing popularity, sold the baseless story to a Calcutta newspaper. This was picked up by the CPI(M) MP Amal Dutta who won cheap publicity on the strength of the lies for some time. When Mamata confronted the then Lok Sabha Speaker, Balram Jakhar, with her degree certificates the latter announced that he had examined the papers and was satisfied with their genuineness. Mamata had wanted to send the matter to the Privileges Committee of Parliament but the Speaker's announcement ended the controversy.



Mamata : maligned

As for "leading a violent mob of Congress activists to assault the late Jaya Prakash Narayan and to disrupt his meeting," when a Delhi weekly, now defunct, published this second lie about her in February 1986, Mamata complained to the Press Council in March 1986, following which the editor of the weekly apologised for the report.

Deep Adhikari/New Delhi

In the doldrums

The write-up (*Out of control*, 14—20 October) presents a dismal pic-

ture of the economy. The main problem with us is the wide gap that exists between principle and practice.

It is time for us to take a new road before we fall into the ditch. There is an urgent need to change our policies by giving incentives to production, introduction of competition where monopoly exists, putting an end to subsidies in a phased manner, creating more employment opportunities, improving technology to boost exports, introducing administrative reforms to cut down on unproductive expenditure and to prevent money from flowing into the coffers of middlemen, revamping tax laws and also accounting procedures to flush out black money. There cannot be any short cuts—or the waving of a magic wand—for growth, other than hard work

A. Jacob Sahayam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)

The road to the top



Madhuri Dixit: high hopes

The cover story on Madhuri Dixit (*Ek, do, queen*, 7—13 October) was really informative. Her performance is improving with every film. And to say that she is the best dancer in the film world is certainly an understatement. In *Sailaab*, her dance was a perfect blend of innocence and oomph, considering the raunchy number. Madhuri has come of age and she seems all set to stay for good.

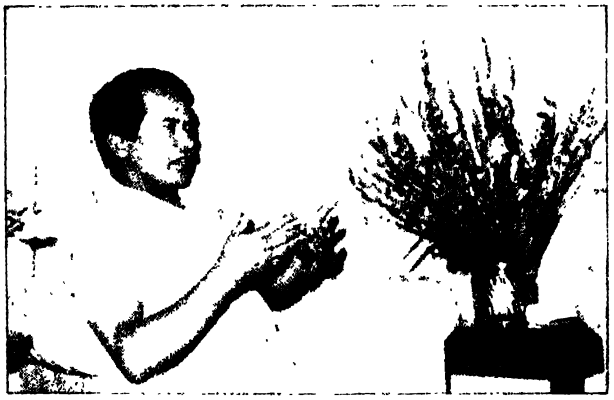
Pradeep Jain, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ Behind Madhuri Dixit's rise lies perseverance and dedication. Her professional attitude to work, her discipline and her effort to put in the best in every sequence got her to where she is. Madhuri is on the road to the top.

Sankar Banerjee, Rourkela (Orissa)

■ Today, Madhuri is undoubtedly the number one actress in Bombay's tinsel world. Her innocent face with a touch of sensuousness is her greatest asset. She made the entire nation dance to the tune of the *Ek do teen* number in *Tezaab*. She followed it up with some superb performances in *Dil* and *Sailaab*. Now she has graduated from the dance and disappear routine to a more mature and restrained acting. She is truly an incarnation of Meena Kumari, especially in the portrayal of tragic roles.

Dipon Roy, Barrackpore (West Bengal)



Nar Bahadur Bhandari: making a reasonable demand

The language issue

While it is a matter of great concern that foreigners are being given citizenship in Sikkim (*The aliens*, 23—29 September), but chief minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari's demand for the inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution is quite reasonable because Indian Nepalese constitute a sizeable 60 lakhs of the population. Bhandari is not pressing his demands with an eye to the vote-bank. In fact, he is voicing the grievances of his people who wants the recognition of their language.

Lakshman Sharma, Kohima (Nagaland)

Rajiv and the Raja

Vinod Mehta in his column (*VP blunders again*, 21—27 October) has not only been uncharitable but grossly unfair when he tries to find fault with Rajiv Gandhi for messing things up in Karnataka and condemning V.P. Singh in the same breath for imposing President's Rule in that state.

When the Congress high command failed to persuade chief minister Veerendra Patil to step down honourably on health grounds, party president Rajiv Gandhi took the right decision in the interest of the party and the state.

So, how can such a decisive and timely action be called a "screw-up" unless Patil was known to have a majority support. Rajiv's stand has been fully vindicated by subsequent events and the hypocrisy of V.P. Singh stands exposed.

G.M. Singhvi, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Gulf of difference

Contrary to Inder Malhotra's assertion (*Hands off the Gulf*, 9—15 September), I would like to extend my support to India's stand of not taking too strong a view against Iraq. One must remember at this stage that Iraq is probably the only Gulf country whose policy over Kashmir is in India's favour. And this support is of crucial importance particularly because Pakistan is doing all it can to internationalise the Kashmir issue among the Muslim nations.

Moreover, India's stand on the Gulf dispute in relation to that of the USA is also laudable. By refusing to flatter the Americans,



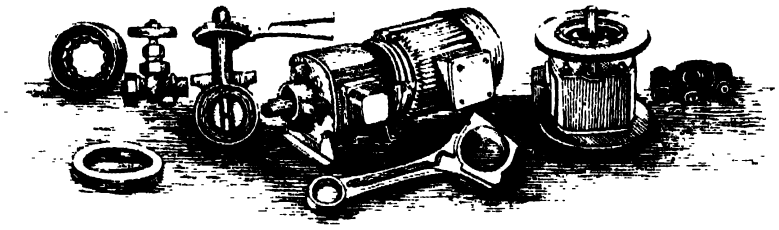
Indians returning from the Gulf

India has made it amply clear that it does not approve of the US role in the Gulf. What India should do now is to befriend the Third World countries, which would further mitigate the influence of the Americans in this region.

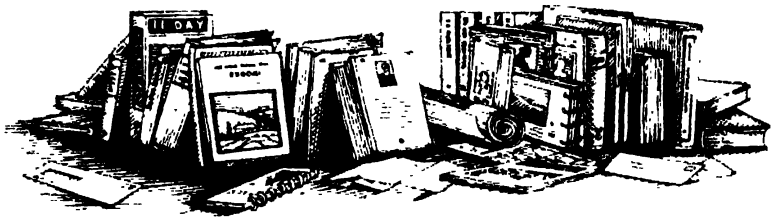
Krishnendu Chakrabarti, Domjur (West Bengal)



IN THE LAST 21 YEARS, WE'VE DELIVERED MILES OF GARMENT SAMPLES.



TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SPARE PARTS OF EVERY TYPE AND SIZE



HUNDREDS OF TONS OF PRINTED LITERATURE.



AND MILLIONS OF OTHER CONSIGNMENTS.

WHATEVER GAVE YOU THE IMPRESSION WE ONLY CARRY DOCUMENTS?

RAKA 3150.A 90

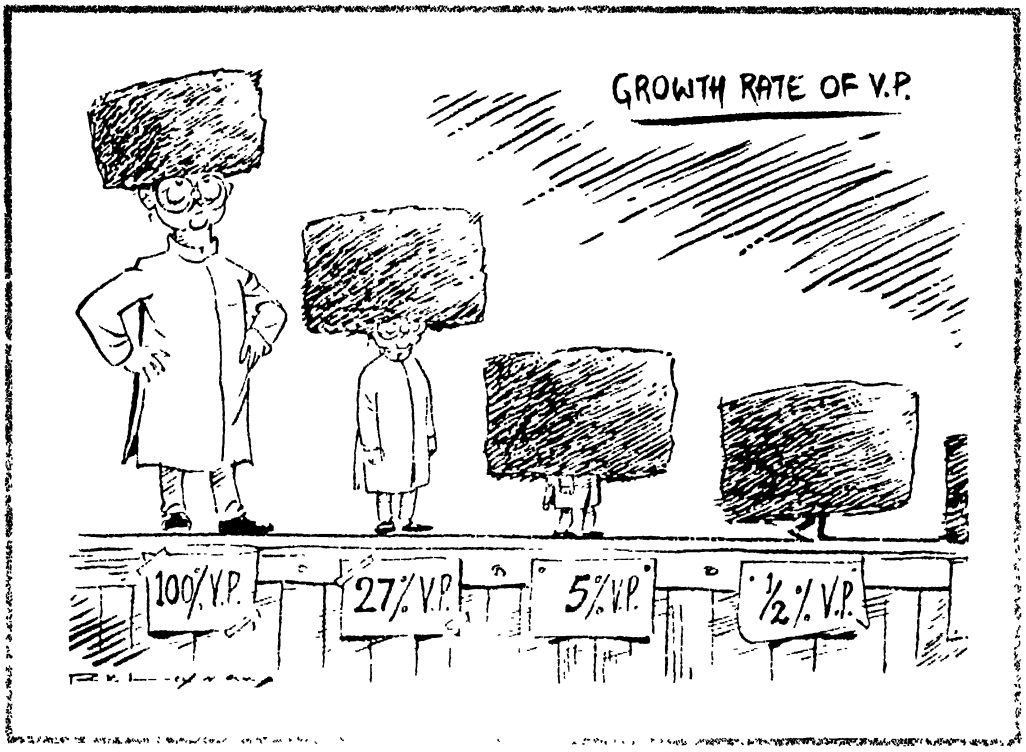
21 years ago, we pioneered the air express industry. Since then, we've been carrying shipments of all types, shapes, sizes and weight. From the ordinary – such as garments, leather samples and printed literature, to the unusual – such as blood samples and even the occasional pregnant cow. Hundreds of thousands of consignments, door-to-door, everyday. And always, through one network, with one service, and one all-inclusive invoice. The next time you have a shipment to send, why not call us for an immediate pick-up?

DHL WORLDWIDE EXPRESS®

We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories

DHL THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

SIGHT AND SOUND



P.K. LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA



■ We could have stuck to the chair, as is being projected by the Congress(I). We could have done it by appeasing the BJP and allowing the construction of the *mandir.*

V.P. SINGH, *Prime Minister*

■ The government has finally bent a little but has not bowed enough...Let the government fall if it must but the sentiments of the people must be honoured.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president, before his arrest*

■ Earlier in his career, he (V.P. Singh) has resigned several times when it was not necessary and the time that it is absolutely necessary for him to resign, he is sticking to his chair.

V.N. GADGIL, *Congress(I) spokesman*

■ Where is the question of me becoming the Prime Minister? There are lakhs of people in the Janata Dal to choose from...there is no dearth of Prime Ministers in the party.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Janata Dal leader*

■ I don't know why Chandra Shekhar is asking for a change in leadership? May be he himself wants to be the Prime Minister.

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister*

■ *Gaadi hi to hain, koi Bhagwan ka rath nahin. Rath hota to ab tak ud jata.*

LALOO PRASAD YADAV, *Bihar chief minister, commenting on L.K. Advani's Ram* rath

■ The Babri Masjid is a *masjid* and you will have to cross the dead bodies of Muslims to build the temple.

SYED ABDULLAH BUKHARI, *Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid*

■ I do not believe that monarchy is the best system of government because the person who holds the high office of king does not reach that position because of merit, but due to birth.

JIGME SINGYE WANGCHUK, *King of Bhutan*

■ What a flop! The director, V.P. Singh, and the coterie of technicians around him are responsible ..I campaigned for them whole-heartedly and I am pained.

SHATRUGHAN SINHA, *actor, on the present state of the government*



VINOD MEHTA

Incense and myrrh

Will V.P. Singh distribute largesse to partymen and dissident Congress and BJP MPs before 7 November?



When Malcolm Muggeridge was a leader-writer in the *Manchester Guardian*, he was advised by his editor to occasionally shock and outrage the paper's readers. Such an approach, the editor said, would ensure not only a lively 'Letters to the Editor' column but, more crucially, leaders would actually get read. Common sense and reason, however admirable, make for dull copy.

I wonder if the hand that punched in the first *Times of India* leader on 25 October was animated by a similar desire to provoke and perturb. The paper, along with most of the English press, can hardly wait for the return of Rajiv, but to argue that the President should have appointed a caretaker Prime Minister between 25 October and 7 November is to tread dangerously close to lunacy. "He (President R. Venkataraman) should have advised Mr Singh to resign before calling on Parliament to meet as quickly as possible to appoint a successor," thundered the Old Lady of Boribundet, conceding at the same time that the measure would be applicable only for "10 to 12 days". Although the paper did not go so far as to name the caretaker, we all know that there is just one candidate for the job—Rajiv Gandhi.

Apparently, in these critical 10 to 12 days, Mr V.P. Singh will be tempted to "distribute largesse in various guises". He could, but I doubt very much if he will. A Cabinet reshuffle or a major expansion 18 hours before the crucial vote in the Lok Sabha is as likely as an Indian victory over Pakistan in hockey. Mandal may have turned the Prime Minister's head, but he is not demented yet. Then, there is the possibility that the value-less V.P. Singh might "indulge in tactics aimed at confounding Members of Parliament". Considering what a cad VP is, I can give no assurances on this one. What would be the honourable thing to do? Should Mr Singh quietly stand up in Parliament, request those for and against him to put up their hands, and if the result goes against him, walk meekly to the slaughter house? The National Front (NF) is being brought down on the twin issues of Ram Janmabhoomi / Babri Masjid and Mandal. Therefore, it is only natural that the motion of confidence to be moved by the NF on 7 November will exploit these two controversies. What is immoral or unfair about such tactics? Indeed, they are eminently sane.

To argue five days before the most concerted assault on the integrity of the Indian state for a ten-day caretaker Prime Minister is to invite bloodshed and civic disorder. The President did not pull 7 November out of a hat. The date was fixed on the assumption that till 30 October, the central government and its MPs will have their hands full monitoring the communal situation and averting violence, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Given the fact that the determination of the BJP-VHP to perform *kar seva* in Ayodhya on 30 October has been intensified following the arrest of L.K. Advani, the law and order situation in the country has received a further jolt. Handing over governance to a caretaker Prime Minister in such an incendiary environment is to ensure the weakening of central authority at a time when its full control is vital.

In fact, President Venkataraman must be congratulated for having taken the correct decision with both speed and dignity. Whether it is government at the state level or at the Centre, the only place where majority should be tested is on the floor of the House. Written communications advancing or withdrawing support are useful only to the extent that they lead to a final showdown in the proper forum. Just a few weeks ago, the Governor of Karnataka was lambasted by the Congress and the press for not adhering to this norm.



ASHOK VAHIE

V.P. Singh is not making the slightest effort to disguise or camouflage his tactics in the coming weeks: The martyr of Mandal and the martyr for secularism will come knocking on our doors for votes

Congressmen's fears about horse-trading, a craft at which they are experts, are exaggerated. Doubtless, some crude efforts will be witnessed. However, the apprehension is being articulated at this time for ritual effect rather than out of genuine fear. Mr Devi Lal talks glibly of 80 rural Congress MPs and 30 in the BJP itching to switch allegiance. This is characteristic Chaudhary wishful thinking. Approaches, of course, are inevitable, but chances of success, minimal. The Janata Dal does not have any tycoon godfathers ready to open money bags, and even if it did, the time at its disposal to buy and ensnare is exceedingly short. Those who complain about possible mischief between 25 October and 7 November might like to remember that the Prime Minister had asked the President for three weeks' grace; Mr Venkataraman gave him less than two.

Whatever variation of incense and myrrh Mr V P Singh and his lieutenants offer to the Congress and BJP Members of Parliament, I am prepared to take a small bet that not one MP from either of the two combines will defy the party whip. The Congress crowd can sense power around the corner, while the BJP at this moment is so charged with a sense of mission that it is difficult to contemplate even a minor revolt. If there is going to be any wear and tear, the Janata Dal is the most likely target. A hardcore group of dissidents is openly and furiously chipping away and boasting that V.P. Singh will be dethroned before D-Day. Thus, it is in the interests of the Congress to give Mr Chandra Shekhar and gang as much time as possible to do their dirty work from within.

The 7 November test of strength in the Lok Sabha should turn out to be an anti-climax. No last minute miracles seem to be on the horizon. Irrespective of the precise wording of the government's motion, the 195 Congress and 89 BJP-Shiv Sena MPs will oppose it. Meanwhile, in spite of some initial movement to his side, Mr Chandra Shekhar is looking his old, forlorn self following the desertion of Mr Devi Lal. One or two Chandra Shekhar cronies could conceivably defy the party whip and face expulsion, but otherwise the National Front count in the House should remain steady. So, even though defeat for the government is a foregone conclusion the terms of defeat will have been set by the losing side.

Vishwanath Pratap Singh is not making the slightest effort to disguise or camouflage his tactics in the coming weeks. Revealing one's battle plans before hostilities have begun is generally considered unwise, but the Prime Minister seems oblivious to such dangers. Over-confidence or supreme desperation? It is difficult to tell. The VP challenge hurled at Rajiv Gandhi and L.K. Advani reads thus: "In the highest forum of the land it will be made clear who stands for secularism and values enshrined in our Constitution." The martyr of Mandal and the martyr for secularism will come knocking on our doors soliciting votes. But before that, the question of caretaker will confront us once more.

Again, Mr V P Singh's claims on the job are impressive. First, he has the advantage of incumbency. Second, the country is passing through an explosive stage that is likely to become even more explosive by a deeply divisive election campaign bound to play up on the electorate's communal passions. Alas, there is no way we can avoid the price electoral majority demands of our fledgling democracy, even if it means communal riots in which a couple of hundred lives are lost. However, what we can avoid is unnecessary and short-term change in the command structure of the administration. No doubt when President Venkataraman directs Vishwanath Pratap Singh to take over as caretaker Prime Minister, his role will be defined, the limits clearly stated. Moreover, there are well-established precedents for caretaker governments which V P Singh will not be allowed to violate by the President and an alert public opinion.

We forget at our own peril that 30 October is not a magic day after which the temple mosque dispute will disappear. Chances are it will remain on the boil because Mulayam Singh Yadav is duty-bound to emulate the actions of his counterpart in Bihar and arrest the entire leadership of the BJP as it sets foot in UP. As a result, the election campaign to follow will be conducted against a background of acute communal polarisation. Clearly, the vigilance and the preparedness of the law and order agencies post-*kar seva* will, if anything, have to be greater.

Never before in the history of the republic has a general election been more unwelcome. The people don't want it; the rank and file of the political parties don't want it; Rajiv Gandhi, L.K. Advani, V.P. Singh, Jyoti Basu don't want it; even the press is reluctant to trudge after politicians on dusty roads listening to tired rhetoric. Yet, we are powerless to prevent it. Even Lord Ram cannot stop the momentum of democracy. Should we rejoice or weep? •



The *Times of India*, along with most of the English press, can hardly wait for the return of Rajiv Gandhi. When the paper suggested the appointment of a caretaker PM, the candidate it had in mind was obvious.

FACTS ABOUT ASBES

It's a fact that Asbestos Cement Sheets are made of over 90% cement and reinforced with about 10% Chrysotile asbestos a natural fibre with 3-4 times the strength of steel Asbestos being 100% alkali resistant, gets 'locked in' with the cement matrix permanently The chemical bond so formed makes the separation of asbe - stos fibre practically impossible

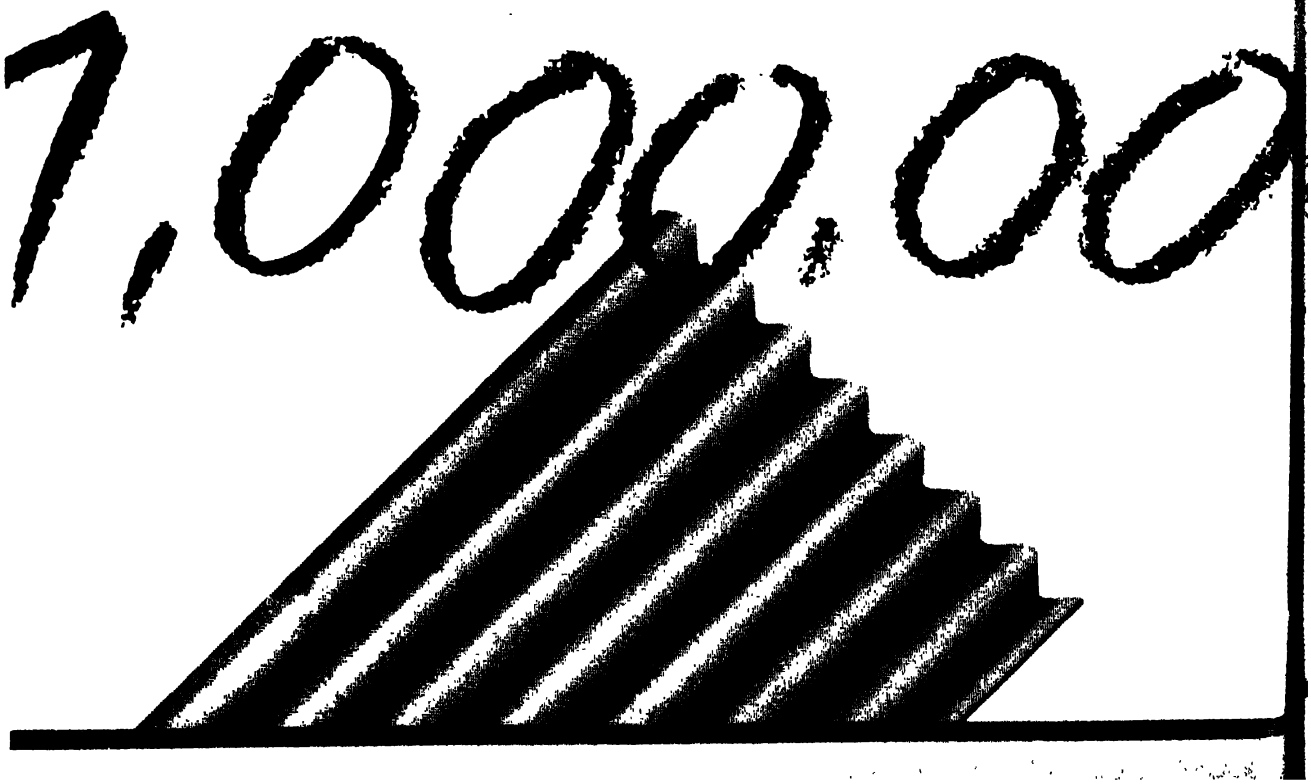
Asbestos Cement Sheets are pre-fabricated, ready-to-use and have the advantages of both cement and asbestos

As a matter of fact, Asbestos Cement Sheets need no protective coatings or treatment Corrosive industrial pollutants leave them unharmed.

It's inherently resistant to fire, heat, rain and salty coastal air, resulting in a long lasting product. Add to the long life of these sheets, higher coverage efficiency. And you have the most cost-effeciive roofing material

Fact is, Asbestos Cement pipes, sheets, slates and shingles have been used since the turn of the century. And continue to be used all over the world.

SUMMED UP WITH



TOS CEMENT SHEETS.

42 lakh tonnes of asbestos, a natural mineral, is mined around the world every year. In countries like USSR, Canada, Brazil and Zimbabwe. Of this, India uses only 2%

Safe to use. Rather than listen to propaganda put out by vested interests about Asbestos Cement Sheets, listen to what the experts have to say.

The normal use of Asbestos Cement poses no risk to the environment or the public.

Leading environmentalists, epidemiologists and the working group of the W.H.O. agree this material is safe.

Finally, let the study group of the Health and Safety Executive of H.M. Govt. of the U.K. clear all your doubts.

"Asbestos Cement products are sometimes confused in the public mind with asbestos insulation. We should think it necessary, therefore, to say that we should not expect danger to arise from existing Asbestos Cement products, eg. roofing, sheeting and guttering."

So, if you're looking for the ideal roofing material, you can't do better than choose Asbestos Cement Sheets.

And that's a fact.

A FEW FIGURES.

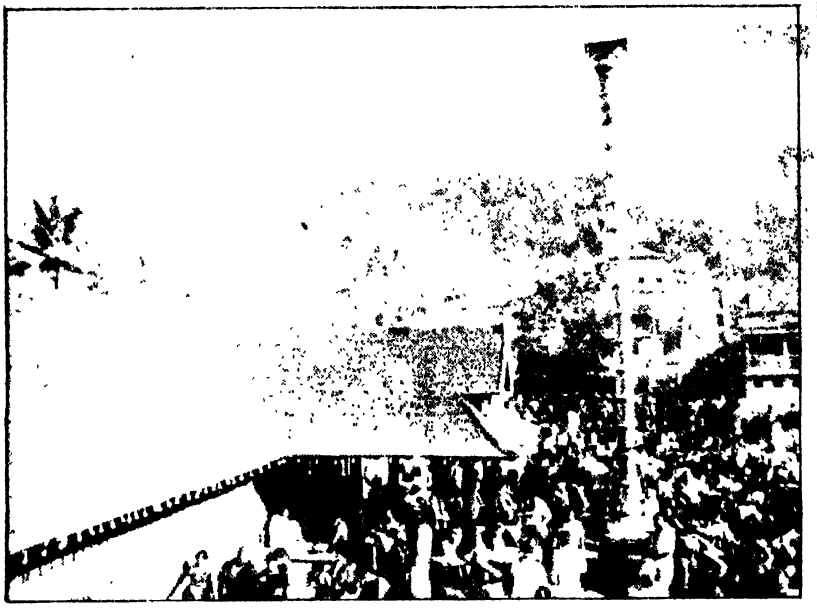


It's a fact that over 1 billion square metres of Asbestos Cement Roofing Sheets are in use in India. With nearly 60 million more added every year.

ASBESTOS CEMENT SHEETS. SAFE TO USE. LAST A LIFETIME.

THE ASBESTOS CEMENT PRODUCTS MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION.

Enterprise/D/ACPMA/560





Tussle for the temple

Marxists gain control of Hindu places of worship in Kerala

For the devout in Kerala, this has always remained a sore point. Time and again, angry voices have been raised against the state's Devaswom Boards, the government-run outfits that administer the Hindu temples in the Travancore-Cochin belt. Apart from charges of financial impropriety, the general feeling in Kerala is that successive governments have reduced these religious boards to state-run corporations and have used them to accommodate politicians. And, despite its atheistic ideology, the Marxists were as keen to gain control of the temple boards as the previous non-communist regimes.

In 1984, the then Congress(I) chief minister, K. Karunakaran, brought an ordinance which clarified that a "Hindu was one who believed in God and temple worship". The move, though cleverly clothed, was clearly aimed at keeping the Marxists off the temple trusts. At that time, a majority of the Hindu MLAs were Marxists and they were not allowed to contest Devaswom Board elections simply because they refused to swear by God. But the ordinance was allowed to lapse as Karunakaran could not muster enough legislative support.

When the Marxists came to power, they nominated Raman Bhattathiripad, the brother-in-law of the CPI(M) general secretary, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, as president of the all-powerful Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB). Soon, other constituents of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) began clamouring for a place in the temple administration. But their efforts received a temporary setback, when, following a petition filed by the president of the Kerala Hindu Dharma Protection Council, the Kerala High Court squashed the election of a Congress(S) activist—the party is a constituent of the LDF—to the Devaswom Board. In its famous 10 April judgement, the court ruled that only those who believed in God and temple worship were eligible for contesting Devaswom Board elections. It seemed that Marxists would never be able to control Devaswom Boards in future.

But the communists were not willing to take defeat lying down. After a series of debates, it was decided to redefine the term Hindu. A Hindu, according to the Marxists now, was one who was born a Hindu or converted into Hinduism. The Bill, with the identity of the Hindu redefined, was passed by the Kerala Assembly. The stage was set for the entry of the Marxists into the temple boards of the state.

Perturbed by the raging battle to control temple trusts, which by then had been reduced to cesspools of corruption, the Kerala High Court appointed a high-powered commission to go into all aspects of the religious bodies and make recommendations. The commission consisted of eminent persons like V. Ramachandran, the former chief secretary of the state, Radhakrishnan Nair, former special director of the CBI, and A.S. Unni, a chartered accountant. The TDB promptly went in appeal to the Supreme Court against the order of the High Court. In May this year, the Supreme Court dismissed the TDB petition. And, the commission was flooded with complaints against the Devaswom Boards.

The commission was shocked at the extent of corruption in the temples of Kerala. Priests were bought and sold for high sums and the administration did not even bother to maintain proper accounts. The commission mem-





RAVI SHANKAR K.V.

TEMPLE POLITICS

(From far left) The Sabarimala temple; priests carry the replica of the Guruvayyurappan deity; elephants belonging to the Guruvayoor temple: cesspool of corruption

bers also objected to the way the temples were being politicised. And the people at the helm of the Devaswom Boards, the commission noted, simply shut their eyes to the goings-on. Result: while the Board members lined their pockets, the temples were thoroughly neglected

But this is not the only reason for the sorry state of most of the temples in Kerala. Their income has been adversely affected following a series of land reforms enactments over the years. It really began in 1811 when Col. Munroe, the then Dewan of Travancore, took over the temples of the area. At that time the income of the temples stood at a staggering Rs 4 crores. And as years passed by, the temples gradually lost most of their land and the source of their income to the administration. The final blow came in 1912, when the government by a proclamation took over the responsibility of maintaining and running the places of worship.

After Independence, the government earmarked Rs 51 lakhs towards the Devaswom Boards' expenses. Today, the Marxists are claiming that since the Devaswom Boards are funded by the government, it certainly has a responsibility to discharge. But as Swamy Satyananda Saraswathy, patron of the Kerala Temple Protection Council, pointed out, "Successive governments in the past have taken away temple lands and the present annuity of Rs 51 lakhs fixed 40 years back is peanuts."

And Swamy is not entirely wrong. Since Independence, the temples were deprived of their vast estates. No wonder there was a sharp decline in the number of temples—many of them were abandoned since the temple authorities did not even have the means to carry out the daily rituals. Consider the following statistics: in 1931, there were over 9,000 temples—big and small—in the state. But by 1983, only 1,500 survived. While in other states like neighbouring Tamil Nadu, governments provided protection to the temples, no such thing was done in Kerala ostensibly because it could hurt secular sentiments.



The Nayanar regime feels that since Devaswom Boards are funded by the government, it has a responsibility to discharge

Today, most of the major temples in Kerala have fallen on bad times and have become symbols of material and spiritual exploitation of the faithfuls. Take the instances of the hill temple of Sabarimala, easily the second largest Hindu place of worship after the Tirupati temple in the south, and the famous Guruvayoor temple. During Karunakaran's regime a Christian convert nearly became a member of the Guruvayoor Devaswom. What is more, the temple had become a haven for the crooks and the corrupt: most of the priests were found to be alcoholics, foodstuff meant for the *puja* were taken out and some employees were even caught smuggling sandalwood from Karnataka using the permit issued to the temple. Guruvayoor has more then 40 elephants, which are used during rituals and festivals: the animals too were mistreated and they were not even given proper and sufficient diet.

The Kerala temple protection committee has also alleged that the grants given by the Guruvayoor Devaswom for the maintenance and renovation of smaller temples under it are being diverted to fund Marxist organisations in the state. It is even rumoured that the LDF government replaced P.N.





(Left) Pilgrims on their way to the Sabarimala temple; (above) Marxist leader E.M.S. Namboodiripad: his in-law was nominated to the Travancore Devaswom Board

Narayanan, chairman of the Guruvayoor Devaswom, because he refused to be a party to the bungling.

The goings-on in other temples of the state is no better and corrupt officials rule the roost. Take the case of the making of the "Golakam" at the Chottanikara Devi temple run by the Cochin Devaswom Board (CDB). (The "Golakam" is the golden image of the deity which covers the idol.) A devotee complained to the police that CDB officials had siphoned off more than 25 gold sovereigns during the making of the "Golakam". Investigation later revealed that copper was mostly used instead of gold.

Time and again the government has pulled up Devaswom officials for irregularities but it didn't really help. In one case, an assistant commissioner of the CDB was suspended when a bundle of currency notes were found in her possession soon after she had gone to supervise *hundi* collection at the Chottanikara Devi temple. Some time back, cops raided the house of yet another senior Devaswom official and recovered gunnybags full of money. There are allegations that *hundi* collections, which include gold ornaments apart from the cash, are usually pocketed by Devaswom officials. In January 1990, the Kerala High Court ordered that *hundi* collections should be made in the presence of three devotees. The Kerala Temple Protection Committee (KTPC) promptly came forward and asked its members to be present during *hundi* collections throughout the state. Said Govind Bharathan, an advocate of the Kerala High Court who is carrying out a crusade against Devaswom Boards: "After KTPC men joined Devaswom officials in the counting of *hundis*, the collections have increased almost twice."

Understandably, the Nayanar regime is not very happy with the High Court and have unleashed a vicious campaign against Justice K.S. Paripoornan, the man responsible for taking whatever action has been taken against Devaswom Boards. The government even contemplated taking away jurisdiction of the High Court to audit the accounts of Devaswom Boards and giving it to a district court, where the chances of manipulation were better.

The three-member high-powered commission appointed by the Kerala High Court to go into the affairs of the TDB and the CDB has recommended the depoliticisation of the Devaswom Boards. It has further stressed the need to make the Sabarimala group of temples an autonomous body. The commission also said that only eminent persons and not politicians be appointed to the Devaswom Boards. Said Govind Bharathan: "The Devaswom Boards are being used as dustbins to accommodate disgruntled politicians who are potential threats to ruling parties."

It was also found by the commission that though the principles and procedures laid down for the budget framework were very sound, they were seldom followed. It said that the TDB has been mismanaging its funds in such a way that lakhs of rupees are lost by way of interest. Some time

"Politicians can manage temples"

Raman Bhattathiripad is the brother-in-law of Marxist supremo E.M.S. Namboodiripad. Bhattathiripad had stood as a independent candidate with Marxist support in the last Assembly elections and lost. But when the LDF came to power, he was rewarded with the coveted post of president, Travancore Devaswom Board. The CITU is dead against him as they feel he is being controlled by the RSP union.

SUNDAY: Is it true that because of your relation with Namboodiripad, you got the coveted post?
A: I am a Marxist sympathiser who believes in God and we have our own family temple. I feel I have the right qualification to be the TDB president, as my ancestors have also administered temples.



back, the daughter-in-law of a TDB member got a job as a clerk in a private bank because the board deposited huge sums of money at low interest rates with the bank. The report stressed that the Devaswom Boards' entire emphasis seems to be on new construction rather than on maintenance, mainly because of the contractor-board nexus. The commission has also recommended a ban on recruitments for a period of five years because the Devaswom Boards were already overstaffed.

Sabarimala is the biggest money-spinner of the TDB—it brings in about Rs 11 crores annually and accounts for 60 per cent of its total receipts—but the temple is neck-deep in scandals. Recently, S. Chandrika, commissioner of the Devaswom Board, was suspended because she took her teenage daughter and other members of her family for a pilgrimage to Sabarimala in connection with *Choroonu*—first feeding of her grandchild. But according to tradition only women past their menstrual periods and young girls who are yet to mature are allowed entry. Asserts Govind Bharathan: "The Marxists are determined to break the age-old customs and traditions which goes with their philosophy that if one temple is destroyed, so much of superstition is eradicated."

Last month, V.S. Madhavan Nair, a close ally of state irrigation minister and RSP strong-man Baby John, was nominated to the TDB. The Kerala High Court passed an injunction against Nair's appointment which, however, the state government cleverly subverted. The Marxists are trying to sell the line that it is trying to gain control of the temple trusts solely because the Devaswom Boards have become a cesspool of corruption. Recently K. Mohanan, former Marxist MP and president of the CITU-led Travancore Devaswom Employees Federation, charged that TDB president Raman Bhattathiripad was inefficient but was sticking to his post of TDB president solely because he happens to be the brother-in-law of party supremo Namboodiripad. Added Mohanan, "The TDB should be dissolved as it is a useless board. Why Bhattathiripad, even God's own son can't clean up this mess." Mohanan further points out that corruption is so rampant in the TDB that the appointments of priests—it is alleged that they do not even know the rituals and *slokas*—in major temples are controlled by party bigwigs.





(Right) Devotees throng the Sabarimala temple; (above) Govind Bharathan: "The Devaswom Boards are being used as dustbins to accommodate disgruntled politicians"

The LDF government is clearly in a soup. It simply cannot ignore the powerful Hindu organisations in the state, all of whom are dead against the Devaswom Boards. Asked a RSS leader: "Will the government dare to take over the churches and mosques in the state?" They feel that the administration of the temples should be left to the Hindu devotees. Said Leela Thampi, a housewife actively involved with the Hindu cause: "The material and moral corruption prevailing in Kerala temples are shocking. The atheist government should hand over temple administration to Hindu believers at the earliest."

But the Marxist government is in no mood to do so. For, the temples in Kerala are the source of political clout and money. •

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum, Cochin and Guruvayoor

Q: But the CITU and former Marxist MP, Mohanan, has been critical of your performance...
A: I totally deny allegations made by Mohanan. If he has made much statements, the party should take action against him.

Q: There are allegations that TDB is a cesspool of corruption.
A: I don't deny that there is corruption but we have taken action against the erring officials. In fact, one of my aims is to clean up the place before my term expires.

Q: What about the Kerala High Court appointed high-power commission's report which has been quite critical about the functioning of the Sabarimala temple and has also recommended autonomy for it?
A: The TDB would implement the recommendations of the commission that would help improve the functioning of Sabarimala temple. But under no circumstances would we allow the separation of Sabarimala temple from the TDB. Nearly 75 per cent of the temples with poor income under TDB are now receiving financial assistance from the funds available from Sabarimala.

Q: The Hindu organisations and the high-power commission are recommending the de-politicisation of the Devaswom Boards. What are your views on it?
A: The commission's report was not deep and it was hazy. In a democracy there is nothing wrong in a politican managing temples so long as he does a good job. There is no question of handing over temples to Hindu organisations as there are too many of them pulling in different directions.

V GANGADHAR

Politics of opportunism

But for some political commentators, V.P. Singh can do no wrong

The *Indian Express* editorial of 25 October says it all. A special session of the Lok Sabha has been summoned on 7 November to enable the V.P. Singh government to prove its majority on the floor of the House in view of the withdrawal of the BJP support. The Prime Minister also claimed that the question was not that of sticking to power but of upholding certain principles pertaining to the Constitution, judiciary and secularism.

The editorial, "Two Difficulties", exposes the hypocrisy of such moral posturings. "Secularism dictates that for ten months he should do nothing on the Ram Janmabhoomi matter. Suddenly, the same 'secularism' dictates that he should yield to the dictates of secularists like Imam Bukhari...Yesterday, he resigned to vindicate a principle. Today, he says he must stick to the chair to vindicate a principle. Yesterday, his government removed Veerendra Patil's ministry without waiting for a test on the floor of the House. That was principle. Today, he says that all must wait till he tests his strength on the floor of the House. This too is principle."

Such brazen opportunism is indeed appalling. Yet, it goes unnoticed by certain eminent political commentators, particularly Nikhil Chakravartty. Such is his 'hero-worship' of V.P. Singh that he stoops to the level of charging the Congress of being soft towards the BJP and forecasts a Congress-BJP alliance in Parliament.

How can anyone be so blind to reality, that too being so close to the seat of power? Who entered into an opportunistic electoral alliance with the BJP at the time of the last Lok Sabha poll? Who acted as though the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute did not exist at all? Who exploited the alliance with the BJP to stick to power? Who ditched the BJP only to acquire a 'secular' image?

The Congress is perfectly justified not to co-operate with such a self-seeking government. It had repeatedly declared that it would support any government at the Centre without the BJP prop. It organised the highly successful and popular Sadbhavna Yatra to stress communal amity.

Commentators like Chakravartty refuse to see and listen to what is going around them. Such a blinkered approach does no credit to objective journalism.

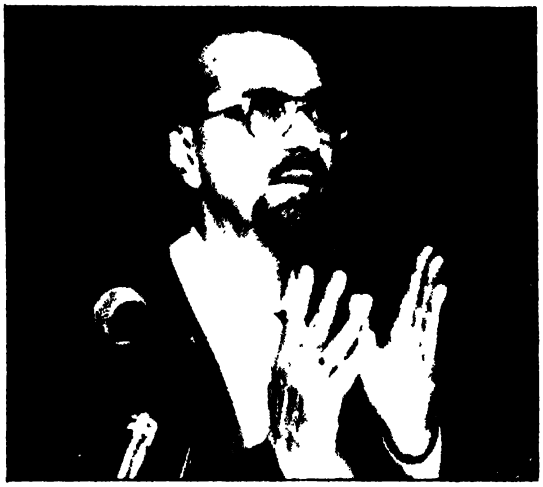
London fog

Oh, come on, Kuldip Nayar is one of us. How can he be accused of any impropriety in the sad death of the former Chief Justice of India, Sabyasachi Mukharji, in London recently? Hasn't he 'thrown open' the gates of the High Commission to 'everyone' and helped to assuage the wounded feelings of the London-based Sikhs? Hasn't Khushwant Singh come out with statements attacking those who were critical of Nayar and demanded his recall during the course of the enquiry into the death of the Chief Justice?

That was the attitude of the 'elite' press. *The Sunday Times of India*, which ran a puff story on its front page sometime back, somewhat made up for it with a hard-hitting interview with Mrs Ratna Mukharji, widow of the former Chief Justice, who was with him throughout.

Mrs Mukharji, quite rightly, fears that the truth will not be revealed so long Nayar was in a position to exert influence through his office. He had already orchestrated a "disinformation campaign" to show he was in no way negligent. With external affairs minister Inder Gujral, a close crony of Nayar, in charge, Mrs Mukharji doubts if the promised judicial inquiry would even come through.

The unfortunate lady has disproved the excuses trotted out by the High Commission and there is no reason to disbelieve her. Their foreign visit may have been 'private' in the eyes of the British government, but was very much 'official' for the High Commission. The Indian government had sent a copy of their tour sanction with instructions to take care of them.



Reams are written about English theatre because most of them are produced by ad tycoons. And sycophancy really peaked as Lintas chief **Alyque Padamsee's** *Othello* gets ready for its premiere



Who entered into an opportunistic electoral alliance with the BJP? Who exploited the alliance to stick to power? And, who ditched the BJP to acquire a 'secular' image? **V.P. Singh**, of course

Even the doctors at the governent-run Royal Free Hospital (the High Commission claimed it was one of the best in London)were surprised that a high dignitary like the Chief Justice was brought there which was meant only for social-security card holders. Mrs Mukharji has reiterated that her husband did sit on a wheelchair for seven hours with a drip in his arm. The embassy officials disappeared after bringing the couple to the hospital. Mr Nayar did not provide them with something as basic as a car though Mrs Mukharji had to travel several times between the hospital and her host's flat. Hours after the death of the Chief Justice, Mr Nayar was entertaining friends at the High Commission, with drinks *et al.*

During his days as a journalist, Nayar was in the habit of accusing anyone and everyone in the government (particularly if it was a Congress government) of real and imaginary cases of negligence. As a member of the value-based team, why doesn't he step down at least when the inquiry into the death of the Chief Justice is on?



Kuldip Nayar was in the habit of accusing everyone in the government of real and imaginary cases of negligence. Now, he should at least step down during the enquiry into the death of the former Chief Justice



More than what **Jaya Bachchan** had to say on the famous relationships of her husband, I was more taken in by the kind of upbringing she had. It was an open, normal, middle-class childhood

A burning issue

V.P. Singh only hinted at it. But Union minister for textiles, Sharad Yadav, was quite categorical in his public speeches and press interviews. Many of the anti-Mandal young men who had allegedly immolated themselves, had actually been torched by vested interests to provide intensity to the movement.

This is a most serious charge. And then came the news item that Rajeev Goswami, who was the first to set fire to himself in New Delhi, had lodged a police complaint that he was torched by some of his companions. It is a pity that this particular aspect of the Mandal tragedy has not been properly brought out by the national newspapers.

Selling out

Hindi, Marathi, Kannada and other regional theatre groups of Bombay find it difficult to get sponsors for their plays. Not so with the 'prestigious' English theatre. Five-star hotels, liquor makers, shoe shops and other commercial firms rush in with sponsorships even for third-rate sex farces.

The same goes for media coverage. Reams are written about English productions, their rehearsals exclusively covered, stars interviewed and so on. The main reason seems to be the presence of advertising tycoons as producers. And the English press goes overboard in its coverage of the English theatre because it always 'pays' to prop up the ad tycoons.

Such sycophancy really peaked as Lintas chief Alyque Padamsee's production of *Othello* gets ready for its premiere. The English press, while using up all the superlatives in their coverage of the rehearsals, went a bit further and came up with long articles on the play's costume designer, set designer and so on.

Simply Jaya

I was very impressed with Jaya Bachchan's *I believe* in the October issue of *Savvy* magazine. She is forthright, sincere and interesting. More than what she had to say on the famous relationships of her husband, I was more taken in by the kind of upbringing she had. It was an open, wholesome and normal middle-class childhood and the parents never imposed their decisions on the three daughters. 'We have never ever had a single discussion on their not having a son or us not having a brother.' Her father did not object to her joining the film institute at Pune. So uncomplicated and genuine was the father-daughter relationship, that when the hostel matron objected to her friendship with colleague Bhaskar Choudhary, Jaya wrote to her father that she liked Bhaskar and would like to marry him. Her father wrote back, "It's your decision. I feel you must concentrate on your studies and do what you went there to do and let the rest of your life just follow; not make commitments without seriously thinking what they involve. There is nothing wrong with what you are feeling. These are things that happen in life, phases that human beings go through."

Golden words of advice to thousands of parents who may have to go through similar situations in life.

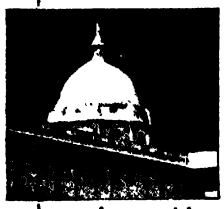
Happy birthday

I was delighted that most of our leading papers mentioned the 40th birthday of the *Peanuts* comic strip hero, Charlie Brown. Portrayed as a complete failure and wishy-washy, Charlie, however, is the hero of the comic strip syndicated in more than 2,300 newspapers all over the world and brings his creator, Charles Schulz, a cool 60 million dollars a year. Not bad for the little, round-headed kid, put down and tormented by the other kids. He cannot fly a kite, he cannot pitch a ball, he cannot raise his eye and look at that pretty, red-headed girl. So what? We all love you, Charlie Brown! ●

INDER MALHOTRA

Battered Benazir

What does the outcome of the Pakistani polls mean for India?



Benazir Bhutto's rout in the Pakistani election is truly stunning. Her charge that the poll was rigged massively has yet to be substantiated by convincing and independent evidence but it need not be dismissed out of hand. The rather low turn-out of voters suggests that the infamous ISI might have done a quiet and thorough job of scaring away PPP supporters.

There is no escape for Zardari or his wife. The regime which has been pursuing them since Benazir's dismissal can be depended upon to hound them with redoubled vigour



On the other hand, the US, whose opinion alone matters in this connection, might not take too dim a view of the situation unless the 40-strong team of Western observers can quote chapter and verse to show that there was a large-scale perversion of the democratic process. Benazir's numerous and vocal friends on the Capitol Hill might continue to shout but the US administration institutionally can be expected to resume business as usual with Pakistan.

In any case, with Benazir's crushing defeat and the landslide victory of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the Pakistani Army, the country's real rulers, have got exactly the political dispensation they want. There is bound to be some tussle over the leadership of the IJI Parliamentary Party, especially because the caretaker Prime Minister, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, is loath to lose his chair (even more than the Raja is in this country). He and his supporters are also bound to argue that to reassure minority provinces, it would be better to have a Sindhi Prime Minister. But this plea would not wash especially when the Pakistani President is a Pathan and the army chief a Mohajir from Azamgarh in UP. Anyhow,it is difficult to see how the prime ministership can be denied to Nawaz Sharif,who has delivered Punjab to the reactionary forces and re-established Punjabi supremacy at the Federal Centre.

Rigging or no rigging, one remarkable feature of the Pakistani poll merits close attention, especially by the Indian politicos now preparing for a mid-term election. Almost every veteran politician of the neighbouring country has been booted out by the predominantly youthful Pakistani voters. Khan Wali Khan, one of the most attractive leaders in the subcontinent, is among those who have bitten the dust. The same has been the plight of Air Marshal (retired) Asghar Khan, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Shah Ahmed Noorani and even the formidable Pir of Pagara. On the other hand, Benazir's husband, Asif Zardari, who even her best friends call a "creep", has easily won even from behind bars.

However, there is no escape for Zardari or for his loving wife. For, the regime which has been relentlessly pursuing them since Benazir's dismissal in August can be depended upon to hound them with redoubled vigour. The charges on which Zardari is held in a detention centre entail imprisonment for as many as 17 years.

Viewed from New Delhi, the present Pakistani election is a very important landmark in the history of a country which has seldom known stability. Indeed, it has been ruled by the military directly for 25 of the 43 years of its existence and indirectly for the rest of the period. Each of its three elected Prime Ministers was dismissed and one was sent to the gallows after what a former attorney-general of the United States called a "travesty of a trial".

During recent months, Pakistan's internal troubles and tribulations have been acute and the capacity of its polity to cope with these is in serious doubt. The best expectations from the election were that there might be a hung Parliament. But now that a jubilant IJI is in a position to form a government entirely on its own, it is clear that the army-dominated Pakistan is at last able to put its political act together. And, even at the risk of stressing the obvious, it must be added that this is happening at a time when, in a curious reversal of roles, politics in India is at sixes and sevens.

Such is the gravity of the crisis in which V.P. Singh has landed himself and the country that the Pakistani rulers, who are confident that they have got an "opportunity of a lifetime" in Kashmir, are bound to feel much more emboldened than during the last ten months or so.

Unlike Benazir, who allowed herself to rant and rave over Kashmir, often to the point of appearing demented, the IJI rulers of Pakistan would be under no compulsion to advertise their animus against India or their determination to wrest Kashmir from it. They are going to act in a manner that is likely to be both hard-headed and hard-faced. This does not mean that Pakistan, under its new government, would rush into a war. Not by any means. But just as the Pakistani Army even before the voters flocked to the booths had done in Afghanistan, they are almost certain to raise the ante in Kashmir. ●

KHUSHWANT SINGH

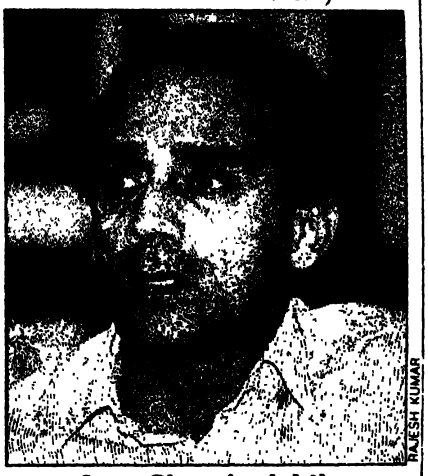
Mahatma Shourie



Actually there are two Mahatma Shouries, father and son. Father H.D. Shourie edits *Common Cause*, which takes up cases of fiscal injustice like unfair pension, sales tax and income tax rules, tenancy laws etc., and has won many spectacular successes for common citizens. The son, Arun, edits the *Indian Express* and with its proprietor, Seth Ramnath Goenka, has fought and won battles against states and central governments, brought down corrupt chief ministers and sycophantic civil servants, and more than once shaken the throne of Delhi. Arun is the most formidable journalist of our times. The issues he engaged in and the way he fought them are the themes of his compilation of articles, *Individuals, Institutions, Processes—How One May Strengthen The Other In India Today* (Penguin-Viking). One could sum it up in one question and answer. Why is everything in India going to pieces? Because we have forsaken Gandhi.

No changes in the Constitution, no switching over from the present form of government to the Presidential will make the slightest difference unless the quality of those who run the institutions of governance also change. Writes Shourie, "Any other structure we devise, however radically different it might be from the present one, will be swiftly reduced to the condition to which we have reduced this one as long as we—the people as much as the rulers—continue to conduct ourselves in the manner in which we are doing now."

Arun Shourie rightly believes that a free and fearless press is the greatest bulwark against the tide of corruption that threatens to engulf the country. Successive state and central governments have tried to stifle the press. Gundu Rao had offices of the *Deccan Herald* and the *Indian Express* besieged in Bangalore; Jagannath Mishra had the Bihar Press Bill; Farooq Abdullah had the J&K Press Bill; Rajiv Gandhi the Defamation Bill. And we cannot forget the Emergency when Mrs Gandhi gagged the entire press. The main target of the government's ire has been the *Indian Express* and its aged proprietor, Seth Ramnath Goenka. As many as 235 cases were trumped up against it; attempts were made to force government nominees on its board of directors; banks were ordered to refuse it loans; its electric power was cut off. For many days it was not allowed to publish. When bullying failed to crush the indomitable spirit of Seth Goenka, Mrs Gandhi tried to buy him off. Srichand Hinduja offered to buy it at any price named by the owner. "Have you come on behalf of the Devi?" asked Sethji. "You may draw your own conclusion," replied the Sindhi. Goenka snapped back with a squelcher of the kind for which he is famous, "*To kya main apnee gaye apney he haath say kasaaee key ghar pahuncha doon?* (you want me to deliver my own cow at the house of the butcher?)"



RAJESH KUMAR

Arun Shourie rightly believes that a free and fearless press is the greatest bulwark against the tide of corruption

Shourie comes down very hard on Indian journalists for not standing up to the government or going to the aid of papers being persecuted by it. The few honourable exceptions are Sri Mulgaonkar, Arun Jaitley, Gurumurthy, and lawyers like Fali Nariman and Ram Jethmalani who fought for press freedom in the law courts. The chief villains of the piece are *The Times of India*, which bends to every passing wind, and the Ambanis, who treat journalists as purchaseable commodity: if they happily accept favours from state governments, get plots of land at throw-away prices or given flats at low rents, free travel abroad etc., there is no reason why Ambanis, Hindujas, Birlas, Singhanias and Jains should not hire and fire them at their will. Shourie quotes from the life of Shaikh Saadi to sum up the plight of the purchaseable versus the upright:

"It was hot as can be. The great thinker and guide, penniless, in worn-out clothes, sat eating gruel under a tree. At a distance, high on the palanquin on which he was being carried by his attendants, and resplendent in robes that proclaimed his high connections, the court philosopher was on his way home for lunch.

"Who is that, sitting there?" he asked his bearers.

"No one of consequence, your honour, just that fellow who spends his time talking to villagers," they replied.

"Carry me to him," the great man ordered.

"What are you doing in this heat?" he asked, recognising the seer as he was lowered.

"Eating gruel "

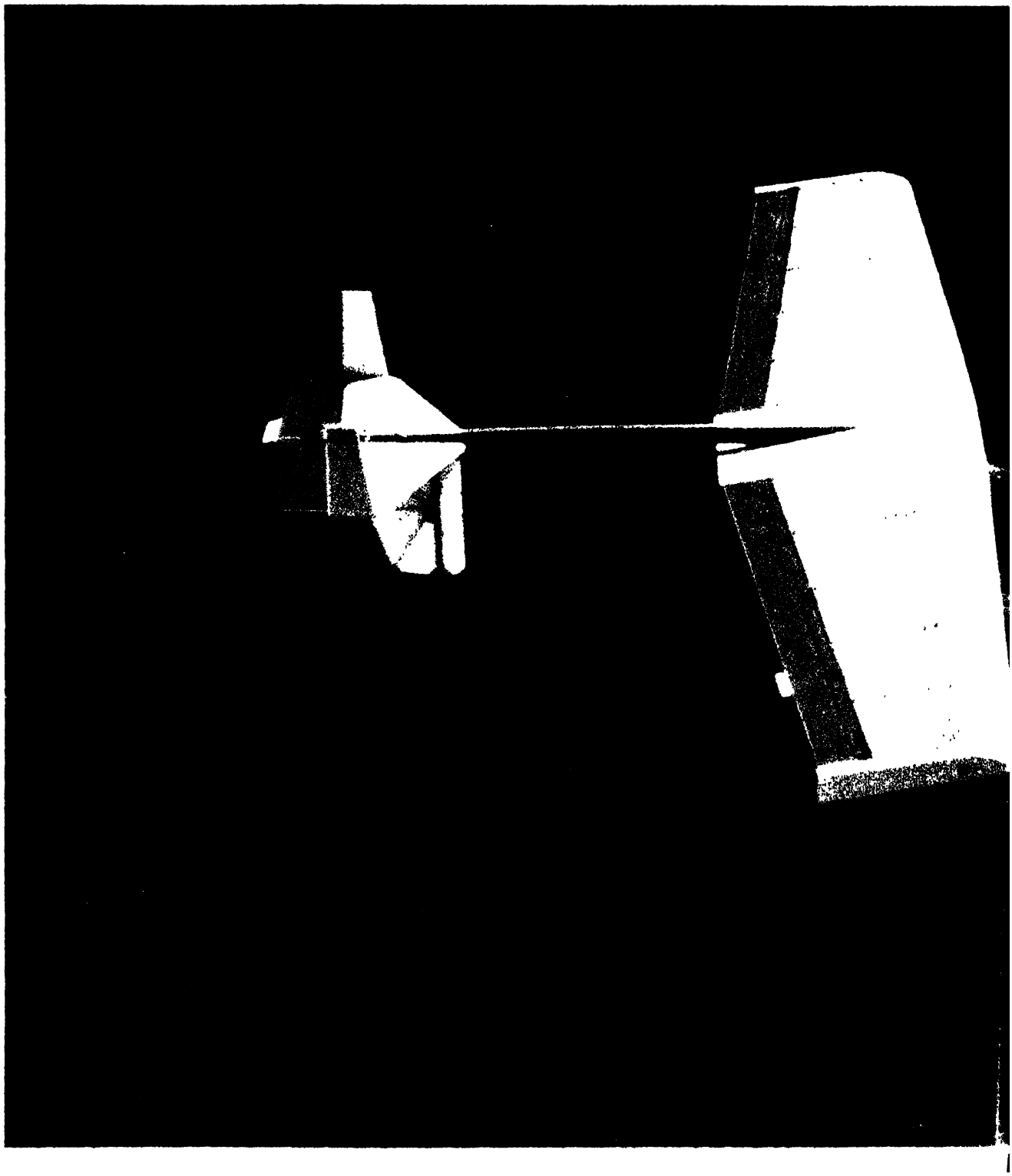
"What a fool you are," said the court philosopher with a sigh.

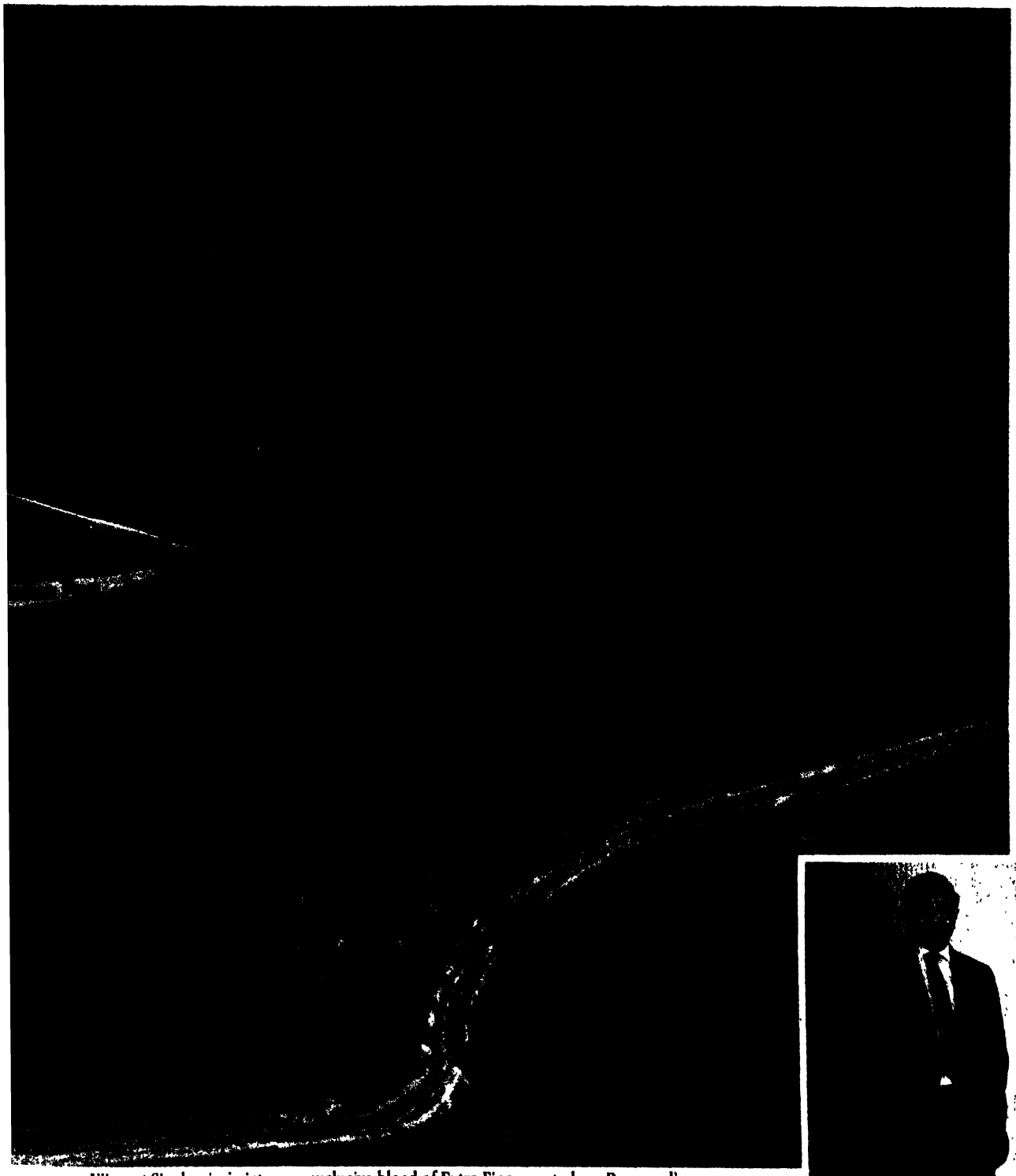
"If only you would learn to get along with the king, you wouldn't have to spend the rest of your life eating that wretched gruel."

"If only you would learn to eat gruel, my friend," said the teacher, "you wouldn't have to spend the rest of your life trying to get along with the king."

There is lot more in Arun Shourie's compilation which will make the reader ponder over the plight of his country. Why can't we get along with each other? Why are our civil servants so spineless? Why do our trade unions behave like gangs of *goondas*? Why can't we stand up to the injustice? I have not read another book on the mess that is India which made me think more and bring tears of anger into my eyes. Also some frustration that Arun should give so scintillating a book so drab and forbidding a title as *Individuals, Institutions, Processes*. Mahatmas rarely bother to wrap their gifts in attractive wrapping paper. Mahatma Shourie is no exception.●

You don't have to set a world flying record in a microlight to be a Raymond's man.





Vijaypat Singhania, aviator, photographer, publisher, industrialist, can't help being a Raymond's man. He's the Chairman of the Company.

His suit: "Microlite", an exclusive blend of Extra Fine Merino Wool.

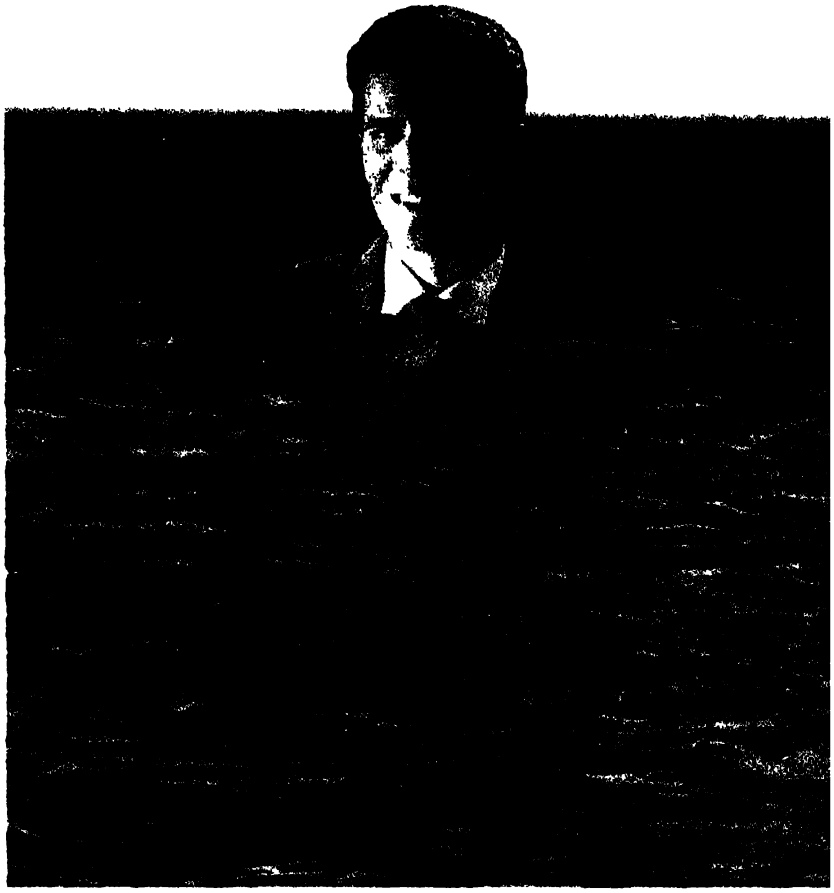
You don't have to break a world record to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

...but it helps.

Raymond's

Never say no to life.

THE 'MAKE OR BREAK' TEST FOR A PRODUCT IS NOT ON THE TEST-BED, BUT IN THE UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF REAL LIFE.



When it comes to engineering firsts in industrial electrics and electronics in India, it is Kirloskar Electric which wrote the book almost single-handedly. We've stuck our necks out, burnt our fingers and done things that other companies considered impossible. But there's one particular first that taught us more than any book could: the 3.2 MVA, 11000/605 volts, class 'C' insulated dry type transformer.

In 1983 the Metro Railways in Calcutta, India's one and only underground rail transport system, asked us to design and manufacture a dry type transformer with the highest rating of its kind in the country.

Their brief was succinct: transformers play a critical role in the Metro system. Without them all loco-movement would come to a standstill. The closer a transformer is to a sub-station, the greater the energy savings. So they wanted our transformer located underground. It had to withstand highly fluctuating loads, have the most advanced standard of efficiency, be totally non-inflammable and require minimum maintenance.

Above all, they wanted it to be utterly reliable.

We are past masters at making transformers and delivered the Calcutta Metro order in 1984.

It was at this time that there was a deluge in Calcutta. Our transformer was totally submerged in water for 22 days. When the waters receded, the transformer was encrusted solid with silt and cement.

We brought the transformer back to our factory, cleaned the core coil assembly with water jets and dried it. The cement deposits however had hardened to the point where they could not be removed. Now for the moment of truth. No test in the world demanded that a transformer work after 22 days under water. Would our transformer take such an extraordinary beating and yet continue to function normally?

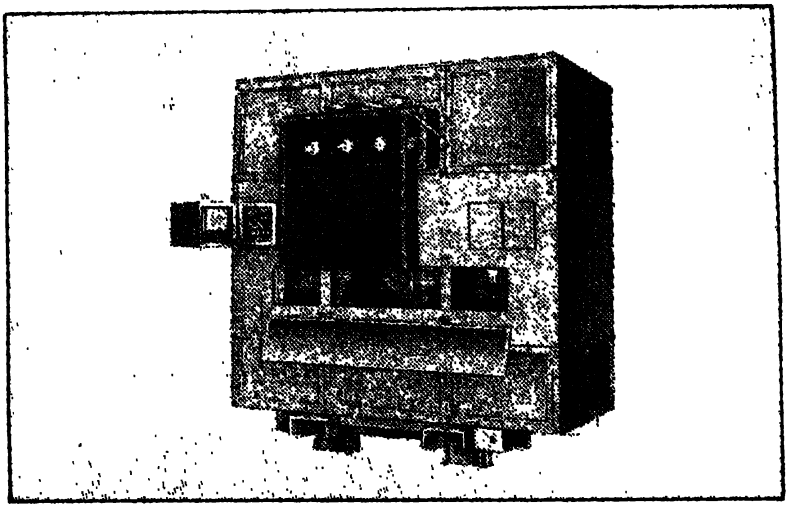
It did. It came through the ordeal by water by withstanding all high voltage tests successfully. We had not just made a conventional dry type transformer with the highest rating in the country but also with the greatest reliability. However, since the cement deposits on the windings would affect the cooling of coils, we replaced the old transformer with a new one.

But Kirloskar Electric is more than the sum of all the firsts it has earned over the years. We are India's leading industrial electrics and electronics company in the private sector. We make some of the finest standard AC and DC drives, transformers, welding equipment and systems, motorised gear units, equipment for defence, electronic control equipment, CNCs, etc. But the one single reason why we are the prime movers in our field is because the centre of gravity at Kirloskar Electric is the customer. Our hi-tech, engineering expertise, superior quality and reliability are all geared to anticipate and respond to his needs.

KIRLOSKAR ELECTRIC CO. LTD.

INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICS AND ELECTRONICS

Regd. Office : Industrial Suburb, Kajajinagar, Bangalore-560 010.



When nobody else can do the job, Kirloskar Electric will.

RUNNING OUT OF TRICKS

Is this the end for V.P. Singh?

A hollow Prime Minister· a hollow claim of a hollow majority—and an all too solid crisis. As the days inched towards the 7th of November when the National Front government would face a motion of confidence in the Lok Sabha, the only thing that was clear was that when India seemed in danger of being rocked by communal and caste-based violence, the country had no government.

It didn't have to be that way. On Monday, 22 October, Vishwanath Pratap Singh went on television to declare that he was, at last, prepared to stand up for secularism, regardless of the cost to his political career. Political observers interpreted the statement to mean that he would arrest Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president L.K. Advani and halt his *rath yatra*. It was the only course open to Singh. All attempts to find a compromise had failed and even if he shirked the responsibility, there was little doubt that UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav would place Advani behind bars once the *yatra* entered his state.

The Raja's TV address was seen as a grand gesture. It was expected that he would arrest Advani early the next morning, that the BJP would then withdraw support, and the Prime Minister, in turn, would cast himself as a martyr to secularism and submit his resignation.

That scenario was only partly accurate. Yes, Advani was arrested and the BJP did pull the plug on the National Front/Janata Dal government. But strangely, it was the Raja—that self-proclaimed reluctant Prime Minister—who sprung a surprise. Even after the BJP's Atal Behari Vajpayee had formally informed the President that his party was withdrawing support, V.P. Singh decided to cling on.

He told an astonished President R. Venkataraman that he thought he could still prove his majority on the floor of the Lok Sabha and saw no reason to resign. His assertion defied both logic and mathematics and so, to back it up, V.P. Singh's supporters



RAJESH KUMAR

V.P. SINGH

put it about that scores of Congress and BJP members were ready to defect and would risk disqualification from Parliament in an effort to keep the Raja in office.

For a normally shrewd politician, this was a childish claim to make. So was V.P. Singh's other assertion: that he would ask for a vote of confidence on the decision to arrest Advani. The BJP would naturally vote against him but the Congress, terrified of seeming communal, would abstain, giving the government a comfortable majority. Within a day, a Congress spokesman had pointed out that a motion of no-confidence would—according to parliamentary procedure—be taken up before any other motion, including the vote of confidence on the Advani issue. And that the Congress would vote against V.P. Singh in any case—even if it was a motion of confidence.


DEVI LAL

At week's end, the hollow claim of a majority having been exposed, V.P. Singh was singing a different tune. Now, he conceded that he would lose but argued—even more bizarrely—that he was clinging to office because he wanted to bring the arrest of Advani before Parliament. Why, asked an interviewer from *The Times of India*, did he still talk in terms of majority support? V.P. Singh had his answer ready: "My formulation (to the President that I will prove my majority) was perhaps not a very happy one. But what I really wanted was to present this issue to Parliament."

It was another hollow explanation and concealed the real motive behind the Prime Minister's actions: a determination to keep Chandra Shekhar from succeeding him. That was why he was clinging on to an office that he had no real right to. And that was why India was without a legitimate or effective government during this grave crisis.

For weeks now, an alternative scenario has been making the rounds. It is no secret that Chandra Shekhar, Devi Lal and Mulayam Singh Yadav have little faith in V.P. Singh. Others, such as Ajit Singh, Biju Patnaik and Chimanbhai Patel, have been content to sit on the fence, demonstrating no particular enthusiasm for V.P. Singh. That has left the Prime Minister with the support of the casteists (Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav), the Arun Nehru faction (which appears to have run out of options) and assorted political non-entities (George Fernandes, Jaipal Reddy, P. Upendra, Madhu Dandavate, etc.).

Suppose now that the fence-sitters went over to the anti-VP brigade. That would give the dissidents enough MPs to split the party (under the Anti-Defection Act, they need a third) and to form a government with Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister—with the support of the Congress(I).

The scenario had evoked much speculation even before the BJP withdrew support. With V.P. Singh reduced to a lame duck, it seemed the logical course of action. Except that now there might be no need for a split—the united Janata Dal might well agree to elect Shekhar leader.

V.P. Singh knew that had he resigned after arresting Advani, the President would have asked Rajiv Gandhi, as the leader of the largest party in the House, to try and form a government. Rajiv would have, in all probability, responded that he didn't want the job but would back a Chandra Shekhar-led Janata Dal government. By hanging on, he prevented this from happening. He wanted to lose his vote of confidence and then call elections.

That was what all the talk of "principles" really amounted to.

Predictably, the attention shifted to Shekhar as soon as Vajpayee told the President that the BJP was withdrawing support. Newsmen and MPs thronged the Janata Dal strongman's sprawling government house in Delhi's South Avenue Lane and urged Shekhar to openly call for V.P. Singh's resignation.


RAJESH KUMAR
CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Shekhar was not having any of this. "I do not believe in celebrating the misfortune of others," was all he would say. Did he want to be Prime Minister? Shekhar was too experienced a politician to give a categorical reply.

His supporters, however, suffered from no such compunctions. While their leader confabulated on the telephone with the likes of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel, three of Shekhar's closest aides took on the job of briefing the press. Kamal Morarka, the

personable young Bombay industrialist who is also treasurer of the Janata Dal, made it clear that he thought that the President should ask V.P. Singh to prove his majority and not wait for a Lok Sabha session. Harmohan Dhawan, who recently resigned as secretary of the Janata Dal, asked V.P. Singh to step down and Yashwant Sinha, the former IAS officer who functioned as the Janata Dal's most articulate spokesman on TV during the elections, made it clear that he thought that Shekhar would be the next Prime Minister.

In fact, it was not so simple. The vast majority of Janata Dal MPs were still out of town; the party's fence-sitters had still to indicate a preference; Mulayam Singh Yadav refused to take any political decision until after the *kar seva* in Ayodhya; and Devi Lal was touring Maharashtra.

But when the Tau returned, he did nothing to boost Shekhar's prospects. Recognising that Devi Lal was an unreliable commodity, Singh had done everything possible to win him over. He had been assisted by Ranjit Singh, the Chaudhary's younger son, who has always feared that Chandra Shekhar prefers Om Prakash Chautala, Lal's elder son, to him. The Raja sent a special IAF plane to fetch Devi Lal (leading the Congress to ask why the air force should be used to help settle the Janata Dal's squabbles). Ranjit Singh flew back with his father and persuaded him that V.P. Singh deserved his support.

Early on the morning of Wednesday, 24 October, Lal drove straight from the airport to the Prime Minister's residence at Race Course Road. The two leaders remained closeted for what must have seemed like eternity to Chandra Shekhar. After the meeting, nobody was willing to disclose what had transpired, but obviously the Raja had succeeded in selling his case to the Tau. For, speaking to the media soon after the heart-to-heart, Lal declared his unhappiness at the idea of changing horses in the middle of the race (*"Beech raaste mein ghoda nahin badalte"*).

The Tau, for the moment at least, was on VP's side. But the dissident camp—though disappointed—did not lose heart completely. After all, wasn't the Chaudhary famed for his abrupt volte-faces, executed without the least sign of embarrassment?

The confidence of the rebels wasn't entirely misplaced. A day later, Lal had changed his stance. Yes, it wasn't politic to change horses when the race was only half-way through, he clarified, but nobody disputed that you could change the rider.

But who would the former deputy prime minister prefer to see in the saddle? The signals that emerged from Lal's Willingdon Crescent residence were confusing, to say the least. Initially, while Chautala had been less than keen on the Raja, Ranjit Singh had convinced the Chaudhary to support V.P. Singh. But now Ranjit indicated, in private conversation at least, that he wasn't averse to the idea of his father having a shot at the prime ministership. Since he appeared to be the current court favourite, political observers took this to mean that Lal was in the fray.

None of the members of the parliamentary party, the argument went, was keen on the Raja continuing at the helm, because of his stated preference for a mid-term poll. The Prime Minister had refused to offer his resignation only because he wished to lose the confidence motion on the floor of the House and recommend its dissolution. In that event, he would lead the party to the next general elections as the caretaker PM and,

Shekhar vs the Raja

It's a battle of personalities, not issues

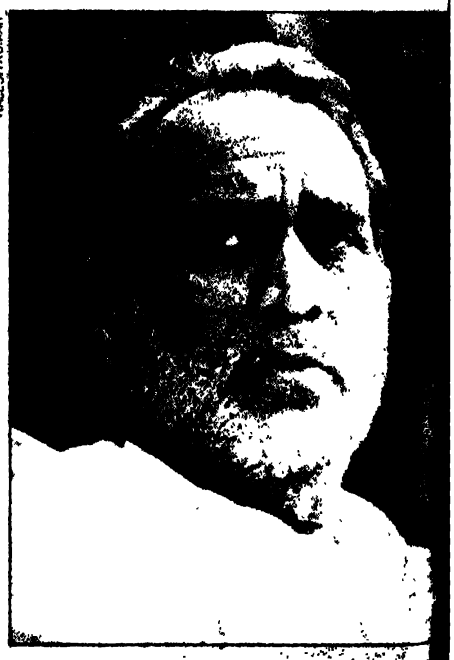
Obsessive. That's the word which best describes the relationship between the leader of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party and its chief sulker. And it is this relationship which could well determine whether India goes to the polls yet again in a year's time or the country gets a new Prime Minister and Parliament a new lease of life.

The animus between Chandra Shekhar and his fellow Thakur, the Raja of Manda, goes back to the days when the various opposition parties were being cobbled together to form the Janata Dal. V.P. Singh, for reasons which were then unclear, decided to keep Shekhar out of the power game. Ajit Singh was appointed party president and the veteran Janata leader was told that there was no significant post for him as his party's quota had been exhausted.

One of the reasons advanced for V.P. Singh's decision was that Shekhar, a UP Thakur leader, could threaten the Raja's votebank. Hence, it made political sense to keep him out in the cold. And deprive his supporters of tickets when the parliamentary polls came along. V.P. Singh, never one to miss a trick, did just that, hoping to eclipse Shekhar's political influence.

Shekhar had his revenge, with the 75th birthday rally of Chaudhary Devi Lal at the Boat Club lawns. The bearded Janata leader went all out to project the Tau as the undisputed leader of the Dal and, by extension, a candidate for the prime ministership. As expected, the move went down ill with the Raja, who began attempts to wean away Shekhar's supporters to get his own back.

With great success. VP managed to win the Chaudhary over to his side soon after the election, doing a deal with him to deprive Shekhar of a chance to stand for the post of party leader (read Prime Minister). Shekhar walked out of the meeting


RAJESH KUMAR

with luck, his caste calculations would ensure his comeback, this time with a clear-cut majority.

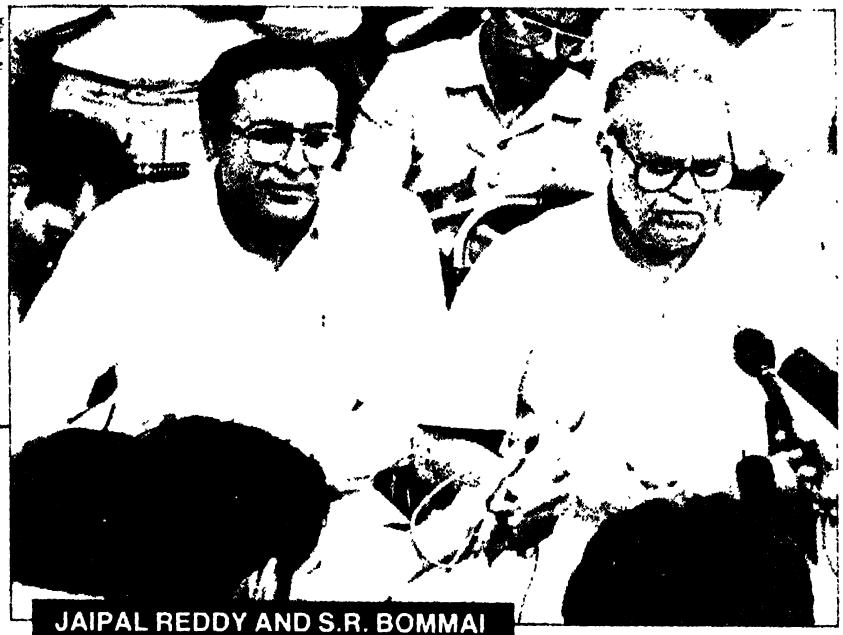
Unfortunately, none of the other MPs shared this perception. They believed that the Raja's misgovernance and the various crises their party had created had disillusioned the electorate beyond measure. And if elections were held, none of them had much chance of retaining his parliamentary seat. It was, therefore, in their interest to keep the National Front government going, for as long as possible.

And if that meant that VP had to go, so be it.

The Devi Lal camp intended to capitalise on this feeling in its bid for a change of leadership. What made its task easier was the Raja's intense dislike of Chandra Shekhar, who had emerged as one of the contenders. If handing over charge became inevitable, went the Raja's reasoning, then he'd much rather have Devi Lal succeed him than Shekhar. So, if a contest did come about, then the Raja would get his loyalists to vote for the Tau.

Shekhar was not unaware of this, or of the fact that whatever the Chaudhary might say to him in private, he was a very unreliable ally. The Janata leader's supporters, therefore, lobbied with such party stalwarts as Mulayam Singh Yadav, Biju Patnaik, Arun Nehru and Ajit Singh in the hope of winning them over. Gossip in Delhi's political circles had it that Shekhar had managed to win over 40-odd MPs and needed another 20 before he would stake his claim. But any mention of numbers was more than suspect in the highly fluid political situation.

It was easier to speculate how the various leaders—and their factions—would vote if the leadership was contested. It was considered relatively easy to predict which way Mulayam Singh would swing. He'd always been an admirer of Shekhar's and the Raja hadn't exactly endeared himself to him by depriving him of his



JAIPAL REDDY AND S.R. BOMMAI

to head straight for his Bhondsi farmhouse, emerging only to announce that he wouldn't accept any post in the Dal government.

The Raja's suspicions about Shekhar's intentions, however, persisted. And the IB was asked to keep a close watch on his activities, while his telephones were bugged to pre-empt any revolt he might try to stage. Shekhar raised a stink through an interview to *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, embarrassing the Raja, who prided himself on his "value-based politics".

Hostilities assumed a graver dimension when V.P. Singh transformed himself into the Raja of Mandal. The nationwide stir that followed gave Shekhar his cue. And with the support of Devi Lal, who had by then been sacked by the Prime Minister, dissident activity resumed with greater vigour than ever before.



Shekhar, however, persisted in his refusal to attack the Raja personally. He did everything short of that to discredit him in the public eye. His supporters, including Yashwant Sinha, Harmohan Dhawan and Kamal Morarka, were put on the job. But the Raja proved more than equal to the task, getting the party to pass confidence motions in his favour every time a breath of criticism touched him.

He never forgave Chandra Shekhar, though. And when the BJP finally withdrew support from the National Front government, V.P. Singh wasn't so much concerned about safeguarding his own position as he was about keeping Shekhar out at all costs. Even if he looked unmistakably like a limpet, in the bargain.

Shekhar's stand wasn't very dissimilar, either. His was also a one-point programme, summed up by the acronym ABVP—Anybody But VP. It didn't matter that Devi Lal might well win a fresh election to the post of party leader; as long as the Raja went, all was well with Shekhar.

And in this battle of personalities, nobody was around to rue the fact that the issues had been lost sight of completely.

moment of glory—having Advani arrested before he could enter Uttar Pradesh.

Ajit Singh, true to his image as the flip-flop man of the Janata Dal, began by sending an emissary to every camp, promising his support. But half-way through, he appeared to have given up on the Raja, walking out of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs meeting on the grounds that a government which had lost majority support had no business taking policy decisions.

The industry minister's options were rather limited in the circumstances. He couldn't afford to let Devi Lal become Prime Minister for fear of losing Jat support in western UP. Given a choice between a lowly minister and the PM himself, the Jats would opt for the latter.

That left only Chandra Shekhar, and Ajit sent over his trusted lieutenant Rashid Masood to the rebel leader, to open negotiations.

What complicated matters in Ajit Singh's case, however, were his delusions of grandeur. With some help from Arun Nehru, he was trying hard to emerge as the consensus candidate for the PM's post—or, at the very least, deputy prime minister. Realising the hopelessness of the task, Nehru soon withdrew, but the industry minister wasn't willing to give up quite so easily.

Arun Nehru, along with such camp followers as Arif Mohammad Khan, seemed to have adopted a policy of wait and watch. And it was thought that he would turn whichever way the wind appeared to be blowing. Shekhar loyalists, however, seemed sure of his support, disclosing that the commerce minister would keep his promise of supporting VP on the 7th—and come over to their side the day after.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister was straining every sinew to effect a compromise: with the dissidents, the BJP and even the Congress. When his exhortations to partymen to unite in this hour of need didn't work, the Raja began talking of developing a secular axis. When observers interpreted this as an SOS to the Congress, V.P. Singh turned all coy and refused to acknowledge that he'd made any such appeal. Then, minister of state for home affairs Subodh Kant Sahay was put on the job of placating the BJP. Sahay sought a meeting with A.B. Vajpayee, while Doordarshan



DAL LEADERS MEET

was roped into the task of creating the impression that the Raja was pro-Muslim.

The Intelligence Bureau (IB) report which spoke of Hindu consolidation was partly responsible for the change of strategy. Scared that he would be left with only minority support, V.P. Singh got Doordarshan to clarify that Prophet Mohammad's birthday was not a national holiday and that the Dal government had not given any money to Imam Bukhari for the restoration of

COUNTDOWN ■ *To the Raja's worst crisis ever*

Monday, 22 October: The Prime Minister goes on television to announce that he is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice in the cause of secularism. The address to the nation is interpreted as the Raja's way of announcing his imminent resignation after the arrest of Advani and the withdrawal of support by the BJP.

Tuesday, 23 October: BJP president L.K. Advani



A.B. Vajpayee

is arrested at 6.30 in the morning at Samastipur. A.B. Vajpayee takes the morning flight to Delhi from Calcutta to consult senior party leaders on the future course of action. At around 10.30 am, Vajpayee calls on the President to deliver a formal letter withdrawing support from the National Front government. The Raja, however, tells Venkataraman that he will prove his majority on the floor of the House and refuses to resign.

Wednesday, 24 October: After consulting senior Janata Dal leaders and his Cabinet colleagues (at the political affairs committee meeting), V.P. Singh asks the President to call an emergency session on 7 November. Venkataraman accedes to the request and issues a com-



R. Venkataraman

munique to this effect. The BJP and the Congress, however, oppose the move to summon the Lok Sabha and insist that the President either dismiss V.P. Singh or he resign of his own accord.

Thursday, 25 October: The JD dissidents gear up to force a fresh election for the party leadership. But Devi Lal—who has been carted back to Delhi by a special IAF plane—comes out in favour of the Raja, putting a damper on their plans. While Chandra Shekhar fobs off persistent newsmen, the Dal severs its links with the BJP in Rajasthan and Gujarat as a retaliatory measure.

Friday, 26 October: Maneka Gandhi's resignation from the council of ministers is rumoured to be the first of a series of such resignations. The dissident



Chandra Shekhar



the Jama Masjid.

But the time for such ploys was over.

As matters stood, one of several things could happen. The most obvious scenario, of course, was that the Raja would manage to carry the day at the National Front meeting. Once the MPs expressed support in his leadership, VP would go to the Lok Sabha to seek a vote of confidence. With Speaker Rabi Ray insisting on a one-line motion, the PM wouldn't get the opportunity to deliver his spiel on secularism and his commitment to that noble ideal. The motion would go to vote right away.

Assuming that the Raja loses the vote of confidence, as seems inevitable, he will recommend to the President that the House be dissolved. VP will then lead the country into the next parliamentary poll as caretaker PM.

Remaining caretaker Prime Minister is crucial to V.P. Singh's strategy. After Mandal, his best bet is the backward vote—hence the concerted efforts to woo the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Kanshi Ram—and the Raja knows all too well that he can only get the backwards to vote if he controls the government machinery.

The President, however, is not bound to take the advice of the head of a minority government who has lost the confidence of the Lok Sabha. So, Venkataraman would be well within his rights to call upon the leader of the single largest party, Rajiv Gandhi, to form an alternative government.

Were such an eventuality to arise, the Congress president could exercise either of two options. One, he could accept Venkataraman's offer and form the government, with outside support. About 40 MPs of the Dal (a third to prevent disqualification under the Anti-Defection Act) could well defect to the Congress, if the party promises to give them tickets for the next election.

Gandhi could then ask for a month or so to prove his majority and spend the interim period in bringing the law and order situation in control and winning the confidence of the people. Once things had settled down a trifle, Rajiv could ask that Parliament be dissolved on the grounds that he could function better with a fresh mandate.

The advantage of adopting such a course is that Gandhi would be caretaker Prime Minister when the polls are held and would thus be in control of the electoral process. The disadvantage is that given the current political situation—Mandal Commission, Ram Janmabhoomi, etc.—he would have to take certain tough political decisions, which might spoil his chances at the hustings.

However, the Congress would not consider it expedient to allow fresh elections just yet. For one thing, Gandhi would have to take a stand on Mandal and Ayodhya, instead of waf-



Maneka Gandhi

camp derives cheer from this, as from the visit of Chandra Shekhar to the President. While Shekhar refuses to divulge what he discussed with Venkataraman, speculation is rife that he had asked the President not to accede to VP's request for a mid-term poll.

Saturday, 27 October: The Janata Dal ministers rally around the Prime Minister, maintaining that the Raja's leadership was not negotiable. The Prime Minister calls MPs to his house for tea and P. Upendra briefs mediamen to the effect that 100 members expressed support for VP's leadership. The dissidents, however, keep up their efforts, with Shekhar hinting at his daily press conference that the 4 November meeting of the National Front would elect a new leader.

Sunday, 28 October: The government cracks down on the *kar sevaks*, arresting 3,000 people in Ayodhya. The Rajmata of Gwalior, Vijayaraje Scindia, is arrested at Chitrakoot as are several other prominent BJP leaders. The dissidents hold a press conference to clarify that all those who had tea with the PM the day before were not his supporters, and claim that the government was using Doordarshan to spread disinformation. But the situation remains as confused as ever, with both Shekhar and Devi Lal being held out as alternatives to VP.

Monday, 29 October: Ayodhya takes over from the Raja as far as newspaper headlines are concerned, with pitched battles being fought on the streets between *kar sevaks* and the police, while a red alert is sounded in UP. The Prime Minister, in a significant comedown from his earlier stand, hints that he might step down if the BJP and the VHP agree to abide by the court verdict on Ram Janmabhoomi. But only if one of his men—Madhu Dandavate, for instance—is chosen party leader in his stead.

Vijayaraje Scindia



Tuesday, 30 October: Hindu fundamentalists enter the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid complex and damage the disputed structure. They manage to hoist saffron flags atop the domes of the Masjid. Violence breaks out in six states, resulting in at least 35 deaths. V.P. Singh renews his offer to step down "in the interests of the country".

Upendra's poodle

Apply, apply, tell another lie

Television autonomy, it now turns out, was just another contradiction to be managed. And, to the Raja's credit, he's managed to do just that. If Doordarshan was better described as Rajivdarshan during the days of the Congress regime, it has now taken the appearance of the PM's personal propaganda machine.

Thus, when the BJP withdrew support from the National Front government, television news bulletins seemed to take the cue from Dal president S.R. Bommai in treating the episode as a "grave situation" rather than a "crisis". No mention was made of the demand for the Prime Minister's resignation.

This kind of skewed view was well in keeping with the traditions of Mandi House, but what followed made the worst excesses of the Congress fade into insignificance. The national news reported the PM's tea party to which all party MPs had been invited. And the brief of the information and broadcasting minister, P. Upendra, which had that as many as 100 members had expressed support for the Raja, received prominent coverage.

The truth was somewhat different. Only 60-70 MPs had turned up—of which a fair number were Rajya Sabha members—and at the gathering, five dissidents (Chand Ram, Kapil Deo Shastri, Jay Prakash, Purshottam Kaushik and Hemendra Singh) had even asked for the PM's resignation! Of course, P. Upendra conveniently forgot to mention this small matter at the official briefing.

The dissidents held a press conference at the residence of Kalyan Singh Kalvi to give their side of the story. But by then, the damage was done

Disinformation—though bad enough—wasn't all. Upendra, realising only too well that his political well-being lay in the survival of the Raja, pulled out all stops in an attempt to give the PM's image a fresh Teflon coating. Unfortunately, in keeping with the minister's general level of incompetence, the moves were amateurish at best and transparent at worst.

The Prime Minister was hauled on to television every night to address the nation on the grave situation in the country. And in an attempt to disprove the canard that he was the first Prime Minister of India who didn't look you in the eye, VP stared goggle-eyed at viewers while on camera.

Eye contact, however, was all



that he achieved. For nobody was buying all that nonsense about a piece of his heart dropping off, etc. And the move to appease Hindu sentiment by talking about his love for Ram and his desire for a temple in the god's honour (though not on the disputed territory) didn't work either.

In the end, V.P. Singh resembled nobody more than Indira Gandhi during the run-up to the Emergency. There were the same nightly addresses to the nation, the same self-righteous harangues to crowds which had the unmistakable air of being rented audiences and the same hunted look when the mask slipped.

There couldn't be a bigger comedown than that.

fling as he has been doing all this while. Also, while the reservation policy may cost the party the backward vote, Mulayam Singh Yadav may well walk away with the Muslims. But if the Dal was to continue in office for another year or so, its bungling would ensure the complete disillusionment of the electorate—and a landslide for the Congress.

That brings us to Rajiv Gandhi's second option. After asking the President for time, the Congress could well approach the rebel faction of the Janata Dal and promise its support if it wanted to form an alternative government. Since none of the Dal MPs wants a mid-term poll, a third could well split to form a new party, which would be supported in office by the Congress.

The contenders for the Prime Minister's post would be Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal. Left to himself, Rajiv would prefer having the Tau in South Block, as he seems programmed to self-destruct. But at a crunch, he could well support Chandra Shekhar.

This scenario, however, could unfold at the National Front meet itself. If a contest for leadership of the party were to be held, the Raja could lose to either Devi or Shekhar. In such an event, the new leader could well win the vote of confidence, with support from the Congress and the BJP, both of which don't want elections and would support a Janata Dal government, provided it wasn't headed by Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

Alternatively, the Dal could vote in a consensus candidate such as Mulayam Singh Yadav or Biju Patnaik as party leader in the hope that his leadership would be more acceptable. The Raja, however, is very keen that one of his loyalists—Madhu Dandavate is the name mentioned most often in this connection—get elected in his stead. But such an eventuality seems unlikely at the present. Or, as Vajpayee suggests, a national government could be formed at the Centre to tide over these difficult times—though it is difficult to see how the left and the BJP could be part of the same government. But then, contradictions, as the Raja is so fond of saying, exist only to be managed.

The possibilities, then, are immense. As is the uncertainty. The only thing beyond doubt is that this situation cannot last—not if the country is to survive. •

Seema Goswami and Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

MAHESH JETHMALANI

Fall from grace

The rath yatra *and its accompanying rhetoric have debunked L. K. Advani's credentials as a national leader*



Not very long ago, Lal Krishan Advani was perceived by most educated Indians as one of the tallest figures in our political firmament. He was widely regarded as being erudite, articulate and the very epitome of sobriety; in a word, a model of statesmanship. At one stroke, Mr Advani's *rath yatra*, its accompanying rhetoric and fanfare, its ultimate objective (which undoubtedly was to construct a temple even if it entailed the demolition of an existing mosque) and his inevitable arrest have together conspired to destroy that perception and debunk Mr Advani's credentials as a national leader, as opposed to a purely sectarian one.

But, it is not Mr Advani's fall from political grace alone that those who conceived the *rath yatra* have to atone for. The *rath yatra* and the foremost priority accorded to the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in the BJP's political agenda have revealed that the party's think-tank is incapable of providing the party with an imaginative platform that affords solutions to the challenges posed to the modern Indian Republic. The BJP has instead chosen to plump for its age-old Hindu revivalist tradition; but in this its latest invocation of that tradition, it has sought recourse to the most irrational paraphernalia.

Consider the elements that together constituted the BJP's travelling road show—a mythological epic, obsolete armoury, such as chariots and *trishuls*, frenzied communal slogans and yes, even a macabre ritual in which Mr Advani was weighed against blood! By defining its political agenda in terms of its pristine tradition and expressing it in such atavistic and excessively ritualistic terms, the BJP may undoubtedly have earned for itself the plaudits of its faithful hardcore, but it is unlikely that the party would have either endeared itself to its communally more temperate members or won for itself new adherents who may have been attracted by the party's ethos of discipline and consistency, while being repelled by the discord and cacophony in the Janata Dal as also the intellectual confusion and puerile one-upmanship of Rajiv's Congress.

It is difficult to comprehend why the party chose to pull the rug from under the National Front government's feet on an issue as controversial and divisive as the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Mr Advani's own statements during the course of his *rath yatra* indicate that there was at least some uneasiness in his mind about the strategy he and his party had embarked upon. His attempted justifications for the strategy are singularly unconvincing.

When Mr Advani first commenced his *rath yatra* his answer to critics who contended that it would result in communal strife was that, on the contrary, the *rath yatra* was designed to promote national unity. Conscious that since Lord Ram was a Hindu deity and that accordingly, he would be equating nationalism with Hinduism, Mr Advani took care to mention that all inhabitants of India including Muslims ought to hold Lord Ram in reverence since he was one of the foremost figures of the country's cultural heritage. In other words, Mr Advani would have the nation believe that the essential unity of all its people was founded on the *Ramayan*.

Mr Advani himself would un-



RAJESH KUMAR

Conscious that Lord Ram was a Hindu deity and that, accordingly, he would be equating nationalism with Hinduism, Advani took care to mention that everybody, including the Muslims, ought to hold Lord Ram in reverence. In other words, he would have the nation believe that the essential unity of all Indian people was founded on the *Ramayan*

doubtedly admit that there may be dissidents to this view. For one thing, it is eminently reasonable to revere Lord Ram on the basis of his conduct set out in the *Ramayan* and yet be somewhat sceptical about the fact of his actual existence. Secondly, those imbued with the rationalist spirit may well be of the view that if nationhood consists in a common history, then why seek recourse to events of doubtful historicity and which, in any event, would have occurred in some millenia BC? After all, this country's history is not totally bereft of glorious eras since the *Ramayan*. Indeed, ancient Indian history is replete with religiously neutral epochs of glory.

Would not, for instance, national unity in the modern Indian Republic, in which pluralistic social and religious life is a fact, be more effectively promoted by recalling the golden period of Kanishka, the Kushan king, the pomp and splendour of the Guptas, the benevolence of Ashoka, the cultural splendour of the Cholas and the great Vijaynagar empire? Surely, it is the prosperity of these golden periods of our ancient civilisation that should be the goal which a destitute country ought to be yearning and striving for.

Appealing to a nation consisting of several insecure minorities on the basis of a religious epic is hardly a prescription for forging unity. In opting for Ram Janmabhoomi, Mr Advani may have at best unleashed an attempt at creating a Hindu consciousness; it is to be doubted, however, whether the movement could have ever generated political unity among Hindu, let alone national unity.

Indeed, Mr Advani is conscious that while the building of a temple at Ayodhya may be unobjectionable so far as the Muslims are concerned, the demolition of a mosque could hardly provoke their enthusiasm, involving as it does a question of competing rights of two religious communities. On the question of competing rights, his answer is that it is incongruous to compare Lord Ram with a foreign adventurer like Babar. But, even Mr Advani cannot be unaware that this argument is misleading. Babar's act of destroying a temple is undoubtedly reprehensible in the extreme, but the mosque that was erected in the place of a temple was not a mosque to commemorate Babar but the founder of Islam. Mr Advani has fought shy of categorically expressing his views as to whether he considers it legitimate to build a temple for a Hindu deity by destroying a mosque built for a Muslim one. Is recourse to Babar's vandalism permitted to rectify a historic wrong? Or, does Mr Advani believe that two wrongs make a right?

Mr Advani, being the intellectual that he is, is conscious of these logial inconsistencies. As the *rath yatra* progressed through Gujarat and Maharashtra, he invoked that great symbol of national integration—Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—in support of his movement and its objectives. According to him, the late Sardar had encouraged the construction of a temple at Ayodhya.

Unfortunately for him, Sardar Patel's published letters disclosed no such intention on his part. On the contrary, the Sardar was against the construction of a temple at Ayodhya without the consent of the Muslims. Further, added the Sardar, if the Hindus insisted on building a temple at the site of the mosque without the consent of the Muslims, they would have to be stopped, for according to him, in the modern Indian Republic, law and order had to prevail. It is one of the tragedies of the *rath yatra* that its inherent indefensibility tripped up even an intellectually unflappable leader like Mr Advani.

Mr Advani's ultimate justification for his *rath yatra* was that it was a symbolic movement. It represented ultimately, he said, Hindu frustration with persistent Muslim appeasement. This was an admission that the *rath yatra* may not have been all that he had earlier said in favour of it, but was justifiable as an ultimate expression of Hindu ire. He repeatedly identified the cause of Hindu ire as being the enactment of the Muslim Women's Bill after the Supreme Court's verdict in the Shah Bano case, in which the court recommended that the time had come for the State to enact a uniform civil code as contemplated by our Constitution. This ultimate justification of Mr Advani must surely rank as the least defensible of all his pronouncements in favour of the *rath yatra*.

On Shah Bano, the Hindus were frustrated, if at all, by a Congress government under Rajiv Gandhi. There surely is a glaring injustice in venting anger on a ten-month old government which the BJP itself sustained in power, for the acts of commission of an earlier government. Mr Advani's arguments pertaining to symbolism amount to saying no more than that on account of their extreme displeasure with the actions of Rajiv's government, Hindus wish to inflict punishment on V.P. Singh's National Front one. Mr Rajiv Gandhi must surely have welcomed such convoluted logic.

Moreover, since the coming to power of the National Front government, the BJP has not once initiated a debate in Parliament or taken any legislative initiative on a uniform civil code. Mr Advani would have been on much stronger ground if he had tested the National Front government on the issue of a uniform civil code and withdrawn support on the failure of the Front to respond on that issue. Indeed, if the BJP was intent on toppling the National Front on a specific issue, it would have been much more prudent for it to have done so on the question of a uniform civil code

As champion of a uniform civil code, Mr Advani could have claimed that the BJP was taking the lead on an issue which enhanced Indian nationhood and promoted national integration. The issue is also in keeping with the needs of a modern Republic. It is devoid of Hindu ritualism and is rational in the extreme. It is religiously neutral, in that, it calls upon the Hindu as much as the Muslim to eschew traditional ways of life in the



interests of a new 'national religion' which synthesises the best from all religions in the land.

In addition, Mr Advani may well have secured the support of Muslim reformists anxious to rescue those among their brethren most adversely affected by the rigours of personal law. Most importantly, he would have had the Constitution as well as the views of a full bench of the Supreme Court in his favour.

On Ram Janmabhoomi, Mr V.P. Singh was right, because he upheld the Constitution and the law. Sardar Patel's nationalist mantle fell on V.P. Singh and not on L.K. Advani. On a uniform civil code, the roles may well have been reversed. And, Mr Advani would have been spared the discomfiture of advancing a series of tortuous and misconceived arguments in support of his movement.

Whatever may have been Mr Advani's compunctions in withdrawing his party's support to the National Front government, the timing of his withdrawal was both ill-advised and unfortunate. Several crucial investigations, initiated by the present regime, into grave offences committed during the earlier Congress rule, had made considerable headway.

The Bofors investigation was on the verge of discovering the actual recipients of the money deposited in Zurich in an account held by AE Services, as also, the beneficiaries of a sixth account in Geneve.

In the St. Kitts investigation, from all accounts, a cast-iron prima facie case had been established by the evidence hitherto collected and had implicated international arms operators, luminaries of a marginal party in India and at least one leading dissident in the Janata Dal itself.

A telephone-tapping scandal of much greater dimension than the earlier one involving Mr Ramakrishna Hegde and implicating a more prominent political figure had been unearthed by the CBI. The Supreme Court was disposing off an important matter pending before it that pertained to an important issue concerning corporate morality and the accountability of public financial institutions and involving a Bombay industrialist well known for his hostility to the present Prime Minister. Several investigations and proceedings, which had been delayed owing to the granting of a stay by one particular bench of the Delhi High Court, were shortly to resume since the period of stay was nearing completion.

The last election was fought on the issue of probity in public life; even the BJP was, undoubtedly, a beneficiary—at least to some extent—of this issue. If V.P. Singh's government fails, the nation will never know the truth in all these matters. Mr Advani and the BJP will be at least partly to blame if only for the timing of their move.

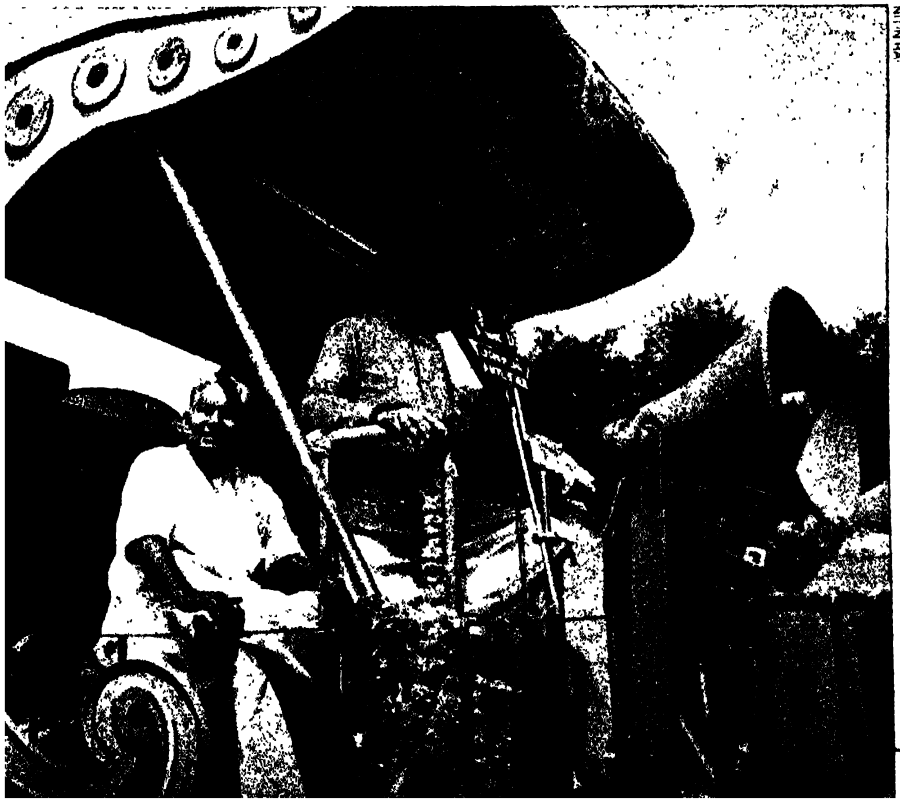
Indeed, the accused in all these investigations being politicians and businessmen of enormous wealth and influence had earlier spared no effort to topple Mr V.P. Singh. All their attempts to cause dissention in the Raja's own party were a dismal failure. They will undoubtedly secretly thank Mr Advani for his well-timed move. Indeed, there are persons within Mr Advani's own party who are sympathetic to these powerful offenders and some of them were in the very forefront of the *rath yatra*. In the ultimate analysis, the nation might well ponder whether Mr L. K. Advani has not been the unsuspecting tool of a powerful lobby of political and economic offenders for escaping from the clutches of the law.

The BJP, no doubt, will persist in maintaining that its withdrawal from the National Front government was based on a question of principle and was forced upon it. The party's action on Ram Janmabhoomi has, however, highlighted that there exist two political options for all those who profess the Hindu faith, depending on which variant of the creed one pursues.

In its mystical, eclectic and tolerant form, Hinduism is a religion which best coexists with political liberalism, a constitutional democracy and with an exciting *laissez faire* in thought and action.

On the other hand, in its fundamentalist manifestion, it is politically comparable only with a rigid totalitarianism in which Hindu dogma must prevail over the law and the Constitution. Bal Thackeray at least makes no bones about his contempt for democracy; the BJP too would do well to shed its inhibitions and let the nation know where it really stands. •

L.K. Advani has fought shy of categorically expressing his views as to whether he considers it legitimate to build a temple for a Hindu deity by destroying a mosque. Is recourse to Babar's vandalism permitted to rectify a historic wrong? Or, does Advani believe that two wrongs make a right?



Storming the Masjid

Despite "foolproof" security measures, kar sevaks *force their way into the disputed site*



It was something he was determined to prevent. During the last fortnight, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav did virtually everything he could to prevent the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) from fulfilling their threat of starting construction of the Ram temple at the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid site on 30 October. About 52 companies of police and paramilitary forces had been positioned in and around Ayodhya and closed-circuit cameras monitored the movement of vehicles and men into the temple town. With the unprecedented security measures, the state government may have had reasons to believe that the threats that large numbers of *kar sevaks* would storm the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi complex were empty. But as it turned out, Mulayam Singh Yadav—despite his promises—failed to prevent the dramatic and violent events of 30 October.

At around noon on 30 October, the stormtroopers of the VHP and its cohorts broke into the Babri Masjid. The three domes atop the mosque were damaged and a symbolic saffron cloth was wrapped around the spires embellishing the domes. A part of the outer wall of the *masjid* was also brought down. The entire operation, executed in just 15 minutes, left everybody baffled, because the general feeling was that even if the VHP demonstrated its strength on the occasion, the *kar seva* itself wouldn't be allowed at any cost. Even the vice-president of the VHP, S.C. Dixit, who incidentally was the superintendent of police in Faizabad district when the idols were placed in the Babri Masjid on the fateful night of 22 December, 1949, and rose to become the director-general of police in UP, was taken aback by the developments.

The mission was accomplished with the wholehearted support of the local people and the open connivance of the administration and the police, including the paramilitary forces, as was apparent to most onlookers. The first focal point was the two-kilometre long bridge over the Saryu river, which connects Ayodhya with the eastern districts of Gonda, Deoria, Basti, Varanasi and Azamgarh. It was through this point that the majority of the *kar sevaks* were expected to enter Ayodhya, apart from Raunahi on the Lucknow-Faizabad road. Two companies of paramilitary forces, including the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and the UP Home Guards, were deployed on the bridge.

The entry of the first group of *kar sevaks* was checked at around three in the morning. By five am, one bank of the Saryu river was already lined with *sadhus* and others, who had come for their morning dip in defiance of the curfew. As they raised slogans in favour of the Ram Mandir and against V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav, they were spontaneously joined by the drivers of the state transport buses waiting on the bridge to take the arrested *kar sevaks* away. At around this time, nearly 15,000 *kar sevaks*, led by young boys and girls in jeans, pullovers and rucksacks who





KRISHAN SAITH





FAILED EFFORTS

(Above) Mulayam Singh Yadav; (left) paramilitary forces patrol the disputed site

appeared more like trekkers, barged through the security cordon on to the bridge. The forces retreated initially, and let the first batch of a hundred inside. The cops took up positions once again, and after some initial hesitation, resorted to a mild lathi-charge. But a second group of people managed to storm in. They were older people, carrying suitcases and tiffin carriers, and many of them slumped half-way through the bridge in sheer exhaustion. Most of them were pilgrims who had come for the ritualistic *parikrama* that precedes the Karthik Purnima festival held in Ayodhya at this time of the year. To circumvent the order of the Allahabad High Court not to ban the *parikrama* in spite of the VHP's programme, the government had imposed indefinite curfew in Ayodhya. But since AIR and Doordarshan bulletins insisted that the *parikrama* was on, these pilgrims, many of who have even come from faraway places like Jammu and Bhatinda, took the risk of entering Ayodhya.

Of course, the pilgrims who managed to sneak in were openly sympathetic to the VHP cause. Said Shyama Handoo, a 45-year-old lady from Jammu, "I had to leave my home, my comforts in Srinagar after my daughters were assaulted by extremists. My house was looted and so many of my relatives were killed. When I was sent to a transit camp in Jammu, I was sure that I was being punished by Ram for my sins. That is why I have come to atone for them by doing the *parikrama*. But this government is not giving me a chance to do that even. But if I have to die I'd rather face bullets from Hindus than Muslims." Prabhakar Bhumkar, a Shiv Sainik from Bombay who walks on crutches, trudged all of 150 kms from Gonda to Ayodhya. "I am half gone, but I will lay down my life at Ram's feet and show the world how Hindus are being repressed by their own community," he said. The cops on duty dropped guard and started hanging around the people as they narrated their tales. "*Harami ka aulaad* (son of a bastard), this Mulayam Singh, making us arrest these people," muttered one UP home guard to another. A fiery young *kar sevak* from Thane called upon the cops to join them. His rhetoric had an instant effect on a PAC cop who shouted, "*Jai Shri Ram*". Five other cops joined him, and they all went to the river bank with brass pots to fetch water for the arrested persons. The women constables fell at the ladies' feet and pleaded with them to court arrest.The cops summoned the *sadhus* to the riverside to clandestinely escort the older men to the temple and enable them to join the *kar sevaks*. "Arrests? It is all one big farce. We don't have enough jails to house them. We'll take them to the outskirts of Ayodhya and then tell them to escape through the jungles," said a CRPF personnel. A BSF commandant, stationed outside the disputed site, later confirmed that the cops were only following the instructions that had been issued by the district heads: that a lathi-charge should be the ultimate resort, and that in the event of having to fire, the crowds should be given enough time to disperse to a distance of at least two kms.



THE SHOWDOWN

(From far left) Policemen keep vigil in Ayodhya; a television camera monitors people and vehicle movements; and, policemen resorting to a lathi-charge to disperse *kar sevaks* on 30 October

In the meantime, Faizabad, a town that has generally never reacted violently to happenings in Ayodhya, woke up to the incident in the neighbourhood. Virtually deserted the day before, people were out on the streets on 30 October once the bulk of the police force was despatched to Ayodhya to tackle the alarming situation. They stopped press cars to assure journalists that they would be present at the site for *kar seva*. According to Shri Krishna Singh, the editor of *Hum Aap*, there were two reasons for the popular ebullience. "When the canopy covering the *shilanyas* site was dismantled on the orders of the administration on the night of 23 October, there was a lot of resentment among

the people. Even events like Advani's arrest didn't have the kind of emotional impact as this. Secondly, the curfew and the repressive kind of security arrangements strained people's nerves. They are not used to these things here. The last straw was the unofficial ban on the *parikrama.*" Said Swami Hariyacharji of Shree Haridhan Gopal Mandir in Ayodhya, "The indirect ban was a direct hit on Hinduism because this *parikrama* has been going on from Vedic times. Even *sadhus* who had nothing to do with the VHP were nabbed by the police. This has turned the tide in favour of the VHP."

The first encounter between the *kar sevaks* and the forces took place before the crossing leading to one of Ayodhya's biggest temples, Hanuman Gaddi, near the Anand Bhavan temple. When the people began throwing bricks and stones, the cops first retreated then burst tear gas shells. And the first security ring crumbled when a state transport bus, carrying about 150 *sadhus* and other *kar sevaks,* crashed through an iron railing manned by a posse of cops. Baffled onlookers watched the bus storming its way to the site, even as the police belatedly tried to stop it. It was later learnt that this bus, which had been brought to arrest activists who had converged outside the Ashrafi Bhavan temple, some five or six kms away, was literally hijacked by VHP volunteers, the driver thrown out, and one of them, who knew driving, sped away with it. The entire security, which was declared as "foolproof," was reduced to a farce because with eleven close circuit TV cameras installed all over this town, the police heads were obviously aware of every single vehicle's movement. Why weren't orders to take the relevant steps issued to the security forces stationed on this particular route? The last barrier, leading to the temple, crumbled down effortlessly, and the *kar sevaks* marched into the *masjid* through every available nook and corner. This lot mainly comprised *sadhus* from Ayodhya who were thoroughly familiar with the topography of the site.

Inside the *masjid* there was an exchange of stones between the *kar sevaks* and the police. Even the Indo-Tibetan Border Force, which was positioned around the shrine and was known for its "non-partisan" credentials, shied away. Soon, the *kar sevaks* took over the area. Meanwhile, 5,000 more *kar sevaks,* who'd been stopped at the Anand Bhavan temple crossing, broke through the security ring, and stormed their way to the site. None of them were armed, though some were carrying crowbars and pickaxes.

Nritya Gopal Das, vice-president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagan Samiti, and Ashok Singhal, general secretary of the VHP, were among those who had squatted at the Anand Bhavan crossing. Singhal was reportedly mildly injured in a lathi-charge.

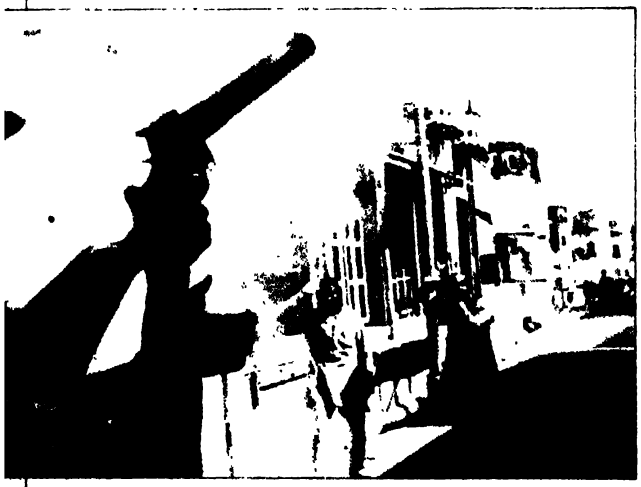
Finally, at noon the deed was done. Presspersons, who had assembled atop a house adjacent to the shrine, had a vantage view of the *sadhus* clambering up the shrine, shouting slogans and systematically breaking down the domes wth crowbars and axes. Not a single policeman was in sight. By this time, the administration had washed its hands of the show and begged Dixit to come immediately to the site and "control," his men. Dixit reportedly said it was too "late" and instead offered prayers at the shrine.

Dixit, who called an impromptu press conference inside the site, demanded that the government apologise to Hindus for causing "untold suffering" to the community by its "repressive measures". He said, "We will never forgive George Fernandes for cancelling so many trains coming into UP." He added that the episode was a "demonstration of people's power and not mob rule." When asked how he and Ashok Singhal had managed to hoodwink the police and enter Ayodhya, Dixit merely said, "If I disclose the scheme, a lot of senior government officials, who are good friends of mine, will be in trouble." It is reliably learnt that Dixit and Singhal had travelled with the editor of a Hindi daily from Lucknow, whose links with the RSS are well-known, on press passes. The *kar sevaks* remained in and around the site because Singhal had instructed them to besiege the place for two days, after which he said a further strategy would be chalked out. Although the administration made out that Ayodhya had been sealed and handed over to the army, all that really happened was the force staging a flag-march through the town.

In retrospect, the writing on the wall was clear on 28 October when the state police refused to fire on some 30,000 *kar sevaks* who had stormed into UP from across the MP border. Instead, the cops reportedly showered rose petals on them. Even before this, *kar sevaks* SUNDAY had interviewed in and around Ayodhya said their entry was possible only with the help of the police. And many constables candidly admitted that they would not attack devotees of Ram even if this meant losing their jobs. Yadav was fighting a losing battle from the start. As a senior police official said ruefully: "In such a surcharged atmosphere, our men can only play a very limited role."

The Hindu citizens of Faizabad and Ayodhya celebrated on the night of the 30th by lighting crackers and illuminating their homes. Large numbers of people gathered outside the civil hospital in Faizabad to donate blood to those injured in the lathi-charges and the firing. As for the Muslims, not a soul ventured out and the curfew hung like a pall of doom over the areas in which the community lives. With the VHP determined to continue *kar seva* and the threat of further marches on the *mandir/masjid* complex, Ayodhya promises to be in the grip of tension for a long while. ●

Radhika Ramaseshan/Ayodhya



ALL IN VAIN

A paramilitary personnel bursts tear gas shell to keep *kar sevaks* away from the disputed area

Quiet confidence

The BJP may go it alone in the event of a snap poll

Despite the arrest of prominent BJP leaders and thousands of *kar sevaks* as they march towards Ayodhya, an air of quiet confidence pervades the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national headquarters on New Delhi's Ashoka Road. The sense of frustration over the stalling of Advani's *rath yatra* has turned into an angry resolve to combat the party's new opponent—Prime Minister V.P. Singh. Here, in the refurbished party headquarters, a gameplan is being meticulously worked out—not just to decide what the party will do on 30 October and the crucial week that follows, but also how it will face the mid-term poll that seems imminent.

Party members point out that the decision to withdraw support to the government was neither sudden nor unilateral. "We had given a clear warning to the government that if Advaniji was arrested, and if the *kar seva* at Ayodhya was not allowed, we would be constrained to withdraw support," says BJP Parliamentary Party leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee. "As early as 1988, the party's national executive committee had decided in Palampur that the temple must be constructed," affirms party vice-president Sunder Singh Bhandari. "There has never been any ambiguity about the party's stand, every word has been crystal-clear," adds Dr J.K. Jain, an active BJP parliamentarian who shared Advani's *rath* during its Delhi sojourn. "Our decision to withdraw support was not impulsive. The Janata Dal was not kept in the dark, nor were our plans ambiguous at any stage," he adds. Jain explains that while the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the more militant affiliate of the BJP, had earlier scheduled the building of the Ram temple in February, it was only at the Prime Minister's behest that the programme was deferred by four months. "There is no evidence that the PM devoted even four seconds of thought in those four months to the issue," fumes Jain.

The BJP's decision to withdraw support to the National Front may have precipitated the worst political crisis for a ruling party in recent years, but what does it mean for the BJP itself? According to a senior member of the Cabinet, the BJP leadership was strongly divided against the move. Vajpayee, long considered to be a moderate in right-wing politics, repotedly warned his party workers that the decision could lead to a situation where the party's strengh in the House might fall from 86 to eight.

Whatever be the differences within the party, the BJP is adept at projecting a cohesive image of itself to the outside world. But has it overplayed its hand? Unless the political scenario changes drastically—and it well could—the BJP will not risk taking on strange bedfellows this time. In all probability, it will go to the polls alone. "The day we embarked on the *rath yatra*, we had an inkling that the consequential result would be mid-term elections," states Bhandari. "And the party is prepared for it." Adds party general secretary J.P. Mathur: "The BJP and the Janata Dal have gone too far apart to come together again. It is very possible that we will go it alone; we will not enter into an adjustment with the Congress(I), communist parties, or the Janata Dal led by Mr V.P. Singh. We will see that V.P. Singh is voted out."

Does that mean that the BJP is prepared to enter into an alliance with the Janata Dal, if there is a change in the leadership? "This is a hypothetical question," retorts Jain. "For the BJP, it is not the person but the policies that matter. If another leader takes a sensible course, we are not averse to changing our stand." Even Vajpayee, who has openly called for a mid-term poll, admits that he has done so only because there seems no other way to resolve the present crisis.



Vajpayee addressing a press conference: Long considered to be a moderate in right-wing politics, he reportedly told his partymen that the decision to withdraw support could bring down the BJP's strength in the House. But now he promises a big deal

The BJP is confident that it will be able to project itself as the only alternative to both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal. "Unlike other political parties, we are quite modest while making public assertions," claims J.K. Jain. "But I would not be surprised if in the next election, Advani becomes the Prime Minister of this country."

While most BJP leaders are quick to declare that they have no fear of triangular contests others admit that it may not be smooth sailing. While both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal

A BJP leader says, "The *yatra's* sword-wielding hoodlums are no less dangerous than the Kashmiri youth shouting for *azaadi*"



are "tested failures", the BJP still has a chance, as it has never been in power. Even though "bad memories" of the Congress(I) rule persist, the party still commands a stable image to its advantage. On the other hand, the Janata Dal's dismal performance is balanced by the formidable caste combination it has worked out by virtue of the Mandal report. The BJP's strength lies in its "firm and forthright leadership," but this advantage is somewhat negated by the antipathy the Muslims have towards the party. "It all depends on who pushes whom to decide," says a senior BJP worker. "Certainly, there is a mass mobilisation on the *mandir* issue all over the country. That, and the repressive measures being used in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar will bring our party into focus, overcoming the caste factor."

The biggest challenge facing the BJP is not a revolt within its ranks but the task of convincing the electorate that it offers more than a Hindu theocratic state. Already, large advertisements have begun to appear in the press, explaining the party's stand, and underlining the present government's failure to deliver the goods. Overnight, the BJP catchword, "Hindutva", has been replaced by the more appealing, but ambiguous, "nationalism". "What does secularism mean?" asks one BJP ad, and goes on to say, "The BJP is deeply distressed at the disinformation campaign charging it of *(sic)* inciting communal passions."

The BJP leaders refuse to admit that they are abetting the rise of religious fanaticism that surfaced during the *rath yatra*. "The *yatra's* sword-wielding hoodlums were no less dangerous than the Kashmiri youth shouting for *azaadi*," admits a senior political leader. Yet, the party believes "the *rath yatra* gave a healing touch to an emotionally disturbed society." It claims that "the fact that there were no incidents of violence along the way is proof of the binding force of Hinduism and its message of unity."

The BJP ledership is overwhelmed by the response to the Bharat Bandh which the party called following Advani's arrest. But the success of the *bandh* may well have been due to fear, rather than the BJP's popularity. "The BJP cadre in most of the states where the *bandh* was a success (like in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka) has never been enough to terrify the people, like the Naxals and the communists," argues a party leader. Given the political atmosphere in most states, much will depend on whether the BJP can provide the right political leadership, put up acceptable candidates and create an effective infrastructre for the elections. "In our case, the cadre is the basic strength, not caste," declares a party worker. He claims that during the past one month, the chief ministers of UP and Bihar, because of their repressive measures, have helped bring the people close to the party.

But being the cadre-based, disciplined party it is, the BJP may well take the electoral drubbing that political pundits forecast for it in its stride. At the moment, however, the party exudes confidene, knowing that its cadre-strength is growing by the hour, fuelled by the dangerous passions of majority communalism. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

Moments of solitude

How Advani spends his days in confinement

Amidst hectic packing as they prepared to leave for Delhi, Pratibha Thadani, daughter of BJP leader L.K. Advani, spared some time to talk about her meeting with her father on 26 October at the fortressed guest house in Massanjore, Bihar.

"We didn't talk politics," says Pratibha, "we were concerned about his health." Moreover, she and her husband Kailash weren't allowed any privacy. "We spoke in Sindhi whenever we had something personal to discuss," the Thadanis say.

The drama of Advani's arrest was quite chaotic, says Pratibha. For example, the district magistrate was asked to make arrangements in Massanjore a few hours before the arrest. "There was no water on the first day," she says. And although Advani had a telephone, the calls were probably tapped and the leader had not spoken to politicians. Except for Laloo, of course—the CM who had arrested him. And the Prime Minister hadn't spoken to the country's most celebrated prisoner. "Not even a courtesy call," says Pratibha.

Ironically, Advani gets his newspaper at 1 pm and whiles away his time by watching television. "He believes that the PM is misusing the electronic media by not giving the BJP or the Congress(I) the chance to air their views," Pratibha says. "And his major apprehension is whether he will be allowed to attend the special session of the Lok Sabha on 7 November."

Apart from pondering over his immediate future, Advani has found time to catch up on his reading. Evidently his daughter took with her two novels by Sidney Sheldon as well as some chocolates. "He refused the VCR, though he is quite a video addict. He enjoys classics and political movies," says the dutiful daughter. "Of course he is also sleeping overtime."

And Kailash does not hide his pride: "As a father-in-law he is the best—very understanding and open to others' views." As this scribe prepares to leave, Kailash stumbles, and a glass breaks. Pratibha hurries to clean the mess. Her husband smiles. "It is a good omen," he observes. And we all hope it is—for him and for the country. ●

Shafquat Ali/Calcutta

Suicide fever

What led so many students to burn themselves in protest against the Mandal report?

Outside the burns ward of Safdarjung Hospital, sit groups of parents huddled together, patiently waiting for some news of their children, all of whom had torched themselves in protest against the government's decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. A mute testimony to the mindless, anti-Mandal frenzy that is currently sweeping north India.

So far, an astounding 160 people have attempted to commit suicide in north India between 19 September to 16 October. All of them were below the age of 25, and most of them were students who were expressing their anger at the government's policy of reservation. What's more shocking is that nearly all the desperados chose to set themselves on fire in full public view.

In Delhi itself, there have been 17 self-immolation attempts in just 26 days. Seven of them died: a toll that will undoubtedly go higher as more and more students find themselves drawn into an agitation that has captured the imagination of the people, an issue that makes headlines in newspapers almost every day.

The "suicide fever", as it came to be popularly known, struck every corner of north India—from the remote hamlets to the big towns, from Hoshiarpur in Punjab and Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh to the capital cities of Patna and Lucknow. And, in almost all the cases the victims came from lower middle class families, were studying in government schools and district colleges or were unemployed and desperate for a job.

Even elitist Delhi was hit by the anti-Mandal wave. But while prestigious colleges in posh areas like St Stephen's,



RAJESH KUMAR

Rajeev Goswami in hospital

Hindu and Miranda took the lead in organising demonstrations, those who resorted to the extreme act were mostly products of either government schools in lower middle class colonies or of what is known as the "lower rung of colleges"—like Deshbandhu and Dayal Singh College.

Monica Chadha, a 19-year-old class XII student of a government school, set herself aflame in her one-room home in Greater Kailash when her parents and four sisters were attending an anti-Mandal meeting in the neighbourhood. Surinder Chauhan, a 24-year-old part-time student in Dayal Singh College, burnt himself to death in front of dozens of eye-witnesses outside his home in Kidwai Nagar. Chetan Gautam, a 14-year-old student of a government school in Shakarpur, a congested colony in East Delhi, succumbed to his burn injuries in hospital. The list could go on.

"It is students from this category—middle class—who feel the psychological impact of such a movement They are the street-fighters while the others are theoreticians. I will change my entire perspective on the issue the day a student from St Stephen's or Hindu feels compelled to commit suicide in such a heinous way," said Ashish Nandy, fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. He added, "The issues involved are larger than the Mandal Commission. There is a sense of frustration and anger at the system, a feeling that the system has given them the false hope that education will give them better jobs." Elaborated eminent sociologist Veena Das of the Delhi School of Sociology, "There is a tremendous sense of betrayal by the state, even though the students have probably not calculated how many jobs and promotions the Mandal Commission would mean. This kind of a desperate action will, therefore, not take place amongst the really poor or the elite."

Students drag away one of their colleagues during an anti-Mandal demonstration



SHOOTER

It all began on 19 September when Rajeev Goswami, a third year student of Deshbandhu College, set himself ablaze in front of a crowd which included reporters and policemen. That was the beginning: what followed was a spate of attempted self-

immolations in the capital and elsewhere. And while some preferred to display their emotions in public, others burnt themselves to death quietly.

In all the cases, the students left behind suicide notes, some of which make interesting reading. Many even bordered on the melodramatic: like Surinder Chauhan's passionate appeal in hospital: "*Agar mujhe pani mil jaaye to mein Mandal ayog ke khilaf bolna chahta hoon* (I want a glass of water to speak against the Mandal Commission)." Some were vitriolic—like Sushil Kumar, a class X student of a government school in Pipli, who wrote: "*Aur in sab ka zimmedar, tu hai VP tu* (You are the only one responsible for this mess, VP)."

Others were aware that they were not doing the right thing. Sandeep Sharma, a student from Jammu who died instanteneously, wrote in his parting note: "Self-immolation is not good but I am doing this to inspire others." As Veena Das put it, "Every movement looks for its martyrs and some people—in this case, middle class students—are forced to become martyrs." Added Brinda Karat of the Janwadi Mahila Samiti, "These children have actually become martyrs of their struggle. And ironically, this is precisely what has also negated their struggle."

Brinda Karat is not entirely wrong. Since Rajeev Goswami's attempted suicide, protests and demonstrations against the Mandal report have virtually stopped. Public attention now centres around the victims, many of whom are battling for life in hospitals and nursing homes. The AIIMS-Safdarjung crossing in Delhi has been renamed Qurbani Chowk and students have even put up a board with the names of those who have committed suicide in protest against Mandal. The result is that the focus of the agitation has been completely lost. The spontaneous outburst of anger has given way to the glorification of self-immolation.

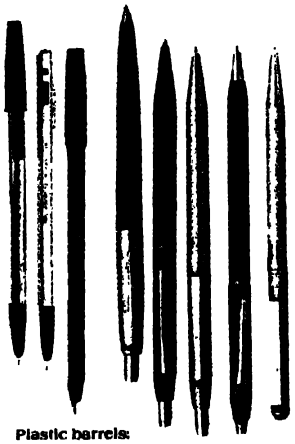
For most women's organisations, the episode is reminiscent of the *sati* incident. Said Karat, "It is the same kind of glorification. In *sati*, a woman is made to feel guilty for not dying. This is the same thing. You are creating an atmosphere where this kind of



ghastly act is being glorified. And, even *sati* at one level is voluntary,isn't it?"

And everybody associated with the Mandal stir seems to have contributed to what Karat termed as "creating a conducive atmosphere for immolation". Even the parents. Take this incident. A family from Ludhiana came rushing to the Safdarjung Hospital, asking where Rajeev Goswami's father was. "We want to pay our respects to him," said the woman. And

Best
PENNED
PILOT

Pilot Hi Tecpoint 05 by Luxor.
BALL POINT PENS

Plastic barrels:
Left to Right:
Ranger, Monami and Trendy.
Metal barrels:
Left to Right: Joner, Crola, Sterling, Chrismatic and Goldline.
MARKERS

Left to Right:Luxor Excel 2 in-1 Marker, Monami Oil Magic Twin Dual Marker, Excel Metal Body Permanent Mar in fine (bullet) and broad (chisel) tips
Available in a wide choice of styles, finishes, body colours, ink colours and tips. For a variety of applications.
CLARION D-251


SHOOTER

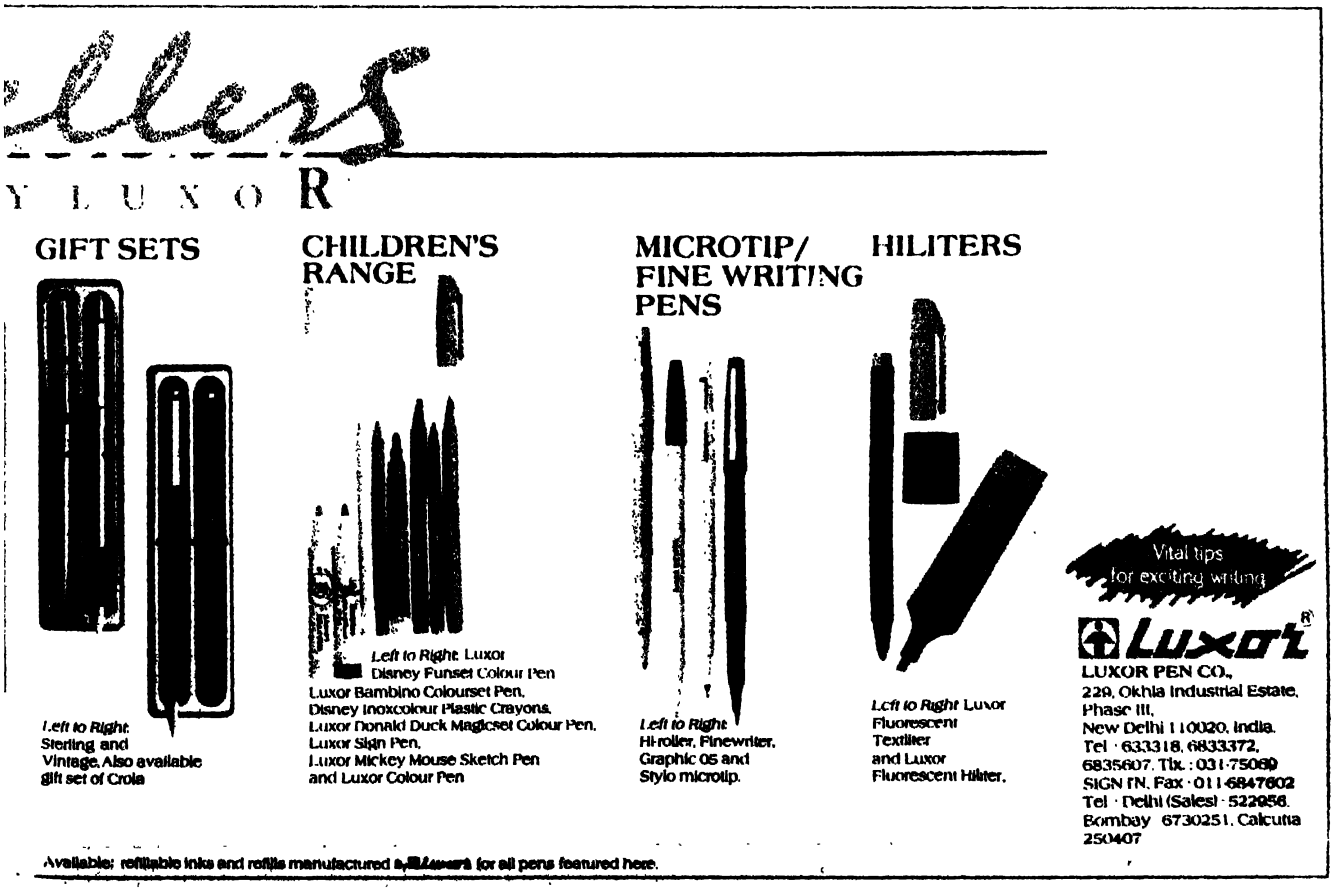
Since Rajeev Goswami's attempted suicide, the spontaneous outburst of anger against the Mandal report has given way to the glorification of self-immolation

after they traced Madan Lal Goswami, a clerk in the postal department, he was showered with praises. Watching on was K. Chadha, whose 19-year-old daughter Monica was also admitted with 90 per cent burns. The conversation now turned to glorifying the acts of their children. Monica's father even agreed to a student's suggestion that there should be a "rose garden" outside the burns ward of the hospital in the memory of everybody who has committed self-immolation. "We have only one request. That you take the first plant and get sister Monica to touch it," said the enthusiastic student and her father nodded in approval saying, "It's always a good idea to plant trees." "There is something definitely wrong when a student takes a photograph of a person burning rather than rescue him," said Nandy, referring to the pictures published in the media of Rajeev Goswami in flames surrounded by his fellow-students. "All the teachers and students are responsible for Rajeev's plight," Nandy added. Das was even more critical. "After all, let us not forget that burning has been used in Delhi for murder ever since 1984. It is not new."

While north India is still reeling under the impact of an agitation that has already taken many lives and which shows no signs of abating, instances of violence have increased since the immolation deaths. The students have become aggressive, venting their fury on everyone. Shukla, who has been pasting posters in the capital for the last 25 years, was beaten up by students who threatened to kill him the next time he was seen with a pro-Mandal poster. "They even broke my cycle. I have never seen anything like this," said a shaken Shukla.

Many people feel that such incidents are only an expression of the frustration that has already set in amongst the agitators. And it's only natural. For, the anti-Mandal stir today has lost its relevance and direction. The focus of attention now is no longer on the controversial recommendation of the Mandal Commission, but the scores of youths battling for life in the hospitals throughout the country. ●

Minu Jain/New Delhi



SWEET MUSIC

The news would, perhaps, have made a bigger splash if the Congress(I) had been in power. But that didn't detract from the fact that eminent Carnatic vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi was a deserving recepient of the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration, instituted by the Congress in its centenary year (1985).

Former external affairs minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, chairman of the advisory committee, announced that the award would be given to the singer in recognition of her outstanding work in promoting national integration and understanding.

And that Congress president Rajiv Gandhi would do the honours by her on 31 October, Mrs Gandhi's death anniversary.

N. PRASAD



M.S. Subbulakshmi (second from left): integrated soul

THE MACE OF LORD HANUMAN

He is either the eternal optimist or a glutton for punishment. For, after all the problems about the historical authenticity or otherwise of *Tipu Sultan,* Sanjay Khan plans to make yet more serials for Doordarshan.

While *Akbar-i-Azam* is still in the conceptualisation stage, the script for *Jai Hanuman* is already in the works. And if Khan has his way, the 26-part serial, with 45-minute episodes, will be ready in a year's time, with special effects by the San Francisco-based Industrial Light and Magic Company, which has worked on Steven Spielberg's blockbusters.

Sanjay Khan: glutton for punishment?



Says Khan: "Hanuman is a child's delight. He is the Indian Superman born centuries before the American Superman. The serial will narrate the Hanuman lore before he became a *bhakt* of Ram. The search is on for a newcomer in his early 20s—someone who is 6'1" with a 44" chest and large expressive eyes."

Yes, thank goodness, that *does* rule out Sanjay Khan.



Sunil Dutt: strategic retreat

FIGHTING FIT

Sometimes discretion *is* the better part of valour. Ask Sunil Dutt, Congress(I) MP from Bombay North-west.

During the Shiv Sena-sponsored *bandh* in Bombay on 24 October, Dutt decided to tour his constituency to get first-hand information about the law and order situation.

Things didn't seem too good, when the MP saw two youngsters on a scooter being pushed around by supporters of the *bandh.* Dutt immediately rushed to the rescue of the duo.

Only to become the target of the crowd himself. Shifting their attentions to the former film star, the people began throwing their fists around. Dutt managed to evade most of the blows, but one of them found its target: the member's lip, which began bleeding profusely. The window panes of his car were smashed by the mob, which was by now in a real frenzy.

Dutt hurriedly withdrew from the scene, he says, to prevent further deterioration of the law and order situation.

And lived to fight another day.

FRENCH WINTER

It's going to be a French winter for Indo-Anglian writer Upamanyu Chatterjee. For, the author of *An English August* will be married to a Paris-based student of political science, Anne Vaugier, this November.

The couple met in Delhi, where the lady was studying Hindi, and it didn't take long for true love to blossom. The marriage will be a simple registration ceremony, after which Chatterjee will go back to his duties as an IAS officer.



GAUTAM PATOLE

Upamanyu Chatterjee: marriage...and a new novel

But, obviously, courtship cares haven't kept Chatterjee from working on his next book. Though, in the best traditions of the bureaucracy, he is very tight-lipped about the work. "It's about life," he says cryptically. Adding somewhat mysteriously that the protagonist is someone who goes through a series of bizarre experiences before being set free.

And no, Anne doesn't feature.

N PRASAD



Arif Mohammad Khan: caught out?

LIAR!

[redacted] National Front ministers continue to have rotten luck on *Khula Manch*. The latest victim is Arif Mohammad Khan, Union minister for civil aviation.

Questioned on the evacuation of Gulf Indians, Khan had replied that "not a single paisa was charged from a single evacuee by the airlines (Air India)".

Not quite, retorted C.L. Anto, coordinator of the United Action Committee for Kuwait Evacuees. Said Anto: "I would categorically state that at least 5,000 evacuees paid for their passage after selling their valuables which they managed to retrieve while fleeing Kuwait.

Those who had no means of raising funds for their passage were forced to sign bonds."

While countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan evacuated their citizens free of cost, Anto continued, Air India fleeced Indians by charging them Rs 9,036 for their passage.

The conclusion: Arif Mohammad should apologise to the Indian people for lying on television.

Preferably on prime time.

COVER DRIVE

The comeback man of Indian cricket is back in the news. No, he hasn't made it to the Test team yet again. This time, it's a cricket coaching video—in Hindi no less—which has done the trick.

Titled *Cricket With Mohinder Amarnath*, the video depicts how one can best improve one's skills at batting, bowling, fielding and wicket-keeping, with demonstrations by such stalwarts as Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri, Mohammad Azharuddin, Syed Kirmani and, of course, Mohinder himself.

NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA

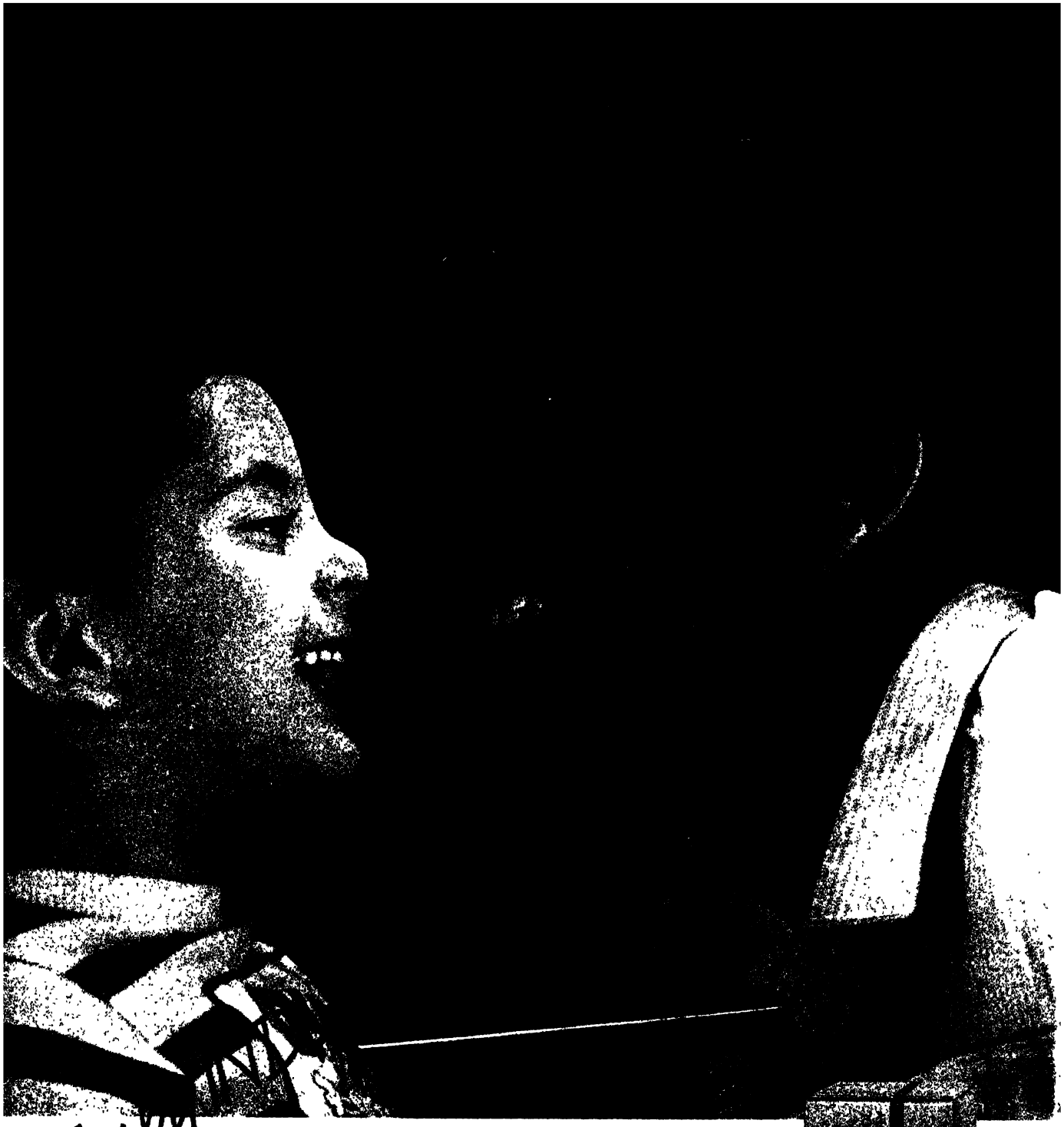


Mohinder Amarnath: an alternative career

The project took two years to complete and, says Amarnath, "required plenty of skill, patience and months and months of editing. It has also been a very costly venture both in terms of time and money."

But this doesn't mean that Amarnath's cricketing ambitions are dead. He hopes to make it to the Indian team again as it "isn't too difficult".

So what if he's on the wrong side of 30? •



Life in breathtaking colour.
Vibrant with emotion.
Trust INDU Colour film
to capture the essence
of human nature.

INDU

Hindustan Photo Films Mfg. Co. Ltd.
(A Government of India Enterprise)
Indunagar, Udhagamandalam 643 005
Marketing Headquarters: Bali Towers,
No.1, Abdul Razak Street, Saidapet,
Madras - 600 015.

Setia-HPF.1484.50 B

WASHOUT!

The double-wicket Pepsi tournament was a disaster

The prize money—a whopping £12,000 for the winning pair—was by no means unattractive. The lineup of players, too, was impressive—Desmond Haynes, Malcolm Marshall, Gordon Greenidge and Carl Hooper from the West Indies, Imran Khan and Mudassar Nazar from Pakistan, Richard Hadlee and Lance Cairns from New Zealand, and from India there was the redoubtable pairs of Kapil Dev and Sachin Tendulkar, and Ravi Shastri and Azharuddin. The media hype that preceeded the double-wicket cricket tournament promised fans country-wide that "it would be a once in a lifetime show". But what started with a bang ended in a whimper—leaving the organisers, Procam, and its sponsors, Pepsi, deep in the red.

First, rains played havoc with the tournament—the competition was scheduled to be held over two days—12 and 13 October—at Bombay's Wankhede Stadium. But a nagging downpour on Saturday the 13th forced the organisers to postpone the second—and the most exciting—leg of the game to Sunday. Imran Khan and Richard Hadlee walked off, pleading prior engagements elsewhere. But more important was the fact that though most of the world's leading cricketers had assembled at Bombay, the idea of a double-wicket tournament just didn't enthuse the spectators. On both the days, hardly 4,000 fans turned out at the 44,000 capacity stadium to watch the proceedings, which was a lacklustre affair in the absence of the crucial competitive edge. And when Kapil Dev and Sachin Tendulkar lifted the Pepsi trophy, there were hardly 1,000 spectators to cheer them.

"Well there are ups and downs in life. The rains made this a definite downer" said Anil Singh, director of Procam Inc. But Anil had spared no efforts to make the tournament a grand success. And he was not lacking in exprience either. Anil—who is a tennis ace himself—and his brother Vivek Singh have been organising international tennis competitions in the country. They first thought of staging the double-wicket tournament more than a year back and began looking for a sponsor. "Initially I approached Reliance," recalled Anil Singh, "but they had foreign exchange problems. So I began looking for a multinational concern. I got in touch with Pepsi and they accepted my proposal."

The hunt for a sponsor over, Anil Singh got on the job of contacting the players. And with the help of his friend Ravi Shastri, Anil was able to rope in the best players of the world. He even got Doordarshan to telecast the event live for two days. But as luck would have it, the idea flopped badly. Today, Anil is a disappointed man, but he is not disheartened: "Sure we lost money but that does not mean it did not work because the idea was a gimmick. It was not serious cricket."

But most of those who watched the cricketers in action felt otherwise. Former Indian cricket captain Ajit Wadekar said: "Double-wicket may be another form of innovative cricket, but I don't think it will work."

Though Anil Singh is yet to work out the exact amount, there is no doubt that the Pepsi trophy was a financial disaster. Pepsi shelled out as much as £55,000. Doordarshan had to be paid $7,000 and the cost for hiring the stadium was around Rs 5 lakhs. Moreover, all the players were given the best of treatment, and the opening ceremony was a glittering affair.

Kapil Dev and Sachin Tendulkar: the winning pair



The set-back notwithstanding, Anil Singh is confident that double-wicket tournaments are here to stay. "I may have lost heavily, but I can assure you that Pepsi cup will be an annual event. The rains let us down this time, but next year it's going to be a success," he said. Meanwhile, Procam is also thinking in terms of staging a tennis competition where players like Jimmy Connors will take part. Said Anil Singh: "Procam believes that sporting events should be innovative and different."

But going by the Pepsi trophy fiasco, isn't the Procam director being a little too optimistic. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

OCM
SUITINGS
HE PERFECT FABRIC
oduct of VXL India Ltd.

AJAX CHAMPION

What did Sigmund Freud
say to the Skypak Man?
"You move so fast... aren't you
afraid of the Freudian slip?"



We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK The worldwide couriers.
Skypak House, Off M. Vasanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

Avenues SC 582 90R

FIGHT BACK!

Indian consumer organisations take on manufacturers and dealers—but there is a long way to go



AMIT DUTTA

Whether it is at a departmental store...

...or a small grocery shop, consumers can be duped

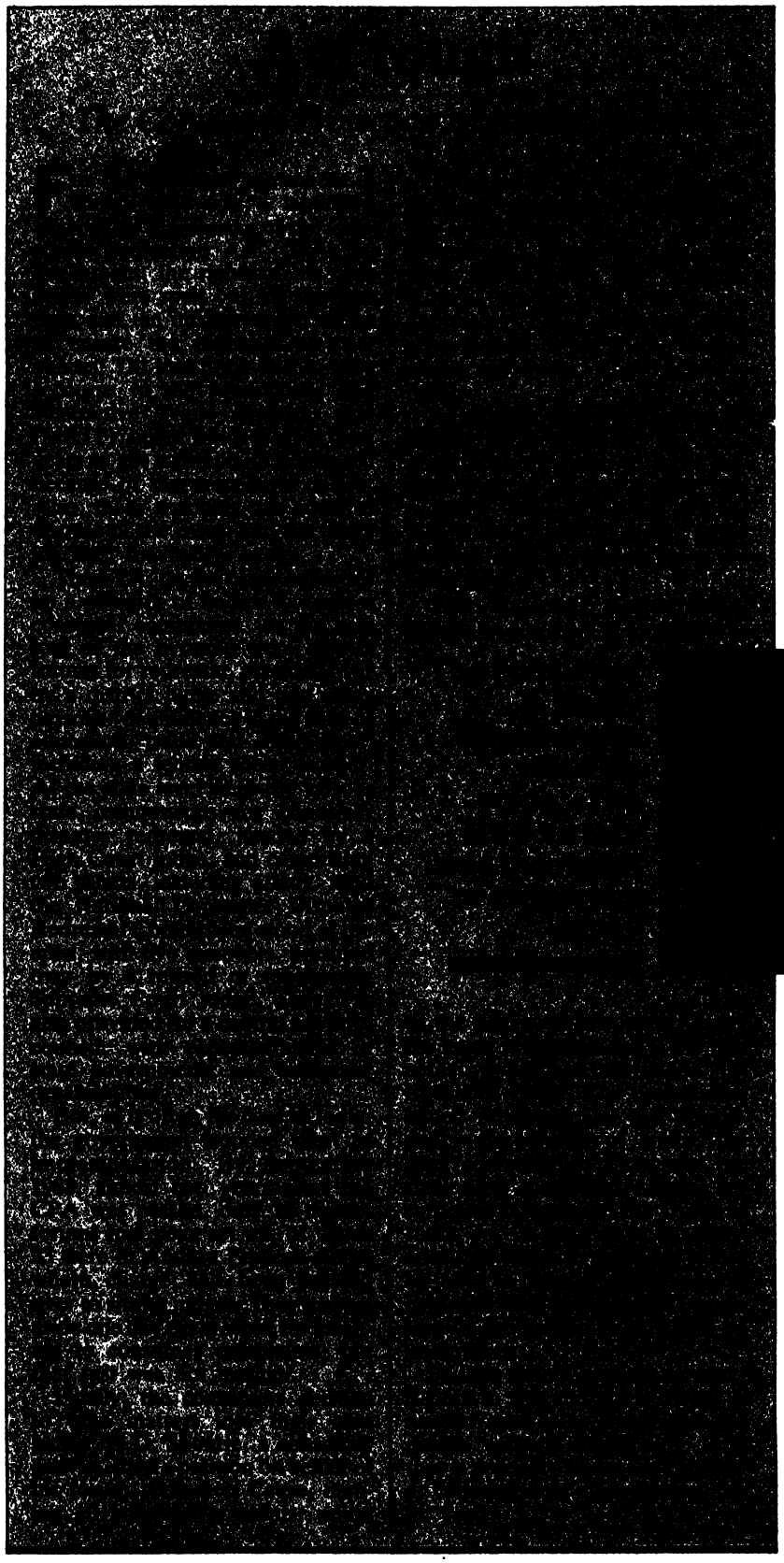
GAUTAM PATOLE

• *Kothari Medical Centre, Calcutta. Radharani Agarwal, suffering from an intestinal obstruction, is administered a drip. But within minutes her condition deteriorates seriously. A member of the family happens to look at the bottle, and finds a fungal growth inside it. The nurse is summoned and the drip stopped immediately. The Agarwals file a complaint with Consumers Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) which takes the case to the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, West Bengal. On 7 August, the commission directs Albert David Ltd to stop selling its dextrose intravenous drips of the batch number OAO 12B.*

• *Vidyasagar, a handicapped businessman of Gulbarga, Karnataka, works from home with the help of two telephone connections. He omits to pay a bill amounting to Rs 5,263 for one connection. And the telephone department promptly disconnects* both *his numbers. Vidyasagar files a case with the Gulbarga district consumer forum, and the forum rules in his favour. The department goes and appeals to the state consumer commission. Justice Desai orders that reconnection charges for one telephone should be refunded and Rs 1,000 be paid to Vidyasagar as compensation for the inconvenience caused.*

• *In April 1988, A.V. Lokendra Rao, a chartered accountant, takes out a life insurance policy of Rs one lakh, naming his wife as beneficiary in a double benefit scheme. Two days later, he dies of a cardiac arrest in a Bangalore nursing home. Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) refuses to pay up, claiming that the deceased had given inaccurate answers in his application. Rao's widow, Uma Devi, appeals to the State Commission Forum for consumer rights, but the LIC contends that forum has no jurisdiction as the case does not relate to consumer rights. The commission disagrees, ruling that LIC falls in the category of a consumer service, and orders the company to pay Uma Devi Rs two lakhs, plus interest at the rate of 18 per cent from the date of entitlement.*

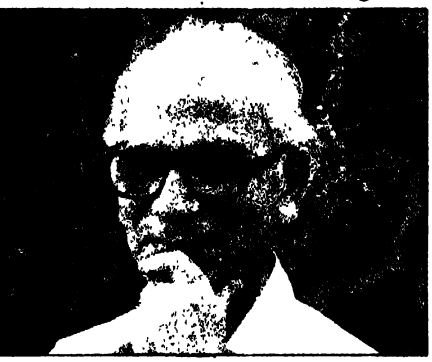
Consumerism is catching. And, going by the shopping list of our burgeoning middle-class, it has certainly caught on in India. Cars, TVs, videos, refrigerators, readymade garments, designerwear, soaps, perfumes...the list is as endless as the brands. All of them sell, indicating



that the consumer boom has come to India for good.

And with it has come consumer consciousness. No longer do people walk into a departmental store and buy the first tube of toothpaste that catches their eye. They have their preferences, more often than not formed by television commercials, and they will not be fobbed off with anything else.

But this is only part of the story. Far more important is the increase in the consumer's awareness of his rights—and his willingness to fight for them. Which accounts for the increasing number of consumer societies in the country, some 400-odd at the last count. The more important among them—CUTS, the Karnataka Forum for the Promotion of Consumer Actions, Common Cause, Voluntary Organisation in the Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE) and the Consumer Guidance Society—are situated in major cities, indicating that the movement for consumer rights is



NITIN RA

H.D. Shourie, director, Common Cause

mainly an urban phenomenon. But the level of involvement is impressive, nonetheless. Says H.D. Shourie, director, Common Cause: "The consumer is finally beginning to raise his voice. I get at least 20 to 30 letters every day from consumers. The BVO (brominated vegetable oils) victory was largely a result of a vigorous drive by a consumer rights forum which forced the MRTPC (Monopolics and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission) to take quick steps and ban the drink."

Pradeep Mehta, general secretary, CUTS, maintains that consumer consciousness increased only after the passing of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) in 1986. "That was the turning point," he says. "Consciousness came about after legal rights were granted, unlike the Western countries where consciousness compelled more

rights." S.R. Khanna of VOICE agrees that things improved after CPA, but according to him what is needed is consumer representation on such government bodies, where business interests are represented. "The Central Commission for Food Standards (CCFS) is one instance where such representation has helped enormously," says Khanna. "The entire question of BVO in soft drinks was first brought up in CCFS. Consumers have to constantly tackle the industrial lobby and representation is the effective answer."

While it is true that for every complaint filed, there are three others that go unreported, there is no denying that the consumer movement had notched up several successes in recent years. Common Cause, for instance, scored a major triumph when it managed to wangle a government notification banning the use of the catchphrase "local taxes extra" which was used by dealers to manipulate prices. From November onwards, all products will have to carry the maximum price with "all taxes inclusive" printed prominently on the outside.

One of the more interesting cases currently pending in the state commission, Bangalore, relates to the Sandoz chappals sold by Bata India Ltd. R. Ramachandra, a Bangalore schoolmaster, bought a pair, and after three months developed white patches on his feet. His doctor maintained that the chemical compound used in the PVC (poly vinyl chloride) of the inner sole was the cause of the problem. Ramachandra immediately complained to the Bata showroom where he bought the pair and exchanged his chappals for a pair of leather sandals.

But he was not satisfied with that. He wrote to Bata's managing director in Calcutta detailing the 'case history'. And received a reply, which said that his complaint was unusual, but assured him that a doctor would be sent to examine him. Says Ramachandra: "A sales assistant came and took me to a clinic where the doctor said that the skin had been affected by the chappals. But Bata still showed negligence."

The irate schoolmaster then filed a complaint with the forum for consumer rights. Bata wrote to the National Commission to say: "Vitiligo (Ramachandra's skin problem) is not caused by PVC. The complaint did not undergo further tests and after almost two years he has filed this complaint which is motivated, frivolous and baseless."

The question has yet to be decided, but if Ramachandra does win damages, his could yet be a landmark case.

However, it is not as if every complaint receives similar treatment. A. Srinivas Murthy, for example, filed a complaint against the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) for not eliminating the menace of stray dogs. He had been bitten by a stray dog, he said, and he did not know whether it was rabid or not. Wrote Murthy, in his complaint: "It is the duty of the BDA towards the taxpayer to clear the streets of stray dogs." Since it had not, and he could well develop rabies anytime over the next ten years, the BDA should give him Rs two lakhs as compensation, "one lakh each to get my two daughters married".

Justice Desai, chairman of the state-level forum for consumer rights, maintained, however, that the BDA did not come under the service sector. "I just threw the case out of the window," says Desai. But Murthy is undeterred, and plans to take his complaint to the National Commission in Delhi.

But there is still a long way to go before the consumer movement can come into its own in India. For, it is mainly restricted to the major cities. In Calcutta, CUTS is trying to create greater awareness in such West Bengal districts as Purulia and Siliguri, but it will be a while before the initiative makes a tangible difference.

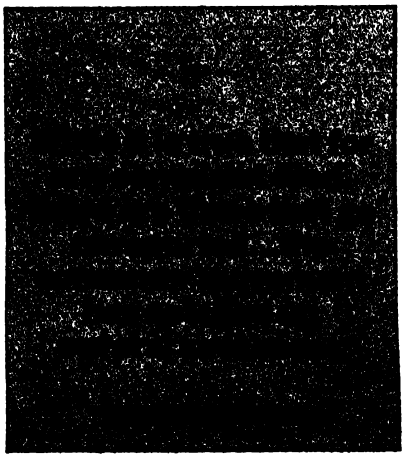
What makes things even more difficult for consumer organisations is the indifference of the average consumer. They may fume, rave and rant when landed with an inferior product, but only two out of ten will take the trouble to go to a conusmer rights group and lodge a complaint, or follow up the case until their grievances are redressed. Says Justice Desai: "It is evident that awareness of their rights is increasing among the consumers, but it is not enough. Though with the consumer forums relief is available in three months, not many people are coming forward to file cases, mainly because of indifference and lethargy."

Consumer rights organisations tackle the problem in their own way. CUTS, for example, announced cash prices for telephones which have been "dead" for the longest period of time, and a rubbish heap photo contest to



AMIT DUTTA

Consumer binge, yes. But you need laws too



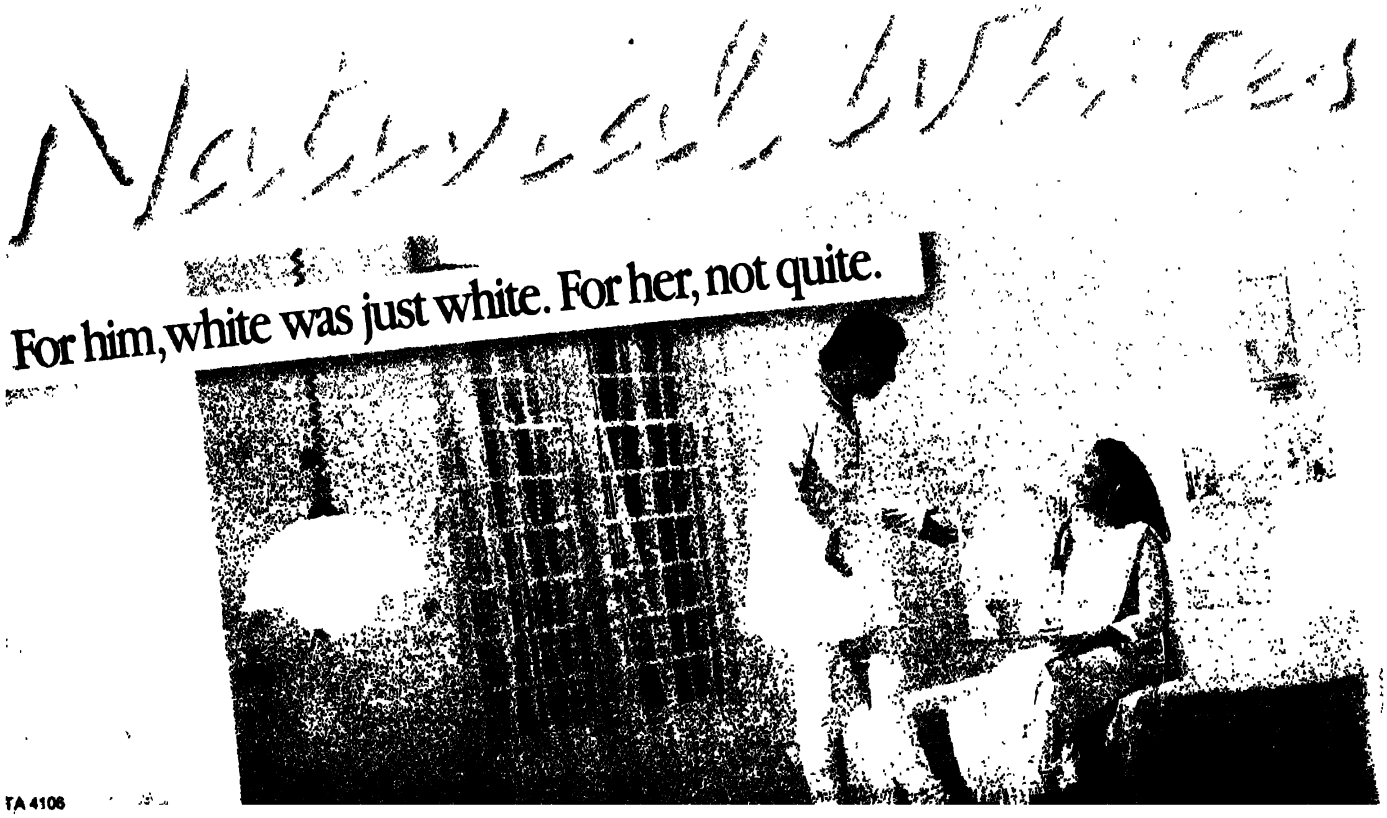
drum up public consciousness and create more civic awareness. The Consumer Guidance Society (CGS) of India observed Consumer Week from 15-21 March, 1990, with its branches in Bombay, Dandeli in Karnataka Goa, Hyderabad, Kottayam, Pune and Trichur pitching in for good measure.

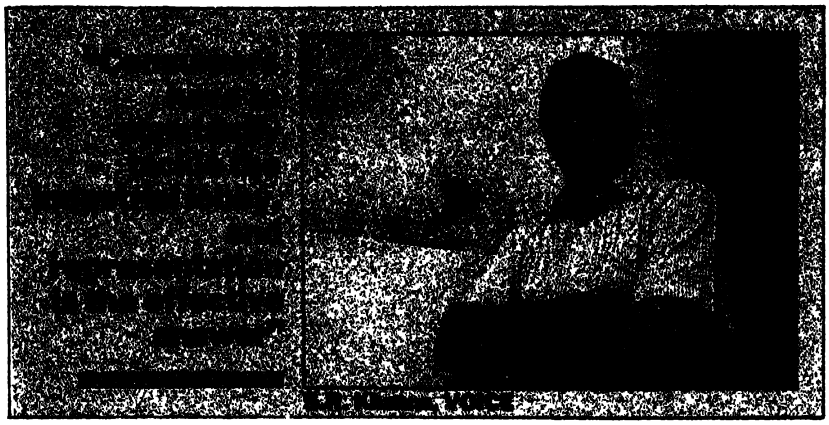
Increasing consumer consciousness is relatively easy. What is not is managing the finances. Consumer rights organisations have of necessity to do without big business and government funding. And private funds are never enough to finance all the battles that such societies have to wage to justify their existence. The CGS, for instance, has a corpus fund of Rs 5,000 and its current bank balance is a dismal Rs 2,000. With this kind of paltry money behind it, the organisation plans to agitate not just for improving the quality of goods but also for such issues as the depletion of the ozone layer, against toxic waste dumping and the marketing of dangerous drugs and pesticides in the Third World. Despite the constraints, the society does manage to accomplish a great deal. Recently, it tested samples



of various food products and discovered that 15 per cent of the tea samples, 46 per cent of the turmeric powder and 40 per cent of the chilly powder samples were adulterated.

Pushpa Motwani, the CGS chairman, maintains that their task is made more difficult by the fact that laws exist mostly on paper. "We have agencies like the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and the Legal Metrology (weights and measures), but they are not doing their job. Even when they get a complaint they do nothing about it. Even the bureau of Indian standards in New Delhi is not interested. The ISI Indian Standard Institution mark, which is supposed to be a mark of excellence, means nothing these days." Motwani gives two examples. The CGS received information that Britannia Industries Ltd was making biscuits in unhygienic conditions. The society stormed the factory premises and found swarms of flies all over the vats of cream and dough, with nobody in the least perturbed about it. The biscuit pack caried the





ISI mark. The CGS went back to the ISI, which had no answer.

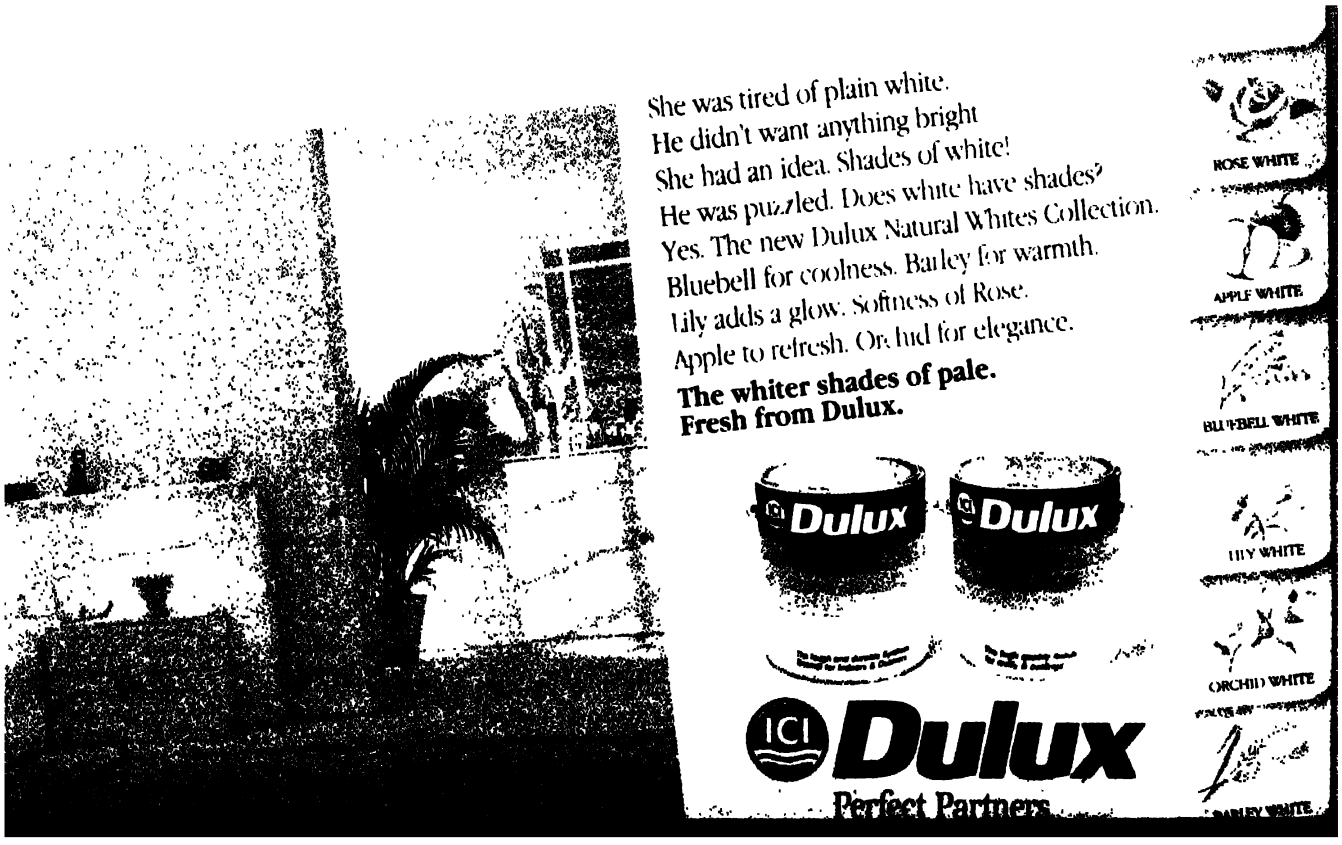
In 1989, there were numerous complaints that the Prestige pressure cooker was badly designed and there were several instances of it exploding in the face of housewives. The CGS took up the matter and the manufacturers admitted that the design was faulty, and redesigned the product.

In Jamshedpur, the Bihar Federation of Consumer Organisations, has done creditable work, setting up a food testing laboratory in 1988, which has led to a sharp decline in the adulteration of food products. The society, with Bejon Misra as president, also conducts classes on consumer education among such ladies organisations as AIWC (All India Women's Conference).

The Association for Consumer Action Safety and Health (ACAASH), founded by Dr R.K. Anand in July 1985, concentrates on problems relating to pharmaceuticals and child health. The organisation, which was associated with the breast-feeding projects initiated by UNICEF, is now fighting for a ban on drugs such as Chloromicetin and Cryptomycin.

But, obviously, the efforts of consumer rights organisation are not enough to prevent such tragedies as befell the Behala oil victims. In June 1988, all those who consumed adulterated rapeseed oil bought from a ration shop in Behala, Calcutta, soon developed a nervous disorder which meant partial paralysis in most cases. Today, most of the victims have yet to get their share of the Rs 18 lakhs sanctioned for them as compensation, and their monthly payments have been stopped for the last three months or so. CUTS has been a help, says Barsed Ali, who had formed the Patients Welfare Committee after the tragedy, but things will never be the same again for the victims.

It is cases such as these which lead to disillusionment among the average consumer and feed the belief that consumer organisations are only an eyewash. Says Lt Col H.S. Sarin, a resident of Kharagpur: "I don't think there is anything like the consumer consciousness movement here. Things







which have been banned are easily available. Retailers put stickers on maximum price and say '*yeh hamara price hain*'. Everyone is just indifferent."

While that may well be an extreme view, plenty needs to be done to get the consumer rights movement going full speed ahead. And the efforts of the International Organisation of Consumers Union (IOCU) will help in this direction. The IOCU has decided to concentrate its attention on India, Indonesia and Malaysia over the next three years. Says Dr Martin Abraham, the head of IOCU's information and research division: "We would like to see an all-India consumers cell. Once we set the modalities up, India is to get a proper system of information going that will ensure that the consumer is not fooled by sub-standard products. Periodicals will take up specific issues and devise better ways to help the consumer. There will also be strong cells to take up consumer issues. This is part of what we call networking."

Grants will be given for support and training and various workshops held for young consumers to enable them to distinguish between good and bad products and teach them to stand up for their rights.

And never ever give up the fight •

Seema Goswami with Godfrey Pereira / Bombay, Gauri Lankesh / Bangalore, Minu Jain / New Delhi and Shafquat Ali / Calcutta

ECONOMY

If they go

In the event the government collapses, the economy will, too. Actually, it might collapse anyway

Yes, this is a warning. A warning for the industry, the people and the economy. Now, it hardly matters whether Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh loses his leadership, or actually *retains it.* What matters is that in any event, government in New Delhi will change, and if not the government, certainly its thinking. And if not its thinking, then certainly some of its ministers. They happen to be in key places. And they, in their individual capacities as well as in tandem, decide India's economic future.

A future which is scary, no matter that foodgrain production in 1990-91 is expected to wipe out the drought-stricken nightmares from three years ago. And no matter that industrial production is on the upswing, or that exports are rising or, that revenue collections are increasing.

What *does* matter is that the government has stopped caring, policy decisions on anything but bare survival have come to a complete standstill (except for the clearance of certain projects in the perverse hope of election funds). And what *does* matter is that policy—or should one say the absence of policy—as it stands today is mostly going to change. This is truly frightening.

What follows is a checklist of the National Front government's key economic ministers—even those who indirectly have a bearing on the economy—their ministries, responsibilities and performances. And how, even if they manage to hang on to their seats, the way things are going to be.

This is also about two key players, who are not in government, but could soon be. In that case, the term "economic mayhem" will seem like an understatement.

VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH

Responsibilities: Prime Minister (?), Planning, Electronics, Human Resource Development, Science & Technology, Ocean Development.

Background: A Raja by default, born Allahabad in 1931. Studied to get BA, BSC and LLB degrees and says he would have become a nuclear scientist if he had not felt a political pull. Had nothing going for him except Sanjay Gandhi's largesse, and later, from his mother Indira and brother Rajiv.

Performance: As minister of state for commerce and civil supplies in 1983-84, he was just average. Came into his own as Union finance minister in January 1985, a portfolio he held till 1987. Rajiv Gandhi's premier liberalisation man: brought in foreign investment, opened up industry, tried to streamline taxation formalities, brought in revenue and thought he could cut back on deficit.

Has simply fallen apart as PM. The Prime Ministership is another story altogether, but his performance with the economic responsibilities he holds has been, simply put, disastrous. The Planning Commission is a mess, with Rama Krishna Hegde sacked, intellectuals still holding fort, and no sign of the Eighth Plan (1990-95) with the first year of the Plan period viewing an uneasy economic sunset. Has done nothing at all as minister responsible for Human resource development. Science & technology receives bare government support, rockets keep falling out of the sky and satellites pack up in space. As far as ocean development goes, a bit of oil, no minerals, and a lot of archaeological artefacts.



Future: He could go and he could stay, but whatever the Raja has touched will stay finished for a long time to come. The next PM could have a big job on his hands. He could, for example, begin by getting the Eighth Plan going. On the other hand: an extended Plan holiday.

Responsibilities: Union minister for finance.

Background: The 69-year-old finance minister is another nuclear physics enthusiast. In fact, he taught the subject (hence, professor Dandavate) from Independence to 1972 at the Siddarth College of Arts & Sciences, Bombay. Has written books: *Evolution of Socialist Policies, Gandhiji's Impact on Socialist Thinking, Three Decades of Indian Communism, Kashmir—A Test case for Secularism, Marx and Gandhi.*

Performance: First, he must not be too happy about the books he wrote: socialism is dead, Karl Marx has been reduced to a misunderstood and maligned character with relevance in Victorian England and early 1900s Europe, but today's world has no place for him.

Neither does India. As minister of railways in the Janata regime, he handled his portfolio correctly for two years between 1977-79. Then, he left with the Janata factions and returned to socialist preaching. His tenure as finance minister this time round has


NITIN RAI

been filled with hopes and disasters. Earlier, when Dandavate said he cared about the economy, people believed him. He still might, but nobody believes him anymore. Banks have not received autonomy, and neither have financial institutions. The Reserve Bank of India is shouting itself hoarse about the country going down the drain, the minister does not seem to hear He is thinking about renegotiating loans, about getting new ones, and trying to tell the public that they need to tighten their belts. He may not even have much power anymore, with deputy Anil Shastri hogging the limelight, and secretary Bimal Jalan running himself ragged trying to keep India solvent. The real deficit this year could be as much as Rs 15,000 crores.

Future: If India stays solvent, it will be the miracle of the 1990s. Recession could strike as early as next year, and the next finance minister (it could still be Dandavate, but it will have to be a different Dandavate) will inherit an impossible situation. The promised long term fiscal policy is out in the cold, nobody is even talking about it. All everyone talks about is inflation, and more inflation. The future is bleak.

ARUN NEHRU

Responsibilities: Union minister for commerce and tourism

Background: When the BA honours student from Lucknow took to running paint company Jenson & Nicholson in 1979, he ran it well, when he took to politics, he took to it like he had been born for it. The portly 46-year-old rose to become chief fund-raiser for the Congress(I).

Performance: In retrospect, he should have stuck to the Congress(I). He was an efficient minister of state for power in 1985, and even now, as Union commerce minister, he is said to have run his ministry excellently. He initiated new tax incentives for exporters and gave the practice of value-added exports a new dimension. Hi-tech imports were his idea, too. As tourism minister, however, he seemed to think that foreign junkets were his prerogative, and holidays abroad were mistakenly thought to be tourism promotion ventures. Now he has stopped working, and gone back to doing what he does best: play politics. Numerous analysts say he is finished as a politico, but with Nehru, one never knows.

Future: Exports will go up, there is no doubt about that. A new minister and a new government will be forced to plug the exports sector as it is a way out of the deficit and balance of payments mess. However, imports will continue, possibly in larger quantities, as after a point, even value-added has its limitations. As far as tourism is concerned, it is expected to be a bit of a disaster. 1991 has been sold worldwide as the Visit India Year. With the way things are: very few tourists, except hardy Britons and the French, are likely to come anywhere near South Asia. Tour group cancellations have already begun, but hotels keep going up. Unless the socio-political situation mends itself fast, tourism, a Rs 2,000 crore foreign exchange earner, is going to be washed up. No tourism minister can avoid it.


NITIN RAI

ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN

Responsibilities: Union minister for energy and civil aviation

Background: Trained to be a lawyer, he should have stayed one. Not that the Bulandshar-born minister is bad at what he does. And, he has principles, though they are sometimes clouded by the fact that he is an unabashed Arun Nehru groupie, and is likely to go any way his portly colleague does.


RAJESH KUMAR

Performance: On the surface, very good. He took over as minister of state for power in 1985 after Nehru moved on, and earlier he made an efficient minister for industry and company affairs (January-September, 1985), and energy (1984). In his new incarnation, has single-handedly done the most for the power sector than anyone else, ever. Brought in privatisation of power, realising that the state cannot possibly handle the demand. Made investment modalities easier. Helped stock market prices of power companies shoot up. Has got all the big names—Tata, Birla, Ambani, Modi, Thapar—keen on private power.

Civil aviation went beautifully till an Airbus A320 crashed in Bangalore last February. Then the planes were grounded, and so were Arif's aviation plans, as the Raja stubbornly refused to let them back in the sky. Arif, however, managed to initiate new measures in this area, too, by helping kick off India's private air taxi services, which has made executive travel a lot easier, at least in South India, where most of these new airlines operate. But Vayudoot and Indian Airlines are in a mess, and if Air India does not pull out of its Gulf evacuation expenses, it could follow suit.

Future: As far as power goes, any administration or minister will have to stick to privatisation. There is simply no other way. But it would help if all rules are put down on paper, state electricity boards learn to cooperate with private operators, and private operators, in turn, realise that their investment will have to gestate for years before profits show up. A bugbear will be power distribution and payments from electricity boards, who never pay up for power bought because *their* customers do not pay up, either.

With civil aviation, it is all over and out. Vayudoot is a goner. Indian Airlines is a goner, and by the time it gets the A320s in the sky, the airline will require still more planes. Passengers will continue to be harassed, and there is no way out. Air India is an imponderable, as boss Subhash Gupte happens to be a thinking man, and could straighten things out. Air taxis are likely to prosper.

AJIT SINGH

Responsibilities: Union minister for industry

Background: Son of deceased Jat chieftain Charan Singh. Studied to be a computer engineer and was one with the Big Blue—IBM Corp. of the US. Has a rural background but prefers to think like a US business school graduate, and run his ministry like one.

Performance: At IBM, great. At the ministry of industry, aggressively hopeful. Singh kicked off his term as minister with a bang: lot of talk about liberalisation which had industry reeling, an effect which intensified after the Union budget for 1990-91. He unvelled a radical—for India, or course—investment plan: foreign investment in key areas allowed, within



FERA limits, but that was expected. Investment norms to be simplified, with paperwork to be cut and bureaucratic interference reduced. Endless benefits to the small and medium-scale sectors. The stage was set for a new era—or so it seemed—and the Raja, Nehru, Arif and Dandavate all seemed hell-bent on backing the policy.

Only, things fell apart—industry did not, and growth rate keeps growing. The industrial policy was lambasted by socialists, and till date, the policy has not been cleared, and new investment norms are as vague as ever. Files are not being cleared, and the few that are, have an orientation to possible election funding. Singh lost his footing after the Raja clamped down on the policy—the 1985 Raja would never have done it. And in the process, so did possibly the most innovative and clear-headed man in the government's economic policy-making scene: special secretary at the PMO, Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

Future: Ajit Singh appears to have sealed his fate. If he manages to stay on, his industrial policy may yet see the light of day, as it is a way out of a recession. On the other hand, recession may kill it. It is not clear if Montek is going to stay on with a change in government, or at least a reshuffling of ministers. The Oxford educated, ex-World Bank economist is far too valuable to lose—he did survive the Rajiv-Raja transition—but with the way things are now, nothing is certain. Industry is entirely on its own.

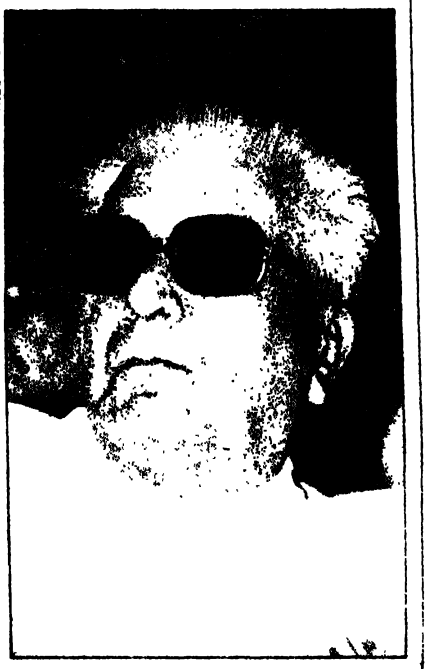
DEVI LAL

Responsibilities: Coming back to power

Background: Nasty. Blasted his way into Jat politics after Charan Singh's death, took over Haryana, and then, tried to take over India. Quite possibly, the high school dropout—he dropped out, moved by Mahatma Gandhi's call to kick imperialists out—is one of the most destructive forces in Indian politics and the economy.

Performance: As former deputy Prime Minister, sullen. As former agriculture minister, disastrous. He did get a lot of benefits for farmers: Devi Lal was instrumental in getting crop procurement prices raised, and a large amount of fertilizer subsidies continued. But there was the near-crazed ploy to waive farm loans. Earlier, it was to be as much as Rs 14,000 crores worth. But Lal gradually realised that it would wipe out the treasury, and consented to have it reduced to Rs 3,000 crores or so for the current financial year. Then, before he could do more damage, he was sacked by the Raja.

Future: He could be back. Then, he will run down big business, back farmers, try to step up loan waivers, doling out largesse from near-empty coffers while India slides down the waste-



RAJESH KUMAR

disposal chute. Fortunately, he may not have much money to play around with. But he will try to get the cow-belt farmers' lobbies strongly behind him, and for that, he will try practically anything. Agriculture will prosper despite Devi Lal. After all, he is not responsible for bountiful Monsoons. For this sector, 1990-91 looks set to be the most hopeful year in decades, and foodgrain targets are set to be broken. Agriculture may yet lift India's economic hopes, backing industry with increased purchasing power, and people with enough grain to fill up buffer stocks to the brim. Only if Devi Lal stayed put where he belongs: village Chautala, district Sirsa, Haryana.

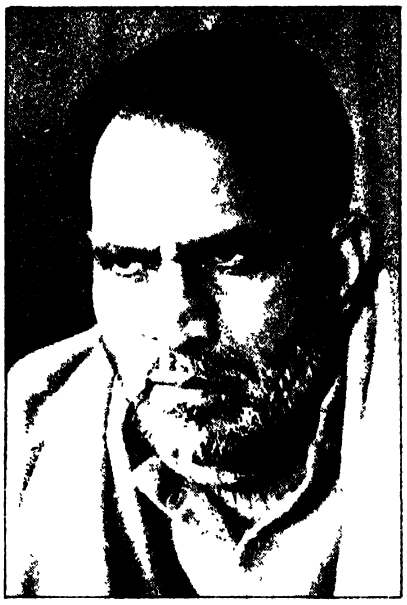
CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Responsibilities: Coming back to power.

Background: Misguided socialist, and a PM wannabe for years. The 63-year-old firebrand manipulator has compromised on power till now—the Raja's becoming PM last year is the most recent example. But things may be changing: Chandra Shekhar has said often enough that he is "willing" to accept the challenges that being PM brings.

Performance: Has run down everything anybody has ever done, except whatever he has done. He ran down the government when the Raja gypped him to become PM, though he kept silent about the person who made it possible for V.P. Singh: Devi Lal. Then, with the advent of the new industrial policy proposals, he found a new focus. He ran down the policy, Ajit Singh, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, and anyone else who dared say how good liberalisation would be for India. He also ran down multi-national companies, complained bitterly about their ambitions which would only stop at the economic conquest of the Third World, and accused the government of trying to sell India down the drain. PepsiCo's entry came in for special mention. As did favours shown to big business houses, no matter that at least some of them are very close to his heart. He ran down the policy, saying that the small-scale sector would get nothing from it, no matter that they would get maximum benefits.

As usual, Chandra Shekhar had it all wrong. He read the policy documents totally. But he stood his ground, and perhaps felt a sense of victory when the Raja backtracked on the policy.



Future: Bleak for big business, except the favoured few, which is the way of all politics. Totally bleak for multi-national companies (and here, railways minister—if he still is—George Fernandes will lend a hand), and a return to the license-permit raj with gusto. If Chandra Shekhar becomes PM, the sun will shine only on his side of the worldview. He will refuse to see reality, not just the economic one, and will ride hard on dissenters. He will try to bully the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, not realising that a lot of India has been built on loans from these agencies. He will not realise that debt is a problem mainly because *government* expenditure is not being slashed. Cross your fingers. ●

Sudeep Chakravarti

BELT-TIGHTENING

Forget it

This seems to be the customs board's attitude to austerity

On 30 October, the eyes of the country were fixed on Ayodhya to see what Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists managed to achieve. But at the Collectorate Building at ITO, in central New Delhi, the hot topic of discussion was tariff, and the disputes about the classification of items. In attendance were collectors and principal collectors from as far away as Madras, Calcutta, Visakhapatnam, Bangalore, Cochin, Kandla, Goa, Bombay and its nearby port, Nava Sheva.

This, despite the fact that home ministry directives insist that senior officials of the Government of India remain at their bases at a time when the law and order situation in the country is at an abysmal low. And when the finance ministry has sent out a directive (*see copy of letter*) asking departmental heads to "mop up every available savings, however small they are". This, in order to implement the ten per cent cut imposed on expenditure to be incurred during the remaining fiscal months of 1990-91. The conference seemed a little unnecessary, as it was more a burcaucratic bash—as most of these meetings are—than a problem-solving session. But, it did seem to be in tune with the agenda of the Central Board of Customs and Excise (CBCE). For, over the months of January-August 1990, zonal conferences had been held in some pleasant locale or the other. In style. An example. The expenses incurred for one such gathering, for one such person, came to Rs 28,288 *for his air fare alone*. With that, the gentleman could have flown half-way around the world. His travelling allowances came to a more modest Rs 2,706. (Rumours in CBCE circles have it that S. Mukhopadhyay, now officiating as principal collector, Delhi, with additional charge of Allahabad, was carried along for every such jamboree, as he was considered to be close to the *Indian Express* lobby and Bhure Lal, joint secretary at the Prime Minister's Office and a top Raid Raj raider.)

Whatever the truth of that matter, wasteful expenditure seems to be the order of the day with the CBCE. One of the board's more controversial en-

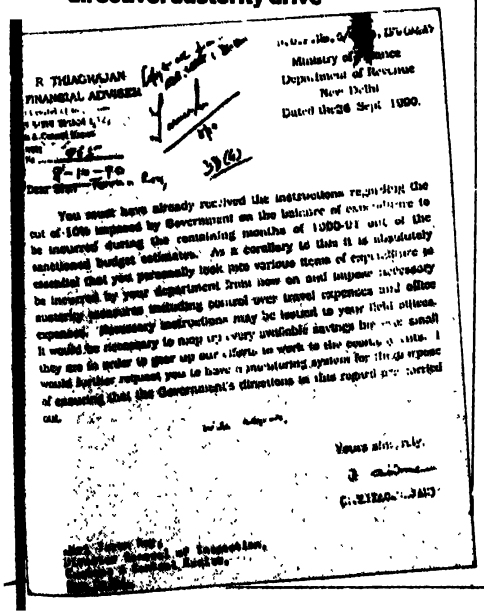


ITC's Maurya Sheraton Hotel in Delhi: Ironic choice

The jamborees are expected to continue, with the north zone conference in Dehradun being the next in line

terprises was the party it threw in honour of T.P. Hayes, secretary of the International Customs Cooperation Council at the swank Club de France, Maurya Sheraton Hotel, New Delhi. Hayes was in India in connection with the International Cargo Agents Meeting organised by Air India. And though the board was not playing host to him, it decided to honour Hayes with a party, anyway. And, for reasons that baffled most observers, A.K. Pandey, who was handed the responsibility of making the arrangements, chose Maurya Sheraton rather than a state-run India Tourism Development Corp. hotel—the usual practice for government functions—as the venue. The choice seemed particularly unfortunate in view of the fact that ITC Ltd. which owns Maurya, a part of its Welcomgroup chain, owes the government a massive Rs 80.30 crores in excise dues—which ITC disputes—and the case was up for adjudication.

A copy of the finance ministry directive: austerity drive



R THIAGARAJAN
FINANCIAL ADVISER

Ministry of Finance
Department of Revenue
New Delhi
Dated the 26 Sept 1990.

Dear Shri

You must have already received the instructions regarding the cut of 10% imposed by Government on the balance of expenditure to be incurred during the remaining months of 1990-91 out of the sanctioned budget estimates. As a corollary to this it is absolutely essential that you personally look into various items of expenditure to be incurred by your department from now on and impose necessary austerity measures including control over travel expenses and office expenses. Necessary instructions may be issued to your field offices. It would be necessary to map up every available savings however small they are in order to gear up our efforts to work to the cuts. I would further request you to have a monitoring system for the purpose of ensuring that the Government's directions in this regard are carried out.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the board are mostly defiant in the face of criticism. Their defence is that the arrangements were made within the budget allocated by the government. And that the Maurya seemed the ideal location in view of the fact that Hayes was staying at the adjoining Taj Palace Intercontinental and had only to walk across for lunch.

Not everyone, however, took a lenient view. Revenue secretary R.L. Mishra, expenditure secretary M. Geethakrishnan and finance secretary Bimal Jalan, all of whom were invited, chose to stay away, perhaps preferring good grace to gluttony. Officers of the Indian Revenue Service, however, obedient to the summons of K.L. Rekhi, chairman of the CBCE, turned up in full force.

Far more serious than charges of frolicking, however, are the charges that the board is behaving lackadaisically. For example, there are a number of vacancies in the customs and excise collectorates. Among them, the posts of principal collector, Allahabad, principal collector customs, Bombay and principal collector central excise, Bombay. Senior officials were given additional charge to take care of day to day affairs, but the posts are still vacant.

Another controversy: the ITC excise case. The company had been served a show cause notice in 1984 about the dues it owed the government as central excise. ITC filed a case disputing government claims in the Calcutta High Court and then, went in appeal to a division bench. The courts, however, advised the company to go to the proper authority, the collector of appeals. The case was then put up for adjudication again with Lajja Ram, collector judicial, officiating.

The amount owed to the government is in some dispute. Going by the assessable value, the dues came to Rs 10-11 crores, but if the amount was computed on the basis of duty-cum-price, the sum went up sharply. There is a fair chance, say observers,that ITC will manage to get the amount reduced, and this, in turn, has led to rumours of double dealing.

Meanwhile, the jamborees are expected to continue, with the north zone conference in Dehradun being the next in line. Scheduled to be held on 12-13 November, the meet will be attended by the chairman of the CBCE and the collectors, excise and judicial, of the north zone. Expenses—and the government's austerity drive—be damned. Besides, Mussourie is less than an hour's drive away. ●

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

■ Not cool enough

The going was pretty good for Enterprise advertising -and chief Mohammad Khan—till major client Vadilal Ice Cream Co. pulled out its Rs



Mohammad Khan: optimistic in the face of adversity

1.5 crores a year account in October. And shifted to rival agency Ambience,- which turns out ads as nifty as Enterprise's. The reason: ad industry insiders say the falling out—after Enterprise actually helped increase Vadilal's sales manifold—had to do with three ad films Enterprise did for the ice cream company. The films, released on TV last January, received such a disastrous market response that Vadilal ordered them scrapped after a couple of weeks, say sources. The loss of investment for Vadilal: almost Rs 20 lakhs. Enterprise was asked to make another film to make amends. After all, Vadilal and Enterprise did make a good team. But this ad too was rejected by Vadilal. The Ahmedabad-based company, say insiders, decided that enough was enough, and that it was time to move accounts to another agency.

This comes at a bad time for Enterprise: two top creative whizzes and a senior client servicing executive have left the agency, and the Vadilal shock is sure to shake up the agency. But Khan is optimistic. One of Indian advertising's most respected names, he didn't start Enterprise to lose.

STOCK QUOTE

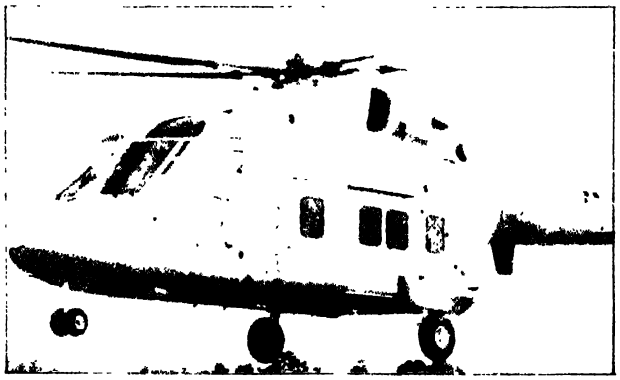
"No wonder the Congress(I) wants to delay the elections. They can't convert their funds when the (US) dollar is so low."

A Janata Dal-aligned economist in New Delhi

■ Flying low

Very low. That's Pawan Hans Ltd for you. The government-run helicopter service organisation is battling crippling losses, crippled machines—its fleet of Westland and Dauphin helicopters are perennially trouble-prone—and the loss of image from three fatal crashes. The reason why agencies—mostly government organisations such as the Oil & Natural Gas Commission and the Jammu & Kashmir and Sikkim tourism corporations, among others use it -- is because no one else has a chopper fleet on offer. Now, Pawan Hans has a brand new managing director, Air Commodore C.M. Singla, an air force veteran with 6,000 hours of helicopter flying time behind him. Singla has flown 11 different kinds of choppers, has been a flight instructor, and still holds a pilot's license. Impressive, as public sector chief executives in India tend to have absolutely no backgrounds for their jobs. However, Singla has his work cut out for him. The way things are at Pawans Hans, it requires a lot more than piloting proficiency to keep it in the air.

Pawan Hans' Westland helicopter: never really taking off



EVENT OF THE WEEK

A tea executive takes on the ULFA



• Fight back. That seems to be T.C. Bordoloi's idea of life. Manager of the McLeod Russel Group's Hunwal Tea Estate near Jorhat, Upper Assam, Bordoloi told United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) militants that he would not pay up the Rs 15 lakhs they demanded from him as "donation". Donation, these days, is the ULFA catch-phrase for extortion, and they have over the past two months or so, mopped up more than Rs one crore from various tea companies. Bordoloi's stand should stir the ULFA up a bit.

■ Without feathers

Executives at Agritech Hatcheries and Foods Ltd must surely be wishing it *was* that way. The Ahmednagar, Maharashtra-based poultry products company thought they had a feather in its cap when they went to market for a Rs 1.8 crore public issue. It was to partly finance a Rs 9.8 crore project to use hi-tech slaughtering machines, which can butcher 29 lakh broiler birds a year, or a fast-paced five a minute. Only, Agritech's plans ruffled the feathers of the Jain community, and even political organisations such as the Shiv Sena, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. All of them have raised objections against the project going ahead. Pervez and Vispy Damania, the project's promoters, claim that their hi-tech plans would make it the largest. fully-integrated broiler farm in India. Tell the opposition that: they hate using the word "farm" for the project. "Slaughterhouse," they say, would be more like it. The Damanias are all aflutter with concern—*their* necks are on the line. •



Speak German?

India should, if it wants to talk the unified-Germany way

On 3 October, after a separation of more than 45 years, the two halves of Germany were re-united. The reunification of Germany is an event of momentous significance in world history as with one stroke of international diplomacy, a 78 million strong nation has emerged within the heart of Europe. Given the legendary German characteristics of organisational ability, technical proficiency and discipline, it is only a matter of time before united Germany emerges as the most prosperous nation in Europe and possibly, the world.

For India's perpetually growing can't-be-done school of political scientists and woefully deficient politicians, the lesson of the reunification of the poles-apart Germany is that if people dream impossible dreams, they often realise them. Hence, the importance of pursuing lofty ambitions. For, a year ago, who would have thought that Germany, which seemed to have been irrevocably rent asunder by the greatest armed conflict in human history could ever be re-united? But the impossible *has* happened because successive governments in Bonn kept alive this hope and vision.

Yet, the reunification of Germany would never have been realised but for the economic miracle of the Federal Republic of Germany (i.e.West Germany). In the final analysis, it was the sheer affluence of FRG which prompted the citizens of the German Democratic Republic, (GDR) or East Germany, to abandon the false gods of Marxist socialism which provided neither bread nor freedom on the same scale of abundance. A healthy respect for the proven laws of economics, an appropriate economic development model and a purposeful leadership enabled war-shattered FRG to transform itself into the most affluent society in contemporary Europe with a per capita income of Rs 2.31 lakhs, twice that of its former, eastern half.

This is the second lesson of the German reunification—that economics is more important than politics. Or rather, that the primary goal of politics should be economics, to raise the standard of living of the populace Yet, in the perverse world of Indian politics, the material well-being of the nation's ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed population comes way down the list of priorities, after abstruse objectives such as national self-reliance, unity and integrity, self-respect etc.

So, for our disputable tribe of economists and social scientists, the lesson of German reunification is: stop messing around with the economy and don't play around with the proven laws of economics. Which means dismantling the inefficient resource-hungry public sector and leaving business to businessmen, *without* interference from business-illiterate bureaucrats. As FRG's economic miracle demonstrates, the function of government is to maintain law and order, build sound education and health-care systems and encourage businessmen to give off their best. The GDR tried it the other way round, and its accession to FRG is an admission of a grave error of judgment.

The Germanys broke down the wall to go capitalism's way. India should, too



The third and perhaps most significant lesson of German reunification is that it has laid to rest the ghost of egalitarian socialism (a.k.a. communism) which has haunted the developing nations of the third world—and India in particular—for over four decades.

In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe the inevitable future is writ large on walls. But is India's new generation of ill-educated, divisive, parish-pump politicians and pedantic, India-is-a-unique-case intellectuals be able to read, and more importantly, comprehend it? I doubt it. ●

Dilip Thakore is the former editor of *Business India, Business World* and *Debonair*

Trouble at the top

Why is the government hostile towards Doordarshan chief Shiv Sharma?

For a government that cries itself hoarse about safeguarding the sanctity of such institutions as the CAG and the UPSC, this was hardly credible behaviour. And to director-general (DG) of Doordarshan Shiv Sharma's credit, he didn't stand for it, either.

Of course, if the government had had its way, Sharma wouldn't have been at the helm of Doordarshan today. For, even one year after the UPSC recommended that his appointment as DG be regularised, the V.P. Singh regime continued to sit tight over his papers. No, he wasn't fired or asked to proceed on leave. But the government continued to give him ad hoc extensions, without assigning any reasons for the delay in appointing him on a regular basis.

Finally, just when it seemed that this was the way things were going to proceed until the end of his term, Shiv Sharma received a letter from the information and broadcasting ministry, informing him that he was to be relieved of his duties as Doordarshan chief and that his services would be utilised in getting Prasar Bharati going instead.

For Sharma, who had been quite foxed by the government's attitude ever since the UPSC recommended his name as the best candidate for the DG's post, this was the last straw. He got his advocates Lalit Bhasin and G. Ramaswamy on the job and appealed to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) for relief. Their argument was simple: UPSC had followed all the required procedures before choosing Sharma over the two other IAS candidates and the government should either regularise his appointment or assign reasons for not doing so. And it certainly couldn't unilaterally decide that his services as DG, Doordarshan, were no longer required.

The CAT, with Justices Karta and Chakravorty presiding, gave a stay order to Sharma, asking that *status quo ante* be restored. This meant that Sharma would continue as DG, until the next hearing which was scheduled for 22 October.

While Sharma treated this as a major victory, ministry sources maintained that the case was yet to be decided and that the government would present its case on the day of the hearing.

The argument that attorney-general Soli Sorabjee presented to the principal bench on the 22nd was that Sharma had been ill for a long period of time—he'd been in hospital after a major operation—and that the minister had not had the opportunity to evaluate his performance. Hence, his appointment had not been regularised. The attorney-general further contended that the appointment committee of the Cabinet had not had the time to process Sharma's appointment. But the argument didn't wash because his appointment had been passed by the previous regime and there was no reason why the entire process had to be repeated.

The tribunal, however, failed to give a final order, fixing 1 November as the date of the next hearing. Until then, Sharma continues as the DG—recording the Prime Minister's ever-increasing addresses to the nation among other things—and *status quo ante* prevails, in accordance with the court's order.

But why the animus against Shiv Sharma? While no one is willing to go on the record, the general consensus appears to be that the government wants a more pliable man at the helm of affairs in Doordarshan at a time when the political situation in the country is so unstable. And Sharma didn't fit the bill.

Also, the coverage of the anti-reservation stir didn't improve matters either. Shots of the police firing on students were considered inappropriate and Sharma, by virtue of being DG, had to take the rap. The government, it is rumoured, had decided then that Sharma had to go.

But Sharma remains—if only for the time being. For, only the next CAT hearing will decide his fate, one way or the other. And also whether Doordarshan autonomy will remain just another meaningless catch-phrase. •

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

Why the animus against Shiv Sharma? The general consensus appears to be that the government wants a more pliable man at the helm of affairs in Doordarshan at a time when the political situation in the country is so unstable



ASHOK VAIRE

Benazir bites the dust

And General Zia's ghost has the last laugh in Pakistan's general election

The Pakistani dictator General Zia-ul Haq might have been killed in a mysterious air crash two years ago, but his spirit lives on. Benazir Bhutto's biggest mistake was not to acknowledge it. When she became Prime Minister in December 1988, she saw it as a personal triumph and a vindication of her decade-long struggle against the Zia establishment.

Benazir thought that Zia was defeated in death and that she had succeeded in fulfilling the oath she had taken after General Zia had hanged her father and the first democratically-elected PM of the country, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in the early morning hours of 4 April, 1979. She perhaps believed that as a Bhutto, and the heir of Pakistani democracy, she had finally come home to roost.

But it was an uneasy perch. Blinded by the illusion of power, Benazir failed to see Zia's ghost looming over the Pakistani polity. And her triumph was ground to dust in a bare 20 months. Zia's successor, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, had her deposed; her arch-rival, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, was installed as caretaker PM; special tribunals were set up to process the charges of corruption against Benazir and her ministers while her husband, Asif Zardari, was flung behind bars. Benazir took to the dusty roads of Pakistan, campaigning for her return to power. She toured the length and breadth of the country, rallying her supporters to stand up to the establishment and its chief custodian, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. She felt that elections would return her to power and humiliate her enemies. Only, nothing like that happened.

In the 24 October general elections, the Pakistani electorate did not give her another chance. The people had made history of sorts by electing her in 1988. Now, they unmade it. A travel-weary Benazir trudged back from her home constituency, Larkana in Sindh province, to Karachi, while broadcasts spoke of a total rout of her People's Democratic Alliance (PDA). The next day's newspapers made banner headlines of the Islamic Jamhooree Ittehad (IJI) victory. The Zia proteges were back, grinning in triumph out of newspaper front pages. They had won a decisive 105 seats of the 207 general seats. Not Benazir, but Zia's heir, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, had been vindicated. The institutions and leaders created by the dead dictator had emerged victorious.



THE ZIA LEGACY

Benazir's biggest mistake was that she failed to see Zia's ghost looming over the Pakistani polity. And the electorate did not give her another chance in the 24 October general elections

Pakistan's political commentators make a curious distinction. They talk of a "government" and a "political government". The two in Pakistan are not one but distinct entities. The government, or the "establishment" as it is sometimes called, is as old as Pakistan and General Zia, during his 11-year rule, ensured that its effective control passed onto the military. Internal security, foreign affairs and major fiscal decisions all came to be handled by the military and its minions in the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. By the mid-1980s, Gen. Zia was confident that the military had acquired a total monopoly over real power in Pakistan.

Civilian politicians were at best performers, carrying out the perfunctory functions of government. The "political government" could go through all the motions of governing, issue statements and pass legislation. But the system ensured that it was the military that took decisions on key issues, told the politicians what to say and determined what legislation was desirable.

General Zia also had the foresight to groom a small group of leaders who could be entrusted with the task of preserving the system he had created. Of this group, four people have gained prominence. The first was a small-time Sindhi politician, Mohammad Khan Junejo, who was hoisted to the prime ministership by Zia after the partyless polls of 1985. Junejo fell out with Zia on the Afghan issue: Junejo wanted Pakistan to sign the Geneva Accord on Afghanistan, while Zia refused. In the end, Junejo had to go. As one commentator put it: "Junejo stumbled into history and stumbled out of it."



GHULAM MUSTAFA JATOI

He was an ardent follower of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, but deserted Benazir some years ago. He was appointed caretaker PM after Benazir's dismissal

The other three Zia promotees have been more successful. Of them, the most powerful, currently, is Ghulam Ishaq Khan, whom Zia appointed Speaker of the Assembly and who automatically became President after the dictator was killed. Ishaq Khan is the frontman of the military and completely faithful to the ideals of his mentor. He, more than any civilian, is determined to ensure that the Zia system prevails.

His chief politician-ally is Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, the caretaker Prime Minister appointed after Benazir's dismissal on 6 August. Jatoi was an ardent follower of Benazir's father, but fell out with her some years ago. Why he signed up with the Zia league is not entirely clear, but it is common knowledge that Zia intervened when his son was hauled up for gunning down eight policemen in Sindh. Since then, Jatoi has been a Zia fan and never stops publicly mentioning how the dictator had repeatedly offered him the prime ministership.

The last, and probably the most critical, member of this coterie is the Punjab strongman Mian Nawaz Sharif, who till ten years ago was a small-time trader. Zia and then the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), which is Pakistan's most powerful intelligence agency, actively promoted Sharif, who is today counted among the country's top ten industrialists. Sharif, unlike the other Zia creations, has succeeded in building up a formidable political constituency for himself in Punjab, which is ironic considering that he is actually a Kashmiri.

At any rate, while he was Punjab chief minister, he successfully projected himself as the champion of the province and implemented a number of projects for its improvement. Today, he is the undisputed leader of the powerful alliance, the Islamic Jamhooree Ittehad.

By all rights, Nawaz Sharif should have automatically become Prime Minister following the IJI's October 1990 electoral triumph. But Jatoi, who is a political lightweight, because of his connections and propensity to fall in line without a murmur, is considered the front-runner for the top political job.

All these men, save Junejo, are now back in the saddle. To complete the picture there is Zia's son and former banker, Ejaz-ul Haq. The young Zia provided the apt touch to the October polls by offering prayers at his father's grave on election eve. He contested the polls from the Rawalpindi Cantonment constituency and won by a whopping margin of 30,000 votes. What more could Zia have hoped for?



MIAN NAWAZ SHARIF

Ten years ago he was a small-time trader. With Zia's backing, he became one of Pakistan's top ten industrialists. He also has a formidable political constituency in Punjab

Benazir Bhutto knew what she was up against even two years ago when her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged as the single-largest party in the National Assembly with 93 of the 207 general seats. At that time, the Zia protégés managed to win just 55 seats and were in no position to form the government. The establishment, nevertheless, demurred and initially made no move to appoint Benazir Prime Minister. At that stage, Benazir had two options: she could either reject the sham and continue as an Opposition politician or else she could compromise with the establishment. As it turned out, she chose the latter course and, in the process, effectively sealed her own fate.

Benazir was appointed Prime Minister more than a month after the elections and after she held prolonged discussions with President Ishaq Khan and the army. The President pointed out that under the Constitution, rewritten by General Zia, the ultimate power to appoint and dismiss a Prime Minister rested with him. Benazir agreed to accept the conditions laid down by the establishment. She would not interfere with the army, control the financial allocations or diminish its special position. Moreover, she would work in close consultation with the President in matters of key appointments and policy. She would tone down her anti-Zia statements, leave the Afghan issue and nuclear policy to the generals, accept General Yaqub Khan as the foreign minister, pull back from her anti-Islamic posture and, in the ultimate analysis, function

within the framework of the power structure.

During the first few months of assuming power, Benazir behaved. The establishment heaved a sigh of relief. It believed it had tamed Pakistan's most vociferous democrat. What it had not quite appreciated was the extent of her antipathy to the establishment. Her sole aim was to break the political back of the Zia groupies and then go about dismantling the "real government". Unfortunately, she showed her hand a little too early.

Her attempt to bring down the Opposition government in the province of Baluchistan was frustrated by the courts and in Punjab, her arch-rival, Nawaz Sharif, proved unexpectedly skilful in resisting her attempts to undermine his government. In the meantime, her own regional alliances—with the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) in Sindh and with Wali Khan's Awami National Party (ANP) in the North West Frontier Province—were coming apart. In Sindh, her own party would not allow her to make concessions to the Mohajirs, while the President put his foot down when it came to appointing an ANP nominee for the NWFP governorship.

By the summer of 1989, things were beginning to fall apart, but Benazir did not see the signs. On the contrary, she felt it was time to assert herself. The Mujahideen thrust against Jalalabad had failed and Benazir started off by spreading rumours that the army was responsible for the failure of the Afghan policy. At the same time, she openly blamed the President's obstructiveness for her inability to change things in the Frontier Province. More foolhardy were her attempts to get at the army.

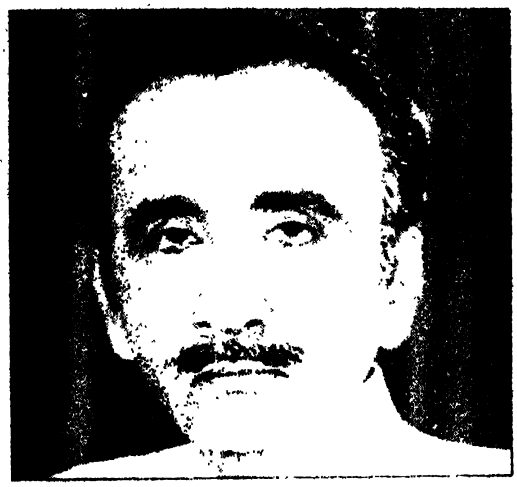
She first had the ISI chief, Hamid Gul, transferred as commander of the Strike Corps in Multan. Next, she appointed a committee under one of her buddies, Air Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan, to see how the country's intelligence agencies could be reformed. Between April and October 1989, she tried her best to retire the joint chief of staff, Admiral Iftiqar Ahmed Sirohi. Her intention was to kick the army supremo, General Mirza Aslam Beg, to Sirohi's position and install an army chief of her choice. This was a blatant attack and it completely alienated her from the armed forces.

Benazir, instead of winning friends and influencing people, was steadily antagonising every power-centre in Pakistan. Instead of maintaining a working relationship with the President, she began to openly undermine him, arguing that his role should be merely advisory and that the Eighth Amendment was undemocratic because it conferred extraordinary powers on the President. She openly clashed with Ishaq Khan over the appointment of judges and then retracted, beaten.

At the same time, she went hammer and tongs to destabilise the Opposition governments in Punjab and Sindh. She introduced the discredited people's programme under which her party workers were empowered to implement federally-funded projects in the provinces. It was like Congress(I) workers implementing the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana in India.

In another move, she completely bypassed the Pakistan Public Services Commission and opened an employment exchange in her own office. Through this expedient, she unabashedly recruited party workers and posted them at all levels of the federal and provincial bureaucracies. It was an amazingly brash attempt and only succeeded in further strengthening the resolve of her enemies, who finally arranged a no-confidence motion against her in November 1989.

She won that round, but with the barest of margins and was temporarily chastened. However, the retreat was only tactical. In the meantime, her two provincial allies broke away and joined the Opposition. In Sindh, this resulted in the escalation of ethnic violence and the army had to be called in. While Sindh burned, her failure to pressure India on the Kashmir issue fuelled the Opposition's propaganda against her. By this time, her oppo-



MOHAMMAD KHAN JUNEJO

He was hoisted to the prime ministership by Zia after the partyless polls of 1985. But he fell out with Zia on the Afghan issue



GHULAM ISHAQ KHAN

He became President after his mentor Zia-ul Haq died. He is the front-man of the military and exceedingly faithful to the ideals of Gen. Zia

nents were up in arms—determined to bring about a final showdown.

In early 1990, the President opposed her budget and succeeded in amending it according to his desire. The Senate picked up the Shariat Bill and passed it. The army forced her to approve its list of transfers and appointments. And her opponents began planning another no-confidence motion.

Feeling the ground slipping under her, Benazir started her own political campaign. In mid-July 1990, the intelligence agencies reported to the President that this time too Benazir was likely to return with a formidable majority if elections were held. Once the establishment got wind of the news that she was secretly preparing for elections, it was time to act. Benazir Bhutto had to be stopped.

At about 4 pm on 6 August, 1990, Pakistani soldiers quietly took up position at all key points in the capital, Islamabad. Benazir's house was surrounded, her telephone lines were cut and her staff told to remain indoors.

Poll fraud?

Foreign observers dismiss Benazir's charges of rigging and bogus voting

Anybody who had been in Lahore two days before the 24 October, 1990, Pakistan general elections would have sworn that Benazir Bhutto was all set to make a spectacular comeback. It was the same euphoria that had greeted Benazir two years ago. This time too the crowds screamed: "*Wazir-e-azam Benazir...raj karegi Benazir* (Prime Minister Benazir...she will rule, Benazir)." Benazir had ended her campaign on the same triumphant note as the last time and the crowds had waited till the cold early morning hours of 22-23 October to catch a glimpse of her.

Virtually every political pundit in the country had predicted her return. Nobody spoke of an Opposition wave. According to the majority opinion, Benazir's alliance, the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA), would either get a majority or at least the same number of seats as it had got in the last elections. The worst case scenario for the PDA was 75-80 seats. And this, incidentally, was the estimate of the Pakistani intelligence agencies. As it turned out, PDA got just 45 seats. The results, needless to say, were truly astounding.

The pundits were stumped. There could only be two explanations: they had either completely failed to read the mind of the electorate or else the polls had been rigged. The rigging theory gained ground after the official statistics on voter turnout were released. In the 1988 polls, the turnout was recorded at about 43 per cent. This time, virtually every first-hand report on polling spoke of very low voter turnout. Yet, the official results showed that the turnout was actually higher than in 1988. Benazir immediately latched on to this discrepancy and declared that the polls had been massively rigged.

Benazir pointed out that even the chief election commissioner, after touring a number of polling stations, on 24 October, had remarked that voter turnout would not be more than 30-35 per cent. But the results showed the turnout at the incredible level of 47 per cent. She alleged that poll results had been tampered with in most Punjab constituencies (which account for 115 of the 207 general seats). A study of the Punjab seats won by the PDA showed about the same turnout as in 1988, or less.





ON THE ROADS

After her ouster, Benazir toured Pakistan, drawing huge crowds. But her opponents had succeeded in confusing the electorate by stressing that Benazir, Husband & Co. were corrupt

Benazir was not at home at the time. At 4.30, President Ishaq Khan convened a press conference, where General Aslam Beg was caught taking a peek at the assembled newsmen. The President announced: "The utility and the efficacy of the National Assembly as a representative institution elected by the people under the Constitution, and its mandate, is defeated by internal dissension and frictions, persistent and scandalous 'horse-trading' for political gain and furtherance of personal interests, corrupt practices and inducement, in contravention of the Constitution and the law, and by failure to discharge substantive legislative functions other than the adoption of the Finance Bill and further the National Assembly has lost the confidence of the people."

It was a cheap coup, made in the name of the people. For Benazir, the nightmare had begun once again. She and a handful of her close Cabinet colleagues were charged with corruption and special tribunals were set up for the trials. Back in Karachi, her husband, businessman Asif Zardari, was accused of influencing bank and

The question was, how had the results been tampered with? For, there had been no general outcry by PDA polling agents in any constituency. Benazir insisted that bogus votes had been added to the tally of 'JI candidates by pro-establishment election officials. But if this had been done, why had her polling agents across Punjab not protested *en masse?*

Most foreign observers were convinced that the polls had generally been free and fair. The biggest blow for Benazir was the post-election verdict given by the 40-member delegation from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Washington DC. The NDI team was composed of representatives from a number of countries and its members had visited about 500 polling stations throughout the country on election day. The leaders of the NDI team, after collating reports from all their colleagues, concluded that they had not found any evidence of bogus voting or rigging of any kind. "We believe irregularities did not take place on a scale which could have altered the results," they said. They felt that the elections at this local level were "generally open, orderly and well-administered"; that the procedures used for balloting and counting were in accordance with law; and that the system afforded opportunities for the candidates to check for abuse.

Benazir's contention was that the rigging had been done by pro-administration election officials chosen and appointed by the IJI leadership. The rigging, according to her, had been conducted in an efficient and organised manner. In every constituency, 40-50 polling stations had been selected and in each of these the bogus votes had been added to the tally of the IJI candidates. In the next step, the booth level results were directly sent by the poll officials to the returning officer of the constituency, whose job was merely to total the returns from each polling station. Benazir claimed that certified copies of the station-wise results had not been given to polling agents to avoid cross-checking.

The former Pakistani Prime Minister could not, however, offer a proper explanation as to why there was not a peep from her polling agents on 24 October and why she was the only leader hollering 'foul'. The fact remained that Benazir had been outwitted. As far as Pakistan and the whole world was concerned, she had come a complete cropper in the poll process. It was a little too late to complain.



A COMPROMISE

Benazir was appointed PM more than a month after the 1988 elections. And after she had held prolonged discussions with President Ishaq and the army. But her antipathy to the Zia groupies soon became evident

POLL RESULTS

PARTY/ALLIANCE

	1988	1990
Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (1988) and her People's Democratic Alliance (1990)	93	45
Islamic Jamhooree Ittehad	55	105
Mohajir Quami Movement	13	15
Other parties	17	20
Independents	27	21
Total	205	206

[In 1988, elections in two constituencies were countermanded and in 1990, in one constituency. Total general seats in the Pakistan National Assembly is 207.]

government decisions and of having coerced a non-resident Pakistani to deposit money in an associate's account. Subsequently, Zardari was arrested and clapped in prison. Begum Nusrat Bhutto had earlier departed for her home country, Iran, and Benazir was once again alone.

Benazir, in retrospect, had been dangerously naive in assuming that people's power is all that matters in Pakistan and that she, the heir of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was the sole custodian of that elusive power. In the end, she was proved wrong on both counts. She toured Pakistan, drawing huge crowds and considerable sympathy.

But her opponents too had mastered the art of campaigning. They succeeded in confusing the electorate by stressing that Benazir, husband and company were corrupt, that they had bartered national interest for their personal ends. Nawaz Sharif's men released letters, allegedly written by Benazir, asking for Indian intervention, and hammered home the point that Benazir had not passed a single legislation to fulfil her election promises. Even the United States' decision to suspend military and economic aid went against her. The IJI argued that Begum Bhutto had engineered the aid stoppage and that the Americans were trying to influence the Pakistani polls.

Any other person in Benazir's shoes would have run for cover. But she stood up to the challenge and fought, convinced till the very end that she would once again win. Whether the polls were rigged or whether she was defeated in a fair contest will always remain a matter of conjecture. What will never be in doubt is the fact that, one way or the other, it was the establishment that finally got the better of her. She remains, as the poll results demonstrate, the single most popular Pakistani leader with a national base. The only flaw in her make-up was her indecent haste. She thought that one election could dismantle a system General Zia had taken 11 years to build. •

Indranil Banerjie/Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

I told you so!

A quick recap of how the scribes viewed the Golden Age of Vishwanath



The Rastrapati has given Weepy a fortnight to prove his majority on the floor of the House. The people have given him a fortnight to prove his minority on the floor of the House. And by 7 November, the Lok Sabha, in the immortal words of Oliver Cromwell, would have told VP: "For God's sake, go!"

Raja ki jayegi barat
Rangeeli hogi raat
Magar mein ro-ungi!

But whyfor *"ro-ungi"* (and in any case, it should be *"ro-unga"*) as my friend Sharad Yadav would say? I'll tell you whyfor. First they got rid of the Tau. This column survived—but only just! Now they're getting rid of Weepy. Can this column survive that blow? But before this column is consigned to the dustbin of history, here—as Vinod Dua would say (and you know why he is on all our minds!)—is a brief recap of how we scribes have viewed this Golden Age of Vishwanath:

IN THE BEGINNING DEPTT

"Thank God, it's V.P. Singh. He is the obvious choice. He only deserves it."
—STATESMAN, *'People's three cheers for V.P. Singh' (1/12/89)*

"We join the people in extending our good wishes to Mr V.P. Singh. He not only deserves but requires the nation's good wishes in tackling the tremendous tasks that lie ahead."
—ECONOMIC TIMES, *Editorial (2/12/89)*

"Mr V.P. Singh's ascension to power as the Prime Minister marks a historic point in the country's politics...There is no doubt that, like Mr Gorbachev, Mr V.P. Singh too will bring many revolutionary changes in politics and the economy and in other spheres of national life."
—*K. Kasturi Rangan,* DINAMANI *(3/12/89)*
Courtesy: INDIA SPEAKS *(11/12/89)*

"(V.P. Singh) has been called indecisive, inept, infirm. But he has trudged along regardless. When the party has failed him, or tried to pull him down, he has trodden a solitary path. In the end, others have been forced to fall in line. These are remarkable qualities and are certain to stand him in good stead as he seeks to grapple with the tumult that lies ahead..."
—TIMES OF INDIA, *Editorial (2/12/89)*

PARDON, YOUR SLIP IS SHOWING DEPTT

"...But there will still be reservations about him."
—TIMES OF INDIA, *Editorial (2/12/89)*

GUSH-GUSH DEPTT

"V.P. Singh is in South Block and he brings to his office, to use his own words, the scent of the dust of India's villages. Long may it linger. A new government has been installed and a new dawn, albeit a misty one, is in sight."
—*Tavleen Singh,* INDIAN EXPRESS *(10/12/89)*



JOKE OF THE YEAR DEPTT

"Mr Devi Lal rose above the lure of power and annointed Mr V.P. Singh. By this action, Mr Devi Lal has sent a message to all doubting Thomases that the Janata Dal will not come apart by infighting."
—*Editor Prabhash Joshi, 'Uncle Devi Lal's Blessings',* JANSATTA *(2/12/89)*
Courtesy: INDIA SPEAKS *(4/12/89)*

PREDICTION OF THE DECADE DEPTT

"Watch out for V.P. Singh. He's going to be around for a long, long time."
—SUNDAY *(31/12/89)*

SECOND THOUGHTS ANYONE? DEPTT

"Shahid Siddiqui: Mufti Saheb, you are the first Muslim home minister of India. How do you feel?
Mufti Mohammed Sayeed: The Prime Minister has displayed great trust in me by giving me this tremendous responsibility...For the first time in the history of this country, its Prime Minister has taken the daring decision to hand over the charge of the home ministry to me, a Muslim, to create confidence among the minorities—a step which even Jawaharlal Nehru could not take."
—*Interview in* NAI DUNIYA *(15/12/89)*
Courtesy: INDIA SPEAKS *(18/12/89)*

LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG DEPTT

"It must be counted as truly remarkable that Mr V.P. Singh should have been able to assemble a team without too much fuss or delay...He can be said to have assembled an impressive as well as representative group of men and, so far, a single woman, who would do credit to any administration."
—STATESMAN, *Editorial (6/12/89)*

HATE YOU, HATE YOUR DOG DEPTT

"Singh and his allies—the BJP—have

proved convincingly that Rajiv is no longer a factor...The Congress is licking its wounds, praying for a miracle that might yet save the party...Much as M.J. Akbar may vouch for Rajiv's sagacity or Mani Shankar Aiyar sing hosannas to the man, there are not many people who believe that Rajiv has the skill or the acumen to manoeuvre himself back to the centre-stage of national politics."
—*Pritish Nandy*, THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY *(11/3/90)*

SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL DEPTT

"V.P. Singh has already proved one thing: his capacity for conjuring miracles...Time is still on V.P. Singh's side. Popular perceptions too continue to support him. He is seen as a man who keeps his pledges and is endowed with an indefatigable sense of purpose."
—*Indranil Banerjie & Rajiv Shukla*, SUNDAY *(21/1/90)*

"None can doubt that the National Front government has seriously settled down to business. There are major differences in its functioning, its 'atmosphere', from the Rajiv Gandhi government...It has proved to be a far more liberal government, more consensus-oriented, less faddist and less paranoic."
—INDIA TODAY, *Comment (15/2/90)*

SUCK-SUCK DEPTT

"What most people do not realise is that Singh is a clever, in fact, canny political player...amazing astuteness...He would rather step down from office on a matter of principle than cling to power, making compromises."
—*Pritish Nandy*, ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY *(27/5/90)*

POLITICAL ILLITERACY DEPTT

"I am amazed at the public support V.P. Singh is drawing, recreating as it were the magic of Jayaprakash Narayan...He might end up stalking the corridors of history as a Prime Minister India will remember. Not for sartorial elegance; nor for his lineage. Not even for the way he has outsmarted his adversaries. But because he has a feel for politics at the ground level and knows how to skilfully turn it to his advantage."
—*Pritish Nandy*, ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY *(11/3/90)*

BLINKERS FOR MY EYES, PLEASE DEPTT

"The title: Star Trek II. The star: V.P. Singh...The crowds materialised from thin air, held spell-bound by the simple little homilies, the snatches of self-penned verse and the gentle chiding that has become his campaign trademark...In his inimitable Allahabadi diction, he comes across as sober and sincere and a man who clearly has a finger on the pulse of the people."
—*Bhaskar Roy*, INDIA TODAY *(15/3/90)*

PUNDITS CAN BE PUNTERS TOO DEPTT

"To prove the efficacy of his government, V.P. Singh does not have to perform any wonders...If for the first two or three years he manages to keep the National Front government reasonably intact, he will be perceived as a successful Prime Minister because he will have demolished one powerful myth: that only the Congress can provide stable governments at the Centre."
—*Vinod Mehta*, SUNDAY *(17/12/89)*

WASTED ADVICE DEPTT

"If the Prime Minister is wise, he will not—given the fractured nature of his support—attempt to introduce too many radical policies. Instead, he will use his powers to launch a clean-up operation to give the people of India a government that they feel they can trust...Then, within a year or so, he will call fresh elections and ask the people to give him the mandate required to finish the job...None of this is difficult to do. The trouble with India's politicians, of course, is that they find 20 complicated reasons for refusing to do the obvious thing."
—*Editor Vir Sanghvi*, SUNDAY *(3/12/89)*



PRESCIENCE DEPTT

"The minority status of the government is working like a lucky charm. In spite of severe infighting and factionalism, none of the constituents of the National Front government is willing to break away from it. Similarly, the two parties which are supporting the government from outside are loathe to kill the hen which is laying them their golden eggs. But for how long can Mr V.P Singh run the government with such fickle and treacherous partners?"
—*Suneet Ghosh*, ANANDABAZAR PATRIKA *(9/6/90)*
Courtesy: INDIA SPEAKS *(19/6/90)*

YOU SAID IT! DEPTT

"Strange are the ways of the national press. The fourth estate is busy lavishing praise on the Prime Minister. The trouble is that, of late, the Prime Minister has not given any ground for praise. So, the press has resorted to congratulating the man merely for continuing in office!...Remaining in office has been his main achievement. He has survived by throwing his election promises to the winds, burying honesty in politics, bidding farewell to secularism and ignoring the growth of secessionist forces. Now he is ready to include in his proposed 'national government' the very Rajiv Gandhi who he said should flee to Italy! But the press may praise him for this too. For, after all, V.P. Singh is the print media's Prime Minister."
—*Cho Ramaswamy*, TUGHLAQ *(15/6/90)*
Courtesy: INDIA SPEAKS *(3/7/90)*

WISDOM DAWNS DEPTT

"Scattered all over the country is a small but committed section of voters who are India's real kingmakers. We call this group the Yukavati, an acronym for *yuvak* (youth), *karamchari* (salariat), *vakil* (lawyers) and teachers...The mood of the electorate in 1989 was anti-Congress thanks to Yukavati...After 100 days of the V.P. Singh government, it is this very Yukavati which is full of bitterness. They believed that V.P. Singh's high ethical standards would make an impact on policy-making and policies. No one thought that,

An art and objects exhibition at London's National Portrait Gallery evokes British India like never before



The Raj curry

London is overwhelmed. There is simply no other way to put it. For a people brought up on a heavy diet of Kipling, Scott and Kaye, here is yet another chance of tallyhoing back to the 'glorious' days of Indian summers, *punkhawalas* and *memsahibs*.

A five month-long exhibition of Raj paintings and memorabilia—titled 'The Raj: India and the British, 1600-1947'—opened at London's prestigious National Portrait Gallery on 19 October. And the crowds have not stopped streaming in.

The Raj has always held a fascination for Britons, and the organisers of the show played on this key point. Even the title was carefully chosen; another title, confess the organisers, like 'Glories of the Orient' or something similar would have ensured that the exhibition was a washout.

The biggest attraction is a life-size elephant, complete with armour worn at the battle of Plassey in 1757. (The elephant was transported from its home in the Tower of London complex in an operation the organisers call a "nightmare".) Other exhibits, though not quite as massive, but impressive nonetheless, are as riveting. British painters of the 18th and 19th centuries such as Johann Zoffany, Tilly Kettle, Thomas Hickey, Sir Joshua Reynolds and William Daniels have their works displayed. So is a Prabhu Dayal poster and Raj snapshots by Narayan Vinayak Virkar, a prominent 19th century Bombay photographer.

In all, there are over 500 paintings and a hundred *objets d'art* on show, making it the biggest ever exhibition to be held at the gallery, and its first on the Raj. To add spice to an already heady presentation, the gallery is organising a series of lectures by historians—Judith Brown, Peter Marshall and K.N. Chaudhary, among others—and films such as Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari*, Aparna Sen's *36 Chowringhee Lane* and James Ivory/Ismail Merchant's *Shakespearewallah*.

The exhibition is divided into four major sections, devised chronologically. Mughal India and the rise of the East India Company, 1600-1800; Company supremacy and Indian resistance, 1800-1858; The Victorian Raj and the rise of Indian nationalism, 1858-1914; and, finally, the road to Independence and Partition, 1914-1947. On display are many previously unexhibited offerings, culled from collections at the India Office library in London, the Imperial War Museum, The Royal Commonwealth Society, The Museum of Mankind, the British Museum, The Victoria and Albert Museum, and from private collections in India and the USA.

Tilly Kettle's oil on canvas of a dancing girl: Raj colours come alive



Side-stepping the usual manner of blindly overdosing the public with stereotypes, the gallery ensured that the exhibition was not only elephants, snake charmers and tiger shoots, however fascinating a slice of history they may be. Also, the organisers decided that they would try and present both sides of the story, the British-eye view of the Raj, as well as how the Indians saw it. Cambridge University historian Christopher Bayly, chief organiser of the exhibition, wanted to also maintain a careful balance between objects from India, and those from Pakistan and Bangladesh. For two reasons. One, because Pakistan and Bangladesh formed the greater India of the British era. And two, because governments of both countries were keen that their national traditions were fully represented.

While the British painters—Zoffany, Kettle, Reynolds, et al—detail the British image of the East India Company and its conquests, the works of Indian artists serve to counterbalance this view. If the 'Company'



A water colour of a durbar procession during Emperor Akbar's reign: a panoramic history

painters tended to show the British as munificent patrons, the subcontinent's artists and photographers used Indian myths, traditions and real life themes or personalities--and sometimes, a fusion of these--as motifs to throw a challenge to Britannia.

Hence, the symbolic use of Kali in several paintings and oleograph posters showing the conquest of the British by the forces of *shakti*. Hence, again, the poster by turn-of-the-century painter Prabhu Dayal, titled Bharatuddhar (or the liberation of India), where Mahatma Gandhi is depicted as Shiva protecting Markandeya (here, Mother India) from the clutches of Yamraj (the British). In a lighter vein, there is a poster showing a viceroy, Lord Curzon, in the form of an all-encompassing Ganesh

The exhibition also shows a darker India, of 'suttee' and the 'thuggee' cults But even here, contrasting British views are shown. While Zoffany showed the widows as brave, almost glorious, a depiction by Thomas Rowlandson brings out the harsh, grotesque truth of widow burning.

The Mutiny and the struggle for independence inspired numerous works of art both by the British and Indians. 'In Memoriam", an oil painting by Sir Joseph Noel Paton shows the women of an English family huddling together as Indian mutineers enter their home, with mayhem in their eyes. On the other hand, Indian artists concentrate more on the popular, heroic. Mutiny figures. Rani Lakshmibai, Tantia Tope and Nana Phadnavis.A political pamphlet, 'Awake Awake , banned by the British in 1908--the time of Bengal's partition--and now preserved in the India Office library, forms part of the Indian resistance section of the exhibition.

Some more history, and some more of unpleasant [illegible] photographs of labourers in bengal, scenes at a jute factory and [illegible] are fascinating. Equally fascinating are the depressing [illegible] the Bombay plague of 18[illegible] Photographs recording the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the [illegible] and pre-Independence [illegible] sessions brought [illegible] Nehru Memorial Museum [illegible] Library in New Delhi [illegible] show, as a 1929 sketch of Rabindranath Tagore by Amit Bose. The sketch, in particular, is important, as it [illegible] introduced the European style of portraiture in Bengal.

That it might take more than one visit to the gallery to see everything is an understatement. And a visit has a bonus for those who wish to preserve memories--and even for those who do not make it; the gallery has printed a sumptuous 432-page catalogue, priced at pound sterling 19.95 (about Rs 700), which is a collector's dream. The taste of this Raj curry is sure to linger on long after the exhibition ends next March. *Bon apetit.* •

Shrabani Basu/London

After the battle of Plassey, Lord Clive meets Mir Jafar: Francis Hayman's view of the all-conquering Union Jack



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

No ban, no challenge... just a burning desire.



All tied up

Doordarshan shortchanges a serial by M.S. Sathyu

You cannot exactly tool around with a man who made a film like *Garam Hawa*. Doordarshan did. And M.S. Sathyu is livid

Doordarshan (DD) pulled out Sathyu's Hindi TV serial *Kayar* (Rope) from the prime time nine pm slot and instead, gave it the late night slot. The reason: the DD review committee found *Kayar* starring Anjan Srivastav, Sreela Majumdar, Anant Mahadevan and Arundhati Nag, among others -too "adult" for public viewing.

Now, for the flaws in the argument One: If DD could show *Tamas* at prime time,what is wrong with *Kayar*? Yes, *Tamas* had communalism and violence, *not* sex, but it was very disturbing, nevertheless. And as real-life as sexual overtones can be. Two: *Kayar* is based on a book of the same title by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, considered an opus in Malayalam literary circles, and won for the author the prestigious *Jnanpith* award in 1984. If literateurs -indeed, the government—found it good enough for an award, why should DD act as if it has blinkers on?

And three: *Kayar* tells the story of life in a remote village in the waterlogged Kuttanad region of Kerala, a tale spanning 150 years– upto the 1970s -and six generations of a joint family, which begins to break up with the passage of time. It shows social, cultural and economic changes wrought on the village, with one theme binding the parts together: man's greed for land.

Sathyu claims that after the serial's plot was approved—and here lies flaw number four of the argument—DD officials led him on to believe that it was prime time material. So, he spent Rs two lakhs shooting the first seven episodes; his sponsors had made it very clear that they were willing to back the serial only if it made prime time. Now, however, Sathyu is in a fix, as there are hardly any sponsors for late night shows.

Sathyu is maintaining an angry silence—prudent, perhaps, as talk can cost him the serial entirely, thanks to some obscure babu in DD. But Thakazhi has nothing to lose. "They (DD officials) should be horse-whipped on the steps of Mandi House (DD's headquarters in Delhi)," says the outraged author. "The least I can say is that their notions about obscenity are perverted." Concurs Krishnan Nair, considered to be the finest critic of Malayalam literature: "I cannot see any obscenity in the novel. And the scenes which were found objectionable by Doordarshan are an artistic necessity."

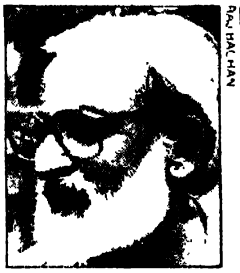
DD may have a fight on its hands. Kerala's minister for cultural affairs and Communist Party of India (Marxist) strongman, has written a stiff letter to Union information and broadcasting minister P. Upendra, asking him to allot *Kayar* a prime time slot. Besides, all MPs from Kerala have already objected to *Kayar* being shifted to a late night slot.

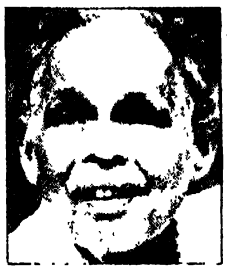
Kayar is power-packed. The story begins in 19th century Kerala, when the matriarchal system was at its peak, and the dominant upper castes, the arch-conservative Nairs, were land owners. When, there were not too many taboos on sex or on sexual relationships. It was a society where even an illegitimate child had rights in a Nair family. A Nair woman could take the man of her choice, and if she was fed up with him, she could end the relationship by just placing a pillow and a mat outside her bedroom, which the man accepted as signifying divorce. Everything had to be orderly, and breaking the code of conduct meant social ostracisation, and in some cases, death. "In my novel," says Thakazhi, "I have tried to portray life in all its reality."

So has Sathyu, in the serial. And for that, DD asked him to wipe out an entire episode, the sixth. The episode deals with Kalyani Pillai -played by Arundhati Nag—a charming Nair woman who gets seduced by a land-classifier, Kochu Pillai, and gets pregnant When her uncle, the head of the joint family, hears of this, he gets furious and starts to beat Kalyani In desperation, Kalyani drops the *dhoti* she is wearing, and runs, the undressing more to deter her uncle. At worst feel critics, DD could have asked for the scene to be deleted, but not the entire episode "It is in this desperation of a woman who sheds her clothes to save herself from being killed that the Doordarshan experts have found sex."

Right now, DD is emphatic about sticking to its stand. It the end, however, Sathyu may have to compromise on one scene. DD, on the other hand, may have to compromise on the serial. •

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum







M.S. Sathyu (top left); novelist Thakazhi (left); and a scene from the serial: too "adult"?

The day after

Advani's arrest triggers off countrywide communal violence



RIOTS

There was blood in the streets. About 83 people died in the continual communal violence since 24 October--the day the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) called a nationwide strike in protest against the arrest of its party president, L.K. Advani. As SUNDAY went to press, 53 people were reported dead in Rajasthan alone. In Gujarat, the toll stood at seven, and in West Bengal, it mounted to 14. Karnataka had six dead, and Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra one each.

There was a dramatic build-up to the arrest of L.K. Advani. The climax was on 23 October. The BJP chief was on his way to Ayodhya in his Ram *rath* when he was stopped at Samastipur, in Bihar, at 6 am that morning. Advani was scheduled to reach Ayodhya, in UP, to launch the *kar seva* for the construction of a Ram temple at the site where the Babri Masjid now stands. And his *yatra*, which began in the temple town of Somnath, had fanned enough communal passions on its gruelling 10,000 km route to make the government sit up and take action.

Advani's arrest was always on the cards. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the UP chief minister, had declared that his government would halt the BJP chief at Deoria on the Bihar-UP border. He felt that a communal powder keg was filling up in the state and Advani's entry would provide the deadly spark. What was not anticipated, however, was that Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav would be the one to pick up the gauntlet. So, as security forces whisked Advani away from the Samastipur Circuit House to a remote, hill-top bungalow at Massanjore, in Dumka, on the Bihar-West Bengal border, the BJP withdrew its support to the National Front government at the Centre and called a nationwide *bandh* for the following day.

The BJP's call led to an eruption of communal violence in some states while only clashes were reported from the parts where the *bandh* was sought to be enforced.



GOPAL SUNGER

Burnt shops in Jaipur: a trail of destruction

RAJASTHAN: The worst affected was Jaipur city, which was never particularly known to be communally sensitive. But in one day's violence, 30 people were killed on 24 October in Jaipur and hundreds were grievously hurt, adding to the toll on the following days. Earlier, when Advani's *rath* passed through the state, large scale rioting had been apprehended as the Muslims had called a *bandh* in protest. Even chief minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat had admitted that the situation was inflammable. Surprisingly, the *yatra* had passed peacefully. But, 11 days later, the news of Advani's arrest in Bihar had an electrifying effect. On 23 October itself, shops downed shutters, although the *bandh* was called on the following day, and the mood turned distinctly sulien and ominous.

It was black Wednesday in the Pink City on the 24th as groups of BJP, Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activists took over the city. What sparked off the violence was, however, a rumour that a child was being held in a place of worship by one community. And in a situation where rumour mills work overtime, this story proved to be the last straw. A large mob gathered at the religious site and all hell broke loose

A police contingent rushed to the spot, to find itself piteously outnumbered by the rioters. Repeated lathicharges and bursting of teargas shells failed to quell the mob. Seven people died in the firing and a policeman was killed in the cross-fire by late afternoon. Trouble spread to other cities like Jodhpur and Beawar also and an indefinite curfew was clamped on all three places. But before the security forces could restore any semblace of normalcy, shops and business establishments were looted and torched, and several persons stabbed. Eyewitness accounts claim that some BJP and VHP activists forced shopkeepers to open up and went on a looting spree before setting the shops alight.

The frenzy, in fact, increased after the imposition of curfew, and the bewildered administration sent out SOS signals to the army. Strangely, it took the army, known for its quick deployment capabilities, almost four hours to move in. Even that did not

improve matters immediately. That night 22 people were burnt alive in a Jaipur locality.

GUJARAT: In Ahmedabad, trouble started a day earlier, on the 23rd itself. Four persons were killed and ten injured in a burst of violence as soon as the news of Advani's detention reached the state. Overzealous BJP workers tried to enforce an instant *bandh*. Next day, two more people died, this time in police firing and stone throwing as rampaging mobs made central government buildings their specific targets. Two MLAs, Kantibhai Kachoria and Vithalbhai Shah were arrested for violating prohibitory orders and instigating the people, even as the *bandh* call evoked good response. At least 2,000 people were arrested on charges of rioting.

MADHYA PRADESH: The state lived up to its reputation of communal tolerance. Though its politics is dominated by the BJP, the *bandh* was marked by restraint both on the part of the people and the administration. Despite sporadic violence in Dhar, where six people were injured in a bomb blast, no deaths were reported.

The state BJP regime, led by Sunderlal Patwa, had anticipated trouble and clamped prohibitory measures in Ujjain, Tikamgarh, Shajalpur at the very first signs of unrest.

KARNATAKA: The wounds of Bidar had not fully healed when another bout of frenzy sent shockwaves through the state. Three persons were stabbed to death in the town of Kolar and two others died in police firing at Mulbagal, in southern Karnataka.The security forces fired on a violent mob also in Hassan district and Mangalore, where vehicles and shops were set on fire. The *bandh*, partially or totally successful in Karnataka towns, showed that the BJP had cut into an area that had traditionally been a Congress and Janata stronghold.

WEST BENGAL: The state administration knew at least 24 hours in advance that Advani was going to be arrested on the morning of 23 October. It had, therefore, made quick preparations to cope with a crisis situation. But despite the precautions, untoward incidents could not be avoided.

Though the *bandh* was a complete failure in the state, clashes broke out

In the gilded cage

A glimpse of the royal prisoner

As the National Front government totters on the edge of a precipice, its most celebrated prisoner waits in his comfortable Alcatraz in Massanjore, Bihar. From the balcony of his second floor suite, the BJP president has a view of the rolling waters of the Massanjore Dam, the lush woodlands of Dumka and the policemen doggedly patrolling the driveway upto the house. The inspection bungalow of the Bihar government is a high security prison for one man arrested on 24 October for driving his *rath* towards his holy grail—the temple-mosque of Ayodhya.

Ten kilometres from the fortified house-on-the-hill, policemen, cradling bolt-action rifles and automatic weapons, manned the checkposts. "No one is allowed to go any further," the officer-in-charge warned with a cold-eyed belligerence. "All roads are blocked."

But one road, a dusty cart-track, snaking its way through paddy fields and impoverished Santhal villages,was not. "There's another route," a 17-year old schoolboy BJP supporter whispered, and volunteered to be the guide. A few kilometres away stood the bungalow, a pale grey in the morning mist. Unsuspecting securitymen of the Bihar Police and the CISF sitting in a circle at the entrance, barely looked up as the car sped through the drive. At the driveway only one paunchy policeman attempted to stop the vehicle.

"How did you get here? Weren't there any checkpoints on the road?" asked the disbelieving senior police officer after refusing to consider all requests to meet Advani. "He is our prisoner. No one is allowed to see him."

But on the second floor verandah overlooking the driveway where five police jeeps, two other vehicles and an ambulance waited, stood Advani sipping tea and reading the previous day's paper. As the photographer aimed his Nikon at him, the BJP president did a courtly *namaste*, smiled and waved. The cameras clicked and our questions were lost in the steady rumble of the dam's waters. Policemen, menacingly waving their batons, were advancing. As Advani flapped his paper for the last time and turned away, it was time to retreat. Ahead, after bluffing one's way through another roadblock, lay a long trip back to Calcutta. •

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Massanjore



TARAPADA BANERJEE

Advani in the Massanjore bungalow: lonely at the top

in certain sensitive pockets, and two people were killed in police firing in Burdwan and Nadia districts. But a red alert was signalled the next day when three people were killed in a sudden outbreak of communal fury in Howrah's Pilkhana *bustee* and another ten were hacked to death in Purulia district.

The Pilkhana *bustee* was an inspiration for Dominique La Pierre's *City of Joy*. But on the night of 25 October it was plunged in gloom. This was a spillover of earlier clashes in a nearby suburban town where the Hindus and the Muslims had fought a pitched-battle when the VHP brought out a procession.

The state home secretary attributed the Purulia clashes to a series of rumours which lent communal colour to a road accident. A motor-cyclist knocked down a man, killing him on the spot. But the word went round that it was a case of planned communal murder. And, in the madness that followed, ten people were killed.



Pilkhana: the left slips

Chief minister Jyoti Basu squarely blamed the BJP for the unexpected violence and urged his party workers to be extra-vigilant. Evidently the Marxists had grown complacent while the BJP was making a frantic bid to gain a toe-hold in the state.

BIHAR: It was feared that the state would go up in flames. But, mercifully, it didn't. The *bandh* was largely successful in parts of central and south Bihar, but the government of chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav managed to keep the BJP activists on a leash.

Significantly, there were no killings in Bihar, though incidents of arson and looting were reported from Sitamarhi, Darbhanga, Dumka and south Bihar. In Patna, shops remained closed and Yadav went around the city in the afternoon, to oversee security arrangements and preach communal harmony, very conscious of his responsibilities. He had shown that he had the guts to arrest Advani. Now he had to ensure that his state did not succumb to communal passions. And he was largely successful, though only a year back Bihar had been rocked by a gruesome riot in Bhagalpur

UTTAR PRADESH: The epicentre of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy was guarded like a fortress. Chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had played tough from the very beginning and the BJP and its allies, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, could do little to dent his armour. In Lucknow, the state capital, the *bandh* was complete. In Meerut and Aligarh, which have the most notorious records of communal carnage, the *bandh* passed off peacefully.

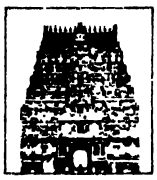
Evidently, Mulayam achieved the impossible. And to do that he had ordered the systematic arrest of BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal workers.

Events during the *bandh* and after proved one thing for certain: that communal clashes, even in the most sensitive of areas, can be avoided, if the administration is truly keen on preventing them. If Mulayam, Laloo and Sunderlal Patwa could pre-empt a flare-up in UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, there is no way in which the failures of Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Chimanbhai Patel in Rajasthan and Gujarat can be explained away. Unless, of course, one concedes that some leaders are more keen on playing with fire than others. ●

Anish Gupta with Milap Chand Dandia/ Jaipur and bureau reports.

A Dravidian holiday

The bandh *in support of the Mandal proposals is total*



TAMIL NADU

On 23 October, Tamil Nadu was set on a different trajectory altogether. While, according to Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, "an atmosphere of fear" gripped the country following the arrest of L.K. Advani, Tamil Nadu observed a *bandh* in support of the Mandal Commission recommendations. The *bandh*, called by the ruling DMK and its allies, brought life in the state to a standstill in protest against the anti-reservation agitation in northern India and the vitiated communal atmosphere prevailing in the country over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy.

The DMK, which held a meeting on 15 October with "like-minded" parties and some Scheduled Caste organisations to finalise the *bandh* plan, did not invite the Congress(I) or the AIADMK. DMK chief M. Karunanidhi felt that the two organisations were against the Mandal recommendations and were shifting their stand far too often. However, a splinter group of the AIADMK attended the meeting.

Karunanidhi's one embarrassment was, however, the snubbing he received from the CPI(M), the DMK's ally in the state Assembly. "The Marxists have expressed support for the Mandal report but are not participating in the *bandh*. I do not know the reasons," the DMK chief remarked when questioned on the issue.

But the rationale behind the *bandh* was not immediately clear. Almost all the parties in the state have backed the Mandal report and the DMK's target wasn't obvious. Some political observers feel that it was directed against the Centre's failure to get the Supreme Court stay order on the Mandal recommendations vacated.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Asking for the Bill

Biju prepares the legal ground to whack JB



ORISSA

For some time now, chief minister Biju Patnaik's overriding obsession has been J B Patnaik. Ever since he came to power, in March, Biju is out to finish JB with a hefty club of corruption charges. And he has decided to attack not only the former Congress(I) chief minister, but also his followers and sympathisers in politics and the state bureaucracy.

If Biju has failed miserably in fulfilling most of his poll promises, he is firm on his pledge of fighting corruption and is relentlessly gunning for JB and his associates. And his latest salvo has been the adoption of a Bill in the state Assembly, which empowers the government to set up special courts to try politicians and government officials on charges of corruption.

The Orissa Special Courts Bill, 1990, still awaiting presidential assent, is seen as a unique measure to fight corruption. The Bill gives the government the power to confiscate a person's property before and during the trial and states that such property would be returned to the accused with an interest of 12 per cent in the event of aquittal.

The Congress(I) tried to fight the Bill, terming it "draconian" and pointing out that a person was likely to be rendered homeless, if disputed residential houses were also taken over. The option in such cases was to deposit a sum of money, equivalent to the value of the property, with the government and stay on. The Bill has been carefully worded to plug possibilities of the special court's verdict being challenged in the Supreme Court. The only length a contestant can hope to go is upto the Orissa High Court.

Biju cannot really be faulted for introducing the Bill. The ten-year rule of J.B. Patnaik was marked by an unprecedented level of corruption and Biju had made it an effective campaign plank against the Congress before the parliamentary and Assembly polls.

But what makes the Bill seem dreadfully vengeful is the fact that, initially, it was made applicable only to the 1980-89 period, during which the Congress(I) was in power in the state. It was only when the Congress(I) and other critics of the Janata Dal raised a hue and cry about Biju's real intentions that the Bill was amended. But its preamble still sets the tone with disparaging remarks about the Eighties: it identifies the decade as the notorious period when corruption peaked in Orissa.



Biju Patnaik: aggressive

If Biju's earlier actions in which he had ordered random raids on the houses of J.B. Patnaik and other Congress(I) leaders as well as some government officials close to the former chief minister are any indication of the shape of things to come, the Congress(I) leaders would do well to prepare for some rearguard action. If the Bill receives the President's assent, Biju will be armed with a formidable legal weapon and JB and his followers would become vulnerable to damaging legal proceedings.

The political upheaval at the Centre and the possibilites of the National Front regime collapsing, following the withdrawal of support by the BJP, is unlikely to bail the Congress(I) leadership out of trouble. If anything, the crisis could increase the Janata Dal government's eagerness to prove its credentials as an uncompromising crusader against corruption. ●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

Master stroke

Arjun Singh outwits the Congress(I) high command



MADHYA PRADESH

With the Congress(I)'s hasty decision to appoint tribal MP Arvind Netam as the acting president of the Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (PCC-I) things seem to be going the Karnataka way in Madhya Pradesh. It all began with the illness of Arjun Singh, the PCC(I) chief and former chief minister of the state. Singh was undergoing treatment in Delhi and had been advised complete bed rest. But that did not in any way hamper the running of the party, not until the high command stepped in and made Netam the de facto chief.

The brain behind the move was



Arjun Singh: playing it cool

Aslam Sher Khan. In July, Khan had a row with Singh during a rally at Bhopal. Singh retaliated by suspending Khan from the party. However, the Congress(I) president, Rajiv Gandhi, revoked Singh's action. When Singh fell ill and was hospitalised in Bhopal, Khan lost no time in moving the party president to apply the 'Karnataka-formula', and remove Singh in view of his 'unfortunate sickness'.

In a letter to the high command, Khan suggested the formation of a committee with representatives from all factions of the Congress. Among those suggested by him were the names of Moti Lal Vora (general), Dilip

Singh Bhuriya (tribals), Aziz Qureshi (minorities), Radha Kishan Malviya (Harijans) and B.R. Yadav (backward castes). He indicated that Vora would be acceptable to all, but argued that since the Janata Dal had V.C. Shukla, a Brahmin, as its state chief, it would be wiser to have someone from the backward castes who could draw the minority votes.

The list of committees formed to monitor the *panchayat* polls has a majority of Singh-supporters and very few of Shukla or Vora's followers

The party agreed to the proposal by appointing Arvind Netam as the acting PCC(I) chief to the rejoicing of all anti-Singh groups in the Congress(I), especially those owing allegiance to former chief ministers Moti Lal Vora and Shyama Charan Shukla. Thus, an impression was created that Singh's writ will no longer run within the PCC(I).

Arjun Singh, however, did not show any signs of panic. He asked Netam to cooperate with all the members until he was back to handle the November-December *panchayat* elections in the state. In an appeal to Congress(I) workers, he stressed the fact that they should work unitedly towards their goal of winning the elections.

Arjun Singh's silent and controlled backlash did not end there. His blue-eyed boy, Thakur Jagat Singh, Rajya Sabha member and general secretary of the PCC(I), announced the list of committees formed to monitor the *panchayat* poll programmes in the districts which are entrusted with the job of allotting party tickets and preparing a poll strategy. The list announced by Thakur has a majority of Singh-supporters and very few of Shukla or Vora's followers.

Shukla had no option but to complain. He publicly protested that Thakur had not shown the list to acting president Netam before announcing it. The anti-Singh faction is now trying its level best to undo the mischief by changing the list. But the ailing Arjun Singh, lying on his hospital bed, seems to have had the last laugh. •

M.V. Kher/Raipur

Falling down, falling down...

Another bridge collapses on the Mandovi



GOA

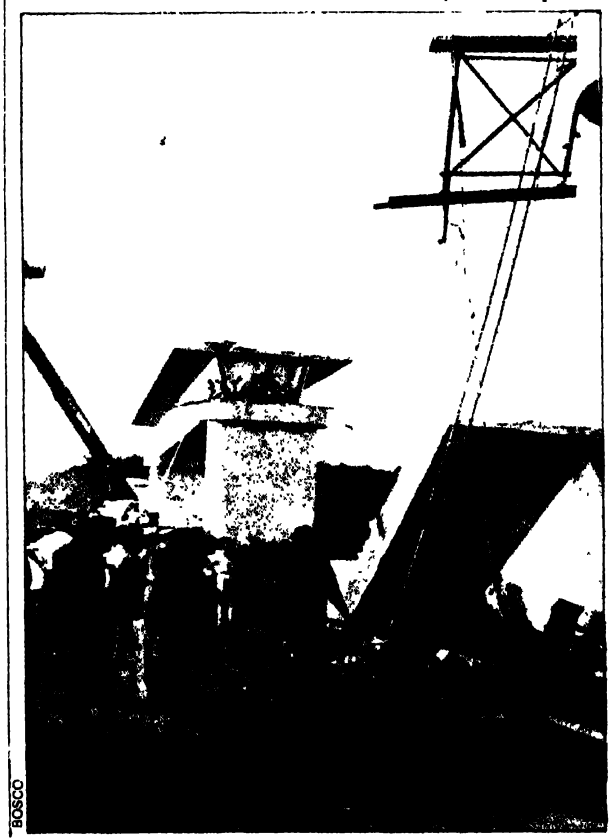
One could call it black magic, coincidence, or simply bad luck. Again, a bridge under construction collapsed, just a stone's throw away from where another had, four years ago. To add to the 'occult' occurrence, the journalist who had predicted the tragedy in 1986, warned the authorities again about the impending disaster in the 25 June issue of the *Gomantak Times*. In spite of the warning, no action was taken and the bridge crashed, killing five and severely injuring many.

The tragedy occurred on the evening of 14 October. A recently erected 750 tonne, 50 metre-long span of the bridge—the part between two adjacent supports—sank and partially disappeared in the placid Mandovi. Of the 60 odd workers of the Uttar Pradesh Bridge Corporation (UPBC), the firm entrusted with the construction work, five died on the spot while 28 others had to be hospitalised.

Chief minister L.P. Barbosa declared that he had 'sacked' the PWD chief engineer (bridges) R. Mathur twenty days earlier, on charges of corruption, and put U.P. Palondekar, of the Command Area Development Authority (Irrigation department) in his place. Police investigations, however, revealed that Mathur had not been 'sacked' but was on paid leave.

Apparently, Mathur had been brought on deputation from Uttar Pradesh, the post of chief engineer being created for him, to ensure that the new bridge was built as per specifications. He certified all construction work till 4 October, and was thus responsible for the span that gave way.

"He was the main person responsible while casting the span on 26 September," says Matanhy Saldanha, a Gomant Lox Pox leader. "How can he escape being punished?" But while



BOSCO

The 750 tonne, 50-metre-long span of the bridge sank and partially disappeared in the placid Mandovi. Of the 60 workers at the site, five died on the spot

seven engineers have been suspended and five of them, along with four UPBC officers, arrested for criminal neglect of duty, Mathur is free. Despite the court's refusal to grant him anticipatory bail, Mathur has neither been arrested, nor penalised in any way.

Thus the arrest of the engineers is widely being viewed as a witch-hunt for scapegoats. According to an engineer at the site, the span collapsed at the fag-end of the complicated but necessary exercise of removing the shuttering. Only two plates were left to be removed. "All the requiredtests had been done," said K.K. Sarin, director general, ministry of surface transport. "The results showed that the concrete had gained enough strength to allow the removal of the shuttering."

The only reason for the bridge collapse can be the failure of the truss (the supporting framework), according to knowledgeable sources. The UPBC, which brought the truss, and Tandon Consultancy, which designed it, are the two most likely to get penalised, apart from Mathur. The Goa PWD Junior Engineers' Association and the Goa Government Engineers Federation have expressed solidarity with the suspended and arrested engineers, and have condemned the action against them.

"The PWD officials were suspended because we have to order a judicial enquiry into the matter and I don't want anybody to tamper with the evidence," said chief minister Barbosa. And allegedly, the IAS clique surrounding the CM is responsible for protecting Mathur. It is also said that Mathur worked for the UPBC before being deputised from the UP PWD four years ago, and the UPBC has made handsome profits from this Mandovi bridge. And significantly, the initial cost estimate of Rs 9 crore was hiked to Rs 18 crore—a clean double.

This repeat tragedy in the same area, on a bridge over the same river, has scared off the locals. And the government has offered to give all bridges a thorough check to restore the people's confidence.

Meanwhile, the queues for ferrying across the Mandovi grows. And the public still waits patiently for the reprimand of those indicated by the Rege Commission in the 1986 bridge collapse. The 1990 repeat tragedy must wait its turn. •

Bosco de sousa Eremita/Panaji

Finally, the frontier

Insurgency spreads to Arunachal



ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The one island of peace in the stormy north-east has finally started rumbling. And new militant organisations are on the rise. With this, all the north-eastern states can now boast of their very own, friendly neighbourhood insurgents.

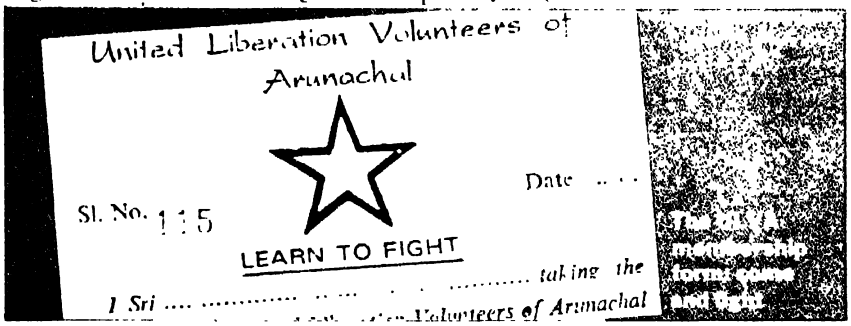
The most high-profile among the newborns is the three-month-old United Liberation Volunteers of Arunachal (ULVA). It has threatened to take up arms against non-tribals and corrupt politicians, in defence of their tribal identity and land customs. Added to that is a new Chakma organisation that vows to fight for the stateless Chakmas—refugees from Bangladesh who are still denied the basic rights of citizens, after 25 years of hopes and promises. And there are the extremists from Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, who pass through Arunachal Pradesh on their way to their hideouts in Burma. Caught in all this, the state is about to lose its calm.

Maybe the extremists' path to Burma, through Arunachal's Tirap district, is at the root of the problem. Though yet unaccustomed to insurgency, the locals of the area have been initiated into the cult of violence. The responsibility mainly lies with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), which has been indulging in terrorist activities in the state and also getting support from the locals. Two NSCN activists were nabbed from Tirap district, where villagers had given them shelter, even though they had burnt down the Pumao police station and circle office a few months ago.

Along with this comes the disquieting news of Arunachali and Chakma boys forming extremist outfits and allegedly undergoing weapons training. All this makes one believe that the NSCN might be keen on extending its bases in villages adjoining the strategic conjunction of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Burma to the new militants.

But not everyone is happy with insurgency. Resisting the insurgents and the Tirap locals campaigning for the NSCN cost some village leaders their lives. Chief Khumtu Mussang of Longrang village and Anchal Samiti member Chinson Mosing of Khami Kham village are among those killed.

The Tirap corridor is causing great worry in government circles as well.



For the past one decade this route has been in use, but nothing has been done to block it. Some Manipuri extremists, intercepted by the state police in 1981, had revealed that an Assamese extremist leader had used his contacts in Arunachal Pradesh and ensured smooth passage to the agitators to the NSCN camp in Burma. The same route—through Ledo and Margherita in Assam, Tirap in Arunachal, and Jagun and Mon in Nagaland—is used even today, not only by the NSCN, but also by other extremist outfits of the area, including the PLA (People's Liberation Army) of Manipur and ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam).

Maybe the recruitment drive of the NSCN, the rearing-to-go enthusiasm of the newly-formed ULVA and the aggressive self-defence strategies of the long-frustrated Chakmas are isolated developments. But, together, they add a new edge to the [illegible] insurgency of the troubled north-east.

Rabijit Chowdhury/Guwahati

GUNS FOR DRUGS

Recently unearthed evidence suggests links between Colombian drug barons and Tamil Tigers

In the early Eighties, at the beginning of the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka, many separatist groups relied upon large-scale bank robberies to fuel the armed uprising. It was only a matter of time before many Tamil leaders realised that it was an easier and safer task to traffic and sell drugs than to rob banks. Out of all the separatist groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) became professionals in the dope business beating such others as the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) who tried their luck for some time in the illicit trade.

Eventually, it was the success of the dope business which made the Tigers the most powerful Behind the supremacy of the Tamil Tigers over other separatist rebel groups lies their jealously-guarded monopoly of drugs.

Undoubtedly, the millions earned through drug deals have been the fountainhead of the Tigers' remarkable fire power used profusely to achieve their singular objective of forming a one-party Tamil state in the North-Eastern Province of Sri Lanka.

The LTTE's arms: drug money pays for sophisticated weapons



The LTTE's latest adventures in Bogota, Colombia are only indications of the militant group's determination to globalise its lawless trade. The Tigers got the opportunity to do so after the decision of Medellin cocaine cartel's number two in command, Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha, to expand his dope business to Europe and Asia. First, the notoriously brutish drug lord who specialised in Colombian death squads, offered to train the Tamil separatist rebels in a small-time military tactics school run by Israeli terror experts. In return, this man who pioneered new cocaine routes through Mexico to the United States wanted the experienced drug carriers of the Tamil militant group to carry Medellin cocaine cartel's illicit produce across Europe and Asia, presumably allowing the money earned in profits to be used for Sri Lanka's separatist war.

Colombia's intelligence reports, the excerpts of some which were recently published by Colombian capital Bogota's *El Tiempo* newspaper followed by the *Washington Post*, reveal that the billionaire drug lord also known as 'El Mexicano' hired an Israeli reserve army officer to train the Tamils together with Colombians in a military school which was to be started in the Caribbean island of Antigua. The group selected to be trained was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

According to Sri Lankan military analysts, Israeli expertise in guerrilla warfare was very vital to the Tamils since some of Sri Lanka's anti-terror commando units were also trained by the Israelis.

For the Colombians, the selection of the Tigers as carriers of Medellin cartel's expensive supplies was quite logical, believe narcotic experts, since the rebels had already established the distribution network of a different drug from the Medellin cartel's dope. The Tamils have been successfully trafficking the potent opium derivative of heroin from India to west Europe.

The Israeli military instructor involved in the controversy is Lt Col Yayir Klein (46), who is regarded as an expert in urban guerrilla tactics, having led his own country's elite troops against Palestinian terror. He came to Colombia in search of govern-

ment contracts for the Israeli company called Hod Hohanit (Spearhead), which reportedly sells arms and military training. But when Klein failed to win the government plum, he allegedly ended up working for drug prince Gacha under the guise of training farmers of the middle Magdelena area. But the Colombian government claims that it knows too well that all ranches in the area were owned by Rodriguez Gacha. Though Klein has admitted being paid US $20,000 for each session to train "poor farmers", Israeli media charged he was offered US $952,000 by the cartel to be picked up in the United States.

During the second session of this training in 1989, Klein's surreptitious plans were leaked out to the authorities by some who had received training in the first one. Though Klein managed to escape to Brazil, thanks to the tip given by the Israeli embassy in Bogota, elite government forces raided his training camp and even took into custody an implicating video film made of the training for promotional purposes. The video was later broadcast all over the world.

A Colombian intelligence report says the other military tactics school financed by Gacha and meant to train Sri Lankan rebels never materialised as planned at the beginning of 1989 due to some unexpected trouble in the Caribbean island of Antigua. According to the organisers, it was "the principal training centre for the organisations of private justice for Colombia and Sri Lanka".

Sri Lankan authorities suspect that the Tamil rebels were introduced to the Colombian drug lords by the Israelis themselves. In fact, the Sri Lankan Parliament Speaker, Haniffa Mohammed, at a press conference in Colombo, accused Israeli intelligence services of involvement with the Tigers. His accusations were later confirmed by the controversial book written by former Israeli spy Victor Ostrovsky,, *By Way Of Deception—The Making And Unmaking Of A Mossad Officer*. The book startled many when it revealed that the Israeli intelligence service Mossad trained both Sri Lankan government troops and their rivals, the Tamil Tigers, in the same Israeli military camp "without either side knowing about the other"

Although the military tactics school failed to begin, Sri Lankans have been caught with Colombian cocaine.

It was the success of the dope business which made the LTTE the most powerful Tamil separatist group in Sri Lanka. The millions earned through drug deals have been the fountainhead of the Tiger's remarkable fire power

When agents of the DEA raided a Greek merchant ship called Demi, three Sri Lankans including two Tamils were caught with 20 kilos of cocaine with a street value of more than two million dollars at New Orleans harbour in January 1990. Two were later convicted. Both were deck hands of a ship which had left Bogota, Colombia. Commenting on the alarming seizure by the DEA, commander of the narcotic group of the Los Angeles police department, Lorne C. Kramer, said it was a very large amount for two deck hands of a ship to carry. "Probably," the chief of drug detectives said, "they were not acting individually, but had been paid a price to smuggle in for some group."

Colombian intelligence traced the connection of the Sri Lankan Tamils to the Medellin cocaine cartel after an assault team of the Colombian national police's anti-drug elite force killed kingpin Rodriguez Gacha in December 1989. The killing led the elite force to a discovery of 500 Israeli weapons in a ranch owned by the executed drug lord. The weapons allegedly ordered by the Antiguan government from Israel had gone into the hands of the Medellin cartel. One thing led to another which finally exposed the Tamil link.

It was the brilliant track record of the Tamil Tigers as successful drug traffickers, making headlines in Europe since 1984, which drew the attention of the Colombian drug princes. Designed after the Mafia's 'French Connection', the network of traffickers came to be known as the 'Tamil Connection'.

"In the years 1984 and 1985," said Sri Lanka's police chief Earnest Perera, "several hundreds of Sri Lankans were arrested abroad mainly in western Europe on offences of drug trafficking and over 80 per cent were identified as Sri Lankan Tamil youth." The Tamil arrests were made mainly

Heroin seized in Milan, Italy: funding a separatist war



in Italy, France, Spain and West Germany.

In 1987, London's *Sunday Times* infiltrated the Tamil Connection, which was using the busy "Heathrow airport as a staging post in a multi-million pound drug trade". During the month of August that year, Sooriya Kumaran Selvadurai, head of the LTTE in West Germany, offered to supply two kilos of heroin in Britain to a *Times* reporter who posed as a drug dealer. Sooriya Kumaran told the *Times* reporter that a "wholesale price of £80,000 to be paid in cash (for the two kilos) would include the services of a courier and the drug could be handed over by a Tamil in London".

The Tiger leader glorified his act of crime by telling the *Times* man, "Unlike you, we don't do it for personal profit. We are only interested in making money to buy arms to help our fight for justice back home."





Tamil Tigers: fighting a protracted guerrilla war

In 1987, it was estimated that three kilos of heroin, which at that time had a street value of £525,000, was carried fortnightly through London's Heathrow airport by the Tamil Tigers without being caught by the customs officials.

London's *Sunday Times* claimed that its investigation exposed that a "highly organised network, operated by members of the guerrilla army, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, has been trafficking heroin through Britain to Europe and North America for more than two years", prior to 1987. In fact, the Tamils became the major traffickers in Britain and during the 18 months preceding August 1987, ten Tamils carrying heroin worth four million pounds were caught at Heathrow airport.

In 1986, Swiss narcotic agents said that law enforcement caught only 15 per cent of Tamil Connection heroin. They believed that the Tigers managed to move more than 100 kilograms of the network's heroin through Switzerland's Bern alone.

Tamil Connection heroin derives from Bombay's underworld, where many Indian Tamil kingpins, who are also politically influential, are alleged to be connected with the hierarchy of the LTTE. Investigations in 1986 by the British customs revealed that 70 per cent of the Pakistani and Afghan heroin arriving in Britain was through India. There were also fears that India, the largest legal producer of opium, was surely becoming one of the illicit producers too.

Many routes of the Tamil drug trade have been identified. Peter Reusser, the public prosecutor in Bern, Switzerland who has keenly observed the network said, "The racket is superbly organised and run from A to Z by Tamils." The two major routes of transport used by the Tamils are the India-Middle East-Europe route and the India-Africa-London route. Swiss investigations also revealed that the Tamil Connection has used Nigerians and Kenyans, who had less visa difficulties of getting into Britain to transport heroin.

During the time of the Iron Curtain, the Tamils easily used a route from India to Poland and East Germany. It is alleged, that with no apparent obstacles by the law enforcement authorities in Eastern Europe which had Marxist regimes in power, the Tigers smuggled heroin in false-bottom suitcases and hollow-soled shoes into capitalist Europe via East Berlin. The lucky route for the Tamils disappeared with the collapse of the East European communist empire, according to Sri Lankan intelligence sources.

With increased law enforcement activities all over Europe and the collapse of the East European totalitarian regimes, the number of Tamils arrested in Europe has dwindled to a remarkable low. In the peak year of 1985, 297 Tamils were arrested for drug offences in foreign countries. It was an increase from the 257 taken into custody the previous year. In 1987, the number of Tamils arrested outside the country for drug deals stood at 108. But in 1988, it dropped to a meagre 34 and in 1989, the figure remained at 35. According to the Sri Lankan police, though these figures indicate the weakening of the foreign operations of the Tamil Connection, they also prove that the Tigers are still very much in business.

But what has alarmed the police in Sri Lanka is, with the alleged declining of sales in Europe, the Tamil Connection's efforts to increase the sales of heroin within Sri Lanka itself. The island nation's police chief, Earnest Perera, said that during the last two years, the Tamil Connection has emerged as the major trafficker and distributor of heroin in the capital city of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Tiger leaders bring large quantities of heroin to the separatist heartland of Jaffna to be distributed by surface roads to the interior of the country. Smaller quantities are also brought to Colombo through its international airport from Madras.

Two Tamils arrested in February 1990 with 340 grams of heroin confessed that they belonged to the LTTE and admitted that they regularly transported drugs between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.

In direct contrast to the pre-1987 period, Tamil Connection drug traffickers have increasingly begun using Sri Lanka as a transit point to reach the troubled European destinations. The Sri Lankan government's fight against the LTTE is thus now on two counts: its battle for a separate Tamil homeland and drug smuggling. It is the worldwide sales of Tamil Connection drugs that is financing the Tigers' protracted guerrilla war. If the LTTE could be deprived of this source of income, many believe, peace might have a chance in Sri Lanka. ●

Walter Jayawardhana

The author, formerly of the Times of Ceylon Group, is a Los Angeles-based Sri Lankan journalist. He was a Jefferson Fellow in Honolulu's East West Center in 1978.

And now, Mahotsav '90

■Apna Utsav was the urbanite's ultimate ethnic dream. It entailed the mass transportation of hordes of villagers and other rural artistes to the capital. For a few days, bemused city audience had a chance to watch and, to a limited extent, participate in folk songs and dances.

The Mahotsav '90 is a folk art festival with a difference. Organised by the Conseil International Des Organisations De Festivals De Folklore (CIOFF) and its Indian subsidiary Chitrakathi, it is an attempt at deurbanising folk arts.

Mallika Sarabhai, the sole Indian representative of the CIOFF, had organised the first such festival in 1984. The festival had been well received in villages where teams from Bulgaria, Finland, the Netherlands, Russia, Poland and, of course, India went and performed. Cultural interaction and mass participation made it an enriching experience for both the participants and members of the audience. This year's festival, the organisers enthusiastically claim, may even outdo the one held in 1984. It is the international communion and genuine interaction which set the Mahotsav apart from Apna Utsav where crores are spent on the entertainment of a bunch of city snobs.

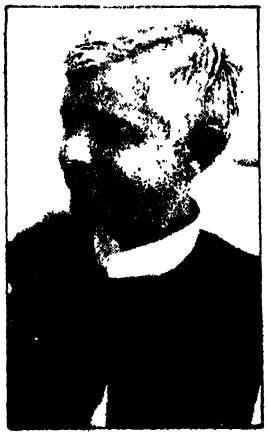
Hunted

■ The Union Cabinet's approval of a proposed amendment in the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act making hunting of protected animals legal if they stray out of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks has shocked environmentalists.

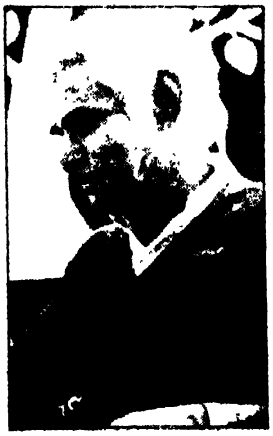
Most experts believe that the amended Act will nullify all the good work done in the last two decades. Moreover, the inherent loopholes in the new system will provide ample scope for poaching since an animal could easily be killed inside the park and its carcass then dragged outside the boundary.

Naturalists all over the country unanimously agreed that this was the single biggest blow dealt to the environmental cause. What made matters worse was that the amendment was proposed by none other than Union minister for environment and forests, Nilamani Routray, despite great opposition by his deputy, Maneka Gandhi. Does the minister still expect people to believe that he had the conservationists' interests at heart when he made the proposal?

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Laloo Prasad Yadav



Baba Amte

THIS INDIA

BANGALORE: While the anti-reservation wave is sweeping the north, what has been its impact in the south? A businessman from Delhi on a visit to Bangalore tried to get an answer to this question. In a bid to find the common man's viewpoint he decided to broach the subject to his auto-rickshaw driver. "What do you make of this anti-Mandal agitation? Why are so many students immolating themselves?", he asked the driver. *"Woh koi Mandal tha aur woh bahut sara commission kha gaya. Isliye janata naraz hai* (People are angry because there was this person called Mandal who pocketed a lot of commission)", was the auto-rickshawalla's non-chalant reply—*The Telegraph* (Jagadish Patra, Matkambeda)



ILLUSTRATION: KRISHNENDU CHAKRABORTY

BORSAD: Talk of the fury of a woman scorned. A woman in a Borsad *Lok Adalat* insisted that she be allowed to beat her husband five times with her slippers before she let him divorce her. And got away with it too. The husband had filed a divorce and the case was taken up to the *adalat* when the wife put forward the bizarre condition. The husband agreed and the case was settled—*The Sunday Observer* (R.N. Singh, Ahmedabad)

BOMBAY: If only it was like in the movies, the operation yesterday would have been a sure success. But alas that was not to be. Working on a tip off about smuggled gold being transported near the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Srinivas Nadgoda and Kamlesh Kolge of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), laid a trap around the area. Surveillance was stepped up when an Ambassador was spotted moving around in a suspicious manner. A chase ensued and the Ambassador was forced to stop. Out rushed the officers, their minds set on capturing the smugglers. Not to be outdone a gun was pulled out and the smugglers turned the tables on the cops. The result—the smugglers grabbed the DRI's Maruti and zoomed away towards Panvel—*Sunday Mid-Day* (A.K. Sen, Calcutta)

Losing Paes

Leander quits Vijay Amritraj's tennis academy

The first phase of Leander Paes' development as India's biggest tennis prospect since Vijay Amritraj has ended. The youngster has decided to sever connections with the Britannia Amritraj Tennis (BAT) scheme, under which he had been trained to become a world-beater.

This parting of ways means that Leander is on his own from now on in a world of cut-throat competition, where every match is computed to world-ranking and hard cash. It also means BAT's loss of its most successful trainee since the scheme was started by the Amritraj family in collaboration with Nabisco company to spot and nurture Indian tennis talent.

The question of Leander's future came up immediately after he won the junior Wimbledon title this year. While Vijay Amritraj thought it would be best for Leander to leave the junior circuit completely and concentrate on the international circuit for seniors, Leander and his father Vece had other ideas. They thought the sudden switch would be too hasty and could lead to disaster.

Things came to a head when the BAT authorities did not enter Leander for the US Open junior championship, which would have been a natural follow-up to Wimbledom. For Leander, it had been a cherished ambition to win the US title. Besides, it would have given the youngster a feel of the country he would have to go to in order to further his career.

"We couldn't go along with the BAT plan of propelling my son into the senior world when he hadn't even got a feel of the junior circuit properly," Dr Vece Paes said. "We felt it would mean that Leander would become an also ran for two years or more as he groped through this fiercely competitive field. And that would certainly not do." He implied that this could have a psychologically crippling effect on the budding talent, whom many rate as the best Indian prospect since Vijay Amritraj romped through the tennis courts of the world.

"We have to get him into harness gradually. We have to let him play with youngsters of his age until he is mentally prepared for the next step. And we would like to get the transition gradually. For example, we wouldn't confine him totally to the junior circuit. He would enter senior competitions, but in a phased manner. That is the only way he could grow properly. The senior competitions wouldn't be the toughest ones, naturally," Dr Paes said.

"The other problem we faced with BAT was that they were not prepared to treat Leander separately. Even after winning the junior Wimbledon, he remained just another BAT trainee, going through the same routine as the others. His potential and his growth were not being taken into account," Leander's father added.

He felt that Leander deserved special treatment as far as training schedules were concerned. He had reached a crucial stage of his career and it was essential that he was given intensive and exclusive training, so that he could be primed for the senior level.

"It was, ultimately a decision arrived at mutually," Dr Paes said. "Both Vijay Amritraj and the BAT coach, David O'Meara thought that, under the circumstances, it would be best if Leander left the academy. It would not be a loss to either."

So, what now? "We have appointed Enrico Piperno as his coach-cum-playing companion. He will play with Leander and accompany him to all tournaments, in India and abroad. This, of course, is a temporary arrangement, because we have made this appointment effective till April next year."

Thereafter? "Well, it's certain that Leander will have to move to the United States. We plan to visit the country around April next year to look around. We will see the various tennis academies there and see which would be best for him. We will also have to look for a coach-cum-manager for the lad on a more or less permanent basis," said Vece Paes.

Once in the US, several quick decisions will have to be taken. Leander will need a coach for the defence of his junior Wimbledon title. Also, a decision will have to be taken on the senior competitions in which he will take part.



It is, however, quite likely that the choice of a coach will ultimately fall on Leander's mentor, David O'Meara. "Yes, that is a possibility, because O'Meara's contract with BAT ends in May next, which suits our plans. Besides, Leander feels he gets the best advice from his BAT coach and finds his line of thinking the best for his career."

Right now, there is another sphere that needs tackling though, by the time this appears in print, it may have been sorted out. As part of the BAT scheme, Leander was enrolled in a school in Madras. Since his education is being given top priority by his father, Leander's admission to a school in Calcutta was essential—since it would be here that he would spend most of his time till a decision on the





Now that Leander Paes (left) has severed links with the tennis academy, it will definitely be a setback for Vijay Amritraj (above) and his BAT scheme

trip to the United States was taken. "We plan to keep him at the International School here, so that admission to a school in the US wouldn't pose a problem if and when the situation arises."

To make sure that Leander doesn't lose his touch during this transitional period, a rigorous schedule has been drawn up. The youngster is practising four hours a day regularly. There are two workouts planned by Piperno—one in the morning followed by a more exacting one in the afternoon.

But where does this leave the BAT academy? Leander is not the first trainee to quit the academy. Rohit Rajpal had left when he felt the scheme wasn't doing him good any more. In the future, too, there may be others who might feel the same way.

It is no secret that the investment of both time and money by the Amritraj family and Nabisco is very large for each player. Apart from the small returns by way of contract money—there is an arrangement for a percentage of the earnings of the players going into the academy coffers—there is nothing that BAT gets. And since it is only when a player gets into the senior circuit that he begins to earn sizeable sums, the exit of players like Leander, just when they are on the verge of entering the big league, will hit BAT hard.

Leander will be a test case for Indian tennis. As a player who has had the best grounding, it is to be seen how, armed with his own discipline and determination, he fares in the world of top-flight competition

One does not know whether the BAT decision to allow Leander to play only in senior tournaments was taken because the authorities expected to repay some of the investment made on him, but it is a fact that the tennis academy cannot run only on the goodwill it generates. So there will have to be some rethinking within the academy about contracts and their implementation.

Meanwhile, Leander will be a test case for Indian tennis of the BAT era. A player who has had the best grounding a tennis player can receive anywhere in the world, emerges from an academy when his basics have been completed. It is to be seen how, armed with that qualification and his own discipline and determination, the player fares in the world of intense, top flight competition. •

Arijit Sen

BEGINNING 4 NOVEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



Concentrate on your business interests this week. An elderly person may assist you. This is a favourable period for romance. The health of your spouse may cause worry. Avoid legal hassles.

Good dates: 4, 6 and 10
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 5
Favourable direction: South

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Financially, this will be a successful week. A short journey may prove fruitful. Musicians and artists will be awarded. Your health may cause concern. There may be tension at home but it will ease soon.

Good dates: 7, 9 and 10
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: North

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



Major financial gains are indicated for businessmen, while new opportunities are in the offing for those in service. You will be busy this week with your social engagements. Look after your health.

Good dates: 5, 7 and 8
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Do not get disheartened if progress at work is very slow this week. This is a very favourable time for dealing with property and insurance matters. For those in love, this is an ideal time to get married.

Good dates: 4, 8 and 9
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July—20 August)



A promotion is likely for those in service. A good time for journalists, writers, painters and musicians. You may inherit money or property. Students are advised to concentrate on their studies this week.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 10
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: West

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



A pleasant surprise awaits you at the end of the week. Business matters will require concentration. Unforeseen expenses might crop up. Take the advice of elders and friends when trying to solve your problems.

Good dates: 5, 8 and 9
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This is going to be a period of ups and downs. You are advised to pay attention to minor business details. The weekend will bring a pleasant surprise. Your children will perform very well in their examinations.

Good dates: 8, 9 and 10
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and and 8
Favourable direction: East

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



A moderately successful week lies ahead. You will have to curb your tendency to splurge. There are chances of unexpected gains. Businessmen must avoid taking impulsive decisions.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 7
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 4
Favourable direction: North

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



A difficult week for businessmen. There may be misunderstandings between partners. On the whole, this will be a favourable period for lovers. Be tactful while dealing with children. Legal problems will be solved.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 8
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: South-west

CARRICORN (21 December—20 January)



Positive planetary influences make this a very lucky week for you. All ventures promoted by businessmen will be successful. This is a good phase for romance and matrimony. Social engagements will keep you busy.

Good dates: 7, 8 and 10
Lucky numbers: 7, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: West

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



Financially, you stand to gain this week. The first two days of the week are particularly favourable for you. This is the right time for love and matrimony. However, be cautious about what you write.

Good dates: 4, 7 and 9
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 5
Favourable direction: North

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



Success in business affairs is indicated, provided you exercise tact. Financially, the week might be favourable. Be cautious before making any promises to loved ones. The domestic front may not be peaceful.

Good dates: 5, 7 and 9
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—PISCES

The combination of these two signs could make for a very successful relationship. Both experience intense emotions and share an incredible harmony. The secretive temperament of the Pisces man will intrigue the inquisitive mind of the Scorpio woman.

Back on the line

The journalistic fraternity can soon expect one of its members to rejoin it.

Kuldip Nayar, the Raja's high commissioner to the Court of St James, has indicated to friends that he will quit once the government falls. He has no great love for the job—though he has been a spectacular success in it—and it is said that he is a little hurt by the failure of Inder Gujral to defend him adequately during the Lok Sabha discussion on



Kuldip Nayar: back to journalism?

the Chief Justice's death.

Moreover, Nayar has collected enough material for a book on his experiences in London and is itching to return to journalism.

But they all look the same

Is the strain getting too much for the poor Raja? Last week, in his new 'The Thakur Who Loves Muslims' avatar, V.P. Singh hotfooted it to the funeral of Mrs Zakir Husain, widow of the late President.

"I knew her well," the Raja reminisced fondly, his eyes taking on a faraway look as he sentimentally contemplated the number of Muslim votes he was likely to get as a result of this visit.

"Why!" he continued, getting into stride, "I met her only two days ago at a banquet for Nelson Mandela."

The family was appalled. The lady had been bedridden for months and had attended no banquets. So, was the Hollow Man telling a little lie?

The charitable explanation is that he had mistaken her for Begum Abida, widow of another Muslim President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed!

It is a little pointless to expect Muslims to vote for you if you can't tell them apart!

HEARD AT SOUTH AVENUE LANE

He finds it easier to meet the camera's gaze than he does to look the country in the eye.

A JANATA DAL MP ON V P SINGH'S DAILY TV APPEARANCES



V.P. Singh: so much for the Muslim vote

ALTIMETER

India's best and worst airports

Bangalore: Despite the bad publicity generated by the A320 crash and despite a building that is too small for its needs, one of the best. Staff are courteous and polite. All delays are clearly signposted and even nearby restaurants are fitted with flight information video terminals.

Bombay: Good on the whole. Has the most efficient Indian Airlines operation in the country and at the Air India module, luggage arrives in a matter of minutes. Customs officials tend to be a little rude after the recent decision to harass passengers in the name of meeting collection targets, but otherwise, no problems.

Calcutta: Two black marks. One: the West Bengal excise men are crooks who pounce on unsuspecting domestic passengers carrying more than one bottle of alcohol. (Apparently, it is a crime to bring more than a bottle in—though there are no signs telling you this.)

And two: the airport security policemen who must make about Rs 500 per day per head from shaking down Marwaris. At the international section, securitymen hassle illiterate passengers and demand hard currency bribes.

But customs is clean, efficient and well-run. And Indian Airlines is, relatively, well-managed.

Delhi: Though the Indian Airlines section has improved over the last three months, Delhi ranks as India's worst airport for four reasons. One: the international terminal is very badly designed. Two: immigration officials refuse to clear labourers departing for abroad if they don't pay bribes. Three: airport security is badly behaved (though not dishonest).

Four: the cesspool of Delhi customs—the single most corrupt customs department in India and one where even assistant collectors refuse to intervene when passengers are being blackmailed.

Great speech minister

So what if George Fernandes was summarily dismissed as minister in charge of Kashmir affairs? He's still regarded as an expert on the troubled state in *firang* land.

Harvard University, for instance, invited the railways minister over to give a talk on the latest situation in J&K and how best it could be salvaged.



George Fernandes: from the mouths of teenagers

George is nothing if not a convincing speaker and on this occasion he excelled himself. The applause which followed was heartening. As was the fact that a young Indian walked up to Fernandes to declare that he'd liked his speech a lot.

The youth was none other than Rahul Gandhi, currently at work in Harvard. •

Myles who? Bob who?

Does anybody still remember the Bofors investigation?

If you think it has been forgotten, then you have another think coming. According to members of the Raja's crack investigative team, the Bofors names will be out "in a few days". (What, again? The first time we heard this chorus was in March!)

The reference is to an appeal filed by AE Services, one of the three



The Bofors gun: does anybody still remember the investigation?

agents, in a Zurich court. The investigators take the line that if the appeal is disallowed, then the names of the principals of AE will be handed over to the Indian government.

In fact, the appeal is not the last course open to AE Services. It can delay the disclosure of the names for a few more months.

And, in any case, all the Swiss will tell us is who the beneficiaries of the accounts are. Their names are already known: Myles Stott and Bob Wilson.

How will that help anybody?

Dhawan aur Dhawan

These days, when you read about a Dhawan on the front pages of the newspapers, the man in question is not our old friend, the raven-haired Su-

HEARD AT A CONGRESS BRIEFING

After living in sin for 11 months, V.P. Singh claims that he is a virgin.

VITHAL GADGIL, PARTY SPOKESMAN





R.K. Dhawan and Harmohan Dhawan: causing confusion

per Steno. The reference is usually to Harmohan Dhawan, a Chandra Shekhar loyalist, who has briefed the press on his leader's behalf and led the attack on V.P. Singh.

But every time anybody says "Dhawan", Delhi politicos think of RKD and so this has led to a great deal of confusion. In fact, the two men have little in common. Harmohan is a politician in his own right, while RKD is a factotum.

But they do have one thing in common. As one embittered Congressman joked recently, "In either party, there's a Dhawan trying to bring down the leader."

BAROMETER

Flimstars and politics—who supports whom

■ **Shatrughan Sinha:** It had been coming for a while. But even so, people are surprised by the vehemence with which Sinha has turned against the Raja (*see item*). At the next election, he can be expected to sock it to V.P. Singh at the hustings.

■ **Shabana Azmi:** Had carefully arranged herself on a 'secular' platform behind V.P. Singh. In this avatar, she was made head of the Children's Film Society and happily approved projects with relatively huge budgets (Rs 35 lakhs to Pankaj Parashar, for instance) so that she could play sugar mummy.

But is now reconsidering her position. It won't be easy to do an about-turn though.

■ **Sunil Dutt:** The most consistent of the stars in politics. Supported Mrs Gandhi when she was down and out and has stuck to Rajiv since 1984. Has made an excellent constituency MP and should not have any trouble winning re-election the next time around.

■ **Raj Babbar:** Went to his hometown of Agra recently and was heckled by anti-Raja types. Despite that, Babbar is sticking to his old loyalties. He is not so much a star with an interest in politics (like Shatru) as a key member of Rani Sita Devi's coterie, ie: an insider.

■ **Amitabh Bachchan:** Despite enormous pressure to contest from Allahabad where he will probably win by a landslide (because of VP's unpopularity in the urban areas), Bachchan is resolutely refusing to re-enter politics. It was a mistake, he says, to have got into it in the first place.

The world according to Sinha

Obviously, those heart-to-hearts with the Raja didn't quite work out. Or why would Shatrughan Sinha be at his voluble best on the lawns of Chandra Shekhar's 3 South Avenue Lane residence, when dissident activity within the Dal was at its height?

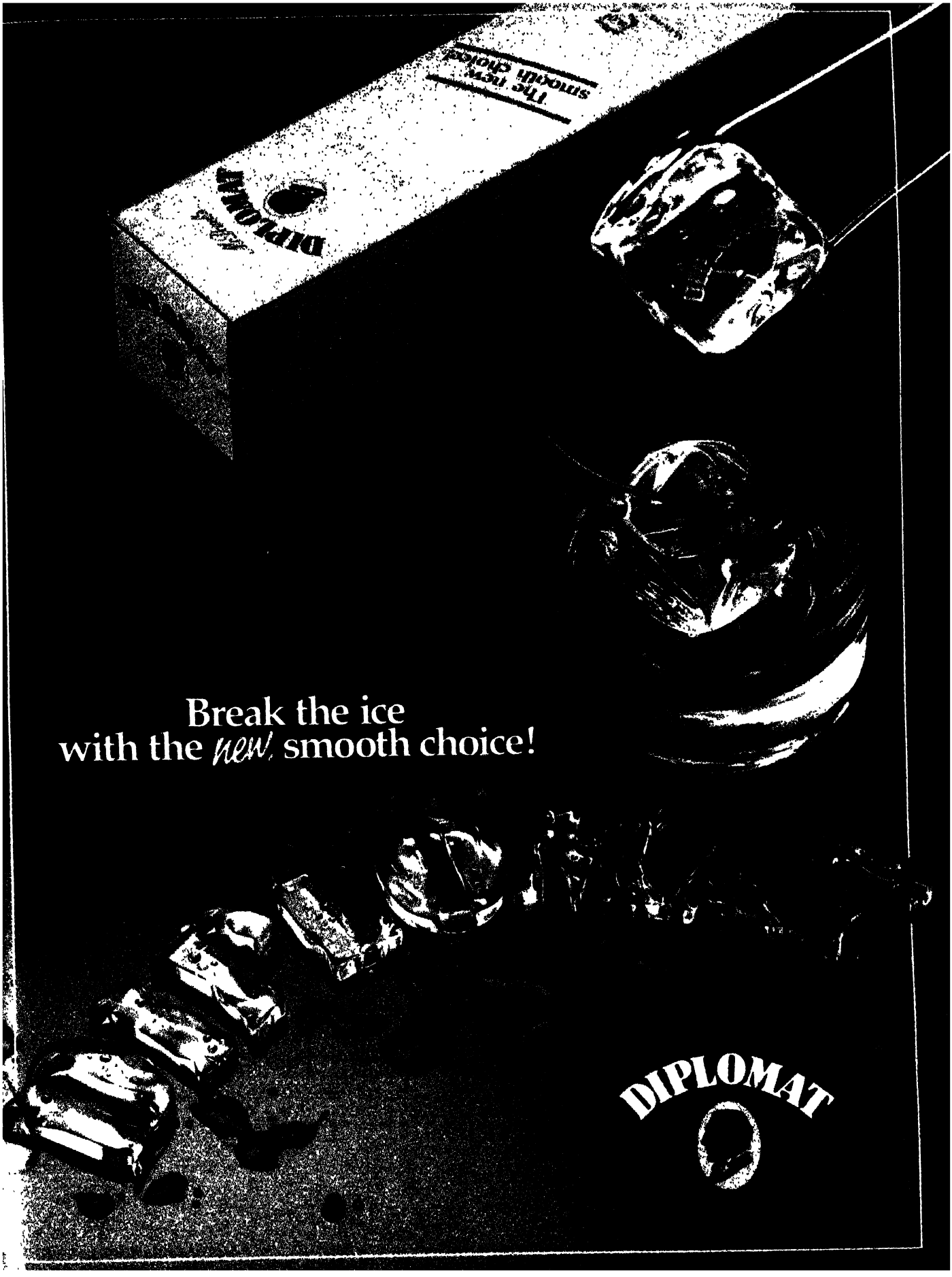


Shatrughan Sinha: holding forth

The star was in his element, holding forth on the political climate in the country, the Raja's unprincipled stand, the fact that he'd forecast just such a situation emerging when the Dal formed the government...

Listening in rapt attention were the usual hangers-on. Though there was some doubt whether they were interested in Sinha's political views, or were just mesmerised by the squiggles on his embroidered shirt. ●

Centre for Public Library


DIPLOMAT
The new smooth choice!
Break the ice
with the new smooth choice!
DIPLOMAT

India's largest manufacturer-exporter Century earns over Rs. 100 crores in foreign exchange in a single year.

Century's magnificent obsession with exports has won for it important international markets – and steadily rising foreign exchange earnings. Achieved entirely by the export of products manufactured at its own factories.

Over the last four decades Century has continuously diversified into new areas and today it is one of the most sought after multi-dimensional corporations in India. Internationally the company has generated a healthy respect for India and Indian products.

In its relentless pursuit of growth, Century is now envisaging new ventures in areas of high priority – such as power and petrochemicals. To create more productive assets for the country. And more opportunities for our people to better the quality of their lives.

CENTURY TEXTILES AND INDUSTRIES LIMITED
Century Bhavan, Dr. Annie Besant Road,
Worli, Bombay 400 025.



"Scaling new heights Setting new standards. That is Century."

Mr. B. K. Birla – Chairman

Divisions:

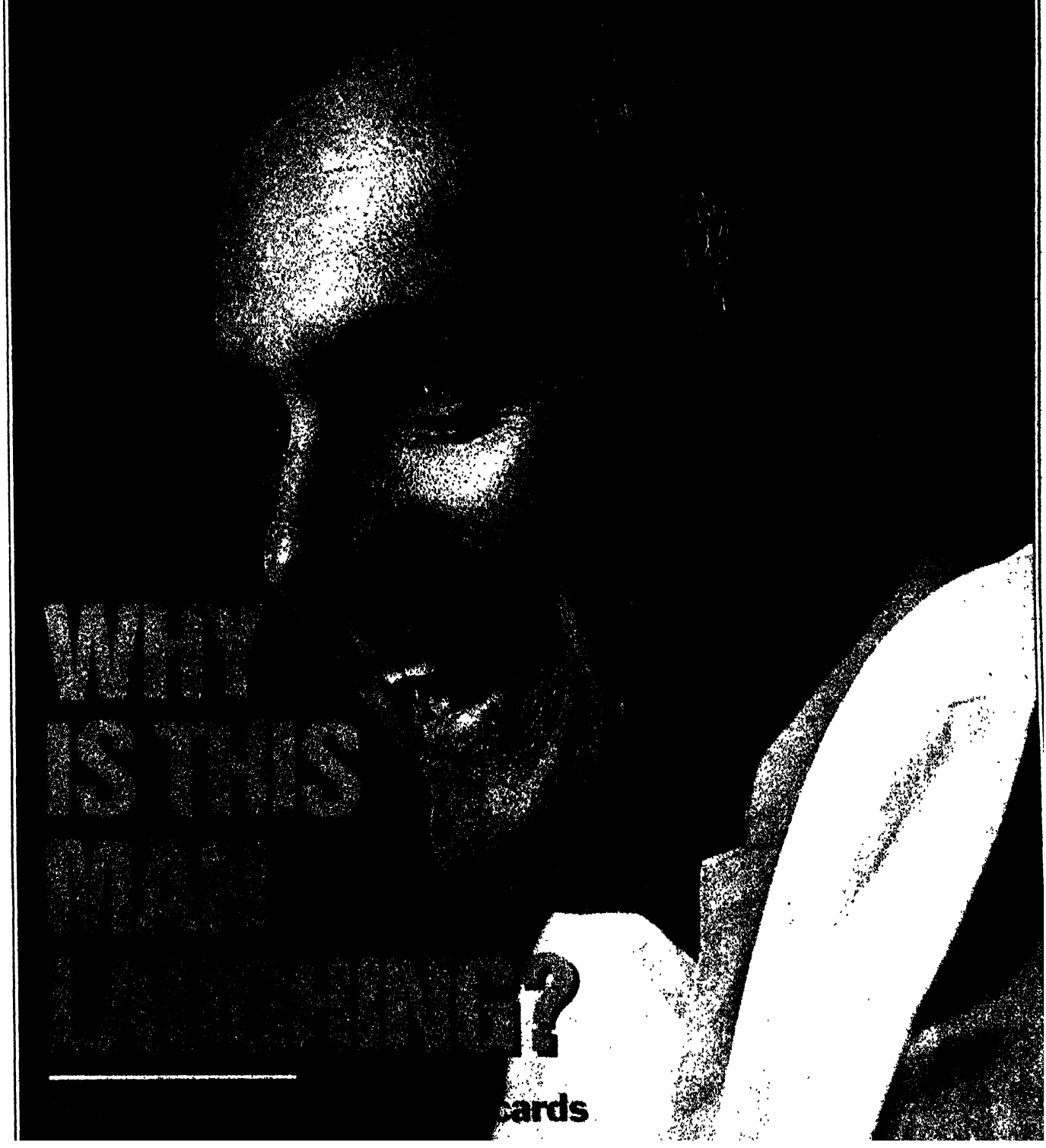
- Century Textiles
- Century Rayon
- Century Chemicals
- Century Cement
- Maihar Cement
- Manikgarh Cement
- Century Pulp & Paper
- Century Shipping
- Century Builders

CENTURY

National perspective – Global [illegible]

THE BATTLE OF AYODHYA

SUNDAY



WHY IS THIS MAN SMILING?

cards


Take the world in your stride
HI-COMFORT WOOL
dinesh

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 44 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
11--17 NOVEMBER 1990






28
COVER STORY
Double dealing in Delhi
The inside story of last week's machinations.

14
NEWSBEAT
The family way
R.K. Hegde and his son are indicted by the Dayal Commission.



20
DIARY
How green is the Valley?
A long and bitter winter lies ahead for the Kashmiris.

24
NEIGHBOURS
The Benazir saga
How she rose, why she fell.

43
NEWSWATCH
Hot and sour
The Karnataka chief minister might be in the soup.

48
BUSINESS
Kill to profit
National Dairy Development Board officials take on the ire of Gujarat's powerful—and dangerous—edible oils lobby.

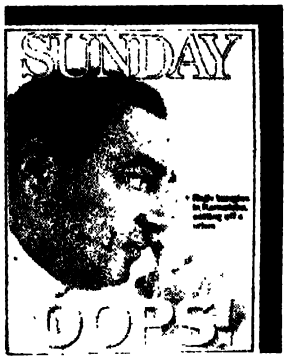
76
BOOK EXTRACT
Ways of deception
How the Israelis trained the Tamils, Sri Lankans and Indians—all at the same time.



82
SPORTS
Tough tackling
The IFA takes steps to impose discipline on the field.

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
SIGHT AND SOUND 9
COUNTERVIEW 12
MANI-TALK 16
BUSINESS DIARY 55
NEWS 59
SPOTLIGHT 70
KHAAS BAAT 74
BOOK REVIEW 75
Profound and simple
MEDIA MUSINGS 80
MILESTONES 86
SUNDAYWEEK 87
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North-eastern states. 30 paise



Rajiv bungles

The haste with which Rajiv Gandhi effected a change of guard in Karnataka has raised many eyebrows (*Triumph and tragedy*, 21—27 October). What is even more shocking is the promulgation of President's Rule in the



Rajiv Gandhi: still a dictator

state for just six days, which makes a complete mockery of democracy. It would be too early to say anything about the new chief minister, but if past achievements are any indication, he doesn't have too good a record.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

■ The cover story was an excellent appraisal of Rajiv's style of functioning. The obvious conclusion one draws from the Karnataka episode is that Rajiv has not learned any lessons from his past mistakes and is yet to emerge as a strong and mature leader.

The reason for Veerendra Patil's ouster, mainly on health grounds, is simply an eyewash. For, as long as Patil was in control of the affairs in Karnataka, Rajiv never saw eye-to-eye with him on many issues. Rajiv was only pretending to restore democracy in the Congress(I). Therefore, this was a glaring instance of how Rajiv resorted to unfair means in order to install his chosen lieutenant, Bangarappa, by ousting Patil.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

The Madhuri mania

The cover story on Madhuri Dixit (*Ek, do, queen*, 7—13 October) presented an exaggerated view of the actress. Though I agreed with some of the points raised, the comparison with her so-called rival heroines was certainly a motivated attempt to cut them down to size. For heaven's sake, don't compare Madhuri with an actress of Meenakshi's calibre. Today, Meenakshi may not be riding as high as Madhuri as per the media's ostensible double standards, but she has nevertheless carved out a unique niche for herself with her outstanding discipline and dedication. Unlike others, she is surely an actress to remember, and not just for *ek, do, teen* years, but decades.

Meenakshi: better than Madhuri?



M.R. Prasad, Hubli (Karnataka)

■ The cover story on Madhuri was simply absorbing. I definitely agree that Madhuri is one of the few heroines who can draw crowds. She is a thoroughbred professional in terms of her performance. She puts her heart and soul into the smallest of roles. She is also a good dancer. She improvises gracefully and that makes her different and original from the rest. She also looks gorgeous in all kinds of dresses. Therefore, Madhuri seems to be slated for the top and stay there for good.

Chayan Dastidar, Bombay (Maharashtra)

Politics of caste

Mahesh Jethmalani (*Why I support Mandal*, 21—27 October) has focussed on only one aspect of the Mandal Commission issue. The fact remains that the decision to implement the commission's recommendations were politically motivated. What is shocking is that no political party is prepared to speak out against reservations for fear of losing a few votes.

Ritesh Misra, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

A matter of faith

The special report (*Chalo Ayodhya*, 21—27 October) was thought-provoking. Though the people tended to term L.K. Advani's *rath yatra* as communal and denounced it as an "irresponsible act", one cannot ignore the fact that the BJP's programme received considerable popular support, especially in western and northern India. And despite such



strong security measures, some desperate *kar sevaks* did manage to enter the disputed site on 30 October and damage portions of the mosque. This not only dealt a severe blow to the UP government, but embarrassed the Centre as well. Advani's *rath yatra* may have been terminated midway, but he managed to sway the masses nevertheless.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

At the helm

The profile of the new Chief Justice (*Justice for all*, 21—27 October) brought out the personality of Ranganath Mishra. He says "My philosophy is simple: a smile on everybody's face," adding, "The common man is my interest." It is rather unfortunate that even 43 years after Independence, justice remains a far cry for the masses, especially for the poor sections of the society. Not that nothing has been done towards this end. Lok Adalats and *panchayats* have been set up to dispose of cases. But nothing really worked. And justice remained as elusive as ever. It is time that something is done to revamp the judicial system and somebody like Mishra, who cares for the



L.K. Advani's *rath yatra*: the chariot of fire

poor, should be at the helm.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Mr Caste

The write-up (*In flames*, 7—13 October) was timely. The students are hostile to the Mandal Report because it favours caste instead of merit.

The only factor which accounts for V P. Singh's obduracy is the strength of his conviction that the oppressed should be given certain benefits and therefore the Indian society should be moulded along caste lines. And, he is in no mood to compromise, for he feels that the leftists and the BJP are solidly behind him. But at a time when the moral fabric of the society is being torn apart, VP seems to be shirking responsibility.

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

Dreams and visions

The article, *The Hollow Man*, (21—27 October) was thought-provoking. According to the author, no politician worth his salt has dared to oppose the hollow and fraudulent vision of V.P. Singh, which exposes the shocking immorality of our entire body politic and that of the nation.

And as for bartering away the future of our children, let us face the reality. The cream of our youth will continue to migrate as they have been doing for several decades in the past. The next best lot will join the private sector, a trend that has been in force for the last 20 years. The ones with initiative among those remaining, will set up their own business and a few patriotic souls will join the armed forces where there are no reservations.

Lt Col. B. Singh, New Delhi

A tragic end

The article on Rekha and Mukesh Aggarwal (*Fatal attraction*, 14—20 October), threw some light on a tragic episode. It is indeed strange that the Mukesh-Rekha marriage should sour within such a short time. Anybody would have expected a more human approach from Rekha, who had spent many happy hours of her life with Mukesh, whom she claimed to have loved.

Prabhakar S. Harsole, Indore (Madhya Pradesh)

■ Mukesh Aggarwal may have been a successful businessman but his personal life was an unhappy one. It was perhaps become of the frustration of a failed marriage that ultimately led him to commit suicide. The way Rekha treated her husband and felt no repentance whatsoever was disgraceful. It is sad that the reel life of these actors are now becoming real.

Harekrishna Mahanta, New Delhi

A genius says goodbye

The obituary (*Shankar Nag, 1954-1990*, 21—27 October) paid a fitting tribute to one of the most accomplished actor-directors of our country. We have lost a man of tremendous calibre who was bound to create more ripples in the celluloid world. Shankar Nag's directorial acumen can be gauged from the roaring success of his maiden television venture, *Malgudi Days*—one of the most memorable serials on Doordarshan.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (UP)

■ The write-up on Shankar Nag was a fitting tribute to the genius. Nag's death has certainly created a void in the theatre, cinema and the cultural world of the country.

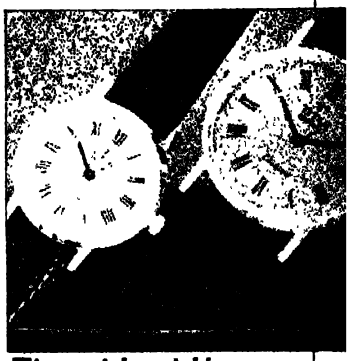
K. Chidanand Kumar, Bangalore (Karnataka)

Rekha with Mukesh: the marriage never worked



A healthy competition

The write-up (*Watch out*, 14—20 October) gives a vivid picture of the war between the 30-year-old public sector giant, HMT, and the three-year-old private sector concern, Titan Watches Ltd. It only emphasises the need for competition. However, the government has to ensure



Titan watches: taking on HMT

that the Titan imports are compensated by its exports, and that there is a considerable percentage of net foreign exchange gains.

A. Jacob Cahayam, Thiruvananthapuram, (Kerala)

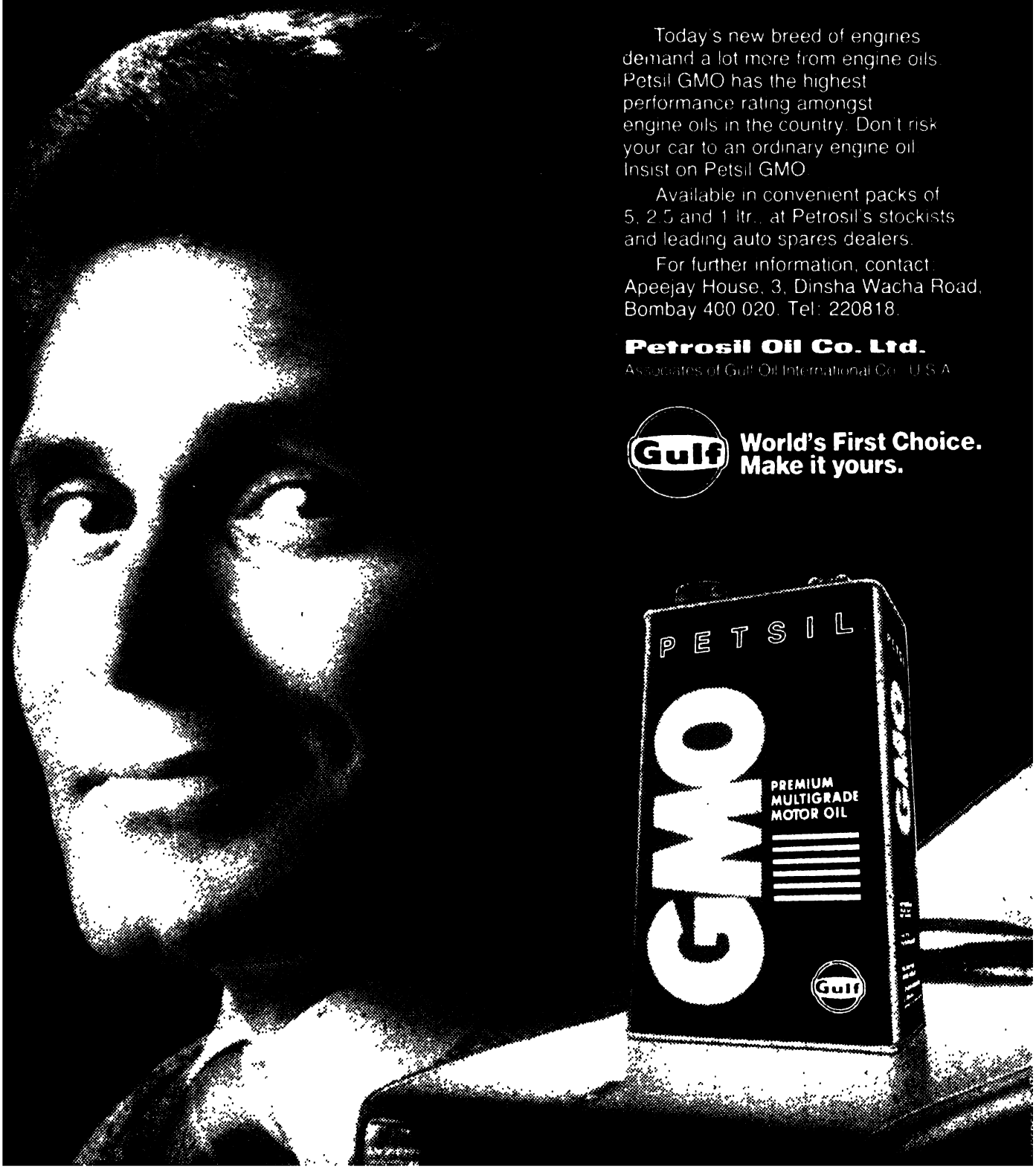
Poor show

The Indian team's performance in the recently-concluded Beijing Asiad (*Battered in Beijing*, 14—20 October) was very poor and it has brought shame, humiliation and disgrace to the country.

In the previous ten Games, India usually came fourth or fifth in the medal standing, but in the Beijing Asiad, India sank to the lowly eleventh position. Golden girl P.T. Usha failed to perform according to expectations.

S. Bachan Jeet Singh, Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

"My car moves on petrol. My engine runs on GMO."



Today's new breed of engines demand a lot more from engine oils. Petsil GMO has the highest performance rating amongst engine oils in the country. Don't risk your car to an ordinary engine oil. Insist on Petsil GMO.

Available in convenient packs of 5, 2.5 and 1 ltr., at Petrosil's stockists and leading auto spares dealers.

For further information, contact: Apeejay House, 3, Dinsha Wacha Road, Bombay 400 020. Tel: 220818.

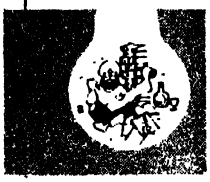
Petrosil Oil Co. Ltd.

Associates of Gulf Oil International Co., U.S.A.

Gulf **World's First Choice. Make it yours.**

KHUSHWANT SINGH

The lyricist



Faiz Ahmed Faiz, by common consent the greatest Urdu poet since Allama Iqbal, had a *farmaish* sent to him at a *mushaira* requesting him to recite a *ghazal* sung by Mehdi Hassan. He was not upset but amused by the request: most *ghazal* lovers know the singers rather than the names of the poets who composed them. The popularity of a particular *ghazal* depends on the singer, the tune-maker and the poet—in that order. First come Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Iqbal Bano, Mehdi Hassan, Mohammad Rafi, Jagjit Singh and Anup Jalota; next come music-makers like Naushad, Khayyam, Anandji-Premji, last of all come the poets: Iqbal, Faiz, Sahir Ludhianvi, Hafeez Jalandhari, Kaifi Azmi and Qateel Shifai. It is ironic that men who gave birth to a lyric on paper should be so utterly dependent on music composers and singers for their works to gain recognition. For years one of my favourite *ghazals* was:

Ulfat kee nayee manzil ko chalaa
Too baahon daal kay bahoon mein;
Dil todney vaaley dekh kay chal
Ham bhee to padey hain raahon mein

You make a new destination of your love,
With arms entwined with another;
You breaker of my heart tread warily
I too am lying by the roadside.

I knew it was sung by Iqbal Bano and imitated by many others. The tune was composed by Master Inayat Hussain of Lahore. Although cassettes bore the name of the poet and the composer, till I met him in Glasgow, I did not realise that the words had been written by Qateel Shifai.

Qateel Shifai was born in Haripur (district Hazara in the NWFP) on Christmas eve of 1919. His real name is Aurangzeb Khan, he changed it to his *takhallus* (poetic pseudonym)—*Qateel*, the victim of murder and *Shifai* the name of his Ustaad—when he started writing poetry while at school in 1935).

He looks a stockier version of Faiz Ahmed Faiz. And shares Faiz's politics being a leftist, anti-Ayub, Yahya and Zia-ul Haq, but unlike Faiz was never jailed for airing his views. He speaks very little English: "I know it as much as your former President Giani Zail Singh," he said to me in Punjabi, which is his mother tongue. He has lived most of his life in Lahore, speaks Punjabi most of the time but writes entirely in Urdu.

Fourteen collections of his poems have been published. His lyrics have gone into the making of over 150 Indian and Pakistani films. He has won the three most prestigious Pakistani literary awards, the Adamjee, the Sarhad Abbaseen Arts Prize and the Presidential Naqoosh Award. In addition, he won the National Film Award for the best poetry of the year in 1986. He is a widely travelled man and his poems have been translated in foreign languages like English, Russian and Arabic. He is undoubtedly the number one film song writer of Pakistan and India today.

Amongst the Indian singers who have sung Shifai's works are Lata, Asha, Salim Agha, Mohammad Rafi, Pankaj Udhas and Mahinder Kapur. His current favourite, *ghungroo toot gaye*, has been lifted and sung without his permission or payment by scores of singers.



Qateel Shifai's lyrics have gone into the making of over 150 Indian and Pakistani films. He is undoubtedly the number one film song writer of Pakistan and India today

In the ten days I was in Glasgow, I met Qateel Shifai almost every day and spent many hours talking to him about his life and poetry. His two sons settled in Glasgow were usually with him. As a gesture of thanksgiving for the hospitality I had received in their home, I offered to translate three poems of his choosing. He was considerate: he gave me one modest-sized and two very short ones to render into English.

Beware of the time
Ye poets, bards and sculptors!
Endless showers of arrows (of calumny)
will be loosened against you.
You will raise cries and hues,
You will cry out to the civilised world:
But every habitant of the civilised world
will have already been wounded like you
Of those that remain
will any come to your help?
No! they will have become addicts of backward-looking heroin.
All they will hanker after is that this
dark wretchedness fill all their veins.
Nothing more.
They'll have no reason, no argument to put forward.
Agreed, you'll do your best to make them understand
But it will be beyond their understanding.
And in these dark times to come
The massacre that will take place
No guardian angel will rise to defend you.
All you meet will be thirsting for your blood.

Beware of that time
ye poets, bards and sculptors;
if you dare, step forward
And block the way
Of the time to come. ●

A parent is born



Bharat Business International Limited

The trading companies in India's public sector announce a significant event in their family

The birth of their parent

BBIL, Bharat Business International Limited

On April 17, 1990

While the parent is new-born, the family members are established names in the business

The State Trading Corporation of India Limited.

The Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation of India Limited

The Projects and Equipment Corporation

And **The Spices Trading Corporation of India Limited**

Companies that enjoy a distinguished reputation in the international trading community

And now, they have a parent

A holding company that will co-ordinate their functions

Consolidate their resources. Synergise their strengths. Utilise their buying power as a leverage to boost exports.

The parental responsibilities of BBIL would include adoption of strategies like Counter Trade, Investments in export ventures. Equity participation in foreign firms supplying essential imports to India. Everything that would help India earn through exports, enough to pay for its canalised imports

The birth of BBIL, in essence, marks the birth of a new era in India's International Trade

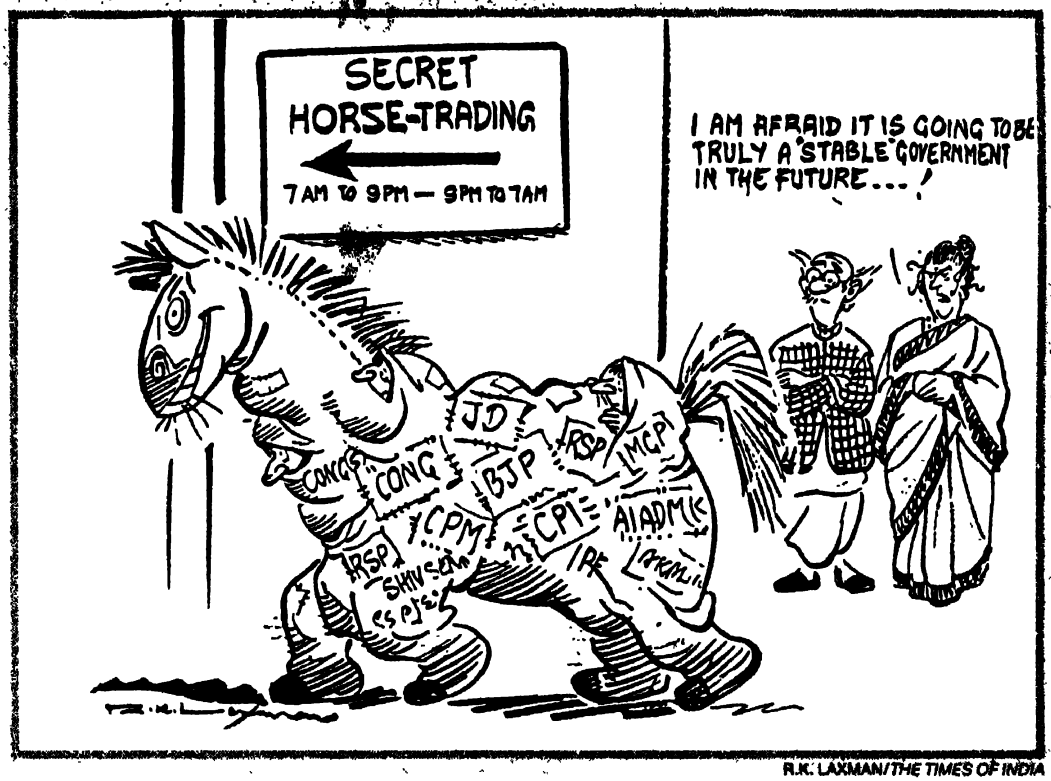
BBIL

Bharat Business International Limited

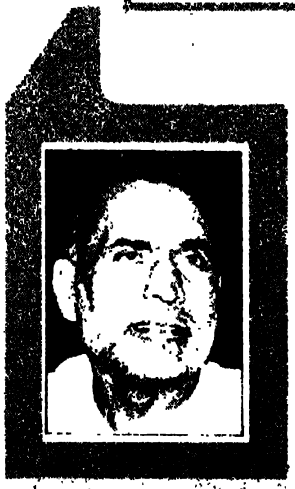
Jawahar Vyapar Bhawan,
Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi-110001

R K SWAMY/BBDO BBIL 5946

SIGHT AND SOUND



R.K. LAXMAN/*THE TIMES OF INDIA*



■ There is no contest (for the prime ministership) now because there is no vacancy. The Prime Minister has not yet resigned.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Janata Dal leader*

■ India must be saved from V.P. Singh. We have only one thing to say to him: In the name of God, go.

V.N. GADGIL, *Congress(I) parliamentary party chairman*

■ Today if the BJP has 86 MPs and the strength to topple the government, it is only because V.P. Singh aided and abetted its designs.

RAJIV GANDHI, *Congress(I) president*

■ I am not at all in this race (for the prime ministership) and I will not stab my leader during his difficult times.

MADHU DANDAVATE, *Union finance minister*

■ If the majority Hindus in their own country cannot build a temple for their God in his *janmasthan*, then they should lay down their lives.

ASHOK SINGHAL, *VHP general secretary*

■ All his (V.P. Singh) decisions are taken by the Imam of Jama Masjid.

K.L. SHARMA, *BJP general secretary*

■ With all the *mushaira* and *namaaz* on television you often get a surprise and wonder if you are in Pakistan.

BAL THACKERAY, *Shiv Sena supremo*

■ This is a victory for secularism, for the Constitution and the rule of law.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN, *Babri Masjid Action Committee member, on the government's successful bid to keep away kar sevaks from the Babri Masjid on 30 October*

■ Why else did he (L.K. Advani) use the party's election symbol on the rath? Has Ram also become a BJP supporter?

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister, maintaining that the BJP had organised the yatra for political gains*

■ Even Ram had built a Shiva temple in Dhanuskodi for Ravana. Ram is not creating problems. In the name of Ram we are creating problems for ourselves.

N.T. RAMA RAO, *National Front chairman*

■ I think it's (public adulation) very important because that's the kind of thing that keeps you going. That's the thing that feeds your stamina.

SUNIL GAVASKAR, *former Indian cricket captain*



FACTS ABOUT ASBES

Its a fact that Asbestos Cement Sheets are made of over 90% cement and reinforced with about 10% Chrysotile asbestos: a natural fibre with 3-4 times the strength of steel. Asbestos being 100% alkali resistant, gets 'locked in' with the cement matrix permanently. The chemical bond so formed makes the separation of asbestos fibre practically impossible.

Asbestos Cement Sheets are pre-fabricated, ready-to-use and have the advantages of both cement and asbestos.

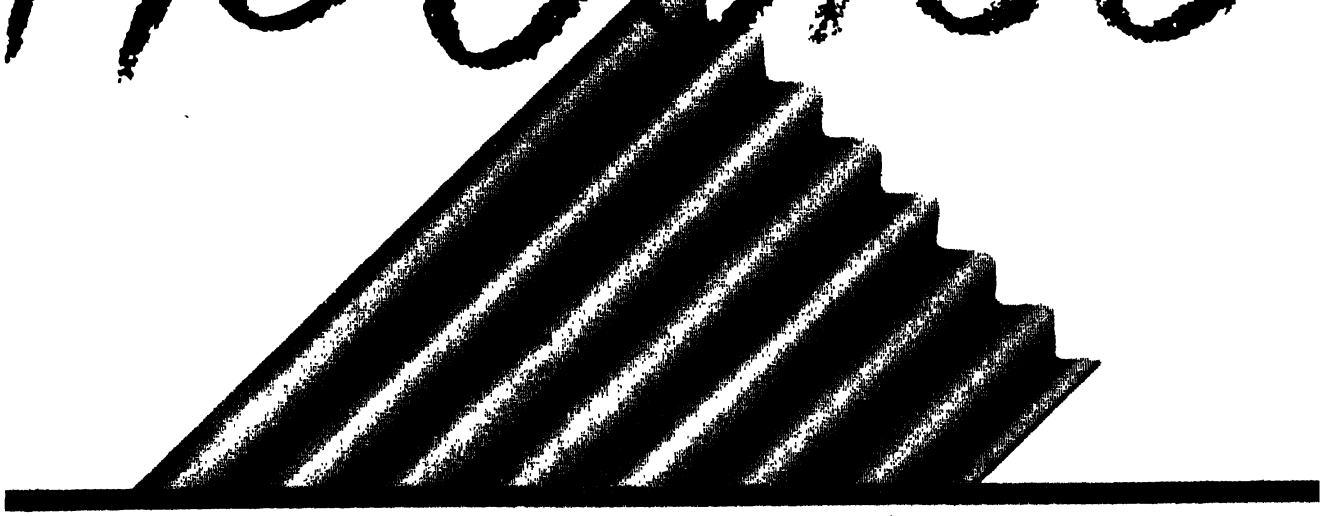
As a matter of fact, Asbestos Cement Sheets need no protective coatings or treatment. Corrosive industrial pollutants leave them unharmed.

It's inherently resistant to fire, heat, rain and salty coastal air, resulting in a long lasting product. Add to the long life of these sheets, higher coverage efficiency. And you have the most cost-effective roofing material.

Fact is, Asbestos Cement pipes, sheets, slates and shingles have been used since the turn of the century. And continue to be used all over the world.

SUMMED UP WITH

7,00,00



TOS CEMENT SHEETS.

42 lakh tonnes of asbestos, a natural mineral, is mined around the world every year. In countries like USSR, Canada, Brazil and Zimbabwe. Of this, India uses only 2%.

Safe to use. Rather than listen to propaganda put out by vested interests about Asbestos Cement Sheets, listen to what the experts have to say.

The normal use of Asbestos Cement poses no risk to the environment or the public

Leading environmentalists, epidemiologists and the working group of the W H O. agree this material is safe

Finally, let the study group of the Health and Safety Executive of H M. Govt of the U.K. clear all your doubts

"Asbestos Cement products are sometimes confused in the public mind with asbestos insulation We should think it necessary, therefore, to say that we should not expect danger to arise from existing Asbestos Cement products, eg. roofing, sheeting and guttering"

So, if you're looking for the ideal roofing material, you can't do better than choose Asbestos Cement Sheets

And that's a fact

A FEW FIGURES.



It's a fact that over 1 billion square metres of Asbestos Cement Roofing Sheets are in use in India With nearly 60 million more added every year !

ASBESTOS CEMENT SHEETS. SAFE TO USE. LAST A LIFETIME.

THE ASBESTOS CEMENT PRODUCTS MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION.

Enterprise·D·ACPMA/560

VINOD MEHTA

Get the politicians out

Hindu and Muslim leaders should sort out the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue between themselves



Under the circumstances, it was the best of results—a draw. The *kar sevaks* enjoyed a few moments of glory when they hoisted the saffron flag on domes built by the hated 'invader'; the *masjid* protectors extracted their pound of flesh when they were invited for an on-site inspection 24 hours after the 'historic victory' and could declare that the structure had been saved after a heroic defense. Meanwhile, Vishwanath Pratap Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav must have breathed a sigh of relief even as they conceded that the apparently impregnable cordon around Ayodhya had been breached. Indeed, as reports of official connivance pour in, the lapses in the security arrangements assume a frightening dimension. Still, to describe the events of the day as the "storming of Ayodhya" is an exaggeration. A few bloody skirmishes did take place before stumps were drawn, but they did not affect the final result.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is busy circulating stories of masterly tactical strategy deployed to hoodwink the law and order agencies. Mr Ashok Singhal, otherwise known as the elusive pimpernel, apparently reached the holy site very much like a Hindi film hero escaping the baddies. And the manner in which the crafty *kar sevaks* remained hidden in the by-lanes leading to the Ram Janmabhoomi is drawing *wah-wahs* from the faithful. But what was finally achieved? Fifteen minutes on top of the mosque and minor damage to its already peeling plaster is small potatoes considering how meticulously the onslaught had been planned and what huge numbers were involved.

Implicit in a draw is absence of victory. So, let us merely note that events on D day could, from the government's point of view, have taken an uglier turn. The fact that they did not means that, moles notwithstanding, the security forces stood the challenge with courage and some efficiency. More than V.P. Singh, it is the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh who is the hero of the hour. His stock in the nation continues to rise.

It is not clear how the Rajmata of Gwalior and Atal Behari Vajpayee interpret the events of 30 October. Certainly, in VHP circles there is moderate euphoria—which is why the fiction that *kar seva* did actually take place is being persisted with. It is a patently false claim, unless of course a stray brick was placed in the *garba graha*, because even for symbolic construction, 100-200 devotees would have had to work for a couple of hours with mortar, stone and cement. Interestingly, even as the VHP extended *kar seva* by another seven days, the BJP president announced from his place of temporary incarceration in Bihar that his party was determined to force mid-term polls on the nation.

This is the first bit of good news in a long time. The BJP's insistence on an election means that the party is soliciting the verdict of the electorate on the issue. Excellent. Elections will mean that the BJP and its allies will concentrate energies on the battle of the ballot rather than the battle for the temple over the next few months. As a result, the agitation, hopefully, will be put on the back burner.



The *kar sevaks* enjoyed a few moments of glory when they hoisted the saffron flag on domes built by the hated 'invader'; the *masjid* protectors extracted their pound of flesh when after an inspection they declared that solid defense had saved the structure

In the coming weeks and months, therefore, the potential for communal violence let loose by the dispute should be reduced. We must keep our fingers crossed and hope that any excess of energy and fervour will be diverted to the political arena, which arguably is the legitimate forum for Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid type discords. Ideally, political parties, after having obtained sanction from the people, should be in a position to point the direction and force the pace towards where a just solution lies. Unfortunately, their record does not inspire confidence. Whatever the veracity of Arun Shourie's latest bombshell (incidentally, if the alleged parleys between V.P. Singh and Mr Shourie's intimate friends transpired at the Express Towers in Bombay





It is not clear how the **Rajmata of Gwalior** and **Atal Behari Vajpayee** interpret the events of 30 October

before the 1989 general election, why did Arun Shourie wait for over a year to expose the Prime Minister's 'duplicity' manifest in a conversation to which Mr Shourie was presumably privy when it took place?). The Janata Dal leader and his minority government displayed criminal negligence just waiting around watching the crisis mount. Why was the furious activity we saw in the fortnight before the *kar seva* left for the eleventh hour? The suspicion that the Prime Minister was playing some devious game of his own cannot be dismissed easily.

Although these days, Rajiv Gandhi and his party swear by secularism and the minorities, in November 1989 they were manipulating vote banks on a daily basis so as to extract the maximum mileage from the controversy. On their part,BJP leaders talk bravely of sweeping the polls, but in their hearts they know that at best they can hope either to participate in a coalition as the junior partner, or support a minority government from the outside. Pragmatists as they are, Messrs Advani and Vajpayee cannot be dreaming of an invitation from Rashtrapati Bhavan to form the government. The four left parties while behaving with exemplary consistency are in the same boat as the BJP. Thus, some parties are discredited while others are impotent.

The message is loud and clear: get the politicians out. They spell nothing but trouble and bloodshed. Having engaged in a trial of strength (both sides claiming a victory of sorts), Hindu and Muslim leaders should be in a mood to get back to the negotiating table and sort out this matter between themselves. In the past, the rival protagonists have used political parties like crutches and allowed them to take over the responsibility for solving a problem that, strictly speaking, is none of their business. I believe the absence of politicians will be a boon for the negotiations.

That a magnificient Ram temple should be built in Ayodhya is no longer a matter of contention. That it should be built not on the outskirts of the city or even 10 kilometres away from where the *shilanyas* was performed last year, but at the site which the VHP claims is the *janmasthan* is also not a matter of contention. Thus, the issue has not, as it were, remained frozen. There has been movement, all of it veering towards the demands articulated by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. For instance, no one today talks seriously of handing over the mosque and the adjacent land to the Archaeological Survey of India. Neither does the suggestion of building a splendid monument next to the mosque in celebration of India's composite culture find much favour. Indeed, the emerging consensus recommends:

(a) the proposed temple stand check by jowi with the *masjid*.

(b) the possible destruction of the outer wall of the mosque including the so-called *chabootra*.

Surely, that should be close enough for Mr Singhal and company?

All that the country pleads for is a teeny weeny concession (compromise is too big a word in the contest): drop the demand for relocation or demolition. Take the disputed land, build in any manner adjacent to or around the Babri Masjid. The VHP can then have their sought-after temple at the holy site, while offence to Muslim sentiments will be spared. Perhaps, this formula is overly-generous to the Hindus, and Muslim fundamentalists will describe it as a sell out. Actually, it is the only way to keep this country from going up in flames.

If the communal atmosphere had not been so poisoned, if politicians had not shamelessly exploited the issue for narrow electoral gains, the relocation of one mosque in a secular country would have exercised only a tiny minority. In Islamic countries, mosques have been shifted/pulled down to facilitate traffic movement. Muslims in India know that their religion is strong enough to withstand the elimination of a single house of worship. All over the country there are numerous abandoned mosques and temples where goats feed and locals go every day to perform their morning ablutions. So much for the sanctity of holy places. The Babri too is an abandoned mosque which in four or five decades would have collapsed, courtesy neglect and the ravages of nature. Alas, we are living in charged times. When people believe that their faith is threatened, they begin to cling to symbols. The mosque in Ayodhya, disintegrating, unused, forgotten, is one such symbol.

On the BBC World Service, the leader of the VHP London branch, when asked why it was so absolutely vital to tear down the mosque in Ayodhya, replied with stirring rhetoric: "Hindus in India will not be able to sleep, eat or drink water until this insult to their religion is removed." Well, I have seen that insult in Ayodhya, and I can tell you that it is not worth a glass of warm soda. *Arre bhai, aap ke Ram lalla ka mandir ek tooti poothi masjid giraye bina nahin ban sakta?* ●

The family way

R.K. Hegde and his son are indicted by the Dayal Commission

The scandals, it appears, just won't go away. Four months ago, an embarrassed and discredited Ramakrishna Hegde was forced to quit the Planning Commission after the Kuldip Singh Commission virtually indicted him in a land scam. And now—just as everyone seemed to be forgetting the findings of that commission—another has probably sealed his chances of making an early political comeback.

Last week, the Parameshwar Dayal Commission passed strictures against the former Karnataka chief minister over his role in the MD seat scam. The commission, which was constituted by Hegde himself in 1985, had been probing the allegation that his son Bharat Hegde and two others had cheated a coffee planter of Rs 2.5 lakhs by promising to get his daughter admitted into a medical college.

Although the commission's report does not suggest that R.K. Hegde had a hand in the deal, Justice Dayal passes strictures against the former chief minister for his "overenthusiastic role in defending his son". The Justice claims that Hegde had done so despite knowing that an FIR was filed against his son. "(Hegde knew) a case was registered and the matter under investigation. It was for the courts and the police to decide if they were guilty or not," the Justice notes. Hegde is also accused by Dayal of not taking any action against a written complaint against his son and the other two accused. Dayal's report even draws attention to Hegde's "arrogance, power puffedness *(sic)* and impoliteness" during his testimony before the commission.

While Justice Dayal recommends that criminal prosecution be launched against Bharat and his associates, he has left it to the state government to decide on the course of action to be taken against R.K. Hegde. Given that the state is now run by S. Bangarappa, Hegde is unlikely to find the government very forgiving. Unlike the previous Congress chief minister Veerendra Patil (who was reputedly soft on the Janata Dal leader), Bangarappa's attitude to Hegde varies between a profound distaste and unaccommodating hatred.



VEERAPPA MOILY

The law minister promises not to be vindictive



S. BANGARAPPA

The Karnataka CM was delighted with the commission's findings



The MD seat scandal

Why the commission was set up

The Dayal Commission was set up in 1985 to probe an allegation that R.K. Hegde's son, Bharat, had cheated a coffee planter of a sum of Rs 2.5 lakhs. It was charged that Bharat, his cousin Udayshankar and a friend, C.P. Lakshman, had received the money from C.P. Bharathan after promising to have his daughter admitted to medical college.

It is said that C.P. Lakshman was approached by C.P. Bharathan (the two are brothers) with the request that a seat be 'fixed' for





BHARAT AND R.K. HEGDE

Justice Dayal held that R.K. Hegde went out of his way to defend his son Bharat after the MD seat scandal broke

Justice Dayal's report was submitted to the government as early as 17 September. While Veerendra Patil—who was then chief minister—decided to keep it under wraps, Bangarappa—who took over only last fortnight—acted with a rare speed to make the findings public. His newly-formed Cabinet accepted the commission's recommendations and the government went out of its way to publicise them. The chief minister handed over the report to the law ministry—now headed by another self-confessed Hegde-hater, Veerappa Moily—to take action on the basis of the recommendations. At the moment, the ministry is working overtime and the whole case is expected to be handed over to the Lok Ayukta.

Given that it is Bangarappa and Moily who are responsible for the future course of action, Hegde is likely to be in for a difficult time. The present chief minister has smarted on more than one occasion from Hegde's vicious and unsparing criticism. "Now that Bangarappa has a stick to beat Hegde with, he is bound to use it to flog Hegde. He can't expect this government to treat him the way Veerendra Patil's did," says a Congress MLA. Moily—who was falsely implicated by Hegde in the famous tapes scandal—is unlikely to be any less harsh. The law minister, however, claims that he will not be vindictive. "The law will take its course. Why should I try to get back at Hegde?" he told SUNDAY.

Predictably, the Hegde camp—as it did in the case of the Kuldip Singh Commission—has already begun discrediting the report as biased and motivated. Says one of Hegde's close aides: "We expected something like this would happen. We knew the report would be unfavourable ever since Dayal was appointed (during President's Rule when the Congress was in power at the Centre) to head the commission."

Although R.K. Hegde was unavailable for comment, his son Bharat—who will now have to face a criminal suit—describes the report as "politically motivated". "We have not yet worked out our line of defence for the criminal prosecution," he told SUNDAY. "But my conscience is clear."

For Ramakrishna Hegde, the findings of the Dayal Commission will make it all the more difficult to effect a re-entry into Karnataka politics. He is also going to be unable to resort to his favourite ploy when faced with embarrassments of this nature: the resignation. Hegde has stepped down from public office four times in the past. And each time, he has—though with varying degrees of success—attempted to reinforce his image of someone who stands for value-based politics.

Obviously, this is not going to be possible now. As one Congress MLA sarcastically remarked, "The only thing that Hegde can resign from now is politics."●

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

---

his daughter, Sudha Satyanath, in the Belgaum Medical College. He knew that Lakshman had close ties with Bharat Hegde and Udayshankar and a sum of Rs 2.5 lakhs was decided on. When Sudha failed to secure a seat, Bharathan demanded that the money be returned. When all attempts at recovering the money failed, he filed a suit against Bharat, Udayshankar and Lakshman.

When the case began to receive publicity, R.K. Hegde—then Karnataka chief minister—tried his best to make out that it was a politically motivated attempt to discredit him. But when the pressure began to mount, Hegde was left with no option but to institute a commission of enquiry.

The commission was headed by three other judges before Justice Parameshwar Dayal took over. All the other judges before him had problems with conducting the enquiry and so did Dayal, who complained publicly about unpaid bills and the lack of facilities extended to the commission.

Justice Dayal notes in his report that Bharat and his associates were more than just friends—that they were also engaged in business transactions. He writes that Bharat was in a position to get work done by virtue of being the chief minister's son. "Bharat Hegde was not taking the money directly but directing it to Udayshankar. Thus, all three were conspiring to cheat others," the Justice notes.

Justice Dayal has recommended that criminal proceedings be initiated against Bharat and his associates. As for the course of action against R.K. Hegde—who has been accused of trying to shield his son—the judge has left this to the state government.

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Crocodile tears

Goodbye V P, goodbye Shourie. You deserve each other



And so the thieves fall out among themselves. What an irony that the poison pen which made V.P. Singh Prime Minister should also prove the "diamond-tipped lancet" of his final quietus (the *nishtar-e-almas*, as the immortal Faiz put it). As Shourie and Singh both go together, each carrying on his back the dagger with which he has been cunningly stabbed by the other, what can we the much-abused public do but recall the childhood ditty:

"Thank you, very much
You are *maggarmach*!"

No, I find it impossible to shed any real tears for either of these gentlemen. Each was the product of a monstrous falsehood, a special talent for covering his true visage behind a veil of self-righteous morality. While VP shaved his head and pulled his *kurta* off to turn his torso full-frontal to the camera (in a reasonably persuasive imitation of Gandhiji), Shourie bought himself a library-shelf full of the *Collected Works Of The Mahatma* to festoon his writings with quotations from Gandhi A-Z.

Both built for themselves a larger-than-life image of men above the fray, not quite flesh-and-blood because their souls wandered in ethereal realms that we poor earth-bound mortals might gawp at in admiration but not ourselves dare to aspire to emulate. Each disavowed any ambition for himself, proclaiming only a higher commitment to the larger good of a greater humanity. Both collected awards—Rajrishi, Padma Bhushan—from well-meaning dupes mesmerised by the Thespian genius that each displayed. If they can get together again, a marvellous future awaits them in Bollywood: Shourie can write the dialogues and Singh can fill the vacuum caused by the departure of Johnny Walker.

Till about January 1987, Shourie had no use for Singh and Singh none at all for Shourie. Singh was busy laying his traps for the capitalist class that constituted Shourie's clients and employers. Shourie, for his part, was occupied as usual with finding a cudgel with which to belabour his favourite whipping-boys: the country's Muslim minority. So, even as VP demonstrated his courage by laying siege on octogenarian industrialists and his probity by misusing his high office to persecute the film star who had upstaged him in the factional party politics of his hometown of Allahabad, Shourie gave the final touches to the manuscript of his book on Islam, a work so vicious and perverted that every English-speaking Muslim I know was outraged at the extracts from the book carried in *Illustrated Weekly of India*. (I decided then to show my solidarity with secularism by *not* reading the book: in any case, who can get through hundreds of pages of the man's convoluted prose?)

What brought Singh and Shourie together was their discovery in late 1986/early 1987 that they were on the same side of a private quarrel. They agreed to abuse their respective public offices—one as a Cabinet minister and the other as an editor—to ventilate their private grievances. They shared many traits in common: each was loyal, above all, to himself—and damn everyone else; each a loner; each contemptuous of team-work; each adept at denying the credit to his collaborators; each a master at garnering all the kudos for himself; each a ruthless carpenter fashioning the corpses of his victims into rungs on which to ascend the ladder of his personal success. Each was also his own make-up man. As Rajiv Gandhi discovered. As Ramnath Goenka has discovered. As Chandra Shekhar found out. As Devi Lal now well knows. (And even Pritish Nandy does.)

In Fairfax were they conceived. In

V.P. SINGH: What brought Singh and Shourie together was their discovery in late 1986/early 1987 that they were on the same side of a private quarrel. They agreed to abuse their respective public offices, one as a cabinet minister and the other as an editor, to ventilate their private grievances.



Bofors were they born. There was one little problem though. V.P. Singh thought that Shourie the Intrepid had the evidence. While Shourie thought VP the Spotless had it. Neither seems to have checked with the other. Meanwhile, VP bloated like a *Khaimal* on the campaign of calumny launched by Shourie. The Rajrishi, for his part, preened himself in postures that imparted a touch of probability to Shourie's shrill screeching. The one told the electorate—and the other his growing band of avid readers—that within but a fortnight of the anointing of the Raja of Manda, the lid would be blown off Bofors, HDW, Fairfax and every other can of Rajivian worms. But once they got VP into South Block, they discovered with startled surprise that the Singh *jhola* contained no evidence, only empty accusations and blatant falsehoods, while Shourie's satchel too was innocent of the Truth That Involves US All and chock-a-block full only of innuendo, distortion and downright lies. What was worse, the two were clearly in cohorts to bring into the Cabinet the one rotund needle of suspicion they had stumbled upon accidentally and unwittingly—in their rummaging through the Bofors haystack. Hence the deliberate suppression of Chitra Subramaniam's story on the eve of the last Lok Sabha elections.

What the stage Gandhi and the print Gandhi forgot was that the real Gandhi has based all his ethics—political as well as personal —on one inflexible principle: that the ends do not justify the means, that resort to unethical means vitiates the ends however good, that only the right means can lead to right ends.

So, Shourie happily overlooked the mote in Singh's eye, even as Singh winked at the beam in Shourie's: the mote in Singh's eye being his politics of caste, the beam in Shourie's being his politics of community. And thereby hangs a tale which certainly bears the telling.

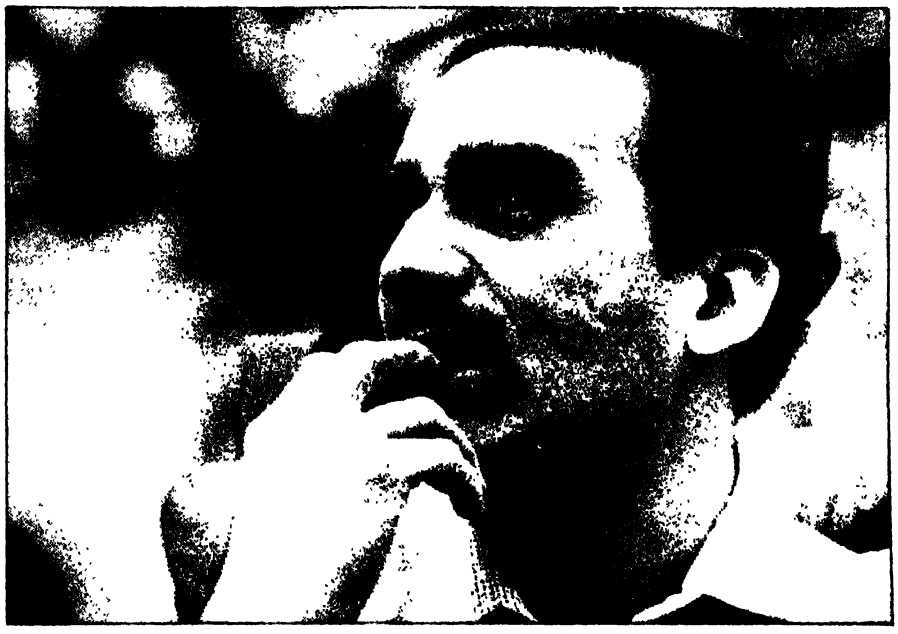
For, when Singh left the Congress, he took with him but half-a-dozen Congressmen (most of whom loathed him anyway, as the Jan Morcha component of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party has just unanimously demonstrated). He, therefore, had to build his political organisation with the collaboration of others. But where were these others to be found? Outside the Congress (and the communists—who, in any case, count for nothing, in the country bar West Bengal and, occasionally, Kerala, which is what, of course, makes them such an irresponsible, unprincipled and opportunistic party at the national level), there are only two sets of political forces in the country —the casteist and the communal.

The casteists (going back to the days of the Tau's Tau, Sir Chhotu Ram, the original manipulator of the AJGAR combine in the first limited franchise elections organised in the Twenties, after the Morley-Minto Reforms, by our erstwhile colonial masters)—the casteists, as I was saying, believe in cobbling together a majority by coalescing one caste with another and then pitting the composite against all the other castes outside the pale, that is, building their support base by dividing the country. The communalists, on the other hand (going back to the Days of 'divide and rule' and Shourie's many Taus—Savarkar, Hegdewar and Guruji Golwalkar, to name but three, not to mention his step-Tau—Mohammad Ali Jinnah)—the communalists, as I was saying, believe in building their majority by coalescing all the members of one community into their camp and then pitting the composite against all the communities outside the pale, that is, building their support base by dividing the country.

Singh fell into the company of the casteists. Shourie was always at one with the communalists. It is, however, impossible for the casteists and the communalists to remain together for too long. This is because casteism divides the community by raising one caste over and above—the other, while communalism thrives on welding all castes into one united community to give battle to all those other communities that they want to exterminate, eliminate or, at the very least, cut to size. When Singh's new-found casteism and Shourie's deep-rooted communalism fused together in 1987, the seeds of the end were planted in the very beginning. For Singh needed Shourie to promote his casteism and Shourie needed Singh to promote his communalism. The incompatibility between casteism and communalism led to the falling out.

For it was the Mandal report that roused Shourie against Singh. Shourie had not cavilled at the NF manifesto promise on Mandal—because he was shrewd enough to notice that Mandal was no priority in the manifesto and

ARUN SHOURIE: But what separated the Siamese twins were their priorities. VP's were: casteism first; communalism later. Or Manda first; Mandal second; *masjid/mandir* later. Rubbish, screamed Shourie; *masjid/mandir* first, Mandal never, Manda only if...



merely a nine-word sop to keep the Ahir element of the AJGAR combo placated. While Singh—by far shrewder than Shourie—spotted in those nine words the petard with which to hoist the original father of original sin, the redoubtable Patriarch of Haryana. So, while Shourie was lulled into thinking that V.P. Singh's highest objective in politics was to give the BJP national respectability, VP busied himself with demonstrating that casteism took precedence over communalism in his ongoing battle for political survival.

Not that V.P. Singh objected to communalsm *per se* (*"Aap usey masjid kehtey hi kyon ho? Woh tho Ram Lalla ka mandir hi hai!"* reference Shourie's swansong, denied publication in the *Indian Express* but reproduced in *extenso* in my favourite newspaper, the *National Herald,* 30/10/90, from which all further quotations in this column are taken.) No, V.P. Singh was quite happy to do clever little below-the-table, behind-the-back dirty deals with any brand of communalist ("the art," as he has himself so felicitously put it "of managing contradictions"). But when it came to priorties, VP's priorities were clear: casteism, first; communalism, later. Or, more accurately, Manda first, Mandal second, *masjid/mandir* later.

Rubbish, screamed Shourie, *masjid/mandir* first, Mandal never, Manda only if...

And thus were the Siamese twins separated, the first abortion in history to take place nine months *after* birth! And each is now receiving his richly deserved comeuppance. As VP crumbles to an ignominious collapse (by the time this column is published, the nation would have done with him), Arun Shourie bares his communal fangs in the idiom of the BJP. From his BJP friends he has pinched their favourite term of abuse: "pseudo-secularist" (reference my article in SUNDAY 9/9/90). It appeared for the first time in what was to prove to be the last *Indian Express* editorial penned by Arun Shourie, the nasty minority-baiting piece on 24 October. It is there again in the parting shot of the Shourie article scooped by the *National Herald.* So taken up have most of us been by the clinching evidence in the article of V.P. Singh's double-dealing with the RSS, the VHP and the BJP, that few of us have had the patience to read through to the end where Shourie's unabashed knickerwallah conclusions have been proclaimed.



L.K ADVANI: Shourie has abuses for the *thekedars* of the Muslims; none for the likes of Advani who have set themselves up as the *thekedars* of the Hindus. Who gave the BJP the mandate to roll in a *rath* to Ayodhya?

There is abuse for the *"thekedars"* of the Muslims; none for the likes of Advani who have set themselves up as the *"thekedars"* of the Hindus. Who gave the BJP the mandate to roll in a *rath* to Ayodhya? Not even one Indian in ten. For a bare 11 per cent of the electorate voted for the BJP in the 1989 elections. Moreover, that one-in-ten vote contained many who were compelled to put their seal against the lotus symbol because V.P. Singh's utterly unprincipled seat adjustment with majority communalism had deprived them of the opportunity of stamping their seal on the *chakra.* Deplore, as Shourie does, the "baubles" by which "the Muslim masses have been enticed by their *thekedars*" he has nothing at all to say about the baubles by which his knickerwallah friends, the self-appointed *thekedars* of Hinduism, have tried to entice the Hindu masses.

Shourie has not a word of reservation to express about Advani's DCM Toyota setting out from Somnath, not a word of condemnation for the inflammatory anti-Muslim slogans chanted by the Bajrang Dal goons accompanying the chariot, not a word of outrage at the blasphemy of a Lord Ram look-alike marching alongside the van as Advani collects the accolades from atop his raised platform, not a word of sympathy for the hapless victims of spreading communalism from Colonelganj to Chennapatna.

The tragedy is that Shourie has no understanding of the desperate need of our minorities to retain their identity in the face of the floodwaters of Hindu chauvinism with which he and his Hindutva cohorts threaten to swamp our minorities. Instead, he has the gall to describe as "moderates" the votaries of the Hindu Rashtra and mock the Muslims for falling victim to the "contrived superficials: the Lakhnavi or Hyderabadi cut, the cap of this cut rather than that, the person's demeanour at *Iftaar* parties, the smattering of Urdu in the person's speeches". If that is all that Shourie knows of our unity in diversity, God save not only India but Hinduism itself from this self-appointed *thekedar* of our *dharma.*

Today he abuses the "surface promise" of constitutional status for "the Minorities Commision". But he himself lent his pen to the group that drafted that NF manifesto promise! And even if he didn't, why was he silent on this point all these months? Amnesia, Shourie sahib? Or silent collaboration between casteism and communalism?

Anyway, V.P. Singh is gone, in a futile, doomed blaze of Doordarshan publicity—on the ineluctable principle that every Prime Minister gets the Parthasarathy he deserves! And Shourie is without a job...But not for much longer, I assure you. If I have no crocodile tears to shed for him, it is because a little birdie tells me there is an editorship falling vacant shortly at the *Organizer!* •

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.

Frost



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Pullover. To set ice on fire And bask

in its embers. To let your warmth flow

in a never ending stream of humanity.

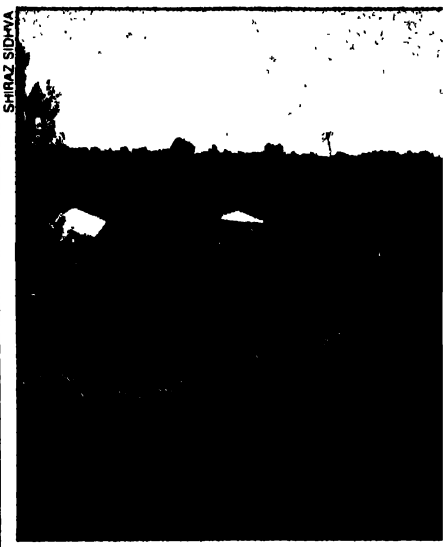
Park Avenue

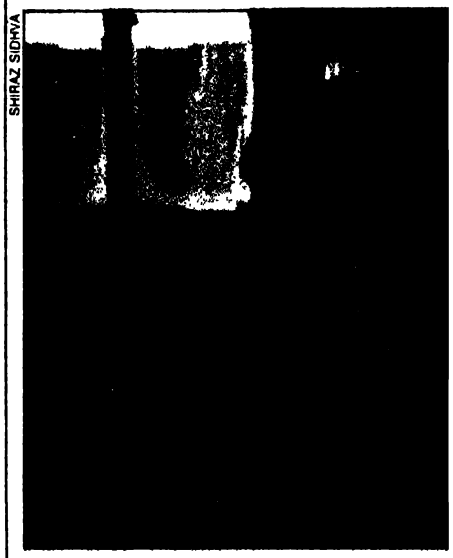
Style. It never goes out of fashion.

LINTAS PA 144 2415

How green is the Valley?

A long and bitter winter lies ahead for the Kashmiris


SHIRAZ SIDHVA


SHIRAZ SIDHVA

The cries for *azaadi* that resounded in the narrow lanes of Srinagar only a few months back can be heard no more. The flag-burning mobs too have disappeared. Endless hours of curfew is a thing of the past, and shops that have not opened for the better part of the year are once again doing modest business. Even the ice-cream parlours have the odd customer strolling in—something that was unthinkable only three months ago. Courageous tourists—mostly foreigners—have begun taking the flight to Srinagar, undeterred by newspaper reports on the crisis. The holiday-makers stroll down the Dal Lake by day but they do not venture out of their houseboats at night. Girish Saxena's Kashmir seems more normal than Jagmohan's, but the calm is deceptive. "Things have only got worse," admits a senior bureaucrat. "Just because the national press has lost interest in Kashmir doesn't mean the state has stopped burning."

And Kashmir is literally in flames. Unable to cope with the guerrilla tactics adopted by the militants, the paramilitary forces are retaliating by torching entire settlements and villages. But instead of achieving its desired aims, such inhuman and brutal measures, have only alienated the people further and there are very few Kashmiris left in the Valley who have a kind word for the government. Hassan, a wealthy carpet-dealer, says he didn't try to stop his son when he decided to join the *azaadi* movement. "Instead, I gave him a pair of snowboots that cost me Rs 1,000. Even six months ago, I would have tried to dissuade him, but today we have no option left but to fight back."

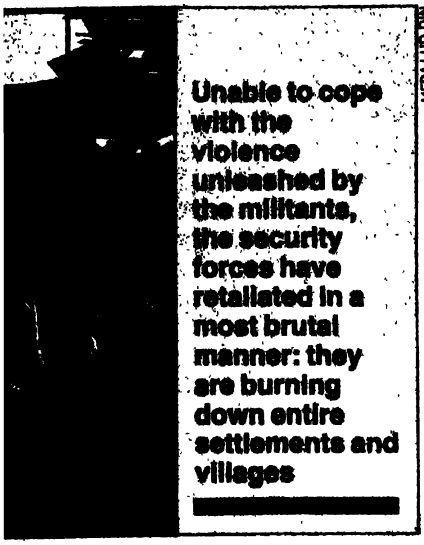
The administration, however, keeps reiterating that the masses are fed up with militancy. But there is no evidence of it anywhere. The people, on the contrary, do all they can to shield their "boys who are fighting for a cause". Even the moderates of yesteryears have been forced to adopt a militant posture solely because of the excesses perpetrated by the armed forces. And as they silently suffer, they wonder why their cries are not heard by champions of civil rights like Nelson Mandela. "It's hypocrisy," says Ghulam Nabi, a schoolteacher, referring to the warm welcome given to Mandela during his visit to India. "We can't understand why a single country or international agency is not coming to our aid."

The answer to that question is not as baffling as the Kashmiris make it out to be. "Nobody is going to interfere in India's war against Kashmir because nothing scares the world more than the possibility of a pan-Islamic state, or even another Iran, on their hands," explains a senior external affairs ministry official. And the Muslim world is too preoccupied with the Gulf crisis to pay any attention to the problems of a small community which for all practical purposes is part of a non-Islamic state.

There is another reason why international agencies and governments haven't rushed to the aid of the beleaguered Kashmiris despite reports of human rights violations and excesses by the armed forces. Underlying the fact that most Kashmiris today want independence is the reality of Pakistan's involvement in the movement. But nobody is willing to admit that the movement has, in recent months, acquired communal overtones.

Behind the facade of the gun-toting militant is a formidable network of intellectuals who mastermind the movement and give it the desired direction

In early October, militants shot dead six members of a Kashmiri pandit family, for no ostensible motive. This incident stunned the neighbourhood in downtown Srinagar; some people even took up arms and protested against the senseless killings. "We had permission from the militants to continue living here, and had even paid protection money to one of the groups," says a brother-in-law of the unfortunate accountant from Broadway Hotel, who was killed along



Unable to cope with the violence unleashed by the militants, the security forces have retaliated in a most brutal manner: they are burning down entire settlements and villages



MERAJ-UD-DIN

The warrens of downtown Srinagar would have done Dickens' 19th century London proud. Gutted shops stand as brutal reminders of violence, rats scamper for cover and a darkness engulfs everything



Even children have joined the movement. Their innocent smiles and pink cheeks do not betray the hatred they nurture towards the Indian government and the security forces



MERAJ-UD-DIN

The excesses perpetrated by the security forces have only alienated the people of Kashmir further. Whatever the administration might say, strong-arm tactics are not the answer

with his wife and four others. "Our relatives kept warning us to leave, but we have known no other home and didn't think we needed to." The dazed survivors left Sringar for Jammu in a police van; there was perhaps no other option left.

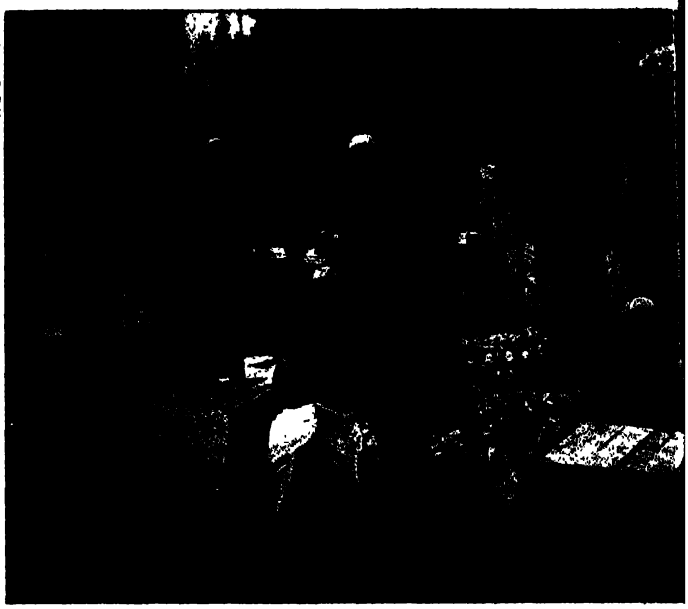
But despite the selective killings, the militants are not willing to concede that the movement has turned communal. In fact, the repeated pleas made by militant organisations to all Kashmiris who have abandoned their homes that they should return to the Valley and would be safe sounds terribly hollow, if not sinister. Many Hindus have died in recent months and nobody is willing to take risks.

The warrens of downtown Srinagar would have done Dickens' 19th-century London proud. Open drains stink of excreta, rats scamper for cover, and a dankness pervades everything. The narrow bylane is lined with young Kashmiris, who signal to each other as soon as they spot a visitor. Their looks are innocuous but everyone is well-armed. You stumble into a passage that is pitch-dark before groping up a flight of steep steps, to emerge in a spacious, semi-lit room. Every window is shielded by armed guards. They form an invincible ring around their leader who has lived underground for the past 11 months. One of them has a cherubic face, and admits he is only ten years old. There, dressed in army fatigues emblazoned with the letters JKLF in white, sporting a cap and dark glasses, sits Javed Ahmad Mir, the acting commander-in-chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Before he took up the gun, Mir was a plumber. Today, he is the only one of the JKLF's four area commanders to have escaped death or prisons. But Mir and all his colleagues seem unfazed by the fact that the security forces have either killed or captured many of the militants. "For every Ishfaq who dies, there will be a hundred others to take his place," claims Javed Mir, adding, "There is no question of giving up our struggle for freedom."

Asked if the change of Governor had made any difference, Mir replies in the negative. "Whether it is Jagmohan or Saxena, they belong to the same nation. We will fight till victory." Isn't it unlikely that the militants will be able to take on the might of the Indian armed forces? "Why not? We will get independence, which is our birthright, even if we have to sacrifice our innocent boys, men, women, and children for it," says Javed Mir.

There is no evidence to suggest that the average Kashmiri is fed up with the militants. Everywhere, ordinary people are sheltering the "boys fighting for a cause"





Dismissing that there was tension between the JKLF and the more fundamentalist Hizb-ul Mujahedeen—which seemed to be calling the shots in the Valley even though the former had widespread support among the population—Mir says: "We are all brothers. Whether we belong to the Hizb or the JKLF, we have only one main objective and target—to defeat the Indian Army." But while the JKLF was in favour of *azaadi*, the Hizb, which is affiliated to the Jamaat-e-Islami, very clearly wants Kashmir to be a part of Pakistan. How did they hope to reconcile their differences? "After the Indian Army withdraws, we will ask the people what they want. Until then, we shall fight our common enemy together," asserts Javed Mir.

How did the JKLF, which has always prided itself as being a secular organisation, view the senseless killings of the few Hindus that had chosen to stay behind in the Valley? Especially since Mir himself has recently asked all Kashmiri pandits to return to their homes? Refusing to concede that the organisation had little control over the scores of splinter groups that were running amuck in the Valley, the JKLF leaders insist that if there were senseless killings, they were the work of Indian agents. "Whether we are Muslims, Christians or Hindus, we are first Kashmiris. And we believe in secularism," insists Mir. "We ask our Hindu brothers to return. It was not the militants who asked them to leave; it is a trick played by the Government of India."

Are the militants prepared for talks with the government to find a solution to the crisis? "Not unless they withdraw all troops and stop humiliating us, torturing our boys, raping our women." Mir has even written a letter to Mandela spelling out what the JKLF thinks are the cause for the Kashmir crisis and urging the African leader to visit the Valley. "But Mandela has not responded. The Indian government has poisoned his ears," says the militant leader.

There is a change of attitude among the militants, but only in the sense that they seem a little more nervous than they were four months ago. But they are a lot more prepared for the long battle ahead, for the sacrifices they may have to make. Chatting informally, Salim, one of those guarding Javed Mir, admits that he hates pulling the trigger. "I feel something when I kill a CRPF man," he says shaking his head. "Some of them talk to us, and tell us, 'leave us alone, go shoot the political leaders who created this mess'."

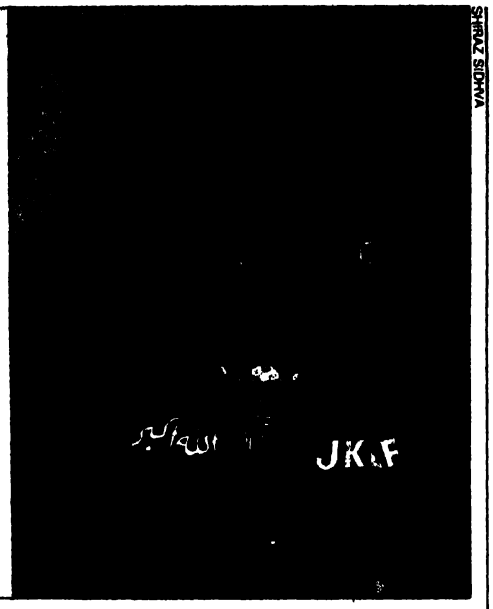
The ten-year-old militant is less repentant though. And Mir is proud of him. Only yesterday, he saved 12 militants by firing a volley of shots on the CRPF. "I feel nothing when I kill them," he says brazenly. His innocent smile and his pink cheeks make it hard to believe that he is capable of playing with anything else but a toy gun. But the revolver tucked under his sweater is very real. "Our founder, Maqbool Butt sahab, was tortured in different jails, and your forces are killing innocent people," he says by way of explanation. The boy has only recently been trained in one of the many camps that have sprung up in the Valley. His indoctrination is complete and his childhood has been cut short by circumstances.

One interesting fact emerges from the meeting with the militants—that





Surrounded by armed guards, Javed Mir, the acting commander-in-chief of the JKLF, exudes confidence. "There is no question of giving up the struggle," he says



behind the facade of the gun-toting militant is a well-organised and formidable network of intellectuals—lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors—who mastermind the movement and give it direction. This is evident from the fact that nearly all the articles in the local press are ghost-written, though they bear the signatures of the militant leaders. "It is only these behind-the-scenes guides who control these boys from going berserk or making terrorist-style attacks on their own people or outside the Valley," divulges a senior police official. "Right now, they are only attacking the armed forces, and those they feel are helping them."



Today, all the splinter militant groups have one enemy: the Indian Army. And, the JKLF is willing to go to the negotiating table only if the troops are withdrawn

While the rest of the country celebrates Diwali, albeit scaled down because of the Mandal immolations, Kashmir is engulfed in darkness. The electricity goes off for hours at a stretch. Since 15 September, nearly 1.37 lakh state government employees have gone on strike following the dismissal of five office-bearers of the employees' coordination committee, which had called a token five-day strike to protest against the excesses perpetrated by security forces in the Valley. As if things were not bad enough, all essential services and government schools and colleges have been suspended since mid-September. Asked if he had plans of holding negotiations with the striking employees, Governor Saxena told SUNDAY: "It is a situation that the employees brought upon themselves. These are our own people, it is a family affair and we could sort these things out." Then why had there been such a protracted agitation? "The employees cannot presume to act as a human rights organisation or as a political party. They have to work within the system," stated the Governor. "We appreciate their sentiments, but there is a point beyond which we cannot tolerate things. You cannot hold the government to ransom or act as a watchdog body of a super-human rights organisation. You have to ventilate your feelings and ideas within the system."

Saxena feels that 80 per cent of the employees would like to return to work, but are being intimidated and kept away by the militants. "This is why I have not resorted to any disciplinary action yet," he claims magnanimously.

The Governor's adviser, Ved Marwah, who during Jagmohan's time had boasted that due to his efforts the power and water supply situation in the Valley (as if those were the only problems that plagued the people) had improved, is, according to reliable sources, deliberately not working the turbines that generate power for the Valley. "There is no need to waste energy on these people," he is believed to have said to his engineers. No wonder the stalemate continues. And there is only darkness. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/Kashmir



SHAZ SIDHVA

The Benazir saga

How she rose, why she fell

Two years ago, on a cold November night, Benazir Bhutto rode into Lahore like a resplendent conqueror, carrying with her an entourage that stretched for miles. As she had come in through the Badshahi Mosque area and entered the narrow streets of Old Lahore, the crowds surged forward, gripped with hysteria and screaming in adulation. Virtually the entire city had stayed awake that night, nerve ends electrified with euphoria. Benazir's coming seemed to herald the beginning of a bright new era.

Last month, Benazir was back in Lahore. The crowds were once again waiting. The black, green and red banners of Benazir's Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) continued to festoon the streets. But a chill had crept in. The euphoria had long seeped out. All the actors this time seemed a little fatigued, their cheering distinctly subdued. For, in the 23 months between the two elections, a great hope had been snuffed out in Pakistan. Democracy had lost its glitter.

Benazir Bhutto had been hounded out of office on corruption charges. Her businessman husband, Asif Zardari, was accused of misusing his position and homicidal intimidation, and flung into prison. Benazir's mother, Begum Nusrat Bhutto, had much earlier thrown up her hands in disgust and sought retirement in her home country, Iran. The PPP's erstwhile allies—the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) in Sindh and Wali Khan's

Awami National Party (ANP) in the North West Frontier Province—had long crossed over to the rival coalition, the Islamic Jamhooree Ittehad.

Materially, of course, nothing much had changed in the country. Benazir's months in office had been marked by the lack of any significant legislation. Poll promises remained unfulfilled and forgotten. The November 1988 polls might as well have not taken place. It was not that the average Pakistani now felt that Benazir was corrupt and uncaring. They continued to chant, *"Ye Allah! Ye Rasool! Benazir Baykasoor!"* But they no longer believed that the kind of democracy Benazir expounded would work. If any idea had been reinforced, it was that real power in Pakistan would always remain with the so-called "establishment" comprising the military top brass, the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, a clutch of feudal landlords, the favoured super-rich and their international allies.

It was not that the average Pakistani felt that Benazir was corrupt or uncaring. But they no longer believed that the kind of democracy she expounded would work. Real power, they thought, would always remain with the military top brass

Electoral democracy for the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis has turned out to be a monumental charade. This cynicism is reflected in voter turnout figures. Pakistan's first general elections, held 23 years after independence, had recorded 67 per cent voter turnout. Since then, the figure has progressively declined and touched a low of 43 per cent in the 1988 polls. This time, officially, more than 45 per cent of the electorate cast their franchise. But this claim appears to be highly suspect. For, virtually every report on polling day (24 October) spoke of low voter turnout. The BBC's network of correspondents said the same thing. And Pakistan's chief election commissioner remarked that voter turnout this time would be as low as 30 to 35 per cent. Not surprisingly, the entire country was more than a little astounded when the official results showed a turnout of more than 45 per cent.

Equally amazing was the PPP's rout—the party secured just 45 out of the 207 general seats in the National Assembly (the Pakistani Parliament). The IJI had miraculously secured 105 seats, which is exactly one more than the number required to form the government independently. Nothing could explain the IJI's overnight metamorphosis into a vastly popular entity. In most constituencies, IJI candidates had won with margins of 10,000-20,000 votes. This means that all over the country, lakhs of bogus voters had turned out to vote for the IJI.

Even before the elections, there was no evidence to suggest that the tide of popular enthusiasm had turned in favour of the IJI. The election mood this time was predominantly one of cynicism. If the average Pakistani had any certainty, it was that "they" would not allow Benazir to become Prime Minister once again. The "they" referred not to the people of Pakistan but to the shadowy "establishment". Benazir's corruption was not the issue. The point, as the average Pakistani saw it, was that the establishment was out to get Benazir. If Pakistan's first democratically elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, could be hanged, what chance did Benazir have? She had been written off the day President Ghulam Ishaq Khan sacked her. At that time, too, there had been no countrywide protest, no mass upsurge or show of public indignation. As far as the average Pakistani was concerned, Benazir had failed. Democracy had failed to deliver.

Pakistanis cannot be faulted for losing faith in the democratic experiment. For, every time the country faced a crisis, it was not the politicians but the army that saved the day. The ethnic violence in the province of Sindh and Benazir's inability to control it only strengthened this view.



SHAZ SIDHWA

BACK WITH A BANG *Though Benazir tried her best to demolish all the power centres that the late General Zia had built, the elections saw the rise of the Zia groupies once again*

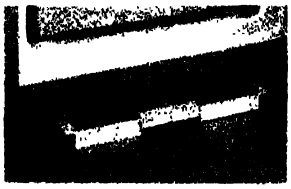
Even Benazir finally had to call in the army to restore a semblance of order in the cities of Sindh.

Even on polling day, armoured personnel carriers and trucks full of khaki-clad soldiers patrolled the streets of Karachi and Hyderabad. In Clifton, the residential area of the Karachi super-rich, there was hardly any evidence of polling. Asif Zardari's Bhilawal House stood deserted, the giant cut-outs of Benazir and family rocking forlornly in the gentle sea breeze. It was a little ironic that Karachi, the first capital of independent Pakistan and the final resting ground of its founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, after 43 years of independence should remain a battleground, with democracy hiding in the back streets.

KEEP AWAY FROM THE HERD



Get yourself something unique. Like the Allwyn.
Quiet, sturdy and reliable.



Allwyn compressor with Hitachi technology for silent and trouble-free working. Tilting bottle racks for easy sliding of bottles. An efficient, quick and non-messy self-draining system of defrost. Leading to an automatic re-start. Withstands a wide range of voltage fluctuations. (170V to 250V) Allwyn- Pioneers of refrigeration in India. Available in 165 litres single and 165,300 and 380 litres double door models. Comes with a seven year warranty. And the choice of an additional seven year protection contract.



You can be sure now, that Allwyn will keep you away from the herd.

ALLWYN

QUIET · STURDY · FAITHFUL

Mudra H : HAL

In a sense, the events of the 1990 elections, far from being fortuitous, had its genesis in processes shaped by Jinnah during the formative years of the country. Pakistan was formed out of Jinnah's belief that Muslims of the Indian sub-continent constituted a separate nationality. The custodian of this nationality was his party, the Muslim League. Strangely, however, the Muslim League was never confident of coming to power through general elections. The party had to resort to the most complex of intrigues to form governments in the four provinces of West Pakistan but failed completely in its attempts to secure a foothold in the eastern part of the country. General elections were scheduled to be held for the first time in the country's history in February 1959, a full 12 years after independence. But General Ayub Khan's October 1958 coup ensured that nothing of the sort happened.

During the next 12 years, the bureaucracy and the armed forces strengthened their hold over the country. The Pakistani "establishment", as this nexus came to be called, administered every aspect of national affairs, from internal security, state finances and economic policy to foreign affairs. The establishment even attracted some of the best and brightest men in the country. To survive and prevail, the establishment had to be imaginative, far-sighted and extremely canny. And, on the whole, it was all of these. It made various pacts with other countries to shore up its defences, it created a credible military machine to stand up to India. It managed generous foreign aid and initiated policies that helped a select group to achieve super-rich status. In the process, it also introduced the Green Revolution complete with large-scale mechanisation and assured irrigation.

The establishment could not, however, tackle two basic problems. One was the rise of Bengali nationalism in the eastern wing and the other was the increasing aspirations of the West Pakistani peasant and dispossessed labour. These problems had arisen essentially because of the lack of democratic processes. Discontent had been repressed. The establishment made a tactical retreat and held general elections for the first time in 1970. That blew the lid. East Pakistan voted overwhelmingly in favour of the nationalistic Awami League led by the charismatic Sheikh Mujibur Rahman while the populist Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto, with his socialistic *mantras*, was returned by a landslide in West Pakistan. If democratic processes had been adhered to, Sheikh Mujib would legitimately have been the first democratically-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. Instead, he was arrested and East Pakistan revolted. India intervened and Pakistan was split in two.

For seven years, the establishment maintained a low profile having lost face in the 1971 war with India. Bhutto with his emotional promise of a 1,000-year *jehad* against India and with his populist promises kept the remnants of the country in thrall. But things were falling apart. The politicians were not half as efficient as the establishment men. Corruption, nepotism and half-baked policies were fast eroding the edifice built by the generals. Finally, in 1977, the establishment once again intervened. Bhutto, the one-time darling of the Pakistani people, was arrested and finally hanged. Political parties were outlawed and the peoples' representatives jailed, and tortured. The establishment, led this time by the shrewd General Zia-ul Haq, restored order. Pakistan was deemed Islamic and the Afghan issue was exploited to gain favour from the United States, which began pouring in billions of dollars in military and economic aid.

Zia managed to impose 11 years of stability in Pakistan. But the cracks were widening. Subnationalism in Sindh and Baluchistan flared up and rising inequalities were breeding discontent throughout the length and breadth of the country. The establishment by this time had learnt the importance of allowing some forms of democratic processes. Zia, with his foresight, promoted a handful of men as the future leaders of Pakistani democracy. They included the present President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the IJI supremo, Mian Nawaz Sharif, caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and ex-Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo.

In 1985, Zia held partyless elections and appointed Junejo as Prime Minister. But democracy and plutocracy could not co-exist indefinitely. Junejo and Zia clashed over the Afghan policy. Junejo was then summarily dismissed. Zia's death made elections even more imperative and Benazir, much to the chagrin of the establishment, emerged as the strongest political leader in the country and the head of the largest party in the National Assembly. Benazir, thanks to her own blunders, lasted a bare 20 months. Now, the Zia groupies in the form of the IJI are at the helm. The establishment proteges are now championing Pakistani democracy. But yesmen and democrats are not synonymous. The IJI for all its success, remains a party largely confined to the province of Punjab (which accounts for about 60 per cent of National Assembly seats). Benazir's party, in contrast, continues to be the widely-accepted national party with a tremendous following. By ousting Benazir, the establishment has at best won a temporary reprieve Any attempt at controlled democracy cannot work in the long run. Similar problems as in 1970 could well resurface again. History has taught that nations cannot be managed, they can only be democratised or destroyed. •

Indrani Banerjie/Islamabad



THE ZIA GROUPIES *The late President, with his foresight, promoted a handful of leaders. They included Ghulam Ishaq Khan (extreme left), Mian Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi*

The desperate hours

The collapse of V.P. Singh and after. The inside story


ASHOK VAHIE

"LIMPET"

As his majority vanished, the Prime Minister clung on to the sound of jibes

It was a time for vengeance. Last year, two men believed that Vishwanath Pratap Singh had stabbed them in the back. Veteran Janata Dal strongman Chandra Shekhar had always been opposed to letting the Raja into the Opposition and had missed no opportunity to make it clear that Singh was not his leader. After the Janata Dal was asked to form the government, Shekhar insisted on standing for election as leader. He would lose, he said, but at least, he would make his opposition to the Raja public. Finally, Shekhar withdrew from the fray after being assured by Devi Lal that the Tau would himself assume the leadership. In fact, Lal had done a deal with V.P. Singh. Once Shekhar withdrew, the Raja stepped in and gleefully accepted the prime ministership.

Rajiv Gandhi had his own score to settle. In 1985, he had disregarded Congress hacks who warned him against appointing a UP politician finance minister and bringing V.P. Singh to Delhi to be part of his 'A' team. After a year and a half of apparent loyalty, the Raja turned against his mentor, began investigating his friends and finally, denounced his leader as a "Bofors *ka dalal*". It was a betrayal that Rajiv will never forget.

From the moment the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) withdrew support to the National Front government thus robbing it of its majority, both Shekhar and Rajiv had a one-point programme: get rid of V P. Singh.

Such was Chandra Shekhar's determination that he did not even mind taking the support of the Congress, a party he had spent over 15 years opposing. And Rajiv Gandhi, resolved as he was to see V.P. Singh out of office, made it clear that he would link up with anybody (save the BJP)—even Devi Lal—if a government that kept the Raja out could be formed.

On the record, however, both men insisted that their motivations were not personal. They talked of V.P. Singh's casteism, his double-dealing on the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi issue, his inability to handle the economy, his lack of interest in confronting secessionist forces in Kashmir and Punjab and his naked opportunism.

But beneath it all, there was the personal factor. For Shekhar and Rajiv, here at last was the time of reckoning. The Raja had cheated them before.

And now, he would pay the price.


JAGDISH YADAV

GANGING UP

Shekhar and Gandhi had one thing in common: they hated V.P. Singh

Not for nothing is Vishwanath Pratap Singh called one of the master tacticians of Indian politics. Others, faced with the sudden loss of their majority in the Lok Sabha, might have considered resigning. Not Singh. He decided to brazen it out.

First, he told a mystified President R. Venkataraman that he would prove his majority on the floor of the House.

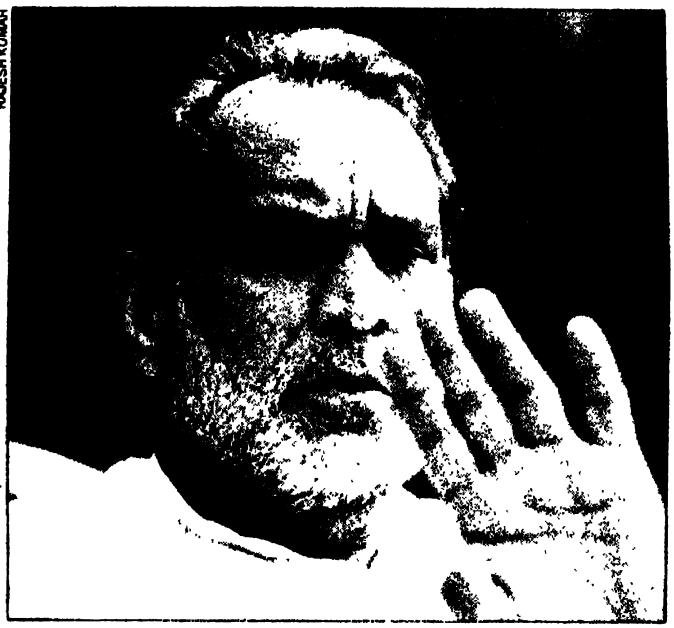


RAJESH KUMAR

N.T.I.N. & A.

SITTING PRETTY

Whatever happened, Rajiv Gandhi gained. Nobody could take office without his support



VENGEFUL

By toppling V.P. Singh, Shekhar avenged last year's fraudulent leadership election

As he had no majority to prove, the President did not quite realise what V.P. Singh was playing at. In fact, the Raja was considering several options. These were:

The election scenario: V.P. Singh believed that with Babri Masjid and the Mandal Commission, he had the Muslim and backward votes sewn up. He would face the confidence motion, lose and then call an election on the secularism issue. It might not result in an overall majority for the Janata Dal, but he would get 200 seats, enough to form a government with the support of the left.

Backward unity: Shortly after the BJP withdrew support, the Raja's supporters claimed that the government was guaranteed a majority because backward caste MPs from both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal would defect in droves and vote for the Janata Dal.

Coalitions: Even before the BJP withdrew support, there had been talk of making West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu Prime Minister. V.P. Singh was, apparently, willing to step down in favour of Basu, convinced that the Congress would support a National Front-CPI(M) coalition in an effort to isolate the BJP.

Another leader: V.P. Singh's principal concern was to ensure that Chandra Shekhar did not succeed him as leader of the Janata Dal. He was willing to accept Devi Lal as Prime Minister to ensure that this did not happen. The scenario assumed that Lal would get Shekhar's support and be able to negotiate a deal with the BJP.

Deal with Congress: It was most important for V.P. Singh to win his vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha on 7 November. Accordingly, his emissaries approached the Congress with the following formula: the party would vote for Singh on the 7th; he would then step down; and a leader acceptable to both sides would be found from within the ranks of the Janata Dal.

Barely hours after Atal Behari Vajpayee wrote to the President withdrawing support from the government, V.P. Singh and his advisers were busily pursuing these options.

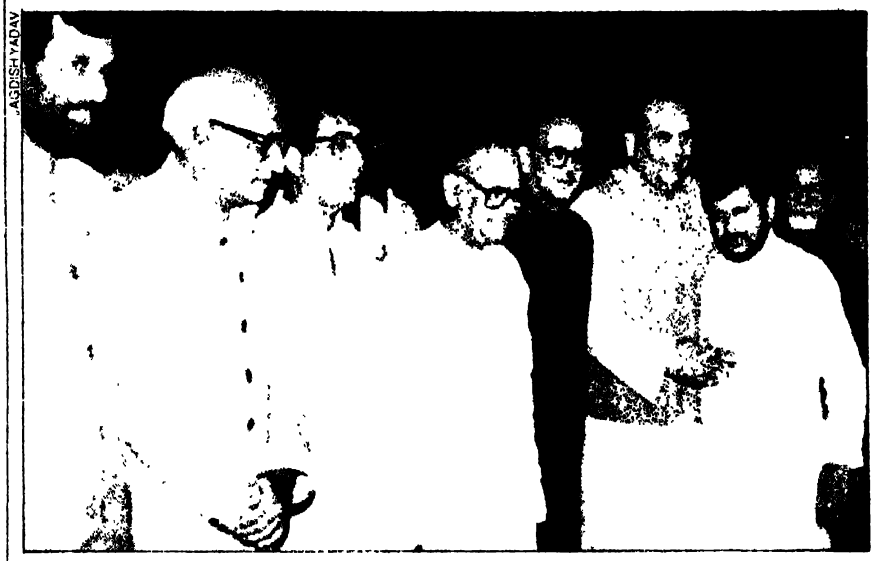
The Raja first explored the possibility of getting Congress MPs to defect. This task was assigned to K.P. Unnikrishnan, Murasoli Maran and P. Upendra. The trio approached 21 MPs—all from south India—but found that not one was agreeing to cross over. Then, Sharad Yadav did his best to cultivate the Congress backwards, again with a notable lack of success.

That attempt having failed, the Raja turned his attention to the BJP. He knew that Atal Behari Vajpayee had not been fully in agreement with L.K. Advani's strategy on Ram Janmabhoomi. And he had hopes that BJP MP Jaswant Singh would be sympathetic to his point of view. Moreover, V.P. Singh knew Murli Manohar Joshi and Rajendra Singh from Allahabad and reckoned that they could persuade Advani to reconsider.

Vajpayee was still the key to the strategy and V.P. Singh used Union minister of state for home affairs Subodh Kant Sahay to get through to him. Sahay and Arif Beg served as the Prime Minister's emissaries, but try as they might, Vajpayee would not relent.

V.P. Singh knew that even if he did earn the support of the BJP on 7 November, he could not hope to last for long. But there was a deeper plan at work.

Shortly after his now notorious Independence Day speech in which the one-time Mr Clean recast himself as a cow-belt demagogue with a reliance on Mandal and other populist measures, he discussed the possibility of a mid-term election with President Venkataraman. The President told him that he was not sure that the leader of a minority government had



AGDISH YADAV

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

His back to the wall, the Raja took his Cabinet to the President with a new suggestion

the right to ask for the dissolution of Parliament.

Since then, V.P. Singh has been advised by legal experts that were he to ask for a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha and win, then his advice, tendered immediately afterwards, would be binding on the President. His strategy now was simple: win the vote and ask for elections.

Hence the feelers to the Congress and hence the overtures to the BJP

There was one major problem with this scenario. the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party did not want elections. Many JD MPs were not sure that they would win re-election. Others had not collected funds. And most thought it unnecessary to go back to the country only a year after they had got to Delhi.

It was this sentiment that Chandra Shekhar capitalised on. Each day, he told visitors to his sprawling bungalow on New Delhi's South Avenue Lane that his immediate priority was to avoid elections. This earthy sentiment contrasted powerfully with the Raja's high-minded homilies. A few minutes away, at Race Course Road, V.P. Singh was busy telling MPs that he was willing to give up his office for the sake of a principle and to let the people of India cast their verdict against communalism. When pressed, he would declare that there might be no alternative to a mid-term poll and that he, for one, was not scared of facing the people.

The trouble was that the MPs *were* scared and so each time V.P. Singh suggested that an election was imminent, his supporters began to have second thoughts By some estimates, it was the Raja's insistence on holding elections that saw the strength of the Chandra Shekhar camp swell. In four days, the dissidents' strength grew from 18 to 30 and other MPs also sent out feelers.

Sensing that he had made a tactical error, V.P. Singh altered his strategy. Now, he told JD MPs that he was against the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. "We have stood up for a principle," he declared at a tea party he hosted for the parliamentary party. "If we lose, then we will go and sit in the Opposition."

The prospect of losing power seemed marginally more attractive than the thought of facing the people again, but more and more MPs were recognising the merits of backing Chandra Shekhar. If the Janata Dal strongman was able to secure Congress(I) support—as seemed likely—then they could stave off an election *and* retain power.

Once this became clear, V.P. Singh spent his time trying to keep his MPs together. The support of chief ministers was particularly crucial. Of them, Laloo Prasad Yadav was a VP loyalist because of the Mandal issue. But Biju Patnaik, Chimanbhai Patel

The new Rajiv

Same as the old Rajiv?

"Has he really changed?"

Last week, as Rajiv Gandhi returned to the centre-stage of Indian politics, that was the only question that mattered.

The parallels with his mother were obvious. In 1980, Indira Gandhi returned to power more because of Janata's failures than because of any concrete achievement of her own. Then too, her supporters suggested that she was not the bad-tempered dictator of 1975-76, but the well-meaning idealist of 1969-71. But as her term (1980-84) proved, she hadn't changed from 1976 at all.

So it is with Rajiv. Is he the arrogant, unreasonable Rajiv of 1989 or is he the Mr Nice Guy of 1984-85 again?

Rajiv has his answer ready. He has never been arrogant or unreasonable—that image was due to "a failure of communications". The way he sees it, he hasn't changed since 1985!

His friends believe that this view is pure bluster. They reckon he has changed in many crucial ways. They offer the following instances:



and Mulayam Singh Yadav were undecided.

The Raja used Jyoti Basu and Indrajeet Gupta to persuade Biju Patnaik that V.P. Singh was in the right. Initially, the Orissa chief minister wavered, but finally, he gave in, though he warned that regardless of what happened, a mid-term poll seemed inevitable.

Chimanbhai Patel's case was different. Once the BJP withdrew support to his government, he lost his majority and seemed certain to fall over a BJP-sponsored motion of no-confidence. Chandra Shekhar saved his ministry by arranging a deal whereby the Congress(I) would vote for Patel in the no-confidence motion. In return, Patel crossed over to the dissidents.

That left the most crucial chief minister: UP's Mulayam Singh Yadav. Perhaps, the only flaw in V.P Singh's Mandal-*masjid* electoral strategy was that it depended overmuch on Mulayam Singh. The backward-Muslim constituency that the Raja has constructed for himself was essentially Mulayam's own support base. If Yadav came out against him—by accusing him of double-dealing on Ayodhya, for instance—then that would cause the Raja's constituency to come crumbling down.

V.P. Singh had an insurance policy. When Bihar's Laloo Yadav had backed the Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar had organised a revolt by 50 of his MLAs. Now, the Raja held out a similar threat to Mulayam: support Shekhar and those MLAs owing loyalty to Ajit Singh will topple you.

It was this that held Mulayam back though his hatred of V.P. Singh and his disdain for what he sees as the Raja's opportunism are no secret. At first, the chief minister refused to commit himself to either side, claiming that he had to deal with the Ayodhya problem. By 1 November, he could no longer use that excuse and both Shekhar and V.P. Singh called him nearly 20 times over the next three days.

On 3 November, Mulayam finally came to Delhi and told Shekhar that he would support him if Ajit Singh would. As Ajit had—in his characteristic flip-flop fashion—sent messages of support to both sides, Shekhar told Yadav that nobody could count on the Jat leader's support. "But," he added reassuringly, "don't worry. V.P. Singh can't topple you. Once he does, then it is the end of his backward-Muslim constituency."

The argument worked. Late on the night of 3 November, Mulayam's MPs met at communications minister Janeshwar Mishra's place. They were to support Shekhar, the UP chief minister declared.

V.P. Singh, who had been anxiously awaiting Mulayam's arrival in New Delhi, made frantic attempts to contact him. But the chief minister did not return his calls and left for Lucknow without meeting the Prime Minister.



TRICKIER THAN TAU

Devi Lal changed his mind every day till he finally came out for Shekhar

- He has ceased to depend on a coterie. Most important decisions are now taken after consultation with a wide variety of Congress leaders.

- He no longer shoots from the hip. Rajiv's instinct was to come out strongly against Mandal. On Ram Janmabhoomi too, he wanted the party to take a more aggressive stand. But he held his peace, asked around and when his colleagues convinced him that it was wiser to soft-pedal the issues, he went along.

- He avoids personal attacks. Though this is not widely known, Rajiv believes that Mulayam Singh Yadav has pandered irresponsibly to Muslim sentiment in an effort to carve out an electoral base for himself. He feels that Mulayam has invited a Hindu backlash and that ultimately, Muslims will suffer.

In the old days, he would have gone for Mulayam. Now, he is more restrained.

Similarly, though he despises V.P. Singh, he disguises his contempt and gives him the respect due to a Prime Minister.

- He has come to terms with the fact that to change the political system, you must play by the rules. Earlier, he imagined that his popularity was enough to overcome any obstacles. Now, he sees the merit in such gimmicks as the second class rail *yatras*.

Oddly enough, Rajiv's view of himself (that he hasn't changed) is quite easily reconciled with his friends' observations. He means that he was never arrogant—the changes everyone talks about are essentially tactical and have to do with methods of communication and not with his basic personality.

Will these changes be enough? Rajiv clearly thinks so, but others are not so sure. They point out that he is not a political person at heart and has always seemed like a nice guy when he is out of office. It is when the pressure builds up—as it did in Karnataka last month—and he has to act, that the problems begin.

Sensing that the revolt was snowballing, the Raja began exploring his other options. By now it was clear to him that he was finished as Prime Minister. But he had a one-point programme: ensure that Shekhar did not succeed him.

The day after the BJP had withdrawn support to the National Front government, V.P Singh had sent an Indian Air Force plane to the Maharashtra town of Nasik to fetch Devi Lal. By then, the Raja had won over Ranjit Singh, the Tau's younger son, and on the flight to New Delhi, Ranjit persuaded his father to support V.P. Singh.

Devi Lal drove directly to Race Course Road from the airport. The Prime Minister was waiting for him. "Devi Lalji," he intoned melodramatically, "you gave me the job (a reference to their fraudulent deal last year), now you take it back."

So overcome was the Tau by this display of histrionics that he announced his support for the Prime Minister on the spot and emerged from Race Course Road to declare that nobody changed horses in the middle of the race.

But as the Tau is inconsistent, so are his children. Within a couple of days, Ranjit had changed his mind. Why didn't Devi Lal take the job after all? Didn't he have the right to be Prime Minister?

The reasoning appealed to the Tau. Messages were sent back and forth and V.P. Singh reiterated that he was willing to support Lal as Prime Minister. But how would the Tau get a majority? One answer was that he would work out a deal with the BJP. And so, Devi Lal, who only three weeks ago had been a great BJP-baiter, moderated his statements and refrained from attacking his former—and perhaps future—allies.

While the Tau dreamt his dreams of glory, the Raja encouraged the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party to believe that there was no question of changing the leader. Certainly, many leading members of the government—who had resigned over Chautala's reinduction and had rejoiced when the Tau was fired—would have been appalled by the moves to install Devi Lal as Prime Minister. The Arun Nehru faction and the Ajit Singh group in particular had no desire to work under the Tau.

Till 1 November, Devi Lal still believed that his best bet was to back V.P. Singh in public before his own inevitable ascension to the prime ministership. Then, somebody told him that at the next day's meeting of the National Front presidium, a resolution would be passed expressing faith in V.P. Singh's leadership.

The Tau was outraged. "He has made a fool of me," he raged to his supporters. That night he sent a message to Chandra Shekhar. And the next day, he offered him his unconditional support. He had no prime ministerial ambitions, he said, and would back Shekhar.

It was clear that time was running out for V.P. Singh and it seemed that Shekhar would at last be avenged. But the Raja had a few tricks up his sleeve.

Nathu Ram Mirdha approached the Congress on behalf of the Prime Minister and offered a deal. At a time of crisis, he said, V.P. Singh would not divide the country any further. Secular forces (ie, everybody except the BJP) should now come together and form a government. Rajiv could be Prime Minister and V.P. Singh would agree to be his deputy.

It was an absurd suggestion. Rajiv Gandhi was—by his reckoning—on the verge of driving the man who had stabbed him in the back out of government. Why on earth would he agree to a formula that would offer the Raja a way out?

There was a second approach to the Congress. George Fernandes, in his current avatar as a V.P. Singh lieutenant, took a proposal to Sharad Pawar. If the Congress would vote for V.P. Singh in the motion of confidence, then the BJP would stand isolated and the 'secular' stand on Babri Masjid would be vindicated. Once that was done, V.P. Singh would gracefully step down and a new leader of Rajiv Gandhi's choice would take over.

This was as bizarre a scenario. When Pawar conveyed it to Rajiv, it was summarily dismissed. The Congress president's objection was the same. V.P. Singh was going anyway. Why should the Congress step in to ensure that the man who betrayed the party made a graceful exit?

Meanwhile, a third approach was made to the Congress, but this time, V.P. Singh knew nothing about it. It was Arun Nehru who sent a message to his cousin, suggesting a mass defection from the Dal to the Congress.

Nehru has made no secret of his disaffection with the Raja: he is appalled by Mandal and horrified by the Prime Minister's double-dealing. His problem is that he is even less enthusiastic about the alternatives to V.P. Singh within the Dal: Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal.

At heart, Nehru remains a Congressman and it was to the Congress



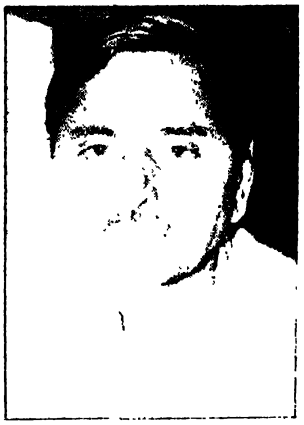
NITIN RA

GATHERING SUPPORT

As the hours went by, the likes of O.P. Chautala and Shatrughan Sinha rushed to Shekhar's side









THE CHIEF MINISTERS

Two (Biju Patnaik and Laloo Yadav) went with V.P. Singh. The others (Mulayam Singh and Chimanbhai Patel) chose Shekhar

that he wished to return. He sent a message to Rajiv saying that he wanted to cross over with 70 MPs. That would have given the Congress a majority and allowed Rajiv to become Prime Minister again.

Nehru's scheme ran into powerful opposition from within the Congress. Many senior leaders simply did not want him back. Others cautioned Rajiv that to return to office as a result of defections would be counter-productive.

Finally though, it was the numbers that killed the scheme. The Congress calculated that Nehru did not have more than 20 MPs on his side. Under the provisions of the Anti-Defection Act, that did not allow his group to cross the floor without being disqualified.

By 5 November, it was clear that V.P. Singh was running out of tricks. His support fell into four broad categories: the casteists (Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, et al); the non-entities (George Fernandes, Madhu Dandavate, Jaipal Reddy, etc.); the Ajit Singh faction; and the Arun Nehru group. Of these, the Nehru group was only sticking on because it wasn't sure where to go. And Ajit could change his mind any time and lead his faction into the opposing camp.

Despite this, there was no doubt that the Raja had the numbers on his side. Simply put, a majority of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party still wanted him as Prime Minister.

Unfortunately, this was not enough to ensure his survival. It was clear that Shekhar had enough MPs to split the party and it seemed probable that he would be able to form a government with Congress support.

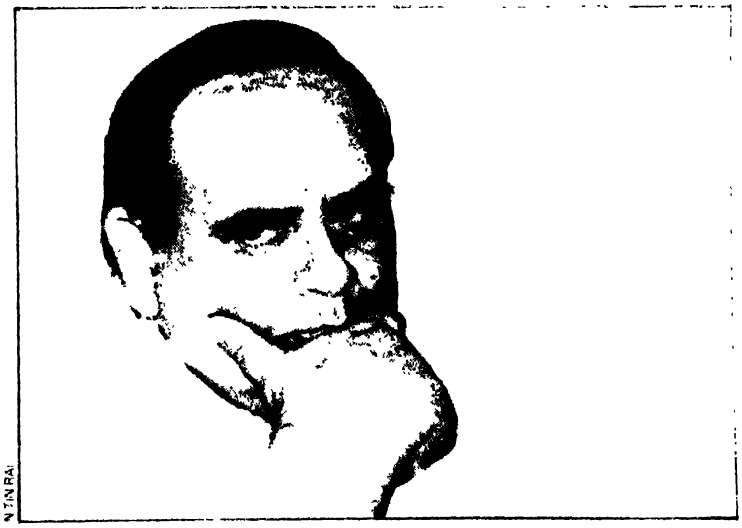
Nevertheless, a majority is a majority and the Shekhar-Devi Lal group—aware that numbers were not on its side—chose to give the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party meeting a miss. Instead, it assembled on the lawns of Devi Lal's Willingdon Crescent bungalow, announced that it now comprised 68 Lok Sabha MPs (under the Anti-Defection Act, 47 are needed for a split) and so was declaring itself the real Janata Dal.

Next, the meeting unanimously elected Chandra Shekhar as its leader and expelled V.P Singh. While the decisions were far-reaching in their import, newsmen seemed more interested in the identities of the politicians who had turned up. There were the ministers who had resigned: Janeshwar Mishra, Maneka Gandhi, Jagdeep Dhankar, Bhakta Charan Das, Usha Singh, etc. But the real surprise was Sanjay Singh, the newly-elected Rajya Sabha MP from Uttar Pradesh, who is a relative of V.P. Singh's. Why had Sanjay Singh switched sides? "Because V.P. Singh is a disaster," he stated flatly.

For all this, there was little doubt that V.P. Singh's faction of the Janata Dal had the more impressive turnout. He got 83 Lok Sabha MPs and so had the majority. (Though, if Ajit Singh defects, then that could change very quickly.) At his meeting, 30 Janata Dal MPs, including Chandra Shekhar, were expelled and the split termed illegal.

The numbers presented their own problems: 83 and 68 add up to 151, but the Janata Dal has only 140 MPs in the Lok Sabha!

Either some of the names had been made up or some MPs had signed both lists. There was the example of Prakash Bhatt, a JD MP from Gujarat, who



REMEMBER ME?

Arun Nehru tried to return to the Congress, but Rajiv shot the plan down



VIJENDER TYAGI

VP SHOULD GO

Nobody wanted to ally with BJP and Vajpayee wanted the PM to resign

had gone to V P. Singh's meeting. After he got there—and perhaps when he realised that the Raja did not have the support of two-thirds of the party—he began complaining of chest pain.

A doctor was called and Bhatt rushed to hospital in an ambulance. On the way to hospital however, he said he was feeling better, stopped the ambulance, hailed a passing taxi and drove away.

He went straight to Devi Lal's house, assured Chimanbhai Patel that he was with the dissidents, badmouthed V.P. Singh and then went off to hospital and finally, got himself admitted!

Once Shekhar had split the party and finished off the Raja's prime ministership, V.P. Singh resolved to play a spoiling game. Now, his only concern was with ensuring that Chandra Shekhar did not become Prime Minister: all talk of principles had long been forgotten.

There were two prongs to the Raja's strategy:

- Because he had expelled 25 of Shekhar's supporters (including Shekhar himself) as well as another five Rajya Sabha members, he argued that they could not be said to have split the party. The 33 MPs who had not been expelled had left on their own, but as they did not constitute a third of the Janata Dal's membership, they were in violation of the Anti-Defection Act. (Finally, Shekhar claimed the support of 58 Lok Sabha MPs.)

This was a bizarre argument and suggested that nobody could ever split any party—all the leadership had to do was expel them!

Strangely, Speaker Rabi Ray, a Janata Dal MP himself, accepted this position, even though Shekhar personally urged him to reconsider, pointing out that his MPs had split the party *before* any expulsion was ordered.

- With this essentially crooked position in place, the Raja affected a high-minded stance. He took along eight of his ministers and rushed off to see the President.

How could an 'unattached member' like Shekhar who had been expelled from a party be allowed to form a government? he asked.

What was the alternative? Well, said V.P. Singh, hastily revising the stand he had taken two days before, he thought a national government would be a good idea.

The idea was a non-starter. The Congress and the BJP had both made it clear that they would not participate in any national government, but by then, V.P. Singh was prepared to try *anything* to keep Shekhar out of office.

Eleven months after he had been

Shekhar and the media

An uneasy, hostile relationship

If Vishwanath Pratap Singh is the man the media made, then Chandra Shekhar is the man the media unmade. Few politicians (except perhaps V.P. Singh over the last two months) have faced the kind of sustained media hostility that Shekhar has endured.

But once, it was all so different. During the 1977-79 Janata period, Shekhar performed creditably as party president and once Mrs Gandhi returned in 1980, he emerged as the obvious Opposition alternative. His principled stands, his *padayatra* and his natural charisma made him a media darling.

Then, in 1984, it all began to come unstuck. The starting point was Operation Bluestar. At a time when the entire country lost itself in an orgy of self-congratulation, Chandra Shekhar was one of only two national politicians (the other, oddly enough, was Subramaniam Swamy) who pointed out what we now know to be correct—that the action had hurt Sikh sentiment and would backfire.

The media reacted badly to Shekhar's view and after Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 landslide (in which Chandra Shekhar lost his own seat), dismissed him as a has-been. In 1987, when the disillusionment with Rajiv began, the press turned to V.P. Singh as an alternative. Unlike the rest of the Opposition, Shekhar did not welcome the Raja with open arms.

He had many reservations: if V.P. Singh thought Rajiv was dictatorial, then how did he justify worshipping Indira Gandhi? If the left were the Raja's "natural allies", then why had he been so right-wing while in office? And so on.

Today, now that V.P. Singh's reputation is in tatters, these seem to be valid questions. But in 1987-88, Shekhar was seen as a spoiler, as a bitter man who was jealous of the Raja's prominence.

In 1989, Shekhar insisted on standing for the post of leader of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party, even though he was certain to lose. "At least then they will not be able to say that V.P. Singh's election was unanimous," he told friends. This decision sat uneasily with the Raja, who wanted to be drafted by unanimous acclaim

sworn in, V.P. Singh had finally revealed himself as a manipulator who would bend any rule and take any step to keep the democratic process from functioning normally.

Even while the Raja and Rabi Ray were busy with this little scheme, Shekhar and Rajiv were ironing out the details of their arrangement.

The Janata Dal strongman met the Congress president twice. First, they had breakfast at Rajiv's bungalow on Janpath. And then they met again to work out the modalities of the deal.

The salient points were:

- Shekhar would be Prime Minister.
- The Congress would support him from outside, but would not join the government.
- This arrangement would last longer than a year after which there would be elections.
- Perhaps some kind of electoral adjustments would be possible once the election was called.
- After V.P. Singh lost the vote of confidence, the President was bound to summon Rajiv. At that stage, Gandhi would refuse to form the government, but would declare his party's support for Shekhar.
- Should the Speaker persist in being unreasonable, then they would bring a motion of no-confidence against him.

From all accounts, the two men get along well. Ideologically, they are poles apart. Shekhar is an unreconstructed socialist who tries manfully to fit into a changing world. Rajiv is a free-marketeer who has had to adapt himself to the socialist rhetoric of Indian politics.

As individuals too, they are very different. Rajiv is essentially a private person. An obsessive family man, he seems ill-at-ease in the hurly-burly of Delhi's political circus. Shekhar, on the other hand, is a totally political person. He has sacrificed family life for statecraft, runs an open house and is always to be found in the midst of a group of political activists. He has no life other than his work.

However, they do have some things in common. Both are basically secular. Neither believes in introducing caste into Indian politics. Both are essentially straightforward men who speak their minds. Neither is very good at deal-making and duplicity.

And both hate V.P. Singh.

As SUNDAY goes to press, all that is clear is that the Raja will lose the vote of confidence and that his crumbling, discredited prime ministership will collapse.

Logically, Shekhar should be his successor. But this is still not certain. And even if Shekhar's band of dissidents does form the next government, theirs will be an interim one till the next election. Moreover, with the likes of Devi Lal around, it is not clear how stable such a regime can be.

The real winner, of course, is Rajiv Gandhi. Eleven months after he was turned out of office, Rajiv is back on centre-stage. He calls all the shots. He holds all the cards.

Once V.P. Singh collapses, it is Rajiv who has the right to form the next government. He has passed it up because he intends to stick to his promise that he will not assume power without a mandate. And the only reason why elections are not being held is because Rajiv believes that neither he nor his party is ready for that responsibility.

But in a very real sense, Chandra Shekhar is also a winner. Right from the time that the rest of the Opposition welcomed the Raja with open arms, he expressed his reservations. Today, he has the satisfaction of knowing that those reservations are shared by most of the Lok Sabha.

Eleven months after V.P. Singh cheated him in the leadership election, Shekhar has got his own back on the Raja. He may or may not be Prime Minister. But just as Rajiv has had the last laugh, so Shekhar has had his revenge. •

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi



NITIN PA

STAKING HIS CLAIM

Shekhar told the President that he ought to be Prime Minister

(having repeatedly declared that he would not take the job) and so an elaborate conspiracy to defraud Chandra Shekhar was hatched with the assistance of Devi Lal. Incredibly, the media supported this ploy and hailed the Dal leadership for lying to Shekhar!

Today, with V.P. Singh's media image in ruins, most of the press agrees that he should go. Yet, so deep is the hostility to Shekhar that his candidacy evokes little enthusiasm among leader-writers.

To Shekhar, of course, this is only to be expected. V.P. Singh lived by the media; his prime ministership died by the media. Chandra Shekhar, on the other hand, has got where he has without the press. So how does it matter what the editorials say?

THE BATTLE OF AYODHYA

The police finally crack down on the kar sevaks. *But the crusade for a Ram Mandir continues*

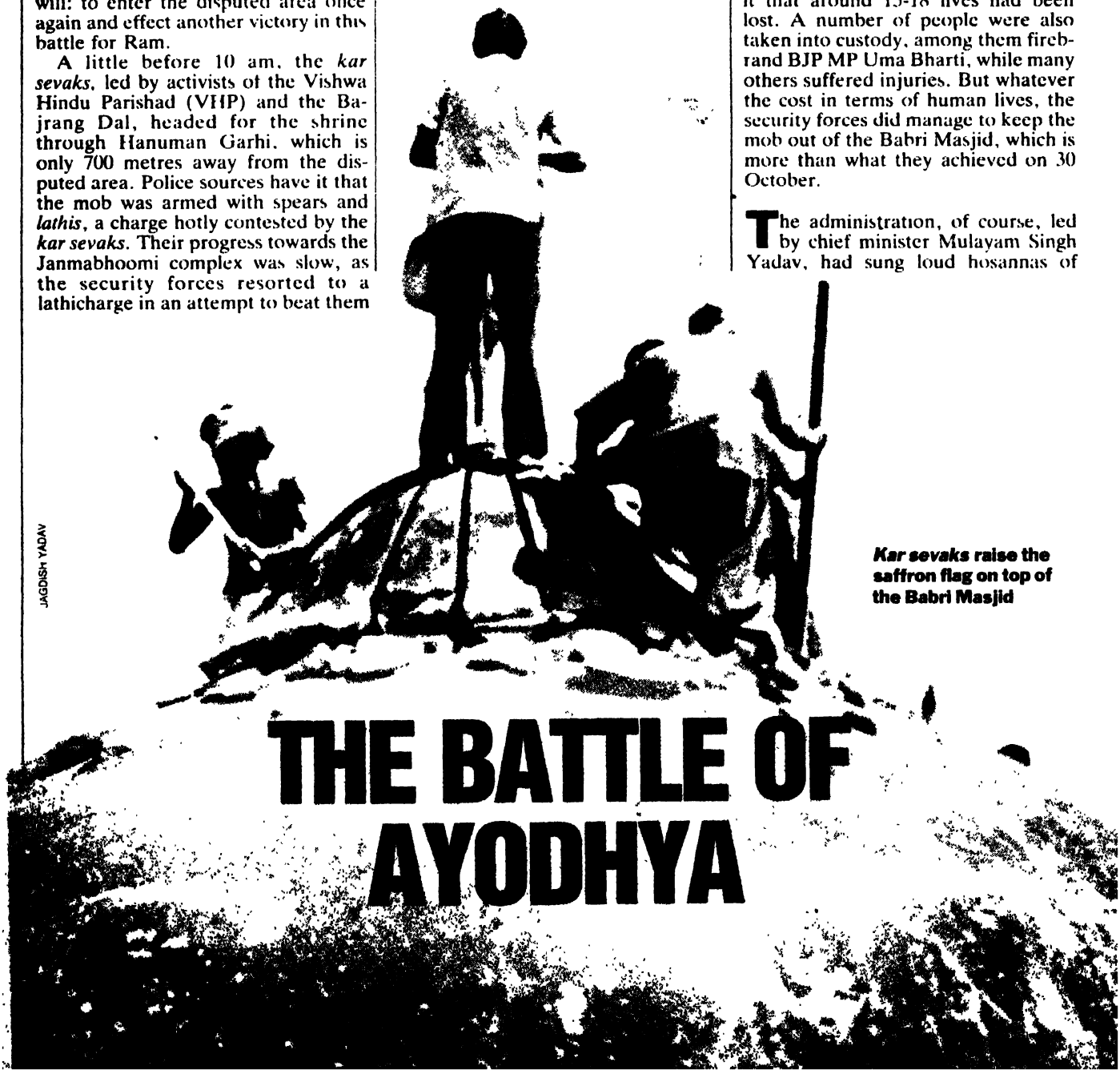
The repeat wasn't long in coming. Only two days after the *kar sevaks* stormed the Ayodhya complex to enter the disputed area and inflict symbolic damage to the Babri Masjid, rigging up a saffron flag on one of its domes as a mark of victory, they were at it again. On 2 November, curfew was relaxed from 4 to 8 am. Thousands of devotees went to the Saryu for a holy dip and prayers. And then assembled at the Ram Ki Chavni Temple, owned by Nritya Gopal Das, a local *mahant* and vice-president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti. It was a crowd with a collective will: to enter the disputed area once again and effect another victory in this battle for Ram.

A little before 10 am, the *kar sevaks*, led by activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal, headed for the shrine through Hanuman Garhi, which is only 700 metres away from the disputed area. Police sources have it that the mob was armed with spears and *lathis*, a charge hotly contested by the *kar sevaks*. Their progress towards the Janmabhoomi complex was slow, as the security forces resorted to a lathicharge in an attempt to beat them back. Undeterred by this, the crowd continued inching forward. Realising that matters were getting out of hand, the police fired tear gas shells, and was brick-batted by those gathered on roof tops for their pains. Meanwhile, the *kar sevaks* moved forward inexorably.

In a last-ditch effort to prevent re-entry of the mob into the *masjid*, the security forces opened fire. According to eye-witnesses, this lasted for about half an hour, and the *kar sevaks* swear that about 50-60 dead bodies were dragged away from this spot alone. Security forces also opened fire at the Saryu bridge, from where a number of *kar sevaks* were trying to force their way into Ayodhya, and VHP sources maintained that 16 people had died in the police action.

Claims on the number of casualties varied. While the administration insisted that only nine people had died in the firing, newsagency reports had it that around 15-18 lives had been lost. A number of people were also taken into custody, among them firebrand BJP MP Uma Bharti, while many others suffered injuries. But whatever the cost in terms of human lives, the security forces did manage to keep the mob out of the Babri Masjid, which is more than what they achieved on 30 October.

The administration, of course, led by chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, had sung loud hosannas of



JAGDISH YADAV

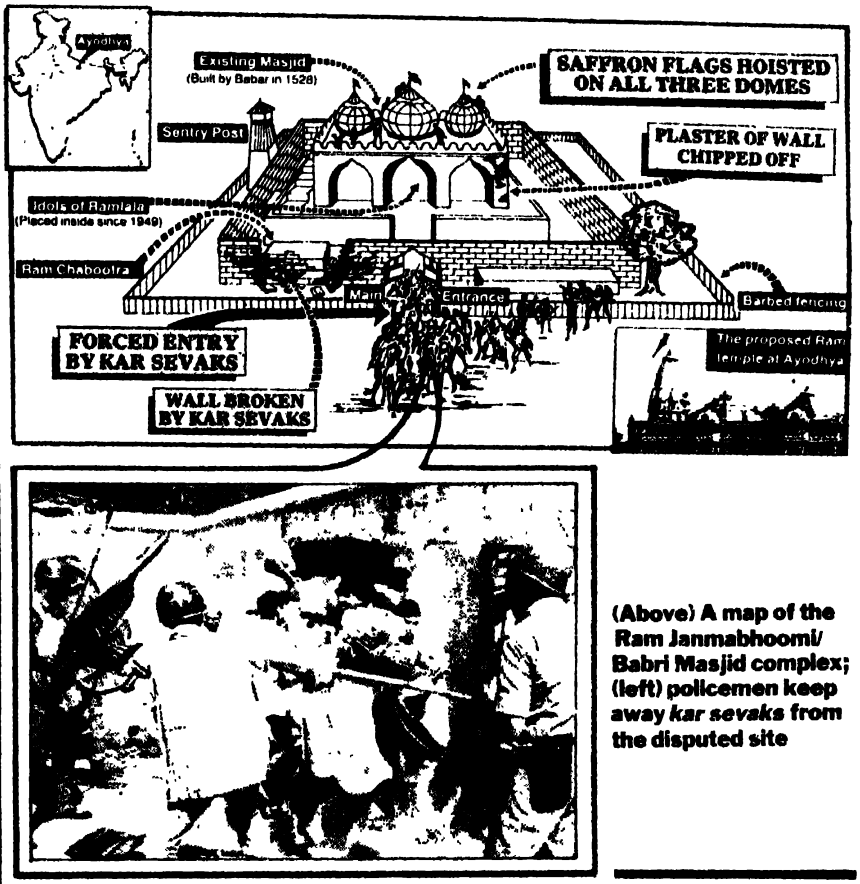
***Kar sevaks* raise the saffron flag on top of the Babri Masjid**

self-praise after the 30 October action. According to them, the police had only acted according to considered strategy, by resorting to the minimum use of force. For, they reasoned, if the security forces had kept out the *kar sevaks* by firing indiscriminately on the advancing mob, the number of casualties would have led to a communal conflagration all over the country, far worse than what the nation was experiencing now. But by allowing the *"Ram bhakts"* some leeway—and entry into the *masjid* —they had prevented a major catastrophe.

Not many observers were willing to buy this. They maintained that the security forces, particularly the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), had connived with the *kar sevaks* and virtually allowed them a free run in the disputed area, as their sympathies—as also of some members of the district administration—were with the Hindu mob. Reporters disclosed that except for such paramilitary forces as the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), everyone else vanished from the scene of action, allowing the *kar sevaks* to go through with their plan. The only senior official in charge was Sulkhan Singh, commandant of the BSF. But, obviously, it was difficult for one man to control such a large mob, especially one surcharged with religious fervour.

Tellingly enough, the VHP and Bajrang Dal activists were confident that they had nothing to fear from the police or the district administration. Omkar Bhave, central secretary of the VHP, told SUNDAY: "The district magistrate (Faizabad) scolded the police force for firing upon the *kar sevaks*. Men of the PAC (Provincial Armed Constabulary) told us that Mulayam Singh Yadav had said, don't wait for orders to shoot, just fire." The implication, obviously, being that even the CM had his doubts about where the loyalties of his officers lay.

In retrospect, the UP government seemed to have erred in deploying such forces as the PAC (whose anti-Muslim bias is only too well-known) and the CRPF, which had borne the brunt of anti-Hindu violence in Punjab and Kashmir. The jawans who had been treated like an occupation army by Sikh and Muslim militants in these states, were hardly likely to turn against their Hindu brethren in Ayodhya. And sure enough, the jawans took visible pride in their Hindu identity, bathing in the Saryu every morning, applying *tikkas* on their foreheads, praying at the temples of Ayodhya and participating in the *kirtans*. When they donned their uniforms after this routine, it was difficult for them to remain impartial observers to the religious drama being played out before them. The *kar sevaks*, too, were canny enough to appeal to their feelings for Hindutva, chanting over and over again: "Police *humare bhai hain.*" The ploy worked. While rumour had it that the CRPF had objected to the demolition of the canopy at the *shilanyas* site, in accordance with Mulayam Singh's orders, it was beyond doubt that the force (along with the PAC) had, on 27 October, refused to open fire on a mob defying prohibitory orders in Allahabad. The chief minister retaliated by asking that CRPF be pulled out, and a neutral force be installed in its stead (hence the induction of the ITBP). The battalion was then kept in reserve, and rumours had it that it was being sent back to the barracks.



(Above) A map of the Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri Masjid complex; (left) policemen keep away *kar sevaks* from the disputed site

In retrospect, the Uttar Pradesh government seemed to have erred in deploying such forces as the PAC and the CRPF

But the *kar sevaks* weren't doing too badly for support, anyway. According to Omkar Bhave of the VHP, well before the *rath yatra*, activists of the RSS, Bajrang Dal and the Shiv Sena fanned out into the districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh to sell their cause. Help from the *mahants* of Ayodhya wasn't long in coming. Says Bhave: "We held secret meetings with the village *pradhans* and block *pramukhs* and found that all of them supported our cause. Village heads promised to supply food and shelter to our *kar sevaks*. With their help, we charted out maps of the route, how to avoid the police, come by river if necessary. Copies of these maps were

The spreading hatred

Communal violence engulfs the country

It took the *kar sevaks* 15 minutes to storm the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid complex, enter the disputed area, partially damage the mosque and put up a saffron flag on one of its domes. Over the next five days, the fallout all over India claimed about 200 lives, with the violence spreading to Bangladesh as well. Strangely enough, there were no reports of serious violence in the Indian state bordering Bangladesh, which had witnessed bloody communal riots during the Partition. The south, too, was relatively peaceful. Jammu and Kashmir displayed remarkable restraint. Punjab remained wrapped up in its own problems.

But the rest of India saw the worst communal flare up since the Forties. As SUNDAY went to press, reports of violence were still coming in. The situation in some states occasioned particular concern.

UTTAR PRADESH: More than 70 people were killed, even with 26 districts under curfew and shoot-at-sight orders in Aligarh, Bijnor and Meerut. On the one hand, the army staged flag-marches in Lucknow, Faizabad and Meerut, and on the other, the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) lived up to its reputation and went on a rampage in Bijnor.

BIHAR: Communal rioting claimed about six lives in Bihar. Old Patna city seemed the worst affected, with many buildings set on fire and violent group clashes. Curfew was imposed in Patna, Giridih and Ranchi. The army tried boosting the locals' morale with flag-marches and the police arrested about 250 people to prevent further violence.

GUJARAT: The riots left around 54 people dead. Three bogies of the Jammu-Tawi Express were set ablaze as it left Ahmedabad. Eight people were burnt alive in the tribal-dominated Panch Mahals district, but the police prevented a repeat in Ahmedabad. However, a mob led by an ex-BJP minister broke into an Ahmedabad mosque and reportedly installed Rama's idol there. Mosques in Porbandar and Jamjodhpur were attacked as well. Following extensive arson, curfew was clamped on practically two-thirds of Ahmedabad and half of Baroda, Baroach, Jamjodhpur, Dhaboi and Godhra were under curfew too.

RAJASTHAN: The state didn't have a history of communal tension. But since the *rath yatra*, it has experienced the most intense communal flare ups. The riots following the *kar sevaks'* entry into the Ayodhya complex left 52 dead over four days. Although a number of towns—including Jaipur, Jodhpur, Beawar and Chomu (near Jaipur)—were under curfew, the frenzy remained uncontrolled.

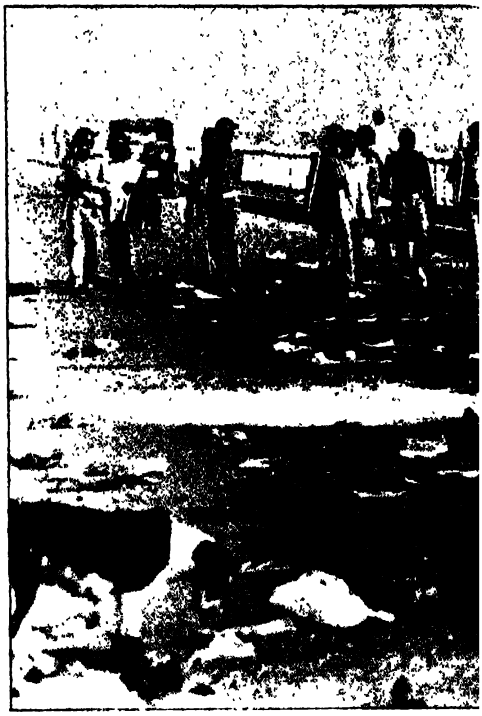
MADHYA PRADESH: Trouble was expected in this BJP-dominated state. The toll, five days after the storming of the religious complex, stood at 15. Trouble started at Indore, where the police clashed several times with rioters. The BSF was promptly brought on and shoot-at-sight orders were issued in certain areas. As the unrest spread to Jabbalpur, Gwalior and Dewa, security measures were tightened, and some areas came under prohibitory orders. Extensive curfew was imposed in Indore, Mhow and Dewa.

Antara Dev Sen

After the riots in Bijnor



JAGDISH YADAV



The Saryu bridge after the *kar sevaks* took on the police

given to the *kar seva* committees for distribution."

Not surprisingly then, thousands of *kar sevaks* managed to sneak into Ayodhya despite the tight security, and inflict damage to the mosque on the 30th. After the event, too, Ayodhya experienced virtual anarchy, with the police watching on helplessly while *kar sevaks* roamed around freely, carrying the dead bodies of their comrades through the town in procession, chanting provocative slogans all the while. Prominent leaders of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, who are supposed to have gone underground, surface every evening to address thousands of "*Ram bhakts*", who are determined to hang on in the temple city till 7 November.

As these meetings commence, the security forces obligingly stand a few furlongs away. The faintly farcical air that surrounds the proceedings increases when Vinay Katiyar, the fiery commander-in-chief of the Ram Kar Seva Samiti demands that the government remove curfew and restore normalcy in Ayodhya within a stipulated time frame. Life couldn't be more normal with *chaat* and tea vendors standing around the venue of the meeting, while flavoured milk and cold drinks were freely available.

Therefore, the crackdown, when it


JAGDISH YADAV

finally came, caught everyone by surprise. A section of the local media reported the events as if a massacre had been perpetrated by the security forces. A Lucknow-based daily brought out a special evening edition on 2 November, declaring that 100 *kar sevaks* had been killed in police firing in Ayodhya earlier in the day.

The repercussions were immediate. Communal violence erupted all over the country, and in Ayodhya itself a *masjid* and eight houses belonging to Muslims were looted and then burnt down. The police, it was alleged, stood by passively while the mob went to work. Madhukar Gupta, commissioner of Faizabad district, was heckled by a crowd of 500 women, some of them the wives of lower-ranking government personnel, who pleaded with him not to direct their husbands to take action against the *kar sevaks*. The editor of a Faizabad daily, who'd reported the casualties as nine, was asked to stay out of Ayodhya, on pain of being lynched by the *kar sevaks*.

The government action had a positive fallout only where the older *kar sevaks* were concerned. Though they insisted that they were still committed to the cause of Ram, fear of further repression by the administration and the breakout of communal violence all over the country, prompted them to depart from Ayodhya. While some began trudging down the highway, others hung on in the hope that the

Maulana Mulayam?

Is the UP chief minister pandering to Muslim fundamentalists?

In less than a year Mulayam Singh Yadav has addressed more rallies than most politicians do in a lifetime. And in every one of them the chief minister has driven home only one point: his commitment to secularism and the interests of the minorities.

The fact that each one of these bravura performances is followed by communal tension at best and riots at worst is dismissed by Yadav's supporters as some remarkable coincidence. Those less charitably inclined, however, insist that there is a connection. For, the argument goes, while Mulayam Singh lambasts the Hindu fundamentalists, he fails to mention their Muslim counterparts. So, his fiery rhetoric inevitably breeds resentment in the majority community. His secularism, they insist, is bogus. Or why would he arrest the Shankaracharya on one hand and on the other tolerate the presence of Mohammad Azam Khan in his Cabinet, despite stories to the effect that the latter was past master at instigating communal violence, ask the CM's opponents.

Be that as it may, at a time when national politics had come to revolve around a mosque and whether it should be pulled down to make place for a Ram *mandir*, Mulayam Singh's stance made political sense. And those who were opposed to a chief minister's taking sides in a dispute quite so openly found themselves in direct conflict with the conventional wisdom on the subject. As far as national opinion—and the media—was concerned, Yadav had taken a principled and courageous stand at great personal cost. Those who ascribed his avowed secularism to a desire to emerge as a messiah of the Muslim masses were dimissed as die-hard cynics who knew no better.

Mulayam Singh Yadav



Whatever Mulayam Singh's motivations may have been, there was no denying that with his stand on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy ("I won't allow even a bird to enter into the mosque") Yadav had the minority vote all sewn up. And that, combined with the support he commanded among the backwards, made him unassailable as far as electoral battles went.

But only at considerable cost. For a section of the Hindus saw the chief minister's attitude as needless pandering to minority sentiment, and saw no reason why they should be called upon to compromise all the time. It was this feeling of near-paranoia that the BJP campaign appealed to, and the emotive appeal of religion combined with what was seen as the CM's partisan attitude led to the inevitable backlash. Result: the creation of majority communalism and a schism between the two communities.

The worst loser in the end was the community Mulayam insisted he would safeguard to his last breath. The Muslims may well have experienced a fleeting sense of well-being at those rallies where Yadav breathed fire and brimstone at those who threatened the Babri Masjid. But, in the ultimate analysis, they would have to bear the brunt of the majority communalism that was created by this extreme stand.

And pay the price for Mulayam Singh's exercise in image-building.

Seema Goswami/Lucknow


JAGDISH YADAV

A *kar sevak* injured in police firing


JAGDISH YADAV

The injured being taken to hospital

Militancy pays

The Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue catapults the VHP on to the centre-stage

If the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy spelled disaster for V.P. Singh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) had cause to celebrate. It had at last, in a way, succeeded in launching a huge Hindu movement.

Going by facts, the VHP had been pressing for the reconstruction of not one, but three shrines. Besides the disputed Ram Janmasthan, the Kashi Viswanath temple at Benares and the temple at Mathura (believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna) had been identified by the organisation as the sanctimonious trio. This, according to the VHP, would be a meagre compensation for the 30,000-odd temples which history records as demolished by the Muslims.

However, since 1988 the demands of the VHP have been focussed on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue alone. According to many who witnessed the freedom struggle, this was easily the largest "movement" since the Quit India call in 1942. B.L. Sharma, the general secretary of the VHP said: "When Hindus are being beaten they are said to be secular but when they fight they are called communal. The Ram Janmabhoomi issue has proved this yet again." Warned Surya Krishna, the joint secretary of the organisation: "If the government thinks this movement will die a natural death, they are mistaken. The Ram temple will be built whatever the cost."

Such an aggressive, even militant posture is nothing new with the VHP; only it is receiving nation-wide attention for the first time in its 26-year-old history. Formed in 1964, the VHP and like organisations—the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and the Bharat Vikas Parishad—acknowledge the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) as its parent body. The RSS itself was formed in 1925 and interestingly, many of the founder members of the VHP were senior leaders of the party.

Ashok Singhal after he was injured in Ayodhya



The present Ram Janmabhoomi crisis revived the lessons learnt by the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha during the Partition. The Mahasabha and the Congress party were loosely-knit organisations then. They received the wrong end of the stick with the two-nation theory propounded by the Muslims, and Pakistan was created. The Hindus found themselves a disillusioned, disintegrated lot. According to Sharma: "We wanted to show that Hinduism is a nationality and never has the movement got such an impetus as it has over the Ram temple issue."

Surya Krishna notes: "Politicians have tried to give our socio-religious work a communal colour. In 1983 Mrs Gandhi said that the VHP's *rath yatra* was ruining the country. This time too V.P. Singh and his ministers made a major controversy out of the *rath yatra*."In both cases the VHP got political mileage.

While the VHP is criticised for having its eyes set on electoral



JAGDISH YADAV

Violence in Ayodhya on 30 October

gains by such mass programmes, its leadership denies it flatly. After Mrs Gandhi's assassination the party embarked on its *Ramjanaki rath yatra*. There was not much to gain because elections were close at hand but from that point onwards, the campaign for the Ram Janmabhoomi began in earnest. The first phase of the movement culminated in the 9 November 1989 *shilanyas* ceremony at Ayodhya.

Even Rajiv Gandhi admitted the *Ram shila puja* and the *shilanyas* contributed to his electoral defeat. The VHP claimed that it had more than doubled its network with *shila pujas* being performed in more than two lakh villages in India. Consecrated bricks arrived from other countries too and during the *shilanyas* at Ayodhya itself the VHP announced that the foundation for the fabulous granite Ram temple would commence on 30 October.

Of course, it was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with whom the VHP has no official link, which reaped the electoral benefits. The party managed 86 seats in the Lok Sabha—an otherwise impossible feat had it not been for the Hindu revivalism of the VHP.

No doubt, the BJP snatched the advantage from the VHP by announcing the 10,000 kilometre *rath yatra* but as the events of 30 October eventually showed, the VHP won back the mileage.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

government would provide them transport back home.

The younger lot, however, assumed an even more militant attitude, hinting that they would wage an armed struggle if the government didn't relent. Said Vinay Katiyar, who has taken over the movement, "Ram also began his campaign against evil on a peaceful note. But when Ravana turned violent, war was inevitable. Mulayam Singh is today's Ravana." In anticipation of such a development, some *kar sevaks* had, in fact, come armed with revolvers and crude bombs.

All attempts of the minority community to affect a reconciliation were snubbed by the Hindu militants. Outside the Faizabad civil hospital, some Muslims joined the crowds gathered outside in order to donate blood to those injured in police action. But the *kar sevaks* sullenly instructed that their blood should not be used. Mahant Nrityn Gopal Das, vice-president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, said : "Let the Muslims give us Ram's birthplace instead of their blood. We don't want the pure blood of Hindus to get sullied with impurities and in the bargain beget a generation of dubious progeny." The strident tone was a marked contrast from the conciliatory note that

***Kar sevaks* gather inside a temple in Ayodhya for the final assault**



JAGDISH YADAV

VHP had struck at its Hardwar meeting only four months ago, when anti-Muslim sentiment was played down to focus the organisation's resentment against V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav. Now, the VHP makes no secret of the fact that the defacing of the Babri Masjid was meant to show the Muslims that they'd better know their place if they intend to live in "Hindu India". Says Katiyar: "The Muslims are apprehensive now? They should have been afraid of us long ago. Let them remember if they want to live in India, they are at the mercy of the Hindus."

Bajrang Dal workers admitted that the main purpose of damaging the *masjid* was to break the morale of the Muslims. But that goal, they said, "will only be achieved when we liberate the Gyan Vapi Masjid in Varanasi and Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura."

Says a Bajrang Dal activist: "But first we have to build the Ram Mandir. The blood of three lakh people has gone into our struggle. Only when the temple is built will their *atma* rest in peace...Ravana too put all kinds of barriers but eventually Hanuman was able to reach Sita."

The agitation, then, would continue. And this was not a BJP show, the VHP leaders were quick to clarify. Said a leader. "This is a VHP *andolan*. The BJP supported us and we are grateful to them. Full stop. If the Congress and Janata Dal had also supported us we would have been similarly grateful to them."

The VHP criticism centres around that fact that the BJP leaders "tamely courted arrest" when they should have been present on the "battlefield". Instead they let the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and others "face the music". Asked a considerably mystified RSS leader from Haryana: "Just the other day even Uma Bharti courted arrest. What is the meaning of all this."

The VHP, for its part, intends to ensure that the BJP doesn't derive political mileage from its campaign. Leaders of the organisation disclose that the VHP means to fight the next election on an independent plank. Or, if that doesn't work out, prevail upon the BJP to give it a free hand in nominating candidates.

But that comes later. For the present, the temple has top priority. And only after Ram gets his *mandir*, will the VHP (along with the RSS and Bajrang Dal) look to the future. •

Radhika Ramaseshan/Ayodhya

The Bijnor backlash

The PAC is blamed for the riots

Bijnor, in northern Uttar Pradesh, was just another quiet town where the Hindus and the Muslims lived together without any major problems. Though Meerut, Aligarh and Moradabad—the state's trouble-spots—are not very far away, Bijnor was free from the communal virus. But the events of 30 October in Ayodhya changed all that. For more than three days, the town witnessed a violent communal flare up as people fought pitched battles on the streets and destroyed public and private property at will. And before the paramilitary forces could restore a semblance of order, at least 50—33 according to official reports—lives were lost in the rioting.

Most Hindus in Bijnor—they constitute around 60 per cent of the town's population—claim that the trouble began not because of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue but due to the utterings of chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Apparently, a public meeting of the chief minister in Bijnor was postponed several times and even his associates advised Mulayam not to hold the rally there as it could whip up communal passions. But an undeterred chief minister went ahead and addressed a large gathering on 9 October. Said Om Prakash, whose ration shop was gutted by the rioters, "Muslims and Hindus have been living together in Bijnor. But since the chief minister's visit, tension ran high. On the morning of 30 October, there were rumours that *kar seva* had begun in Ayodhya, and suddenly the attack of the Muslims began."

Many Hindus also claimed that the Muslims were well prepared to launch an attack on them. They pointed out that a large quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered from Muslim homes during searches conducted by the police. "When the moment came, we found that the Muslims were well armed and we were taken completely unawares," complained Om Prakash.

The Muslim community, however, felt that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement had swayed the Hindus of Bijnor. Mohammad Azad, who has been living in the town for quite sometime now, said that much before 30 October, *kirtans* and frequent prayer meetings had disturbed the peace of Bijnor. "Life had suddenly become difficult. We could hear nothing but the cries of *Har, Har, Mahadev*. The Muslims were definitely scared."

Charges and counter-charges notwithstanding, the fact remains that both the communities contributed to the flare up. On the morning of 30 October, a large number of Hindus had assembled at the local Arya Samaj temple. Soon, rumours began doing the rounds that the *kar sevaks* had stormed the Babri Masjid and construction of the Ram temple had begun. A procession was soon taken out to celebrate the victory, and, as the group of hymn-chanting devotees was passing through the Mirdgan and Kassawan areas of the town, the Muslims allegedly attacked it.

Trouble spread within minutes. The administration promptly called in the army and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) to restore law and order. But as it turned out, the PAC, which has the dubious distinction of perpetrating excesses, came in for severe criticism, particularly from the Muslims. Anisha Begum, for instance, alleged that two of her sons were brutally gunned down by PAC constables, who, she claimed, were clearly siding with the Hindus. Then there was Shabnam Pravin, who claimed that on 31 October several PAC men entered her house and forcibly dragged away her 14-year-old daughter.

But instead of heeding to such serious allegations, the Uttar Pradesh government rushed in more forces from outside and sealed off Bijnor. Even reporters were prevented from entering the town. What is more, the administration laid the entire blame on the local police and transferred the superintendent of police, Pravin Singh, leaving the residents of Bijnor at the mercy of an outside force. Lamented Pravin Singh: "The developments here are pitiable. But this is what is happening all over Uttar Pradesh."●

Ritu Sarin/Bijnor



NITIN BA

"We found the Muslims were well-armed and we were taken completely unawares", complains Om Prakash sitting inside his gutted house

Hot and sour

Karnataka's new chief minister might be in the soup

For S. Bangarappa, the new chief minister of Karnataka, the *guddi* is proving to be rather uncomfortable. In the first place, he was installed at an extremely difficult time when the state was rocked by communal violence in Bidar district. Besides, the former CM was removed under particularly unhappy circumstances, after he had a paralytic stroke. And now Bangarappa has a peculiar balancing act on hand—to try and get the caste factor under control.

Bangarappa formed the ministry according to the wishes of the Congress(I) high command. But that hardly helped. The special session of the Assembly convened to formalise his appointment was problematic, even though the Congress MLAs finally joined hands to pass a unanimous vote of confidence in his favour. The Opposition, led by the Janata Dal, had geared up to prevent the new CM from initiating the motion. The six-hour-long bickering reached a peak when some Congressmen nearly assaulted Independent member Vatal Nagaraj for his remarks about the Congress(I) president, Rajiv Gandhi.

Nagaraj is a well-known supporter of ousted CM Veerendra Patil. Obviously, he did not like the sudden dumping of his mentor and issued a call of protest by "self-respecting Kannadigas against the ignominious ouster of Patil". Immediately, the Opposition parties latched on and condemned the "reemergence of the *goonda* culture of the Congress which had been ushered in by the new dispensation".

Surprisingly, Bangarappa's troubles are not caused by the Opposition alone. The ex-CM's supporters in the Congress are not ready to accept a new master either. Besides, his induction of six senior Congressmen into his Cabinet, with permission from the high command, has also created trouble.

And Bangarappa has no escape route. When he tried to calm the Patil supporters down by including G. Puttaswamy Gowda, who had sided with the ousted CM till the last moment, the MLAs protested wildly. Quite a few members of the strong Vokkaliga community cried out loud that their loyalty to Rajiv Gandhi had not been rewarded while a Patil-supporter had been presented with a ministerial berth.

It seems that the allocation of portfolios has come under criticism in general. Bangarappa has kept a number of departments to himself. And his ministers have expressed furious dissatisfaction at being given "insignificant departments". Even Veerappa Moily, a die-hard loyalist of Rajiv Gandhi, is reportedly brimming with ill-concealed discontent. Moily had hoped for the chief ministership, and having lost out to Bangarappa, had expected at least an important portfolio. Instead, he got the same departments that he held under Patil.

Interestingly, another reason for dissatisfaction with Bangarappa's Cabinet is the age factor. The new CM, instead of infusing fresh blood, has opted for the old guards. The Cabinet has an average age of 56, and the 50-year-old Moily is considered the baby of the team. The Congress Legislature Party, which has a host of young MLAs, was considerably irked by this development.

But probably the most important problem that Bangarappa is facing is the caste factor. The powerful Lingayat lobby is truly dissatisfied with Patil's exit and Bangarappa's entry. The new CM, who is himself a backward class man, is racking his brains to think out ways of placating this important caste lobby. He has already started making overtures of peace towards Patil. He has been seeking Patil's blessings. He has offered to foot the ousted CM's medical bills. He has tried to be helpful in more ways than one.

However, whether all this will help the caste balance in Karnataka politics is uncertain as yet. Bangarappa might have realised the gravity of the situation, but the Lingayat community is still too strong a match for the backward caste leader. And Bangarappa might have to walk the tight-rope for some time to come. •

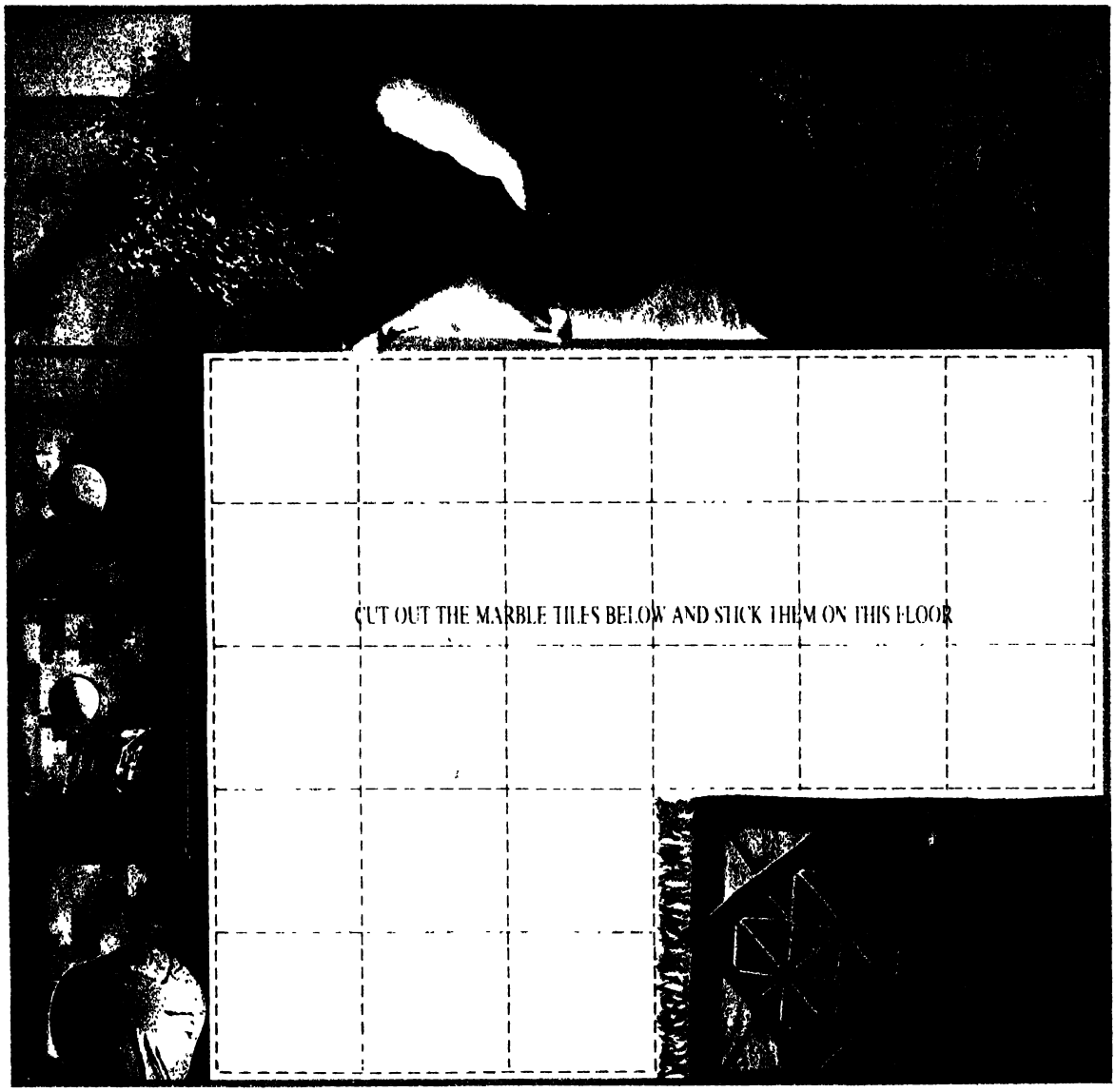
Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore



Veerendra Patil: out but not down

S. Bangarappa: tight-rope walking

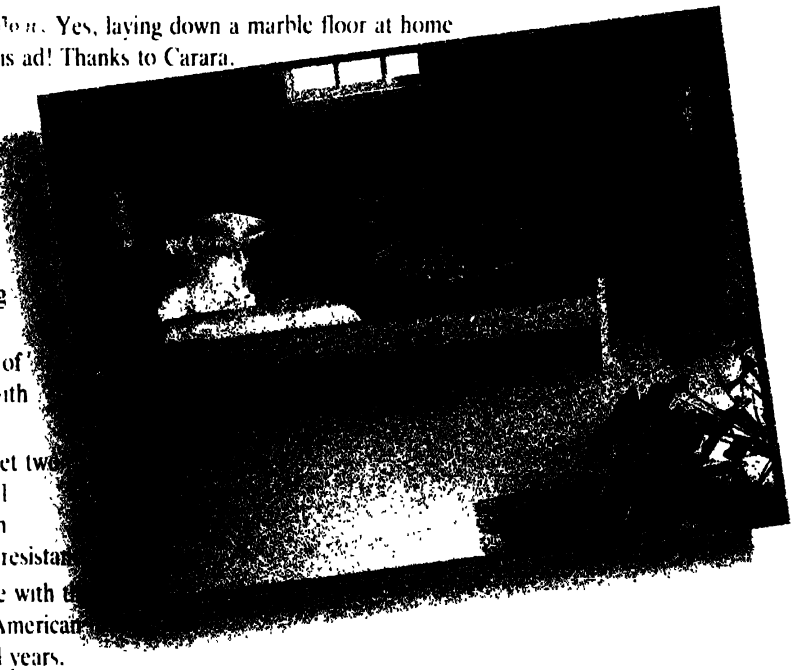
IN JUST A FEW MINUTES, YOU COULD CREATE A MARBLE FLOOR ON THIS PAGE.



Armstrong World Industries permit INARCO Ltd the use of the brand name Armstrong, under licence

IN JUST A FEW HOURS, WE CAN CREATE ONE IN YOUR HOME.

Carara. The quick and easy marble floor. Yes, laying down a marble floor at home is as simple as sticking on the tiles in this ad! Thanks to Carara.



All you have to do is get Carara laid over your existing floor. In a shade that matches your walls and furnishings.

It'll take just a few hours. No mess, no inconvenience.

Blended Marble. Carara is made of blended marble, a unique floor covering material.

80% of each Carara tile is made up of fine granulated marble, held together with imported binders.

Fabulous floor decor. You get two exquisite designs and a range of original shades to choose from. And the smooth toughness of marble: Carara is scratch-resistant.

Armstrong expertise. Carara is made with the technical expertise of Armstrong, the American floorings giant. So it lasts for years and years.

What's more, giving a room a Carara floor costs you less than giving it a new coat of paint!

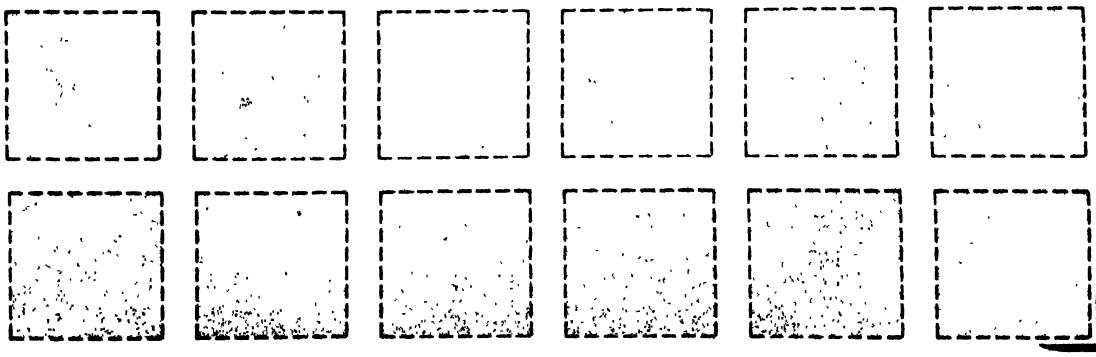
Hurry, call any of our offices today. And stick on a brand new marble floor.

Armstrong

CARARA

BLENDED MARBLE TILES

Instant floor decor



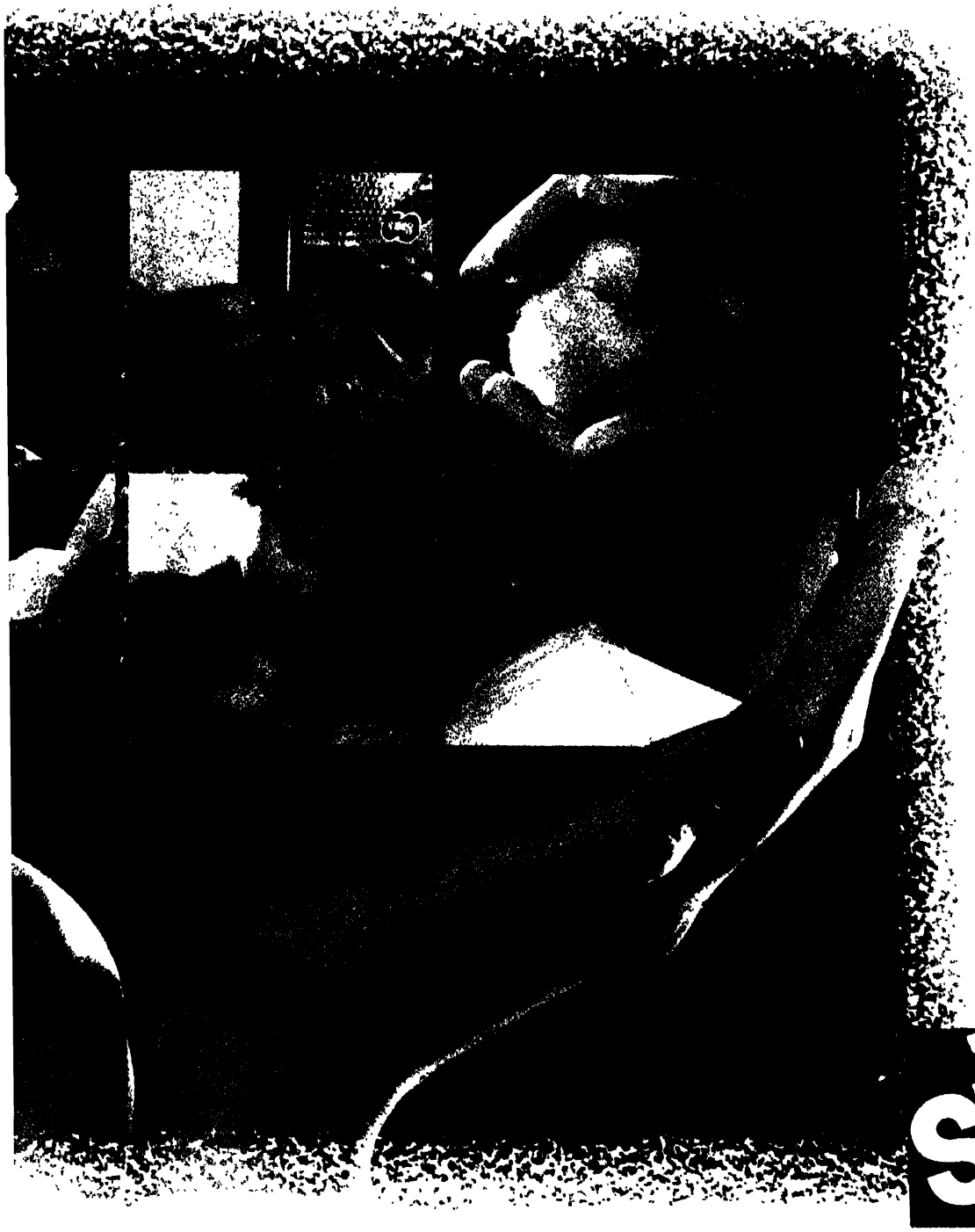
NTA 2905

INARCO Offices: Bombay: 12-A, Advent, Gen. Bhosale Marg, Bombay 400 021. Ph. 2022621, 2022213
• Delhi: Ph. 3713047, 3712253, 3324418 • Calcutta: Ph. 446990, 432768 • Madras: Ph. 475191, 476596, 479186

By giving key industries critical inputs we're helping boost productivity and enhance export competitiveness



We're intimately involved with key industries. Offering new generation inputs and import substitute chemicals. We've tied up with 4 of Europe's technology leaders. Imbibed knowhow in compressed time-spans. And turned start-up projects into profit centres in record time. By doing so, we've doubled our profits each and every year. And become one of the most sought after scrips in the stock market. **A chain reaction of successes.** Achievement breeds its own ambition. From our special place in the speciality chemicals market, we're diversifying rapidly. Into projects to manufacture Methanol, Carbon Black, Pig Iron, a world-class beer. The project on hand, is one of special significance. SM Glycols. A Rs. 275 crore agro-based petrochemicals project that will make Ethylene Oxide and a range of Glycols. High value products that feed escalating demand in high growth industries. Value Multiplication. It's what you've come to expect from SM Dyechem.



High-value added products for a wide spectrum of high-growth industries.

- Textiles
- Man-made Fibres,
- Leather
- Animal Health Care,
- Detergents and Toiletries,
- Pharmaceuticals
- Pesticides
- Fertilisers
- Oil Exploration and Refineries.
- Processed Foods

SM DYECHEM

SUCCESS THROUGH VALUE MULTIPLICATION

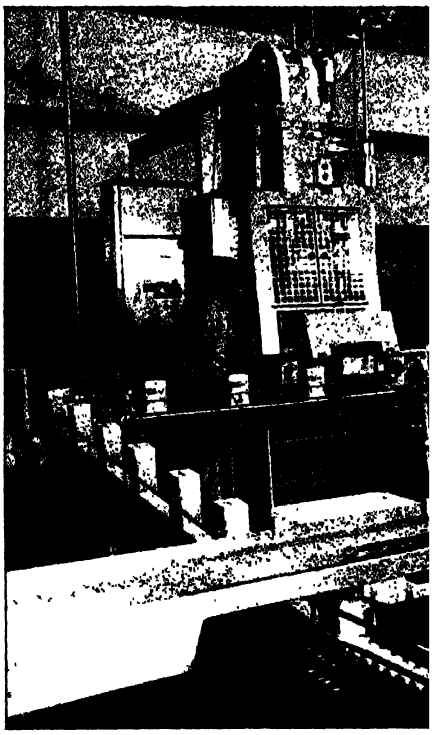
SM Dyechem Ltd. SM House, 11, Sahakar Road, Vile Parle (E), Bombay 400 057.

Adfactors/SMDL/274

EDIBLE OILS/MURDER ATTEMPTS

Kill to profit

National Dairy Development Board officials take on the ire of Gujarat's powerful—and dangerous—edible oils lobby



• *15 August, 1987. A.A. Chothani, chief of the National Dairy Development Board's (NDDB) vegetable oil division, is on his way to New Delhi. With him on the Frontier Mail is his daughter. Around two am, early morning the next day, he shuffles out of his first class cabin on his way to the toilet. At least two people—Chothani is not sure exactly how many—hit him on the head with iron bars and fling the NDDB official out of the moving train. His daughter wakes up a few minutes later, and not finding Chothani around, pulls the chain. When the train grinds to a halt, the assailants escape, but fortunately for Chothani, a search party finds him lying by the tracks, profusely bleeding, spine twisted and body swollen. But alive—barely.*

Now, three years later, Chothani is in high gear. He is the managing director of the National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India, but has not forgotten the attempt on his life. Or why it happened. "To fight the oil lobby we have to generate heat," he says. "They tried to kill me, but by me being buried the oil project would not have stopped. We will win in the end." The killers have not been found.

• *30 April, 1990. It is late in the night, and NDDB chairman Verghese Kurien is at 1, Amul Dairy Campus, his home in Anand, Gujarat. Two people arrive on a motorcycle, and throw a bomb—apparently with a slightly delayed fuse—at Kurien's ground floor bedroom. But the alert watchman, noticing the projectile, makes a dash towards it, scoops it up just as it is about to touch the ground, and flings it back to the road. The alleged killers speed away, as the bomb explodes, leaving a large crater in the tarmac. Officials later say that the bomb, if it had found its target, would surely have killed Kurien.*

"Of course the oil lobby was behind this," says Kurien, in his office, five months later. "The police could not find out who it was, because there are thousands of them... Their fire-crackers don't scare me. When it is time for me to leave the world, I will go. I'm not afraid of dying. Till then, I will fight them with everything I have."

NDDB chairman Verghese Kurien: "Everybody wants to crucify me"



Kurien will have to. Chothani cannot give up, neither can any official at the NDDB. The thing is, the oil lobby will not give up, either. The threats will go on, and so might the attempts on people's lives. For, in this game of oil for money—and oil for self-sufficiency—there is simply far too much at stake for niceties.

Now, for the background, which shows that events leading up to the present crisis could have been entirely avoided. The Saurashtra region in Gujarat is known as the 'groundnut bowl of the world.' In a good year, it produces as much as 15 million tonnes of groundnut, used mainly to produce oil, and down the line, generates an income of a staggering Rs 7,800 crores. Other oilseeds—such as rapeseed, sunflower, *til*—are extra.

Only, whatever India produces is not enough to cater to the demand, and the situation is set to get worse. So, the government is forced to import edible oils at great



NDDB's *Dhara* brand oil: upsetting private traders and lobbyists

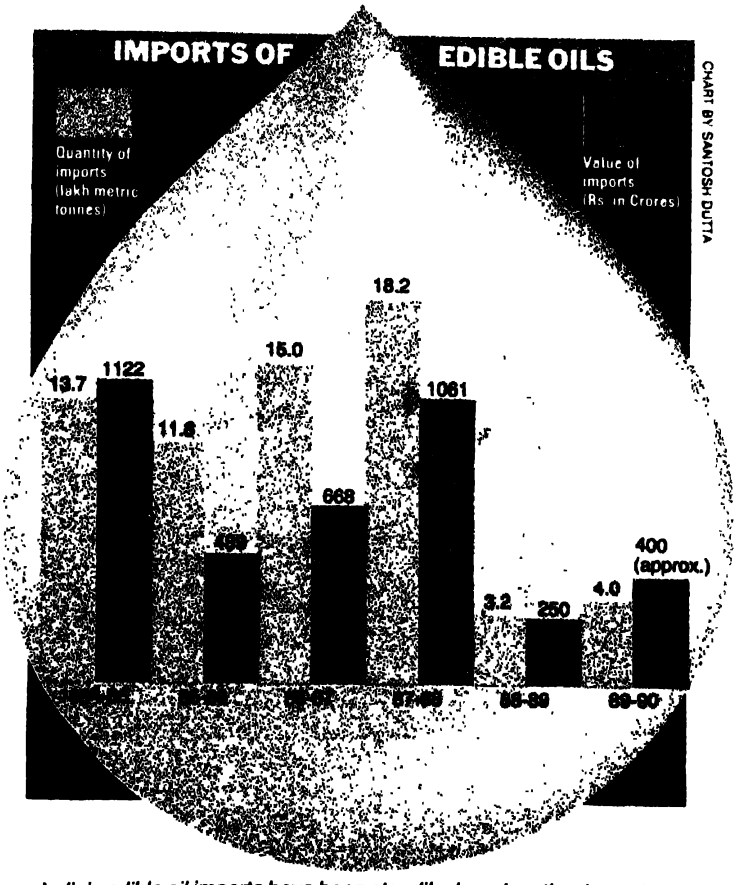
cost (it could cost the exchequer as much as Rs 800 crores for the 1990-91 financial year). To obviate a grim oil environment, the government decided more than a decade ago to hand over the job to Kurien and his NDDB, hoping that the rural management expert could repeat his milk production (Operation Flood) trick. He did, and was helped along when the government formulated the technology mission on oilseed in 1986. India has the resources, went the wisdom, so why not? All that the move for increased production needed was good management.

So far so good. But, the government fouled up even while it was harping on self-sufficiency. In the late 1970s, New Delhi began to play bureaucratic games. On the one hand, the *babus* made noises about going *swadeshi*. But on the other, the government began to import edible oils at international prices—usually lower than Indian prices for most commodities—and distributed these in the market at rates far lower than prices at which domestically produced oils could ever be supplied. The obvious happened: the domestic market plunged, as did oilseed purchases by the trade, and farmers were left holding their crop and nowewhere to go. Traders, however, made their killing. They made crores of rupees by simply adulterating the cheaper imported oils and pushing them, at prevailing prices, in the market.

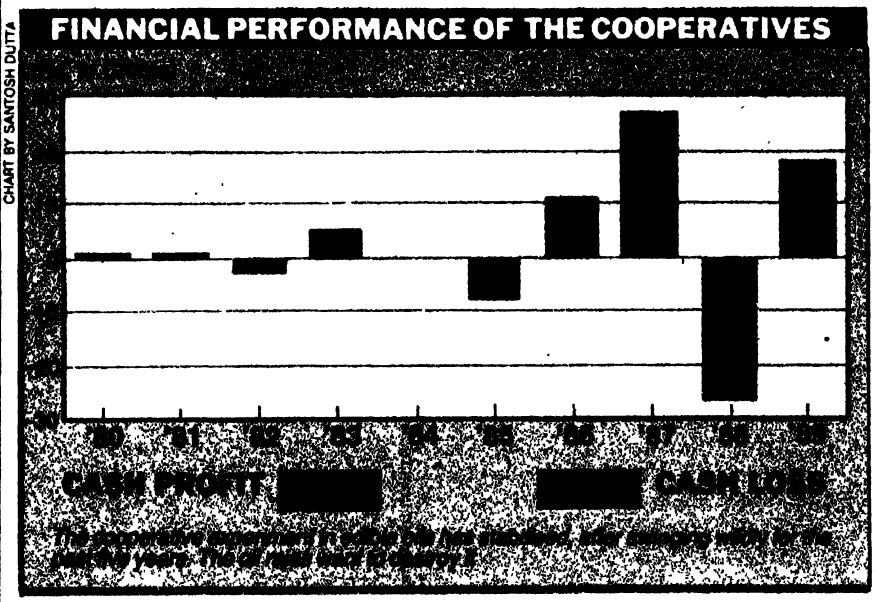
The government woke up to the menace, years after it should have, and stepped in. On 13 January 1989, New Delhi finaly decided that the NDDB would handle its 'market intervention operations' (MIO) to control prices and check adulteration. The NDDB would also have the authority to import edible oils and oversee distribution and sale. The *telia rajas* (or oil kings) of Gujarat obviously did not like the idea: a government grip on edible oil prices would mean a cut in their profits. They began to lobby with politicians and declared war on the NDDB. (Actually, they already had, spurred on by NDDB's Operation Golden Flow, as the attempt on Chothani's life signifies. Now, NDDB's *Dhara* brand of groundnut oil, which sells for almost half the prices private competition offers, has raised the lobby's hackles.)

The MIO was a little slow to catch on, with a formal go-ahead reaching Kurien in April 1989. And Kurien went headlong into trouble. The NDDB was authorised to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of edible oil for 1988-89, but the organisation found it very difficult to bring in even a third of the amount. The explanation according to Kurien: it was the oil lobby, which manipulated New Delhi to hinder imports. This also broke the back of NDDB's MIO, as it had less oil than it needed to intervene in the market. And critics sneered that Kurien flunked his test for controlling prices.

The dairy—and now, oil—don refutes this. For example, says Kurien, "the price band for groundnut oil was fixed between Rs 20,000-25,000 per metric tonne at wholesale prices in Bombay for the year 1988-89. During this time, the price band behaved and stayed within the periphery of the stated figures." And the band for 1989-90, he says was fixed between Rs 22,000-28,000 per metric tonne. "All these rabble rousers scream



India's edible oil imports have been steadily dropping, thanks to the NDDB and technology mission status, but meddling by oil barons can ruin things completely

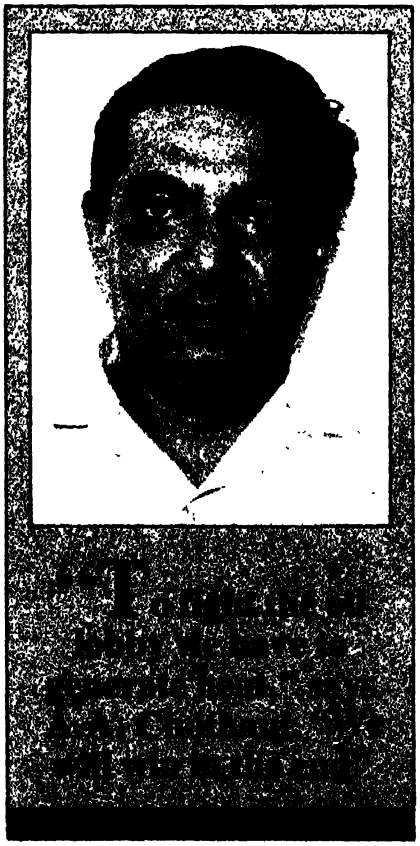


that prices have gone up." continues Kurien. "But anybody, even a bullock, knows that the consumer price index and the wholesale price index have shot up by eight per cent and nine per cent (respectively) in the last one year." Everything has become more expensive for the farmer, he says, ploughs, tractors, diesel oil and fertilisers. "It is easy to sit and blame me for the rising prices of oil," says Kurien. "Why not also blame me for the rising prices of cement, textiles and pulses?" He adds: "Everybody wants to crucify me."

Not everybody. Just the oil lobby. Because, Kurien is still trying his MIO stunts. "I know for certain that they (the oil barons) paid Rs 14 crores to the politicians in Gujarat and New Delhi," says Kurien, "and now they say, 'let's get this bugger Kurien off our backs'...They tried to kill Dr Chothani, and now I guess it is my turn."

It is. Kurien has had to live with having his organisation's key oil plant in Bhavangar burnt and damaged seven times in the past three years or so (every time, the plant was quickly put back into operation). The more stubborn Kurien is about taking on the lobby, the more difficult it will be for him to hang on. Besides, Kurien is also taking on the age-old business-politics nexus, and with every new disclosure against the trade, the gang gets firmer in its resolve to break NDDB. It hardly matters that some trade members are changing their minds about whose side they are on.

For example, in March this year, it was discovered that 60 per cent of the oil millers in Gujarat were squirelling away money that should have legitimately gone to the government as taxes. Interestingly enough, this exposure was made by a section of the Saurashtra Oil Mills Association (SOMA), who should, by any stretch



of logic, be gunning for Kurien. In a startling memorandum to Gujarat civil supplies minister Ashok Bhatt, the SOMA provided figures which showed that the state government was incurring a revenue loss of Rs 100 crores a year. This confessional trend has extended itself to Bombay, India's premier oil market, too. In a letter to Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar, the vice president of the Bombay Oilseeds and Oil Exchage, N. Shah, says it all. "It is observed," the letter goes, "that in the recent past, some unscrupulous and dishonest elements have started indulging in serious malpractices, with a view not only to evade sales tax, but also pocket the same after collecting it from purchasers, but without paying the same over to the state exchequer...market reports show that the amount runs into crores of rupees."

More exposure. According to trade insiders, aiding and abetting corruption is the government's public distribution system. And its premier trading agency, the State Trading Corp. (STC), which has now come under the wing of a holding company, along with the Minerals & Metals Trading Corp. Edible oils have always been imported through the STC—till the NDDB virtually took over—and the STC, in turn, distributes it to the various state civil supplies departments.

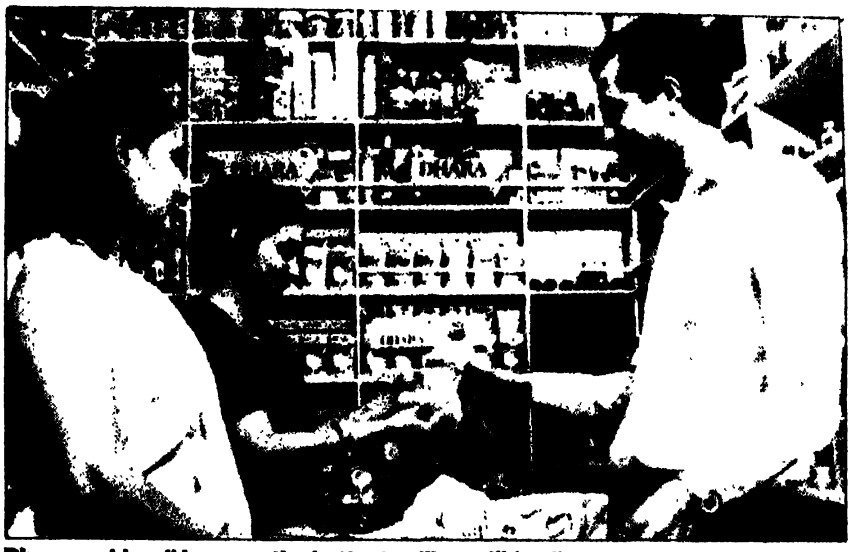
And so on, down the line. By the time oils reach consumers, say insiders, it is adulterated, quite thoroughly. At Chokha Bazar, one of Ahmedabad's wholesale marts, the reaction to adulteration is funny—almost. "What is wrong with the mixing of oil?" queries a grinning Ishitbhai, an oil merchant who prefers not to divulge his last name. "People have been doing this for years. So what if palmoline is mixed with groundnut oil? It is not killing anybody, and we can supply it cheap to the poor people." He adds: "That *dudhwala* Kurien should stay with his cows." Conveniently, Ishitbhai neglects to talk about his profit margin. And inconveniently, for him and others of his ilk, Kurien is not content with merely being a *dudhwala*.

An NDDB survey which covered five major cities showed that as much as 60 per cent of the total oil sold loose—instead of the packaged and sealed variety—was adulterated with cheaper, imported palm and palmoline oil. The findings showed that adulteration was at its maximum with

groundnut and coconut oils. Further, a check on various laboratories by Ahmedabad-based Consumer Education and Research Centre showed that these places were ill-equipped, indifferent and prone to passing on false reports. The research centre arrived at a frightening conclusion: there is absolutely no way of thoroughly checking the quality of edible oils. On another matter, equally frightening: the governments of Gujarat and Maharashtra have done nothing to check either tax evasion or adulteration. Neither has the Centre.

Which is expected. A combination of knee-jerk policy and alert vested interests has ensured that it does not pay attention, despite public claims of extending all power and help to the NDDB. Forty to fifty per cent of imported edible oils given over to the public distribution network finds its way into four major oil producing states: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Since the four produce surplus oil, which they export to less privileged states, the distribution pattern—government endorsed, of course—hardly makes much sense. Again, this year, the Centre released imported edible oils in the market just as the domestically produced varieties arrived. And created an instant surplus. "It would appear," says Kurien, "that this policy of import and release of oils was designed precisely to allow private traders to profit from the surplus, by adulteration, and for the government's machinery to share in the profits."

It could well be that way. Despite statistics flashing danger—nay, disaster—signals, pointing to a future where all the work for becoming self-sufficient and staying self-regulated add up to a big zero, the government has not done much to help. Not just the NDDB, but the country as well. Current readings point to a massive overall deficit in vegetable oils, which could swing beyond eight lakh tonnes per year, despite an impressive domestic oil extraction level of between 25 lakh tonnes to 28 lakh tonnes a year. To measure up, the government will have to do more than just extend help to the NDDB and cut back on lobbyists. It will have to reduce industry taxes. Presently, besides a market cess of 0.4 per cent, there is the sales tax, turnover tax, and specific taxes for every variety of edible oil (groundnut oil, for instance, attracts a separate tax of Rs 2.80 per kilo).



Dhara could well become the hottest selling edible oil

Yes, the government and oil kings have to do a lot. But Kurien is not free from criticism, either, says the trade. People at Ahmedabad's Kalupur *ghee* bazar, for example, insist that Kurien is playing dictator at NDDB, and one day, the government will finally wise up to his tricks. "He (Kurien) talks of us being corrupt," says Manilal Shah, a major wholesaler. "(But) what is he doing by concealing the huge amounts of oil that he is buying from the traders? He has refused to even make this figure known to the government of Gujarat." Kurien's stubborn stand, says Shah, only proves that he has something to hide. "Just because his 'Operation Flood' has achieved some success, it does not mean he can do the same with oil," Shah goes on. "It is a different field. Kurien will learn the hard way. Oilseed crops are not cows and buffaloes."



"For us," says R.P. Aneja, "there is no going back. Sure, there have been pressures. But we've learnt to live with them."

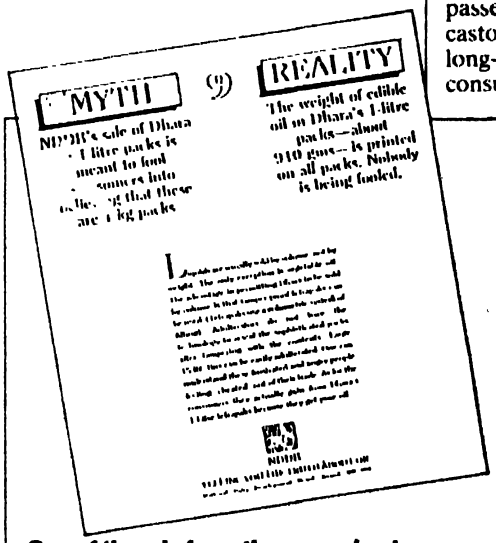
Sure, but Shah does not realise that his comments damn the trade more than it indicts Kurien. The trader's remarks reek of a veiled threat. Besides, Kurien does have a defence, and given the circumstances, an obvious one.

"Why should I let on to how much oil I have?" is Kurien's comeback. "If I do that, every private trader will move in. By manipulating the trading they will certainly make things difficult for me." All NDDB transactions, says Kurien, is recorded on computer. So, they are there for New Delhi to audit. "It must be remembered that MIO is a government of India programme that NDDB has been requested to work on," adds Kurien. "No profits can come to us. So why should we cheat?"

In fact, says Kurien, the question of NDDB hoarding oil came up for discussion in Parliament. Then, former deputy Prime Minister and agriculture minister—and presently, a PM aspirant—Devi Lal intervened and categorically said that it would not be

in public interest if NDDB gave out its oil stock figures. "For example," says Kurien, "if the oil lobby knows that we are running short, they will gobble up existing stocks. What we are doing is helping the consumer to buy almost directly from the producer, and the middlemen don't like this." Adds R.P. Aneja, who recently resigned as NDDB's managing director because of his "own mental and physcial state" and is now a consultant: "For years, there has not been one day when entirely honest transactions have taken place where oil trading is concerned. And last year, we were being asked by these fools in New Delhi, 'How come the prices of edible oils have crossed the price band?'"

The Kurien criticism that does make some sense comes from the man who complained to Sharad Pawar about trade malpractices, Bombay oil exchange official Navinchandra Shah. "If Kurien is so interested in helping the farmers, why does he not buy oil directly from them after they have crushed their produce (in an Operation Flood-like milk procurement scheme from cooperatives)? Why does he come to Bombay to buy oil from the traders?" Kurien's response: if he gets oil at the right price, anywhere, he will buy it. That sounds a little flat, but the point is that it is perfect for keeping the MIO trick going. Says Kurien: "Let me ask this one question to the thousands of traders: 'How many people live on the import of oil alone? For every rupee spent on imports, how many other people make money by adulteration?'"


MYTH

NDDB's sale of Dhara 1 litre packs is meant to fool consumers into believing that these are 1 kg packs

REALITY

The weight of edible oil in Dhara's 1-litre packs—about 910 gms—is printed on all packs. Nobody is being fooled.

NDDB

One of the ads from the campaign to educate the public

Counterpoint. Adulteration *is* a health hazard, however much traders such as Ishitbhai may wave off the argument. Take the Behala tragedy in 1988. People from this Calcutta locality bought what they thought was mustard oil from a ration shop. Only, the man who ran the shop mixed a chemcial with rapeseed oil to make it smell and appear like the more expensive mustard oil, cashing in on the difference. The result: paralysis for scores of people who consumed food cooked in that chemical muck. Or, take the widely sold, infamous 'loose sweet oil' or '235 oil', which is a mixture of two parts castor oil, three parts palmoline, and five part groundnut oil. This concoction, which is also known as 'disco oil' in the market, is passed off as groundnut oil. Since castor is a powerful laxative, the long-term effect of the mixture, if consumed regularly, is disastrous.

Dhara has still to make a profit, but sales have reached 130 tonnes a day, and that is hurting the oil lobby.

Another thing that could be upsetting the oil kings—besides the MIO and adulteration checks—is NDDB's attempt to change the oilseed cropping pattern completely. According to Kurien, India's edible oil future lies in increasing rapeseed production. This is based on the assumption that consumption patterns can be changed—an idea that appears to be working. In Gujarat, for example, the most widely used oil was *til*. Today, it is groundnut oil. Tomorrow, it could be rapeseed.Here,India'senvironmentalists have stepped in. Groundnut produces 250 kilos of oil per hectare of crop, they say,and rapeseed yields 700 kilos. So why not go in for the better solution, they ask, especially as it means more yield with less land used? Kurien concurs.

Says Jeet Jadhav, an oilseed farmer in Ahmedabad's outskirts: "If there is money in it, I will even grow sunflowers." A beginning may have already been made, if not by pricing policy, then thanks to the way NDDB behaves. "I have stopped selling groundnut to private traders" says Jadhav, "because I found out that the scales they use for weighing are wrong. They cheat people. At least with NDDB, I know that they will not cheat and I will get a fair price."

On the other hand, there are many farmers who still sell to the private trader, mainly because they can negotiate. Then there are others who are forced to part with their produce for paltry amounts because they have borrowed money from traders; a virtual manifestation of bonded labour—till the farmer pays back the loan, he has to continue selling to the particular creditor/trader, the advantage entirely with the latter. Among other things, the NDDB is trying to break this hold. And the lobby, inevitably, is resisting. "The oil lobby till today is trying to beat us," says Aneja, still talking as if he is very much with the NDDB team, "but for us, there is no going back. Sure, there have been pressures. But we have learnt to live with them."

Presently, NDDB's edible oil project covers seven states, involving five lakh farmers through cooperatives. And *Dhara*, according to NDDB estimates, is going to hit the top spot very soon. "*Dhara* has still to make a profit considering all that we have put in, says Kurien, "but it will." He adds: "The sale of *Dhara* has now reached 130 tonnes a day, and that is hurting the oil lobby."

Yes, because the threats have not stopped. Kurien routinely receives phone calls—at night, true to underworld stereotyping—ordering him to back down. Even Kurien's wife, Molly, has to listen to voices telling her to "stop her *dudhwala*" from dabbling in oil. And NDDB officials fear that another attack may be forthcoming, because many Gujarat oil traders were recently raided for income tax evasion—they hold Kurien responsible. "Let them think what they will," says Kurien, gravely. "What's one bomb thrown at me?" Then, he breaks into a smile and wisecracks: "What better way can I think of leaving the chairmanship at NDDB? At least I will go out with a big bang." ●

Godfrey Pereira/Anand, Ahmedabad and Bombay with Sudeep Chakravarti

ADVERTISING

Selling chauvinism

Sexist ads still work in a man's world

Visual: *A nattily dressed, macho man pinning down a glamorous woman to a jazzy red car. The advertising copy: "Man at work. Your environment, your work, your way of life, your comfort, easy and affordable." The product: Siyaram's Oxemburg shirts and trousers.*

Visual: *A woman, in a strappy green and yellow dress flying in the breeze, superimposed on a lush mustard field. The copy: "Inspired by nature, perfected by us." The product: Kurl On mattresses.*

Women continue to be used for selling every product imaginable. From luxury soaps, detergents, *men's* suitings, colognes, plywood and even, hardware. A recent advertisement for Ranutrol Hansa Aqua Mixers (simply put: taps) has the tantalising visual of a pair of enticing, and perfect, female legs, rising out of a bubble bath, complete with the arch delicately poised over a gleaming Hansa tap. The copy is not as inspiring, however, and reads: "The world's most elegant way of mixing water with pleasure. Flawless to the minutest detail." In this ad, like in numerous other cases, the woman has little or nothing to do with the product being sold.

The thing is, the products *do* sell. And selling, as any marketing or adperson will testify, is what advertising is all about. Only, for a price: women are often demeaned in the ads, they are there for their physical presence and little else.

And despite strident protests from women's organisations, the much touted Indecent Representation of Women's (Prohibition) Act passed in 1986 and pious declarations from agencies, ads continue to portray a woman as a "sex commodity".

"The stereotype these ads present are positively dangerous," says an activist with Saheli, a women's rights group in New Delhi. "Ads are playing an increasingly important role in all our lives thanks to the invasion of television, video and, of course, the boom in the print media. They reflect and worsen the subservient and second-class-role situation that women play in our society."

The ads, in short, have just helped polarise the gender difference in societies all over the world. American media expert, Trevor Millum, has noted in an often-quoted study: "Most women were captured in pictures which tended to emphasise mannequin and dummy expressions...while men more often demonstrated a thoughtful expression implying some intellectual processes."



Dangerous stereotype

"The ads, in essence, have remained the same over the years," says Kamla Bhasin, a member of the Committee on the Portrayal of Women in the Media, set up in 1983.

However, Bhasin admits that sexist portrayals are lessening, even if marginally. "The really blatant advertisements have stopped after the hue and cry that we raised several years ago." But the difference is only a matter of degree. While the really obnoxious ads have stopped, it is now a question of subtler forms of discrimination. Earlier, women's organisations had to battle ads such as the one for Cosmic TVs, which said: "A beauty of 14, keep her in your bedroom or take her to the office." Accompanying the offensive copy was the visual of a young, presumably 14-year-old girl with a portable TV next to her. Now, they fight ads for Harpic toilet cleanser, for instance, which is all about how cleaning a toilet is really the easiest and most glamorous household job.

The scene outside commercial product advertising is even more dismal with frankly lewd film ads making a huge comeback. In fact, the Delhi police had even formed a committee against obscene advertising in the city. Set up with much fanfare in 1987, the committee boasted a host of luminaries such as Sharmila Tagore, journalist Mrinal Pande, the then deputy commissioner of police in the crimes against women's cell, Vimal Mehra, and ex-Doordarshan chief Bhaskar Ghose, among others. But after the initial frenzy of activity, precious little was done. "We haven't had a meeting for the last eight or nine months," says committee member Pande.

That seems to be the way of all government action on the issue. Most illustrative of this is the abortive Indecent Representation of Women's (Prohibition) Act, passed only after intense lobbying by women's groups in 1986. "Only the government machinery can take an advertiser to court," says Bhasin. On the other hand, she counters: "what government department can possibly be expected to do such a thing? The onus, as usual, falls on us."

And, so, the female stereotype, be it pliant girlfriend or self-sacrificing mother, patient wife or demure daughter, still remains the hottest selling property in the multi-crore advertising industry. A fact that no women's organisation, not even the most vociferous, can do much about. For as long as ideas and products sell, nobody is about to change his—or her—ways. ●

Minu Jain/New Delhi

■ Enough!

As predicted by this column two years ago, the Raunaq Singh group has lost its best manager. Dr Surinder Kapur, Raunaq's son-in-law and the group's single best manager and public relations man has just relinquished charge of Bharat Gears.

Kapur is said to have tired of interference from less competent members of the family and walked out to look after his own, flourishing Sona Steerings, a joint venture with Maruti Udyog.



Raunaq Singh: lost his best man.

Two years ago, Kapur nearly quit—and this featured in Business Diary then—but was persuaded to stay on. Now he has decided that he doesn't have to take the Raunaq family's style of functioning any longer.

■ Time out

If Titan Watches Ltd pulls this one off, HMT Ltd may have to. The fast-paced private sector watch-maker is going to collaborate with Timex of the US to make quartz, digital and analog (nothing fancy, just your usual wind-me-up variety) watches in India, at "more affordable" prices than are available currently. The Rs 60 crore project, to be set up in the New Okhla Industrial Estate near New Delhi, will manufacture two million watches a year. Titan officials say they expect production to commence next year.

This could give HMT nightmares. Titan has largely wiped out its quartz segment hold. And with Titan also making moves towards a segment which has kept HMT going all these years—no nonsense, inexpensive watches—the public sector giant would be badly hurt. Besides, HMT hasn't touched the digital watch market. Titan could be ahead here, too. HMT could be rueing its advertising catchline "If you have the inclination, we have the time." Increasingly, it looks like going Titan's way: "We have the inclination, *and* we have the market."

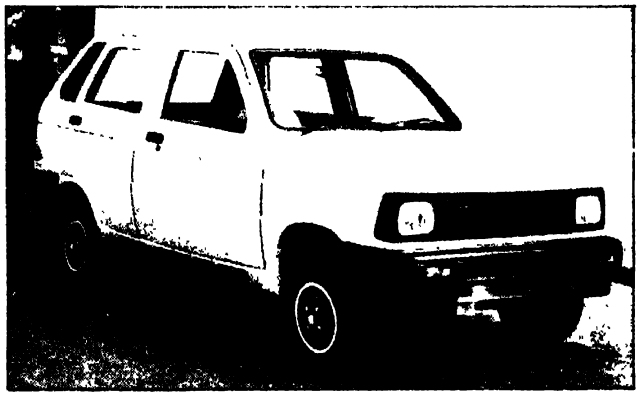
STOCK QUOTE

"Taste the blunder!"

A senior Pepsi Foods Pvt. Ltd executive's smug comment on Parle Ltd boss Ramesh Chauhan's opposition to Pepsi cola, when it was 7 Up—which hit Limca hardest—that he should have been worrying about.

■ Tough fibre

Sipani Automobiles Ltd has one problem: the company does make cars that are light, economical and cheap, but with the Maruti-mania in full swing, not many buyers looked the Bangalore-based car-maker's way. Now, Sipani wants to actually take on Maruti, sidelining its older Dolphin and Montana models in favour of the Fox, and the as yet officially unnamed D1.



Sipani Automobiles' Montana: justifying fibre-glass bodies for the D1 and Fox?

Sipani plans to manufacture the newer cars in collaboration with Reliant Motors of the UK, which helped out with the Montana. Sipani will stick to fibreglass bodies for the cars. This is in tune with earlier models, but Sipani could still face an old problem with the new cars, too. Simply put, not many consumers believe that a fibreglass body can be tough, and seem to prefer metal bodies for their cars. Sipani tried to break this voodoo last year by conducting demonstrations: a man with a hammer would beat the daylights out of a Montana fibreglass panel to show onlookers exactly how tough the car was. It didn't help very much. This time round, Sipani plans to score a point with what the company calls superior cars. ●

WINNER OF THE WEEK

Dhirubhai Ambani

Chairman, Reliance Industries Ltd



By the time you read this—if all has gone according to plan—V.P. Singh will no longer be a full-fledged Prime Minister. And the champagne corks will be popping at Nariman Point. The way they tell it, the Janata Dal crisis is all Dhirubhai's doing: he set up Devi Lal, Chandra Shekhar is his man, he has RKD in his pocket, etc.

In fact, Singh's problems are entirely of his own making: Ambani's contribution has been minimal. Nor does he have either Shekhar or Rajiv Gandhi wrapped up, whatever the Reliance PR machine might spout. But even so, it's clear that Ambani has won and the Raja has lost. The Reliance share price has boomed and the worst V.P., Gurumurthy, Vinod Pande, *et al*, have been able to do is take Larsen & Toubro (L&T) away. Now, any new government—that is not motivated by vendetta—is certain to tell financial institutions to remain neutral in the L&T affair. Once that happens, the Ambanis will regain control.

And 1990 will be no more than a bad dream in the life of the polyester pasha.

Man in the middle

Mulayam Singh Yadav holds the key to Janata Dal politics

As the tussle for the leadership of the Janata Dal gained in intensity and the political situation in the country became more confusing than ever, everyone turned to the one man who could well decide how things turned out. No, he wasn't the Raja, or the Tau, or Chandra Shekhar or even Rajiv Gandhi. It was the diminutive chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who held the key to the future. For, the leadership of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party would be decided by whom Mulayam Singh—and his band of committed loyalists—chose to support. So, effectively Yadav would decide who faced the Lok Sabha on 7 November to seek a vote of confidence. Thus, while the chief minister stayed back in UP to devote his time, energy and considerable political acumen to defusing the Ayodhya issue, speculation abounded in the capital as to which side Yadav would plump for. As the various theories made their rounds, one thing was clear: Mulayam Singh Yadav had emerged as the new strongman of Indian politics.

At a time when most reputations had taken a severe knocking, Yadav had, by a process nothing short of miraculous, managed to enhance his. Chandra Shekhar had ruined his image by sulking in the corner like some churlish schoolboy once he was cheated out of the prime ministership; the Chaudhary stood exposed by his excessive love of family; and V.P. Singh had transformed himself first into the Raja of Mandal and then the Lord of the Limpets. Yadav, on the other hand, had not only consolidated his vote-bank, but established himself as the leader who would make the ultimate sacrifice when it came to safeguarding the secular fabric of the country. Yes, every other politician made much the same noises, but Mulayam Singh's case was different. When he said: "Given a choice between saving a few lives and saving the government I will choose the former," everyone believed him. He was dubbed Maulana Mulayam by his critics, but as Yadav pointed out with justifiable pride, as many Hindus attended his rallies as did Muslims.

It was, perhaps, this turnout that convinced the chief minister that the majority of his people were secular and that there was nothing to fear on the 30th of October. This was, at least, his public stand. In retrospect, this turned out to be a highly erroneous reading of the situation.

Strangely enough, that wasn't how everyone saw it. Political leaders across the spectrum congratulated Yadav on a job well done. while media reports had it that the chief minister had handled the situation with commendable skill. Even the Muslims didn't take the attitude that their *masjid* had been defiled. On the contrary, members of the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) went on television to endorse the official view that no damage had been inflicted on the mosque and that Yadav had delivered despite extremely trying circumstances.

Nobody had granted that Mulayam Singh would ever be a major



MULAYAM SINGH YADAV: calling the shots





CHANDRA SHEKHAR AND V.P. SINGH: wooing Mulayam Singh Yadav

player, when he first emerged on the UP political scene. A short wiry higher secondary schoolteacher, when he first began dabbling in Etawah politics, nobody paid Mulayam much attention. He belonged to a poor agricultural family (sleeping with the cattle because there was no room for him in the house) and lacked the money power often deemed essential to making it big in politics. Nevertheless, Yadav joined politics along with his close friend Balram Singh Yadav, with whom he'd studied and wrestled in his younger days. The two men dabbled in party politics and organised *dangals* (wrestling bouts) on the side, and seemed happy enough being lower-level players.

His debut in electoral politics had been quite successful, with Yadav being elected member from Jaswantnagar during the Sixties and Seventies. But while district politics in Etawah had always revolved around him, his first big break came when the Janata government was formed in Uttar Pradesh in 1979. While Mulayam Singh missed the chance to become chief minister, because Raj Narain supported Ram Naresh Yadav, he was appointed Cabinet minister in charge of cooperatives.

The Janata experiment, however, didn't last too long. And when Charan Singh split from the party to form the Lok Dal, Mulayam Singh followed his lead again. In 1980, Yadav lost the elections from Jaswantnagar, but was appointed leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council by virtue of being the UP chief of the Lok Dal. In 1985 he contested elections from Jaswantnagar yet again on a DMKP (Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party, a creation of Chaudhary Charan Singh) ticket and won. The DMKP reverted back to its original name, Lok Dal, and Yadav took charge as leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

It was around this period that Mulayam Singh built up his power base. Touring incessantly throughout the state—his petrol bill was always a matter of some controversy—he created a strong party organisation at the village and district level, taking care to install those personally loyal to him in key positions. All those who were opposed to him were systematically destroyed and Yadav built up a party that owed allegiance to him over everyone else.

His rise to the upper echelons of the party wasn't without a struggle, though. And Mulayam Singh made a fair number of enemies along the way. Among them were Charan Singh's daughter Saroj and Rajendra Singh, the state chief of the Lok Dal. When the Chaudhary's health worsened and he lapsed into coma, this duo tried to freeze Yadav out. But he proved to be more than a match for them, persuading Charan Singh's son Ajit (with some help from Sharad Yadav, Ajay Singh and K.C. Tyagi) to join politics against Saroj.

But Ajit and Mulayam couldn't remain on the same side for long. And their rivalry, which culminated in the fight for the UP chief ministership in 1989, began around this time. Mulayam Singh, along with Sharad Yadav and Devi Lal, split the party and went over to Lok Dal (B), led by the late H.N. Bahuguna. Around the end of 1986, Mulayam was removed as leader of the Opposition by Ajit Singh, with Yadav swearing revenge against the son of his mentor.

Even when the two men found themselves in the same party as, in 1988, Janata Dal, the rivalry continued. Both claimed to be heirs to the Chaudhary's legacy and fights commenced on every issue, from the leadership of the state unit to the distribution of party tickets for the parliamentary and Assembly elections. Mulayam Singh won the right to be state party chief on the basis of his organisational strength and influence on party workers. But this was only a minor skirmish: the battle was far from over.

And the final round came after the Assembly elections, where the Dal won 212 seats in a house of 425. Mulayam Singh staked his claim to the chief ministership, only to come up against Ajit Singh, who wanted the same post. While Devi Lal came out openly in favour of Yadav, the Raja seemed to be favouring Ajit.

With reason. There was no love lost between the two men ever since 1980-82 when V.P. Singh had been UP chief minister and Yadav the leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council. Mulayam Singh had gone on the record to call the Raja a killer of backwards, having engineered their deaths in fake encounters. In 1986, when VP was the finance minister in Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet, Yadav had brought the work of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly to a standstill for a week on the issue of the Dahiya Trust scandal, in which the Raja's family was alleged to have obtained Rs 1 crore as compensation by fraudulent means.

V.P. Singh, therefore, was loath to have Mulayam Singh as chief minister. But such was Yadav's command over the individual MLAs that the Raja was forced to concede the point that he would win an election to the CM's post. Though he didn't come out openly in Mulayam's favour, he withdrew support from Ajit Singh anyway. And Mulayam Singh Yadav became the new chief minister of UP.

That wasn't the limit of Mulayam's ambitions, however. And instead of restricting himself to state politics

and administration, he chose to adopt stances which were bound to prove controversial and would thus ensure greater publicity for him at the national level.

That was what inspired the chief minister's anti-English stand. Yadav had always suffered from an inferiority complex *vis-a-vis* his inability to speak *angrezi*, and now that he was in a position of authority he would get his own back on all those English-speaking types who had sniggered at him throughout his political career. Of course, Mulayam Singh came up with ideological arguments, talking about the damage servility to a foreign tongue had done us, but those didn't really wash when it was discovered that his son was studying in an English medium school.

The CM had greater success in his anti-communalism campaign. His government, unlike V.P. Singh's, didn't depend on the support of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). So, Yadav could afford to adopt an openly confrontationist stand against the party. He first gave notice of his aggressive intentions when he arrested the Shankaracharya of Dwarkapeeth, when the religious leader was on his way to Ayodhya to participate in the *shilanyas* ceremony. With this one stroke, Mulayam Singh established himself as the best bet for the Muslim voter and a secular leader of note.

The charges that Mulayam Singh had levelled against others, however, stuck to him as well. His critics claimed that the chief minister had 24 criminal cases pending against him. Yadav conceded the fact, but maintained that these had been trumped up by his political opponents to discredit him and that there was no substance to these charges.

Or to the allegation that he provided succour and support to criminal elements (Anna in Lucknow was a name bandied most often in this connection) in the state and utilised their services in settling scores with his rivals. Mulayam contended that his behaviour was no different from that of Jaya Prakash Narayan and Vinoba Bhave. While they had tried to reform dacoits, he was trying to convert common criminals into respectable citizens. And he deserved approbation, not condemnation for this.

Meanwhile, Yadav's assertion of independence from the central leadership continued. Not only did he invite Chandra Shekhar to address rallies with him, he also appeared on the same platform with Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Kanshi Ram. At all these events the Raja was conspicuous by his absence. And to prove his point, Mulayam Singh refused to comply with the Prime Minister's directive to come to Delhi after 30 October. Yadav stayed put in his state, and the Raja couldn't even utter a ritual protest for fear that the chief minister would vote against him in the elections to the post of party leader.



JOSHI YADAV

THE BABRI MASJID: everyone felt that Mulayam had done his best

V.P. Singh did achieve a pyrrhic victory, by depriving Mulayam Singh of the chance to arrest BJP president L.K. Advani. But Yadav's secular credentials were too well established by then for that to make a discernible difference. He'd been attending meetings organised by various Muslim organisations all over India and at the National Integration Council meeting held in Madras, the left and the Congress had offered him their full support in the battle against communal forces.

The Raja had perforce to give in to Mulayam Singh Yadav for, with the Muslims and the backwards solidly behind him, the UP chief minister was well nigh invulnerable

Yadav could, therefore, afford to take an uncompromising stand, refusing, for one, to accept the secret understanding that Advani be allowed a safe passage to Ayodhya. And the Raja had perforce to give in to him for with the Muslims and the backwards solidly behind him, Mulayam Singh Yadav was well nigh invulnerable.

The chief minister didn't give up on the other vote-banks, either. Thus, unlike Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav, he did not adopt a strident tone on the Mandal recommendations, thereby ensuring that the forward communities in his state didn't turn against him. Despite his admiration for the Lohia school of thought, Mulayam Singh invited various industrialists home for dinner and asked them to invest in his state.

Yes, Mulayam Singh Yadav thought of everything. And as the Janata Dal leadership crisis deepened, everyone's thoughts were focused on the UP chief minister, and which way he would swing. There was no better measure than that of Mulayam Singh's place in the scheme of things. •

Rajiv Shukla with Seema Goswami/Lucknow

EXIT SHOURIE (AGAIN)

Goenka fires his crusading editor for the second time



SONDEEP SHANKAR

When *Indian Express* editor Arun Shourie received a one-page telex from proprietor Ramnath Goenka on 25 October, asking him, in effect, to resign, it was history repeating itself. For over two weeks before that happened, there were strong rumours in the capital that the press baron and his crusading editor would once again part ways, ostensibly because they differed on "policy matters". Earlier, in 1982, Shourie had been forced to leave the paper he was so closely identified with as its executive editor—only to be asked to return as editor in February 1987.

As Arun Shourie sees it, the dismissal came as a complete surprise to him. The ailing octogenarian had spoken to his editor only three hours before sending him a telex charging him with violating the paper's policy, and virtually asking him to resign. "I had absolutely no knowledge that this would happen. Ramnathji had been as affectionate to me as always," insists Shourie. "When I phoned him, he reassured me that he would come to Delhi the next day, and we would talk. But since he didn't come, or couldn't come, I went over to Bombay with N.S. Jagannathan (who took over as editor on 3 November) to meet him."

According to sources in the newspaper, tension had been brewing in the offices of the *Indian Express* for some time. The old man, say sources close to him, was unhappy with his editor since his damning exposure of Devi Lal, in which Shourie reproduced a telephonic conversation with the then deputy prime minister, replete with the most vulgar abuses in Hindi, on the *Express*' front page. He was not pleased with Shourie's strident criticism of the government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report either. Earlier, Goenka had backed Shourie's inimitable crusading style, and even encouraged it, as the paper's circulation soared. Over the last few months he was interfering less and less with the

Arun Shourie: V.P. Singh is a liar

Express' editorial content. But there were other members of his family who were more than perturbed that the paper was being increasingly used by the editor to launch vituperative attacks on some politicians in a style which sometimes verged on pamphleteering.

Two young directors of the company, Goenka's grandsons Vivek Khaitan and Manoj Sonthalia, had, for some time, been engaged in a running feud with Shourie and his ally in the organisation, S. Gurumurthy. Shourie denies that there was any tension between him and the grandsons, maintaining that their relationship had always been cordial. "They told me in Bombay that they were ashamed that such a decision (to sack Shourie) had been taken, and they could see no reason why it had happened," he claims. According to Shourie, Goenka was his usual affectionate self when they had a "frank" discussion. The ailing press baron later called Gurumurthy and said, "all points are in your friend's favour, I have asked him to return to Delhi and continue as editor"

The following day, at lunch, Shourie received a fax message dismissing him. Goenka had changed his mind, saying that the decision to sack him was irrevocable, and that he should hand over charge to Vivek Khaitan. Shourie refuses to divulge the reason for this volte-face, though he does mention that he warned Ramnathji that "people were poisoning his ears". While admitting that he felt "buffetted" by the tide of events Shourie consistently denies that he has a clear explanation for his dismissal.

Others in the newspaper are, however, quite forthcoming about the reasons behind Shourie's ouster. They are certain that the flashpoint between the editor and the management was an article Shourie wrote for publication on the day he received the telex sacking him. The article, which details negotiations between Prime Minister V.P. Singh and RSS leaders on the eve of the last Lok Sabha elections, was spiked. Apparently, Goenka and adviser Gurumurthy were involved in the negotiations, and the proprietor did not like the idea of the details being divulged a year later at such a critical juncture in Indian politics. The piece entitled, "*Arre bhai, masjid hai hi kahaan?*(Where is the mosque, my brother?)" makes out that V.P. Singh had wooed RSS leaders with a promise that the Babri Masjid would be demolished, and later went back on his word after wresting power with their (BJP and RSS) help. Quoting "persons I know intimately" (he later divulged that they were Jaswant Singh, Arun Jaitley, Gurumurthy, and Bhaurao Deoras; Jaswant Singh also issued a statement saying that the facts reported by Shourie were absolutely true, though the Janata Dal spokesman Jaipal Reddy termed it a piece of fiction) who were present at the meeting, the article is a scathing indictment of the Prime Minister's attitude to the problem, even a year before it escalated into one of the worst crises ever to have threatened the country's unity. V.P. Singh is quoted as having said: "Demolition *ki zaroorat hi kahan hai, bhai? Ek dhakka doge to woh gir jayegi...aur agar aap sab ek ek eent ghar le jayenge, wahan kuch rahega hi nahin* (where is the need to demolish the mosque? One shove and it will crumble...if each of you carried one brick home, there would be nothing left)!

Shourie dismisses the idea that the piece had anything to do with his dismissal, or that the management was afraid that he had gone overboard in attacking V.P. Singh, whom they supported. "How can I, writing in my little paper, affect Singh?" laughs the soft-spoken editor with the acid pen. "He has committed self-immolation, he is already cremated, who can save him?"

He consistently declines to badmouth the management that has so summarily dismissed him, saying, "I wish them all the best, they were fair to me (when working out the terms of his dismissal)." He is also all praise for his colleague, N. Jagannathan, who has taken over as editor, but only after Shourie declared that the management has been fair in their dealings with him.

Would Shourie return if the management asked him to? He brushes aside the possibility, not wishing to answer hypothetical questions. He suggests that you read his article, "What can a mere writer do, and what he must do to do it", and wishes the press wouldn't "get after" him, and "invent motives" for all his stories. He breaks into an Urdu couplet to describe how he feels about being sacked for the second time. "You get used to it, *woh yaad bhi kahan aati hai (you don't even remember)*," he smiles stoically. "I'm much more distant from my work than I used to be." He adds that he would never refuse an office which would enable him to serve the people. "None of us must look for anything other than brief opportunities to do that."





Goenka (left) did not like the details of the negotiations between **V.P. Singh** and RSS leaders being divulged at such a critical juncture in Indian politics

It may be a while before another "brief opportunity" comes along, admits Shourie. "Which paper would give me a job?" he jests. Until then, there are three books to be written, and a column or two, perhaps. And maybe there will be a short respite from the abuse and accusations hurled at him by the "bloody fool press".

"Even Baba Amte and Mother Teresa, such saintly persons, were abused in our society," he says dramatically. "I am only a *cheenti* (ant) compared to them, but you must stand up and counter it (the abuse) all the same." ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

If you have relatives or friends who are Non-Resident Indians, do them a good turn.
Send them this ad.

(Or send us their names and addresses and we'll do it for you. You may use the coupon for your convenience.)

An outstanding investment opportunity for NON-RESIDENT INDIANS!

NRI BONDS
(Second Series)

7 year U.S. $ denominated Bonds — repayable in non-repatriable Indian Rupees	Fully exempt from Income, Wealth and Gift Taxes in India — even on permanent return to India
Freely Transferable from one NRI to another	Higher Interest 1% more than 3 year FCNR deposit
Choice of Cumulative or Non-Cumulative (half-yearly) interest payment	Loan Facility. Premature encashment facility. Plus many more attractive features.

PRESSMAN

Issued by

State Bank of India

Issue Open from 1st November, 1990 to 31st December, 1990

For further information please contact any of the foreign offices of the State Bank of India or write to us:

Managers to the Issue

SBI Capital Markets Ltd.
202, Maker Tower E,
Cuffe Parade,
Bombay 400 005 India.

Please send your information pack about NRI BONDS (Second Series) without any obligation
PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK LETTERS

Name :

Address :

Country :

A GREAT WAY TO SECURE YOUR FUTURE

INDER MALHOTRA

The diplomatic drift

The V.P. Singh regime never had the time to look beyond its borders



By now it is crystal clear that for several months, until fresh elections hopefully clear up the mess, India is in for grave political uncertainty, confusion and convulsion. This crisis of unprecedented dimensions could not have come at a more awkward time. For, the searing conflicts within the country are accompanied by no less grim external challenges to Indian security and diplomacy.

Ironically, in a remarkable reversal of the traditional subcontinental pattern, Pakistan has been able to put its act together at the precise moment when Indian politics is in disarray, bordering on disintegration. It is after many a summer that Pakistan has a democratically elected (never mind the rigging) civilian government entirely in tune with the hard-line President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, and the hard-headed army generals. The new combination can therefore be depended upon to try to wrest Kashmir from India—or, at the very least, fatally to bleed this country in both Kashmir and Punjab.

At the same time, the Gulf imbroglio is bound to come to a head within the next few weeks. Even at the best of times, when V.P. Singh's government was still stable and Inder Gujral was able to rush from one world capital to another (now he has had to cancel his visit to China), this country was unable to formulate a long-range Gulf policy beyond the safe evacuation of Indians stranded in Iraq. How on earth are we going to have a policy on this subject—the single most crucial international factor to influence subcontinental affairs—when there is an unstable and shaking hand of an essentially caretaker regime at the helm?

Before answering this question, let us briefly survey how, despite frenetic activity by the foreign minister, the Janata Dal government managed to lower both India's voice and importance in world affairs. In the first place, it did so by largely confining its sights to the country's immediate neighbourhood, indeed to the six SAARC sisters. This was in accordance with the Janata Dal's pre-poll world view, influenced greatly by the new ruling party's brains trust. The wisdom then was that, reversing Rajiv Gandhi's policies, the Janata Dal would almost overnight convert South Asia into an "area of peace, cooperation and friendship"

Pakistan, however, delivered a shattering blow to this naive notion though, to its credit, the new Indian government did improve relations somewhat with Bangladesh. Moreover, the improvement of relations with Nepal—and this is not much—has been due entirely to the return of democracy in the Himalayan kingdom. And this would have been impossible but for Rajiv's refusal to do a deal with the royal Nepalese regime. In Sri Lanka, where Gujral was to go on 11 November but cannot possibly go now, the likes of Ranjan Wijeratne have been scoffing at India since long before the V.P. Singh regime landed itself in its current ignominy.



Even when V.P. Singh's government was stable, India was unable to formulate a long-range foreign policy

The second major flaw of the Janata Dal government's conduct of international relations was the virtual abdication of his inescapable responsibilities by the Prime Minister. V.P. Singh was right in trying to undo the personalisation of foreign policy and the concentration of decision-making on it in the Prime Minister's Office which was Rajiv's penchant. But in doing so, Singh let the pendulum swing to the other extreme. Consequently, in the absence of prime ministerial authority behind it, no worthwhile initiative could be taken on such issues as the Gulf or the future of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Those inclined to believe that as in the French Fourth Republic, so in an uncertain and unstable India, the top bureaucracy can be depended upon to keep things going ought to think again. From the days of Indira Gandhi through the Janata years, the Charan Singh interlude and Rajiv's Raj, a very depressing bureaucratic culture has developed in Delhi. Top civil servants such as the Cabinet secretary, the principal secretary to the Prime Minister, hand-picked advisers and so on tend to become servants of those in power, not of the Indian state. At a time when a make-or-break election is to be fought, it is doubtful if many of them would, or would be allowed to, shed those bad old ways.

The country's only hope is that the people occupying such sensitive positions as those of defence and foreign secretaries, service chiefs or stewards of intelligence agencies would place national interest above loyalty to the boss and petty self-service. ●

The Ayodhya fall-out

The kar seva *sparks off communal violence in Bangladesh*



COMMUNAL STRIFE

Ayodhya may be more than a thousand kilometres away, but it is close enough to inflame communal passions. All attention was riveted on the UP town where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies—the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal—had planned to defy prohibitory orders and begin the construction of a Ram temple at the controversial site of the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi on 30 October.

Tension had been mounting in Bangladesh ever since BJP chief L.K. Advani began his *rath yatra* from the temple town of Somnath in the last week of September and the party announced its plans. Despite reports of the elaborate security arrangements made by the state of Uttar Pradesh and the government of India's resolve to beat back any attempt by the BJP and its allies to desecrate the place of worship, apprehensions persisted in the public mind. And 30 October was the day of reckoning.

The happenings in Ayodhya on that crucial day sparked off a spate of communal violence in parts of Bangladesh. Reports saying that the *kar sevaks* had breached the police barricades, entered the mosque, damaged it partially and set frenzied mobs rampaging in the streets. The worst-affected were the port city of Chittagong and the capital, Dhaka, where trouble broke out on the evening of 30 October itself.

The Bangladesh press had been following the events in India, where recurring communal riots took a heavy toll of life everyday, but few had charged the Indian government with failing to protect the interests of the minorities. The pro-Islamic *Inquilabi* was, however, an exception. On 31 October, it front-paged an editorial screaming that the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya had been razed to the ground, and added fuel to the already raging fire. The next day, the paper realised the blunder, retracted and apologised for publishing a piece of fabricated news.







President H.M. Ershad (above): promising communal harmony; Hasina Wajed (top right): preaching religious equality; Khaleda Zia (right): stressing collective responsibility for protecting the minorities

But communal storm-troopers had taken over by then. By the afternoon of 31 October, the situation had clearly gone out of hand and curfew had to be clamped in Dhaka and Chittagong, where the army was called out to restore order. The violence left four people dead and over a hundred injured. Shops and houses belonging to the minorities were looted and torched and several Hindu temples damaged. In Dhaka, the arson was mainly confined to the old parts of the capital where the minorities are concentrated. The curfew was relaxed for a couple of hours on 2 November so that the Muslims could say their Friday prayers. But miscreants took this opportunity to foment fresh trouble.

Most political parties reacted by calling for peace and stressing communal amity. On 1 November, President H.M. Ershad said at a meeting of his Jatiya Party that the "glorious tradition of communal harmony would be preserved at all costs and trouble-makers indulging in anti-social activities would be dealt with severely."

Next day, Ershad visited the affected areas in Dhaka and Chittagong and ordered the immediate restoration of the damaged shrines. According to reports available in the capital, restoration work had already begun under heavy security arrangements. The rebuilding of the broken temples was being undertaken by the

works ministry at government cost.

And the Opposition, too, condemned the violence—both in India and in Bangladesh. The Awami League, headed by Sheik Hasina Wajed, expressed surprise over the intrusion of Hindu fundamentalists into the Babri Masjid and flayed communalism and religious bigotry, saying that her party believed in the equality of all religions.

The other fiery Opposition leader, Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief Khaleda Zia, also urged the people to maintain peace. "It is our collective responsibility to give protection to life and property of the minority community," she said.

But Maulana Abbas Ali Khan, acting *amir* of the fundamentalist Jamat-e-Islami party took a dangerously rabid stand. There is no scope for communal harmony, he thundered, even as the minorities were in a state of shock.

Other Opposition parties and independent groups took a different view of the crisis. They criticised the imposition of curfew in Dhaka and Chittagong as a government ploy to defuse the anti-Ershad agitation sweeping the country, and attributed the clashes to vested interests who, they said, were trying to divide the people.

Dr Kamal Hossain, convenor of the Profession Council, and Faiz Ahmed, convenor of the Cultural Front, alleged that anti-socials struck terror in different areas while securitymen stood as mute spectators. The Hindu, Bouddha, Christian Oikya Parishad, a joint platform of the three religious communities, also held the government responsible for the violence.

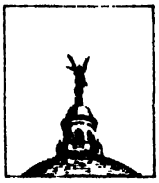
Most opinion-setters, however, expressed concern at the growing miasma of Hindu fundamentalism in secular India, but welcomed the steps taken by Prime Minister V.P. Singh—which might well be at the cost of his own government—to foil the attempts of the fundamentalists to demolish the Babri Masjid and build the temple in its place. They are all praise for the UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and the CPI(M) leader, chief minister Jyoti Basu of West Bengal, for their unwavering stand against the communal forces.

But despite the brave front put up by some Indian leaders, the Bangladeshis are worried over the resurgence of communalism in India, as it tends to stoke communal passions in Bangladesh. •

Alamgir Hossain/Dhaka

Go forth and unite

The left urges the Congress(I) to join its peace initiatives in Calcutta



WEST BENGAL

Reports from the cow-belt states were grim—the tragedies of Partition were being enacted over and over again. Though Ayodhya had reopened the wounds of 1947 and lit the bonfires of communal hatred, Bengal—where over 12 million Muslims live, remained outwardly calm, apart from stray disturbances in Howrah and Purulia. While the Hindi heartland burnt, a crumbling mansion in Beliaghata, a north-east Calcutta suburb, became a new symbol of communal harmony. On 1 September, 1947, Mahatma Gandhi had begun his fast-unto-death at this Beliaghata house. Forty three years later, on 29 October, leaders of the CPI marched past the house, now a museum few ever visit.



Led by chief minister Jyoti Basu, senior CPI(M) leaders lined up with party workers to form a human chain in Calcutta

The acrimony of the past was forgotten as the CPI leaders appealed to all secular forces including the Congress(I) to unitedly fight the communal scourge. "The left parties in India aren't strong enough ..We are appealing to the Congress(I) and all other secular forces to come together and strive to avoid a '47 type situation," CPI MP Gurudas Dasgupta said. Demolishing the Babri Masjid would be construed as an act of barbarism, he felt, adding that the Hindus living in Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Islamic republics of West Asia would be in danger if the VHP succeeded in the objective.

Only a day later, as the VHP storm-troopers were punching their way through the police cordon around the temple-mosque, senior CPI(M) leaders linked arms to form a chain for peace. Led by chief minister Jyoti Basu, senior ministers including Buddhadev Bhattacharya, Asim Dasgupta and Shyamal Chakraborty and CPI(M) Central Committee member Biman Bose lined up alongside DYFI members (the CPI-M youth wing) as part of a human chain. The workers formed human chains in different parts of the city, organised local committee meetings and marched in processions chanting "Hindu-Muslim *bhai bhai.*"

Blaming the BJP-led state government in Rajasthan, Basu claimed that government employees had incited the rioters there. Bengal, he proudly proclaimed, was free of communal disharmony for decades, but referred to the outbreaks at Pilkhana in Howrah (the setting of Dominique Lapierre's *The City of Joy*) and Purulia as "severe blots". But the Left Front chairman, Sailen Dasgupta, ruled out anti-communal alliance with the Congress(I): "We cannot make it a general rule, the Congress(I) is at the root of many problems."

And reacting to the CPI(M) sniping, PCC(I) general secretary Pradip Bhattacharya accused the marxists of "dirty politics". The Congress(I) also organised a *rakhi bandhan* day and a communal harmony week. But more than the appeals of political leaders, it is the memories of the Forties' carnage, aided by the lack of grassroots strengths of Hindu chauvinist organisations, that has prevented a major conflagration. •

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta

Ek, do, teen...

Militant groups proliferate in Assam



ASSAM

Insurgency is the only growth industry in Assam. Every other day a new outfit mushrooms in the state proclaiming itself to be the saviour of the masses, and the host of acronyms that vie for attention on walls of buildings can be mind-boggling. The latest addition to this proliferating tribe of do-gooders is the United National Socialist Council of the Eastern Region (UNSCER).

The nomenclature has a strong affinity to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), a dreaded rebel outfit that operates on the Nagaland-Manipur border. But the UNSCER claims to be a far bigger forum than the NSCN, as its professed area of operation covers the entire north-east.

This new outfit has recognised the NSCN, the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) and the Kangleipak National Union as the dominant revolutionary groups in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur respectively. It claims to have established fraternal ties with these organisations and hopes that they will reciprocate.

Claiming that it has already built up its own militant force to liberate the north-east, the UNSCER has also disclosed that these militants have been trained in a country other than Burma.

The others who have joined the fray are the Ahom Mukti Force of Assam (AMFA) and the Assam Muslim Liberation Army (AMLA). The AMFA has emerged as a counterpoise to the AASU-AGP-ULFA nexus and has threatened to meet the terror tactics of the ULFA with its own brand of militancy. The AMLA likewise plans to float vigilante groups to protect the minorities.

As the elections approach, more such groups are likely to sprout. And Assam's ethnic scenario might be interesting to watch. •

Rabijit Chowdhury/Guwahati

All for Bombay

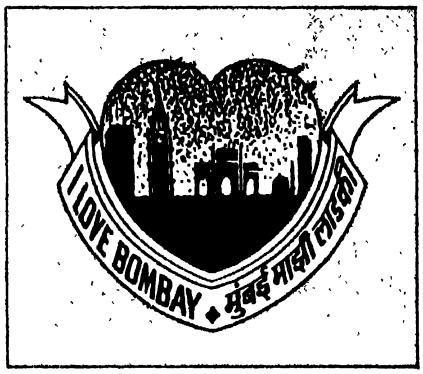
A row breaks out over the city sheriff's decision to hold a cultural extravaganza



MAHARASHTRA

Had it been a hundred years ago the mayor and the sheriff of Bombay would have fought a duel. Mayor Chhagan Bhujbal and sheriff Nana Chudasama are engaged in a keen contest of oneupmanship to prove that they know Bombay best. It all happened suddenly, on 25 October, when the sheriff, whose term is going to end shortly, thought of a Rs 15-lakh extravaganza to get people to say, "I love Bombay". The idea is to spread the message of keeping Bombay clean and fighting drug abuse. And, accordingly, the enthusiastic sheriff has planned a cultural show on 15 November.

As soon as he had the brain wave, Chudasama got into the act. He roped in the city's officialdom, which is eager to carry through the impresario's game plan. For example, the government's secretary of publicity is in charge of the festival.



The festival logo: the heart of discontent

Mayor Bhujbal did not like the sheriff's flowing enthusiasm. He, along with Congress(I) councillor R.R. Singh, felt that the sheriff was edging them out in the popularity race. So, the two men embarked on a bitter battle. Said the mayor: "The present sheriff seems to be very interested in publicity. During my previous term, I got the private companies to build and beautify traffic

The communal bomb

Scientists stress fusion over fission to avert a catastrophe

Scientists have called for sanity. As the frenzied chants of the *kar sevaks* in distant Ayodhya reverberated in Bangalore last fortnight, members of the city's large scientific community cried halt. They denounced the rise of religious fundamentalism in the country and stressed the need to delink religion from politics for the sake of secularism and communal harmony.

About 200 scientists have said in a written statement that the communal threat, arising out of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy, has come at a time of severe economic crisis, and have pointed out that the tasks of attaining world standards in science is becoming difficult under vitiated



Prof U.R. Rao: a close shave

islands, and the sheriff has gone about advertising his own name."

But sheriff Chudasama is unfazed. "Those who criticise us do not understand our problem," he retorts. "We are doing everything for free—KalyanjiAnandji, Amitabh Bachchan, rock groups and Gujarati and Marathi drama troupes will perform and the common people will get all this for free." But to what end, no one really knows.

And the mayor has some tough questions which the sheriff has so far parried. If Chudasama is really keen on entertaining the slum dwellers, Bhujbal wonders why the extravaganza was being planned at Marine Drive instead of Dharavi. Bhujbal also criticises BEST's (Bombay Electric Supply and Transport) readiness to press additional buses into service on the day of the function, when it has drastically reduced its daily fleet.

As if all this was not enough, the sheriff had to drag the navy into the controversial razzmatazz. Surprisingly, the navy has agreed to fly helicopters to shower confetti and arrange fireworks from ships.

Evidently, the mayor points out, the fuel crunch does not seem to worry the sheriff or the government. •

Olga Tellis/Bombay

Coming home

A stolen Garuda idol is brought back to Puri



ORISSA

There was much rejoicing in Puri last month. To the god-fearing people of this temple town it was the victory of good over evil. An ancient and rare twelfth-century idol, stolen from the Gundicha temple of Puri five years back, was finally brought back by the sleuths of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). But it will be quite a while before it is re-installed in the temple's *sanctum sanctorum*. The image is valued at several crores in the international antique market.

The idol, a rare specimen of the mythical half-man half-bird Garuda, is still *sub judice*, says Sarat Chandra Mohapatra, administrator of Puri's more well-known Jagannath temple. It will take some time before the case filed by the CBI against a gang of antique smugglers is settled. And till then, the 15-inch high, 40-kg statuette will have to be produced before the metropolitan magistrate, Delhi, from time to time during the legal proceedings.

The image, carved out of superquality black granite back in 1197, is now kept in the southern precincts of the Jagannath temple and is being worshipped daily.

The temple administration, assisted by the crime branch of the Orissa Police, initiated efforts to bring the idol back to Puri because of two reasons. First, the magnificent artefact was lying uncared for in the CBI's *maalkhana* (godown) in Delhi and was beginning to lose its lustre. Secondly, the people were growing increasingly suspicious about its fate, to the extent that its existence was being doubted.



The Garuda: worth its weight in gold

For three years, the Garuda was in the possession of the smugglers before the CBI seized it when it was about to be taken out of the country.

According to Mohapatra, Garuda worship is a very ancient tradition. The half-man half-bird diety that thrives on snakes is the *vahana* (carrier) of Lord Vishnu, and inscriptions from the Indus Valley civilisation mention Garuda worship. The excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa unearthed its images. The Garuda statue of Gundicha may not be as pristine, but it is almost a thousand years old and is worth its weight in gold. •

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

circumstances. Scientific luminaries such as Prof. C.N.R. Rao, head of the Indian Institute of Science, Prof. V. Radhakrishnan, chief of the Raman Research Institute, and Prof. R. Narasimhan of the National Aeronautics Laboratory were signatories to the appeal.

The scientists have said that "religious fundamentalism closes the door to rational debate and discussions, the prerequisites of democracy" and feel that the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue is threatening democratic and secular ideals. They have particularly taken the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to task for trying to impose its will on the nation and rejecting constitutional options.

The scientists incurred the wrath of some fundamentalist groups because of their stand. On 31 October, an attempt was made by a five-member gang belonging to the Kannada Ranadheerara Pade (Kannada Warriors' Battalion) to kidnap Dr U.R. Rao, chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The police acted on a tip-off and arrested the five men before they could execute their plan. The leader of the gang confessed to the police that their intention was to secure a better deal for Kannada language in the state and the release of all arrested BJP and other Hindu fundamentalist leaders.

Scientists apart, leading litterateurs and artists also demonstrated against the machinations of the VHP-BJP combine at the Ravindra Kalakshetra, the state's cultural nerve-centre.

As the wave of communal hysteria lashes the state, the people keep their fingers crossed. Since end-September, the state has been witnessing the worst-ever communal clashes and even the police are not sure when the madness will end. •

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

Reprieve for a 'ripper'

The Supreme Court stays the hanging of a murderer on the grounds of caste

The court's decision was unique. Muthukutti Chandran, 40 known as 'ripper' Chandran, had death staring him in the face. He knew that in a few days, the jail warden would lead him to the gallows. But 72 hours before that fateful moment, Chandran got a reprieve by virtue of a Supreme Court order that stayed his hanging.

Chandran is a notorious criminal. During 1985-86 he and his gang created terror in north Malabar area in Kerala and in southern Karnataka. Chandran was found guilty of having committed serial murders and, like the Calcutta Stoneman, his gang killed by clobbering the victims on the head with sticks or a hammer. They left behind a trail of ghastly murders, and for six months the police in the two states were in a state of total confusion.

Finally, it was the Karnataka police that tracked Chandran down, near Chikmagalur in Karnataka. The police in the two states spent nearly Rs 20 lakhs on the 'ripper' investigations. The courts in Kerala sentenced Chandran to the gallows, while four of his associates were given life imprisonment.

The death warrant against 'ripper' Chandran was ultimately signed by the district and sessions judge of Kasargod on 9 October, directing the superintendent of Cannanore Jail to hang him on 31 October. The news of the black warrant made Chandran go berserk. According to jail officials, he "behaved like a mad man". He told the other prisoners and the officials around him: "I will move the mountains, they will never hang me."



Chandran wrote to the home ministry claiming that he was a Harijan and in Ambedkar's birth centenary, the emotional blackmail worked. The government decided to put off the hanging for the time being

And he sure did. Initially, he had written to politicians and jail officials pleading for mercy, but his letters were not even replied to. Then, someone advised him to write to the home ministry claiming that he was a Harijan and that his wife and daughter were his dependants. And in the year of Mandal, the emotional blackmail worked. The home ministry underwent a quick change of heart. "How can a Harijan be hanged when the nation is celebrating Ambedkar's centenary?" the ministry officials asked.

So, the Union home ministry appealed to the Supreme Court to defer the hanging. And 72 hours before Chandran's tryst with death, he got a new lease of life. The jail superintendent refuses to say why the Supreme Court issued the stay order. It is believed that the Harijan factor helped make the decision.

'Ripper' Chandran is a cold-blooded murderer who started his crime career by using dogs and cats as guineapigs. He used to smash the heads of the neighbourhood animals in order to perfect his murderous techniques. Later, he started doing the same with human beings and, as per police files, he knew precisely where to strike on the head.

A little-known fact about Chandran is that he is also a rapist. He and his men had gangraped many women. Six children had been attacked by his gang. Chandran also used to rob his victims.

There are doubts whether Chandran is truly a Harijan. People allege that he is married to a Harijan woman but is not one himself. Says a social worker at Cannanore: "There should not be any reservations for murderers. It is a dangerous precedent that will have far-reaching consequences."

In March this year, Balakrishnan, a man guilty of committing four gruesome murders, was hanged at the Cannanore Central Jail. His mercy petition was rejected and the Nayanar government had, at that time, criticised the press for giving what he called undue publicity to a murderer who was going to be hanged. The same government is, however, surprisingly silent in the Chandran case.

Says a shocked advocate of the Kerala High Court: "Probably this is the first time in the country's history that a man has escaped the gallows because he happened to be a Harijan." And in the territories that were terrorised by the 'ripper', the people are still not willing to believe the news. ●

Shreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

Roots

A new Delhi Administration scheme provides homes for the homeless



NITIN RAI



Ekta Vihar: hope for slum-dwellers

For the residents of Ekta Vihar in South Delhi, it is a dream come true. From an impoverished, rootless existence, to owners of land. Almost overnight these slum-dwellers have a home they own. a home they cannot be evicted from, a home secure from the Delhi Administrations' demolition squad. Says one of the new home-owners, a migrant from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh: "After living in Delhi for eight years, I finally feel that I belong." Adds a beaming Bhoop Singh, Ekta Vihar's *pradhan*: "For the first time, we have a house of our own."

Ironically, for all this, the home owners have the much maligned, but all powerful, Delhi Development Authority (DDA)—and its new cooperative scheme—to thank. It is the DDA which has given the residents land, arranged for a Rs 5,000 loan on nominal interest, and provided technical assistance to build their houses. Ekta Vihar is the first colony under the DDA's novel scheme.

The residents of the colony have also done their bit. With each home costing an estimated Rs 10,000 (just four walls and a roof), each resident had to arrange for a minimum of Rs 5,000 on his own, an astronomical amount for people who barely earn enough to make both ends meet. But they managed admirably. They borrowed from money-lenders, sold off land in villages back home, pawned ornaments, worked overtime and somehow, arranged for the money. The lure of a permanent home in Delhi seemed to be worth any price.

However, the deal had a catch. The scheme, initiated by Action for Social Health for All (ASHA), a voluntary organisation, has laid down several conditions for membership. The houses cannot be sold to an outsider, nor can they be rented out. Perhaps the most outstanding condition is that women will be primary owners of the houses. "Actually, it is joint ownership," explains Dr Kiran Martin of ASHA. "But we thought that women are less likely to be tempted into selling land. Also, women are not normally given to addiction and brawls. In slums they are the ones who keep the family together." This prerequisite has unwittingly given Ekta Vihar's women a new status: their husbands now treat them with due respect. "My husband doesn't fight so much anymore," says Gayattri, a housewife still unaccustomed to her recent emancipation. "Nor does he get drunk in the evenings."

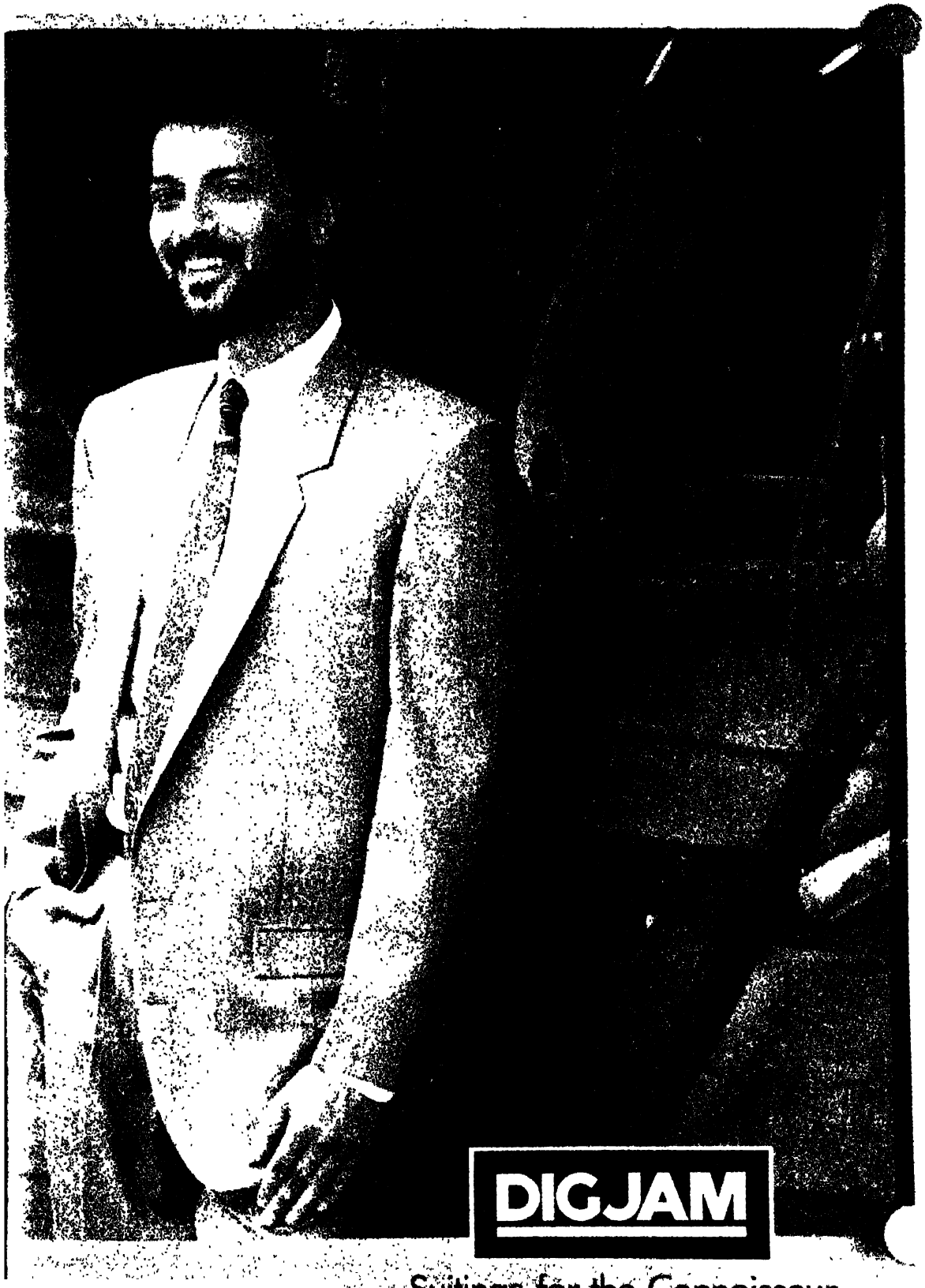
The passage to a secured life was, however, not without hurdles. The community resisted initially, a major objection being that women were given the ownership rights. But, after prolonged meetings with the DDA and ASHA, the residents warmed to the idea. Also there were financial sacrifices to be made and threats from neighbouring slum lords who felt their hold would weaken once the residents had their own houses. But there are no regrets. Says Sunita, an illiterate but active social worker of the area and a new-scheme resident: "Our lives have become more peaceful since we got the house. It's almost as if we have a new purpose in life." She adds: "We have to earn enough to repay the loans." And Sunita is determined to do just that.

If the scheme has given a new lease of life to the slum-dwellers, it has also given the DDA a chance to clear its bullying, insensitive image. "It was not easy for us either," says a DDA official. "The land and building department of the Delhi Administration initially refused us permission to build, but eventually they gave in." The official maintains that more colonies would be added under this new scheme.

It would help. In Delhi, an estimated 45 per cent of the eight million population still live in filthy, squalid hovels. If the DDA is really serious about its intentions, it could turn much of this mess to Ekta Vihars. ●

Minu Jain/New Delhi





Suitings for the Connoisseur

A Product of VXL India Ltd.

CHAINED BY HER IMAGE

[redacted] She continues to take her political career—and her love of good causes—as seriously as ever. Unfortunately for Shabana Azmi, nobody else does.

Take the events of 30 October, when the film star turned up at Patel Chowk, New Delhi, to participate in a function organised by the Yuva Janata Dal, for instance. The programme commenced on schedule, with copies of the pledge for communal harmony being circulated and those gathered—including such celebraties as Bhisham Sahni, Mulk Raj Anand, Ram Vilas Paswan, Raj Mohan Gandhi and Sonal Mansingh—forming a human chain as a symbol of "concern and urgency of our people to remain united".

SANDEEP SINHA



Shabana Azmi: hasty retreat

Unfortunately, the aforementioned concern lasted only until Azmi arrived. For, as the star took centre-stage to address those assembled, the groupies took over, pushing and shoving to get a better look and quite ruining the prevalent sombre atmosphere in the bargain.

Shabana tried to retrieve matters somewhat, hurrying off to join the human chain, husband Javed Akhtar in tow. But even that didn't work.

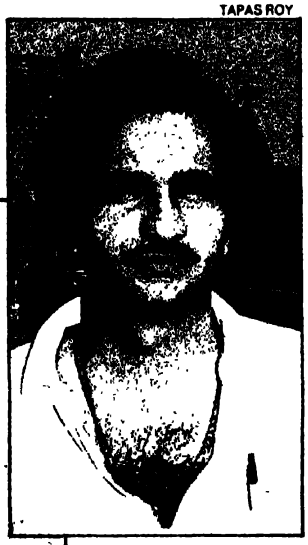
And in the end, activist Azmi had to beat a hasty retreat.

SIPPY AND SOAP

First, we had the soap operas: *Hum Log, Buniyaad.* Then came the mythological mishmash: *Ramayan, Mahabharat.* And in the end there was sheer tedium.

It was left to film and tele-serial maker Ramesh (*Sholay*) Sippy to salvage the situation. And to his credit, he's planning to do just that with another magnum opus which will—Mandi House willing—take over the Sunday morning slot vacated by *Mahabharat.*

TAPAS ROY





Ramesh Sippy and Neena Gupta (left): together again after *Buniyaad* (right)



Sippy has already begun work on a 104-episode serial, titled *Parivartan,* scripted by Manohar Shyam Joshi (of *Hum Log* fame) and with Neena Gupta in the lead. Gupta plays the young *bahu* while Ajit Vachani is the 90-year-old patriarch who rules over his family with an iron hand.

A pilot episode has already been filmed and despatched to Mandi House. And were clearance to come through, viewers may well have another *Buniyaad* unfolding on their TV screens.

SHOWBIZ IS BEST

His duties as Lintas chief have kept him away from theatre for a bit. But it's back to showbiz for Alyque Padamsee now, with his production of Shakespeare's *Othello* scheduled to go on stage in Bombay and Calcutta in November.

The play serves as a comeback vehicle for another old theatre person Kabir Bedi, who'd decided years ago that he preferred Sandokan to Tughlaq. Bedi will, of course, be playing Othello to new find Nikki Vijaykar's Desdemona.

No, Sharon didn't get to bag the lead role this time.

GAUTAM PATOLE



SONDEEP SHANKAR



Alyque Padamsee and Kabir Bedi (above): theatrical comeback

TRY AND CAP THIS!

For an environmentalist, she has singularly bad taste when it comes to choosing her leader.

First, Maneka Gandhi threw her lot in with the Raja of Manda, he of the karakul fur cap. Predictably a fair amount of embarrassment followed for the lady who prides herself on her commitment to the preservation of all wild life (and by that we don't mean enterprising goons of the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch variety, either). Whose side was Maneka on anyway? asked concerned environmentalists, and the other Mrs G was stumped for an answer.

Then, in the best traditions of *noblesse oblige*, the Raja decided to shun karakul in favour of synthetic fur. And the crisis seemed to be over.

Not quite. For the Green ex-minister decided to change sides. And went over to Chandra Shekhar, who has been immortalised for posterity only too often, sitting on a deer-skin rug.

You may well argue that that shouldn't be any skin off Maneka's perfect teeth. But those who know Maneka know better. And according to them, Shekhar may well find his rug whisked out from under him one of these days.

And replaced by a synthetic carpet, no doubt.

Maneka Gandhi: dear me!

JAGDISH YADAV



PROS AND CONS

His complaints are quite standard: nobody in the country respects sportspersons; the Bengal government didn't even send him a congratulatory letter after he won the world amateur billiards title; and much more in the same vein.

But Manoj Kothari isn't going to waste more time than strictly necessary in rueing his lot. Instead, the champion has decided to give his sporting career a new turn by turning professional.

All that he needs is a sponsor, before he becomes a regular on the international billiards circuit. ●

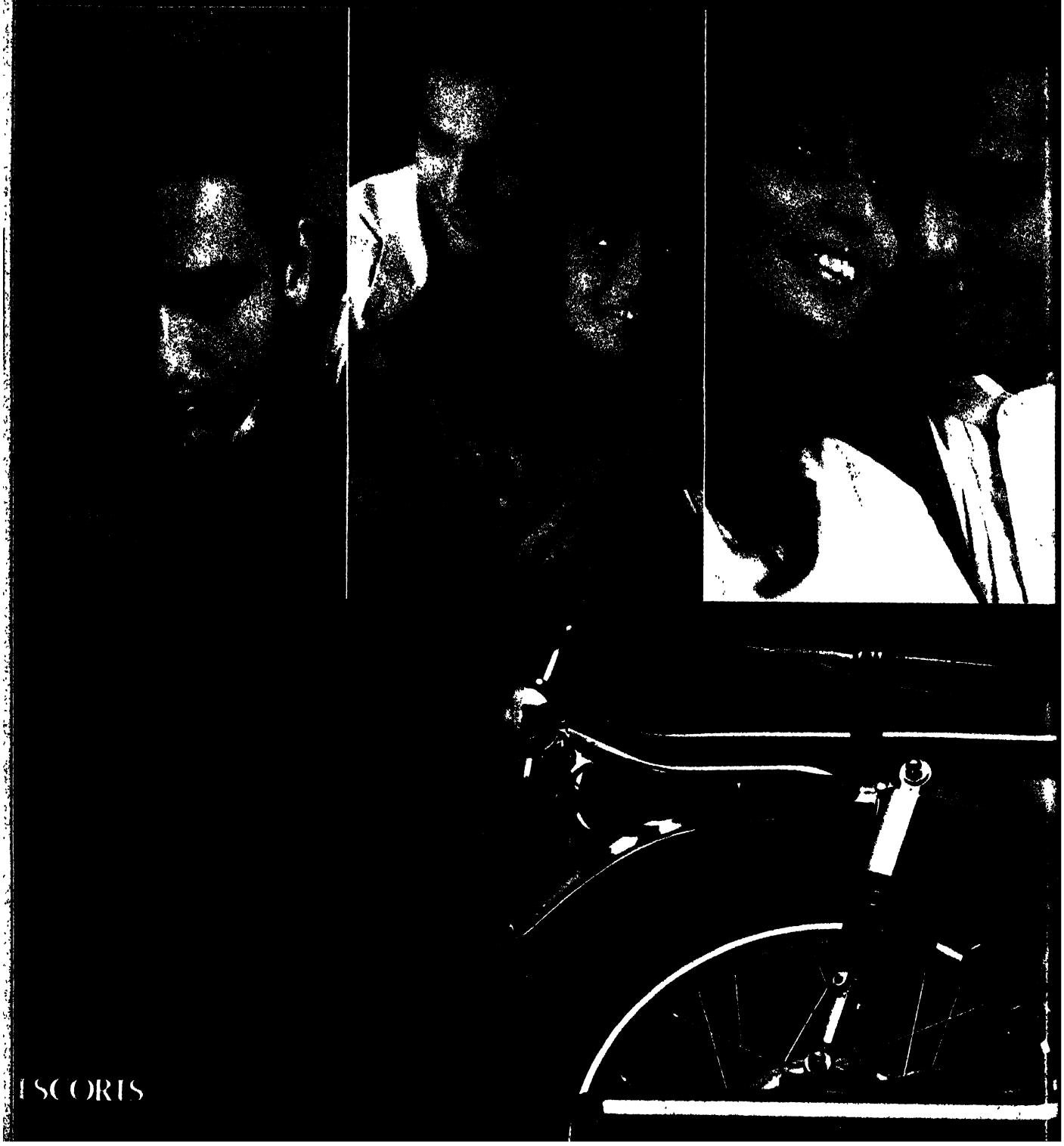
RASHBEHARI DAS



Manoj Kothari: in search of a sponsor

A MA

There's magic in her touch that just never



ESCORTS

AND HIS PASSION

many people likes the car who stole my heart away.

YAMAHA

RX100

THE INTERNATIONAL FAVOURITE



Everyone had Kabir Bedi down as the man most adept at loving and leaving 'em (Protima, Parveen and Susan will vouch for this). Everyone but Sonu Walia.

For sexy Sonu acts as if Kabir's walking out on her is nothing short of a national calamity. All queries about the fate of her "beautiful relationship" are met with moist eyes and a "I'd rather not talk about it now" forced out in a choked voice.

But surely Walia should have seen it coming. For, if Bedi could dump the original (Babi) he was hardly likely to remain faithful to a pale imitation.

RASHBEHARI DAS



Kabir and Sonu: the affair is off

She hasn't proved her worth as an actress. But when has that ever mattered when it comes to making the gossip columns? And the Kapoor *beti*, Karisma, the latest entrant to the film world, has managed to feature in them with effortless ease.

The latest is that Karisma has—god, what will they come up with next?—a boy friend. And if that's not exciting enough news, there's more. He's none other than Nusli Wadia's son Jeh, heir to Bombay Dyeing.

Their friendship goes back to school, but it has flowered only recently, with the duo going on long drives in Jeh's black Mustang and then parking in some dark suburban lane to cootchie-koo the hours away.

Karisma: old enough for long drives



Wonder what mama Babita has to say to this? After all, isn't her Lolo baby's career the most important thing at this time?

While Muzaffar Ali's professional career seems to be on hold, with the shooting of *Zooni* progressing in slow motion, there's plenty happening in his private life.

Ali and second wife Subhashini have split, with the *Umrao Jaan* director marrying an architect, Meera, who's just a little older than his eldest son.

Apparently, the estrangement with Subhashini, now a member of Parliament, began around the time she began getting involved with politics. This meant spending more and more time in Lucknow, while Ali remained in film land.

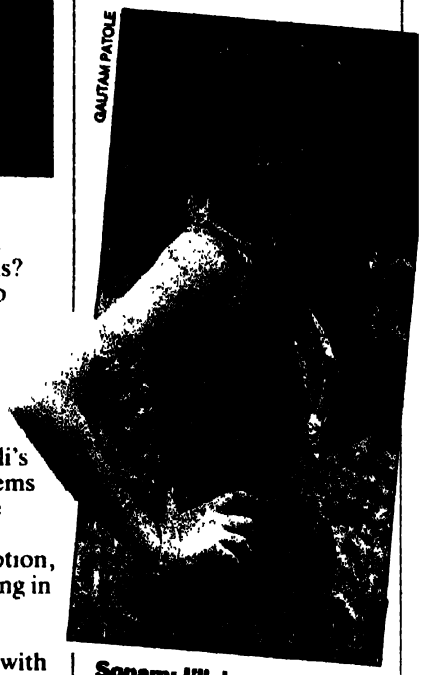
The inevitable happened. Muzaffar found a new love and conducted a *nikaah* with her. Only he ommitted to divorce Subhashini before that and she is reportedly livid with him for treating her in this cavaliar manner.

But that doesn't make much difference to Ali, who claims that with Meera he's found a new reason to live.

Poor Sonam. Despite her best efforts to cut down husband-to-be Rajiv Rai's expenditure on his shooting stint in Nairobi (she left her make-up man behind for one), his expenses continue to sky-rocket.

Of course, that has a lot to do with free loaders like

GAUTAM PATOLE



Sonam: I'll do my own make-up

Dimple Kapadia, who landed up in Nairobi to enjoy a free holiday in darling Sunny's arms.

With Rajiv Rai picking up all the tabs, of course.

Perhaps, the extremely large drunk has decided to settle into happy domesticity, after all. For, the second Mrs Vinod Khanna is in the family way.

While Kavita is very excited at the prospective birth, for Khanna the event has an air of *deja vue* about it: he's had two sons by first wife Geetanjali, remember.

But never mind that: here's good luck to him, anyway. ●

Profound and simple

R.K. Narayan's latest novel is both at once

The maestro returns. Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan, better known as R.K. Narayan, has produced his 14th novel on the fictitious south Indian town called Malgudi, continuing to enchant readers with his inimitably charming style and depiction of quaint Malgudi characters. *The World Of Nagaraj*, originally published earlier this year by Heinemann of London, is now available in an Indian edition.

Narayan, who celebrated his 84th birthday last month, is the only one of our senior triumvirate of Indian-English novelists (the other two being Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao) who continues to write fiction prolifically in his advanced years. Unlike many others who persist in churning out volumes despite declining inspiraton, his unique literary touch remains unaffected by age. Also unlike many others, including some much younger authors, he continues to live in India, showing no desire to settle down where the grass is greener. And, certainly unlike many lesser Indian writers in English, he completely desists from either exoticising India to attract Western customers or simplifying India for their benefit. Yet, he retains a wide readership outside; some even say that his non-Indian audience is larger.

How does he do it? Simple. That's the keyword. His novels are the apotheosis of simplicity. There's none of the convoluted complexities as in the works of so many serious 'intellectuals', nor the superficial structural razzle-dazzle that typifies much fiction nowadays, which leaves us breathless just trying to remember who is who and catch up with who has done what. But it is difficult to be simple. Narayan's apparent transparence disguises a very sophisticated craftsman and elegant stylist.

This novel, for instance, is about Nagaraj, an ordinary man attempting to grapple with the unpredictability of life—a consistent theme in all of Narayan's stories. When you come to think about it, hardly anything happens in the novel, apart from the mishaps and mysteries accompanying the arrival of Nagaraj's beloved nephew. But the master story-teller weaves a magic spell, so hypnotic that one scarcely notices the fineness of the threads in his web. His method is intricately digressive, containing stories within stories (in our hallowed epic tradition) in an accumulative flash-back and flash-forward technique that is stunning when one pauses to reflect on it.

What Narayan might be suggesting is that a mere story is not the point of fiction; people and emotions are what's important. The characterisation of Nagaraj is simply a gem. Like most of Narayan's heroes (and like most of us) he has dreams which fail to materialise: "Life is getting more and more complex," he cogitates. "All that I seek is freedom, peace of mind and scope to write my book" (he wants to write the definitive book on the sage Narada).

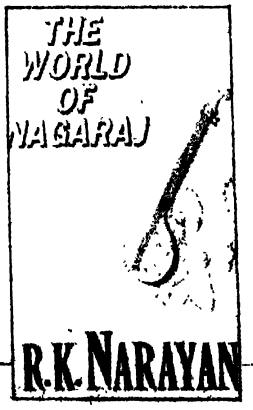
The entire novel revolves around his thoughts: Nagaraj thinks all the time, rarely speaks his thoughts and never acts. He is the archetypal procrastinator; when his brother likens him to a cow chewing his cud, there could not be a better analogy. He sits on the *pyol*(raised platform) outside his house surveying the world slipping by and recognises his own ineffectualness: "Everyone is in a hurry and passing on. I am stationary like a milestone...Why can't I also pass instead of being a milestone? People take advantage of my milestone nature." Of course, he never does anything to reverse the process.

The tragedy of Nagaraj's life is made into a sympathetic comedy by Narayan, with the kind of genial humour for which he is famous. His tenderness towards all humans, his understated irony on their foibles, his acute sense of the past and present jostling each other in India, get inflected in the other characters he draws. So we find Nagaraj's friend Coomar running a shop called the Boeing Sari Centre; his mother constantly picking fault with his wife (even for being childless); the anonymous Talkative Man staging a comeback from Narayan's previous Malgudi novel; and the man who stands on his head for 72 hours without food, wanting to get into the *Guinness Book*. They and many others come and go, representing the simultaneously fleeting yet eternal nature of smalltown India. •

Ananda Lal



R.K. Narayan suggests that a mere story is not the point of fiction; people and emotions are what's important. The characterisation of Nagaraj is simply a gem



The World Of Nagaraj
by R.K. Narayan.
Published by Indian Thought Publications, Mysore, 1990
Price Rs 40





THE MOSSAD

How the Israelis trained the Tamils, Sri Lankans and Indians—at the same time

Few books on intelligence can have caused as much of an uproar as By Way Of Deception, *the memoirs of Victor Ostrovsky, a former agent of Mossad, the Israeli secret service.*

The Israelis have tried their hardest to get the book banned and there has been a worldwide uproar over many of the book's allegations. One charge that has escaped notice in the Western uproar is Ostrovsky's allegation that Mossad trained Sri Lankan troops, Tamil Tigers and Indian security forces—all at the same time!

In this extract, he tells the story.

After several months in research, I was transferred to what was to me the most exciting department in the building, *Kaisarut*, or liaison. I was in the section called *Dardasim*, or "Smerfs," which handled the Far East and Africa. I worked under Amy Yaar.

It was like a train station, sort of a mini foreign office to countries Israel has no formal ties with. Ex-generals and various former security people would be sauntering in and out all the time, wearing visitors' tags and using their former Mossad contacts to arrange deals for their private companies—usually selling arms. Because these "consultants" couldn't go to certain countries as Israelis, liaison would facilitate the sales by providing false passports and other items for them.

It wasn't right, but nobody would ever say anything. Everyone felt that one day he'd be a has-been, too, and likely doing the same thing.

Amy told me that if I received any unusual requests, I was not to ask why, but simply to bring such things to his attention. One day a man came in and asked me to have a contract signed that had to be approved by the Prime Minister. The contract was for the sale of between 20 and 30 U.S. made Skyhawk fighters to Indonesia, something that contravened Israel's armament agreement with the United States. They were not supposed to resell such armaments without U.S. approval.

"Okay," I said, "if you don't mind coming tomorrow, or leaving me your phone number. I'll call you once it's taken care of."

"No, I'll wait," he said.

During my trip to IAI, I had seen about 30 of these Skyhawk fighter jets sitting on runway completely wrapped in bright yellow plastic, and ready for shipping. When we asked about it, they just said they were for shipment overseas, but they wouldn't tell us where they were going. I was quite sure there was no way the Americans would approve of the sale of these planes to Indonesia. It would change the balance of power in the area. But it wasn't up to me. So when he said he'd wait for Prime Minister Peres's approval, I opened my drawer, looked in, and said, "Shimon, Shimon." I turned to him and said, "Sorry, Mr. Peres is not here right now."

The guy got really mad and told me to go see Amy. I hadn't even bothered asking who he was. When I told Amy about it, he got quite excited. "Where is he? Where is he?"

"Out in the hall."

"Well, send him in with the contract," said Amy.





CONNECTION

About 20 minutes later the man left Yaar's office and walked by mine. Holding the contract under his chin for me to see, and grinning from ear to ear, he said, "Apparently Mr. Peres was in, after all."

Peres, in reality, was probably in Jerusalem, and would certainly have known nothing about his signature being put on these documents. The paper involved was known as an "ass-cover", for internal use only, just to show the shipper or whoever else was involved that they were covered financially because the Prime Minister had approved the deal.

Officially, of course, Mossad employees work for the Prime Minister's Office. The PM would be aware of money transactions, but he often did not know about actual deals. And many times that was fine with him. It was sometimes better not to know. If he knew, he'd have to make decisions. This way, if, say, the Americans found out, he could say he didn't know and it would be what the Americans call a "plausible deniability."

The Asia Building, owned by wealthy Israeli industrialist Saul Eisenberg, was right next to headquarters. Because of Eisenberg's connections to the Far East, he was the Mossad's tie-in with China. He and his people were doing considerable armament dealing with various places. Many of the sales were of leftover equipment, Russian-made material captured from the Egyptians and Syrians during the wars. When Israel ran out of Russian-built AK-47s to sell, it began manufacturing its own—a cross between the AK-47 assault rifle and the American M-16, called the Galil. It was sold all over the world.

It was like working in a department store servicing all these private consultants. They were supposed to be tools used by us, but the tools got out of hand. They had more experience than any of us, so that in fact they were using us.

One of my assignments, in mid-July 1984, was to escort a group of Indian nuclear scientists who were worried about the threat of the Islamic bomb (Pakistan's bomb) and had come on a secret mission to Israel to meet with Israeli nuclear experts and exchange information. As it turned out, the Israelis were happy to accept information from the Indians, but reluctant to return the favour.

The day after they left, I was picking up my regular paperwork when Amy called me into the office for two assignments. The first was to help get the gear and staff for a group of Israelis going to South Africa to help train that country's secret-police units. After that, I was to go to an African embassy and pick up a man who was supposed to fly back to his home country. He was to be taken to his home in Herzlia Pituah, then driven to the airport and ushered through security.

"I'll meet you at the airport," Amy said, "because we have a group of people coming from Sri Lanka to train here."

Amy was waiting for the Sri Lankans' flight from London when I joined him. "When these guys arrive," he said, "don't make a face. Don't do anything."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, these guys are monkeylike. They come from a place that's not developed. They're not long out of the trees. So don't expect much."

Amy and I escorted the nine Sri Lankans through a back door of the airport into an air-conditioned van. These were the first arrivals from a group that would finally total nearly 50. They would then be divided into three smaller groups:

- An anti-terror group training at the

military base near Petha Tikvah, called Kfar Sirkin, learning how to overtake hijacked buses and airplanes, or deal with hijackers in a building, how to descend from helicopters on a rope, and other anti-terrorist tactics. And, of course, they would be buying Uzis and other Israeli-made equipment, including bulletproof vests, special grenades, and more.

• A purchasing team, in Israel to buy weapons on a larger scale. They bought seven or eight large PT boats, for example, called *Devora*, which they would use mainly to patrol their northern shores against Tamils.

•A group of high-ranking officers who wanted to purchase radar and other naval equipment to counter the Tamils who were still getting through from India and mining Sri Lankan waters.

I was to squire Penny, President Jayawardene's daughter-in-law, around to the usual tourist spots for two days, and then she would be looked after by someone else from the office. Penny was a pleasant woman, physically an Indian version of Corazon Aquino. She was a Buddhist because her husband was, but she was somehow still a Christian, so she wanted to see all the Christian holy places. On the second day, I took her to Vered Haglil, or the Rose of Galilee, a horse-ranch-restaurant on the mountain with a nice view and good food. We had an account there.

Next I was assigned to the high-ranking officers who were looking for radar equipment. I was told to take them to a manufacturer in Ashdod named Alta that could do the work. But when he saw their specifications, the Alta representative said, 'They're just going through the motions, they're not going to buy our radar."

"Why?" I said.

"These specs were not written by these monkeys," the man said. "They were written by a British radar manufacturer called Deca, so these guys already know what they're going to buy. Give them a banana and send them home. You're wasting your time."

"Okay, but how about a brochure or something to make them happy?"

This conversation was going on in Hebrew while we all sat together eating cookies, and drinking tea and coffee. The Alta rep said he didn't mind giving them a lecture to make it look as if they weren't being brushed off, "but if we're going to do that, let's have some fun".

With that, he went into another office for a set of big transparencies of a large vacuum-cleaner system that is used to clean harbours after oil spills. He had a series of colourful schematic drawings. Everything was written in Hebrew, but he lectured in English on this "high capability radar equipment". I found it difficult not to laugh. He laid it on so thick, claiming this radar could locate a guy swimming in the water and practically tell his shoe size, his name and address, and his blood type. When he'd finished, the Sri Lankans thanked him, said they were surprised at this technological advancement, but that it wouldn't fit their ships. Well, we knew about their ships. We built them!

After dropping me off at the hotel, I told Amy the Sri Lankans weren't buying the radar. "Yes, we knew that," he replied.

Amy then told me to go to Kfar Sirkin where the Sri Lankan special-forces group was training, get them whatever they needed, then take them into Tel Aviv for the evening. But he cautioned me to make sure it was all coordinated with Yosy, who had just been transferred to the same department that week.

Yosy was also looking after a group being trained by the Israelis. But they weren't supposed to meet my people. They were Tamils, bitter enemies of my Sinhalese group. Tamils, who are mostly Hindu, argue that since Sri Lanka won independence from Great Britain in 1948 (as Ceylon), they have been discriminated against by the island's predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese majority. Of the 16 million or so Sri Lankans, about 74 per cent are Sinhalese, and just 20 per cent are Tamil, largely centered in the northern section of the country. Around 1983, a group of Tamil guerrilla factions, collectively known as the Tamil Tigers, began an armed struggle to create a Tamil homeland in the north called Eelam—an ongoing battle that has claimed thousands of lives on both sides.

Sympathy for the Tamils runs high in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where 40 million Tamils live. Many Sri Lankan Tamils, escaping the bloodshed, have sought refuge there, and the Sri Lankan government has accused Indian officials of arming and training the Tamils. They should be accusing the Mossad.

The Tamils were training at the commando naval base, learning penetration techniques, mining landings, communications, and how to sabotage ships similar to the *Devora*. There were about 28 men in each group, so it was decided that Yosy should take the Tamils to Haifa that night while I took the Sinhalese to Tel Aviv, thus avoiding any chance encounters.

The real problem started about two weeks into the courses, when both the Tamils and Sinhalese—unknown to each other, of course—were training at Kfar Sirkin. It is a fairly large base, but even so, on one occasion the two groups passed within a few yards of each other while they were out jogging. After their basic training routine at Kfar Sirkin, the Sinhalese were taken to the naval base to be taught essentially how to deal with all the techniques the Israelis had just taught the Tamils. It was pretty hectic. We had to dream up punishments or night training exercises just to keep them busy, so that both groups wouldn't be in Tel Aviv at the same time. The



"Technically we worked for Prime Minister Peres (seen here with Itzhak Shamir) but he usually did not know the details "



actions of this one man (Amy) could have jeopardized the political situation in Israel if these groups had met. I'm sure Peres wouldn't have slept at night if he'd known this was going on. But of course, he didn't know.

When the three weeks were just about up and the Sinhalese were preparing to go to Atlit, the top-secret naval commando base, Amy told me he wouldn't be going with them. The *Sayret Matcal* would take over their training. This was the top intelligence reconnaissance group, the one that carried out the famous Entebbe raid. (The naval commandos are the equivalent of the American Seals.)

"Look, we have a problem," said Amy. "We have a group of 27 SWAT team guys from India coming in."

"My God," I said "What *is* this? We've got Sinhalese, Tamils, and now Indians. Who's next?"

The SWAT team was supposed to train at the same base where Yosy had the Tamils, a tricky and potentially volatile situation. And I still had my regular office work to do, along with the daily reports. In the evenings, I took the SWAT team to dinner, again making sure none of the groups ended up in the same place. Every day I had an envelope brought to me with about $300 in Israeli currency to spend on them.

At the same time, I was meeting with a Taiwanese air-force general named Key, the representative of their intelligence community in Israel. He worked out of the Japanese embassy, and he wanted to buy weapons. I was told to show him around, but not to sell to him, since the Taiwanese would replicate in two days anything they bought, and end up competing with Israel on the market. I took him to the Sultan factory in the Galil, where mortars and mortar shells were made. he was impressed, but the manufacturer told me he couldn't sell him anything, anyway: first, because he was from Taiwan, and second, because everything he had was preordered. I told him I had no idea we were training so hard with mortars. He said, "We aren't, but the Iranians are sure using a lot of them." That was keeping the company in business.

At one point they made arrangements to bring in a whole group of Taiwanese for training. It was a compromise of sorts. They had asked the Mossad to give them combatants in China, but they wouldn't; instead, they trained a unit similar to the neviot, capable of gathering information from inanimate objects.

At this time, the department also had a series of Africans coming and going and being offered various services. I stayed with the department two months longer than I was supposed to, at Amy's specific request—both a compliment and a useful addition to my personnel record.

They used to tell the story of the "kerplunk machine" to illustrate some of the weird and useless things the Africans would spend their money on. Someone asked an African leader if he had a kerplunk machine. He didn't, so they offered to build him one for $25 million. When a huge arm, nearly 1,000 feet long and over 600 feet high, hovering over the water, was complete, its creator went back to the leader and said he'd need another $5 million to finish it. He then devised an elevator apparatus under the arm that held a huge stainless steel ball more than 60 feet in diameter. All the leader's subjects and visiting dignitaries from other African countries gathered at the river bank on "launch" day to see the wonderful machine in action. When it was turned on, the elevator moved slowly along to the end of the arm, it opened, and the giant ball fell into the water and went "kerplunk."

It's just a joke, but it's not so far from the truth.

Two weeks into the courses, both the Tamils and Sinhalese—unknown to each other, of course—were training at Kfar Sirkin...On one occasion the two groups passed within a few yards of each other while they were out jogging

I never saw so much money changing hands so quickly and among so many people as during my time with Amy. The Mossad regarded all these contracts as initial contact with various places that someday would bring diplomatic relations, so money was no object. And the businessmen, of course, were looking at it from a profit point of view. They were all getting their healthy percentages.

My last assignment with Amy was a four-day trip around Israel with a man and a woman from Communist China who wanted to buy electronic equipment.

They were angry at being shown equipment of lesser quality than they already had. They complained saying, "What are they trying to sell us, socks?", which I found really funny, because I used to say that if we could sell socks to the Chinese army, we'd be economically sound. Everybody would be knitting.

But the Chinese couple were badly treated, and that was because Amy thought they weren't high-ranking enough. He was making foreign-affairs decisions by himself, without asking anyone. It was astonishing. All his life Amy worked for government at a government salary, yet he lived on this acreage north of Tel Aviv in a huge villa with a small forest of his own. We'd stop there sometimes for a drink when we were working on the weekends and there were always businessmen wandering around the lawns, and a barbecue going. I once said to him, "How can you manage all this?" and he said, "You work hard, you save, and you can manage." Yeah, sure.●

By Way of Deception: the Making And Unmaking Of A Mossad Officer by Victor Ostrovsky and Clair Hoy. Published by St. Martin's Press, New York. Price. Rs 391

V. GANGADHAR

The Indian Ex-pressman

Even his detractors will miss Arun Shourie

Arun Shourie never regarded himself as a journalist. In fact, he tended to look down on journalism, particularly the Indian variety. He was a pamphleteer to many, a social reformer to himself.

Shourie started off being anti-Indira Gandhi and anti-Emergency. He and his boss never forgave Indira Gandhi for suspending the democratic process, albeit for a brief period. Like many others, Shourie and Goenka believed that once Congress and Indira Gandhi were ousted from power, all our problems would be solved. It did not work out that way. They propped up the ailing Jayaprakash Narayan and his sidekicks at the penthouse suite of the Express Towers, gave them the five-star treatment while working on something called Total Revolution. Nothing really came off it.

Shourie changed sides as frequently as any politician. He praised Rajiv Gandhi to the skies and then turned against him with a vengeance. The same was the case with Vishwanath Pratap Singh. For some time, Singh was the saviour of the nation, a symbol of our hope and value-based politics. The political ploy over the announcement of the Mandal Commission recommendations changed all that and Singh became Enemy Number One.

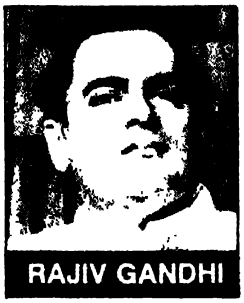
The former *Express* editor never liked Chandra Shekhar or Devi Lal. He would have dearly loved to see Lal Krishna Advani assume the Prime Minister's *gadi* and, perhaps, the Scindia Maharani, the home minister! Fortunately, this is not likely to happen.

Shourie's sympathies are clear. They are for the middle, upper middle class and for a Hindu India. Towards the end of his career with the *Indian Express*, the dislike against the minorities was showing clearly.

There are still some mysteries around this fascinating personality. Why did the *Express* and Shourie turn against Rajiv? Was it because the Rajiv government failed to 'punish' Dhirubhai Ambani? Why did *Sethji* delay taking action against Shourie? After all, the controversial article, "*Arrey bhai, masjid hai hi kahaan?*" which was withheld from the *Express*, did not say anything new. In fact, it was less offensive than the one published on Devi Lal, which contained all those choice Hindi abuses. Some say, Goenka was influenced by the younger members of the family to rein in Shourie. According to others, the likely emergence of Devi Lal, Chandra Shekhar or Rajiv Gandhi would have made things difficult for the *Express*, had Shourie remained the editor. Shourie who refused to talk to the Indian press, did give an interview to Radio France International. He said he did not know the reasons behind his sack. It could have been



V.P. SINGH



RAJIV GANDHI



ARUN SHOURIE

Shourie changed sides as frequently as any politician. He praised Rajiv Gandhi to the skies and then turned against him with a vengeance. The same was the case with V.P. Singh



VIOLENCE AT AYODHYA

family quarrels or pressure from the government. The *Indian Express* management may have taken objection to his exposing the hypocrisy of V.P. Singh, who met the BJP leaders constantly in 1989 and hid this fact from the public. In his typically arrogant manner he declared Rajiv Gandhi to be "illiterate" and accused V.P. Singh of playing Hindu against Muslim.

One may never agree with Arun Shourie but even his detractors would miss him. His departure from the *Express* yet again confirms that it is not the government which imposes restrictions on press freedom, but the newspaper managements.

Misleading report

How did the Indian press, by and large, react to the recent happenings at Ayodhya? A symposium organised by the Bombay Union of Journalists felt that the media asked the 'right' questions on the Ram temple issue and handed out bouquets to the media.

Yet, there were quite a few disturbing trends. The national newspapers, which are supposed to be objective and propagate secularism, erred on a number of occasions. The *Indian Express* and *The Times of India* carried highly coloured reports. The *Times* headline mentioned pitched battles but the copy contained no mention of these.

Covering a provocative speech of the Shiv Sena boss Bal Thackeray on the Ram Janmabhoomi, the *Times* used the headline, "Demolish Mosque: Thackeray". A bit irresponsible, I felt. What is disturbing is the obvious sympathy and admiration for the *kar sevaks* from the accompanying scribes. The bias may not come through in so many words, but the tone of the reports clearly suggests a leaning towards the proponents of Hindutva. Those who are killed while trying to destroy a place of worship are referred to as *martyrs*. It's all a bit sad.

Vishwanath Sachdev, resident editor of *Navbharat Times*, Bombay, checked with his paper what the proposed headline was for the lead story from Ayodhya, filed by his man on the spot. "VHP's Dreams Come True", he was informed. Sachdev had the story killed. Not because he did not believe his correspondent, but because journalism had a larger responsibility to the cause of communal harmony. Journalism could do with some more Sachdevs!

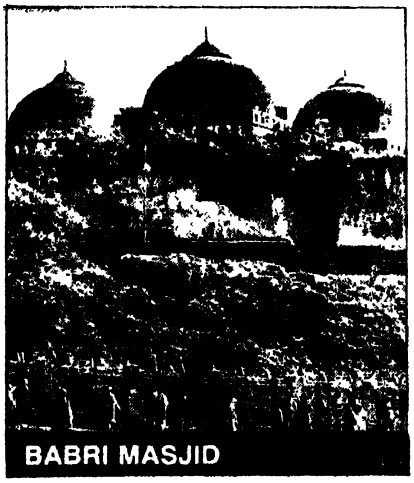
We are still a nation in a flux and journalists should realise that even educated people tend to be communally aroused on reading inflammatory reports on sensitive issues. I certainly agree with the anguish felt by Jyoti Punwani of the *Independent*. According to her, the events of 30 October, only confirmed that India is a Hindu state. Why? Because only 11 people died when tens of thousands broke the law at Ayodhya? She points out that 11 persons died within 30 minutes in February 1989, when barely 1,500 Muslims took out a *morcha* in Bombay. Between 60 to 200 died in Srinagar in January when 20,000 Muslims, including women and children, defied curfew to protest against indiscriminating raids and house to house searches. May not be the right kind of logic, but the bitter truth cannot be evaded.

While appealing for the "Healing Touch", the *Indian Express* editorial mentioned "Greek tragedy", "Catch-22" situation, "Russian roulette" and a "Micawberish hoping for the best". Only the "Gang of Four" was missing!

The sanest voice was that of the *Economic Times*. "Meanwhile, the business of righting historical wrongs has clearly gone too far. This country has had a strife-torn history and been subjected to waves of invasion and conquest. If the Hindus want to demolish mosques which were built on temple sites, should Buddhists ask for the rebuilding of Nalanda university which the Hindus destroyed? History relates to what had happened. Should we let that determine the future in a destructive manner?

"The most dangerous development of them all is the majority community's adoption of a minority complex, the feeling that Hindus are second class citizens in their own country. This is arrant nonsense. By any economic, educational or social yardstick, the Hindus are better off than Muslims. No opportunities are denied to anyone on account of his being a Hindu. If anything, the complaint has been that there is not enough representation for Muslims in the executive, judiciary and police. In short, no one can claim with any degree of credibility that the seats of power—political, financial, or any other—are held by minorities which then seek to deny these to the majority community." •





BABRI MASJID

Some national newspapers have been biased on the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue. The tone of the reports clearly suggests a leaning towards the proponents of Hindutva. Those who were killed on 30 October are referred to as martyrs. It's all a bit sad

Tough tackling

The IFA takes steps to impose discipline on the field

Violence on the field always increases in inverse proportion to the standard of play. This is a Calcutta Maidan truism, never more evident than in the season which has just concluded. And its effects are still continuing—both on the football field and the game's administrative front.

The three leading clubs of Calcutta, which were at one time considered invincible, are faring so poorly that defeat no longer rankles their die-hard supporters. Even as recently as in the DCM tournament, all three tasted defeat to relatively weaker sides in the initial rounds of the competition.



Trouble during the match between Mohammedan Sporting and East Bengal

But more important, all the three outfits have faced an unprecedented spate of disciplinary measures taken by the parent body in the state, the Indian Football Association (IFA). "There are several reasons for this," says Justice Ajit Sengupta, president of the IFA. "Maybe, the money that is being paid to the footballers—albeit as conveyance and other allowances—is going to their heads. Maybe, the urge to win trophies at all costs is another. But we, as the controlling body in the state, just can't sit and watch indiscipline mounting on the field. After all, as far as we are concerned, football is an amateur sport here and we must do everything to ensure that the game is played in the best spirit. Amateurs, after all, are supposed to play for the fun of playing."

But that is not how Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting view the situation. Their players and officials have been involved in ungentlemanly conduct on and off the field—leading to disciplinary measures being taken against some of them.

In a fracas during a Mohun Bagan-East Bengal match, several players were involved in a free-for-all. Some of them were fined and others suspended. It is a different matter that they were all let off before the stipulated period, after most of them paid their fines.

But the latest imbroglio threatens to disrupt the entire functioning of the game here. It all started with the walkout of the Mohammedan Sporting team during the IFA Shield final match against East Bengal. Claiming that the only goal of the match till then, scored by Kuljit Singh, was from an off-side position, the players stomped off the field at the bidding of some of the club officials. They did so after threatening and jostling with both the referee of the match and one of the linesmen.

The IFA took prompt action. The association suspended the club from taking part in any tournament till 31 December this year. It also issued show-cause notices to some players who had misbehaved with the supervisors of the game on the field. Going by precedent, it was a foregone conclusion that the players would be fined and suspended and, if they expressed sincere regret, they would perhaps be let off without actually being suspended.

But Mohammedan Sporting, after an initial plea for clemency, decided to go to court on the issue of suspension. As the matter became *sub judice*, the IFA could take no further action. In the meantime, the DCM authorities were eager to get Mohammedan Sporting to play in the tournament.

The club won a victory in court and immediately proceeded to Delhi and played their first match. Not only did they lose, they have also landed themselves in another controversy, the effects of which are likely to be far-reaching.

The IFA rules clearly state that any affiliated club wishing to take part in a competition outside the state would have to take written and prior permission from the association. Mohammedan Sporting, busy with the court case and then jubilant over the verdict, ignored this basic requirement.

The IFA played its cards well. It convened a meeting immediately on receipt of the court verdict to discuss disciplinary measures. But Mohammedan Sporting officials stated that they did not receive the letter. "Though we know they had" Justice Sengupta said. "But we preferred to give them another chance, so that we are not accused of acting in haste."

The IFA president was clear about the IFA's objective. "We are not here to punish people or institutions. But we do have to maintain discipline, because, otherwise, we cannot supervise the game properly.

By not taking permission from the IFA, Mohammedan Sporting have queered their own pitch. This amounts to gross indiscipline and one

that will be difficult to explain away in any court of law. Not only is the act punishable by the IFA, the situation will get worse when the All India Football Federation (AIFF) is apprised of the matter.

Privately, some IFA officials admitted that the club could be banned from taking part in any tournament for a year or so. This will be an unfortunate blow to a club poised to celebrate its centenary through several competitions and seminars.

Of course, one such seminar took an ugly turn when the Mohammedan Sporting Centenary Celebration Committee chief, Kalimuddin Shams, accused the IFA of being blatantly communal and working against the club at every opportunity. While some invitees to the seminar walked out in protest as the former deputy speaker of the West Bengal Assembly launched his diatribe, almost everyone else condemned the statement made by Shams, at a seminar ostensibly convened to further communal harmony through sport. Several officials of Mohammedan Sporting Club also criticised the attitude and the utterances of the club official.



The IFA took offence to Kalimuddin Shams' reported assertion that the association was out to get Mohammedan Sporting because it was communal

The IFA has decided to take action against Kalimuddin Shams, who is a vice-president of the club. At a governing body meeting, the IFA decided to issue a show-cause notice to the club official, for saying that the association was "the illegitimate child of the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad". Simultaneously, the club will also be asked why it had taken no action against its office-bearer and member for this objectionable remark.

But all of this is having a demoralising effect on the club. Mohammedan Sporting, which has made notable contribution to sport in West Bengal and the country, is now faced with a suspension that could ruin the fruition of a hundred years of dedicated service to sport in general and football in particular. It would indeed be a cruel irony if the club found itself out of action at a time when it was about to celebrate a 100 years in sporting activity. •

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

Take your pick from the finest range of

Racold

OVEN CUM GRILLERS

Have a look at the latest range of Racold oven-cum-grillers. Each of them is perfected to give excellent service for long years. They are so sleek. Easy to operate and clean.

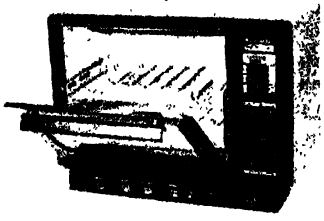
Bake or grill on Racold oven-griller. It is fast and most convenient, without fuss.

You have BOG, Super-Chef and the Mini OTG to choose from. Take your pick today.

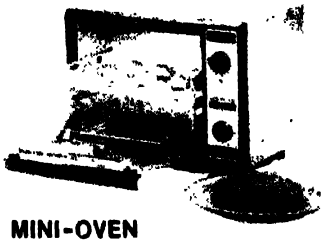
These oven-grillers can also keep food warm.



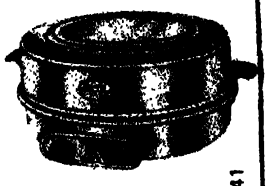
BAKING OVEN-CUM-GRILLER
Fully automatic with insulation on all sides 1000W at the top and 750W elements at the bottom 3-Heat 4-position switch and thermostat Adjustable temp . 50° to 300°C



SUPER CHEF
Brass frame inside, Digital display timer, push switches with LED display; 2-Sheathed tubular heaters 1250W each and thermostat.



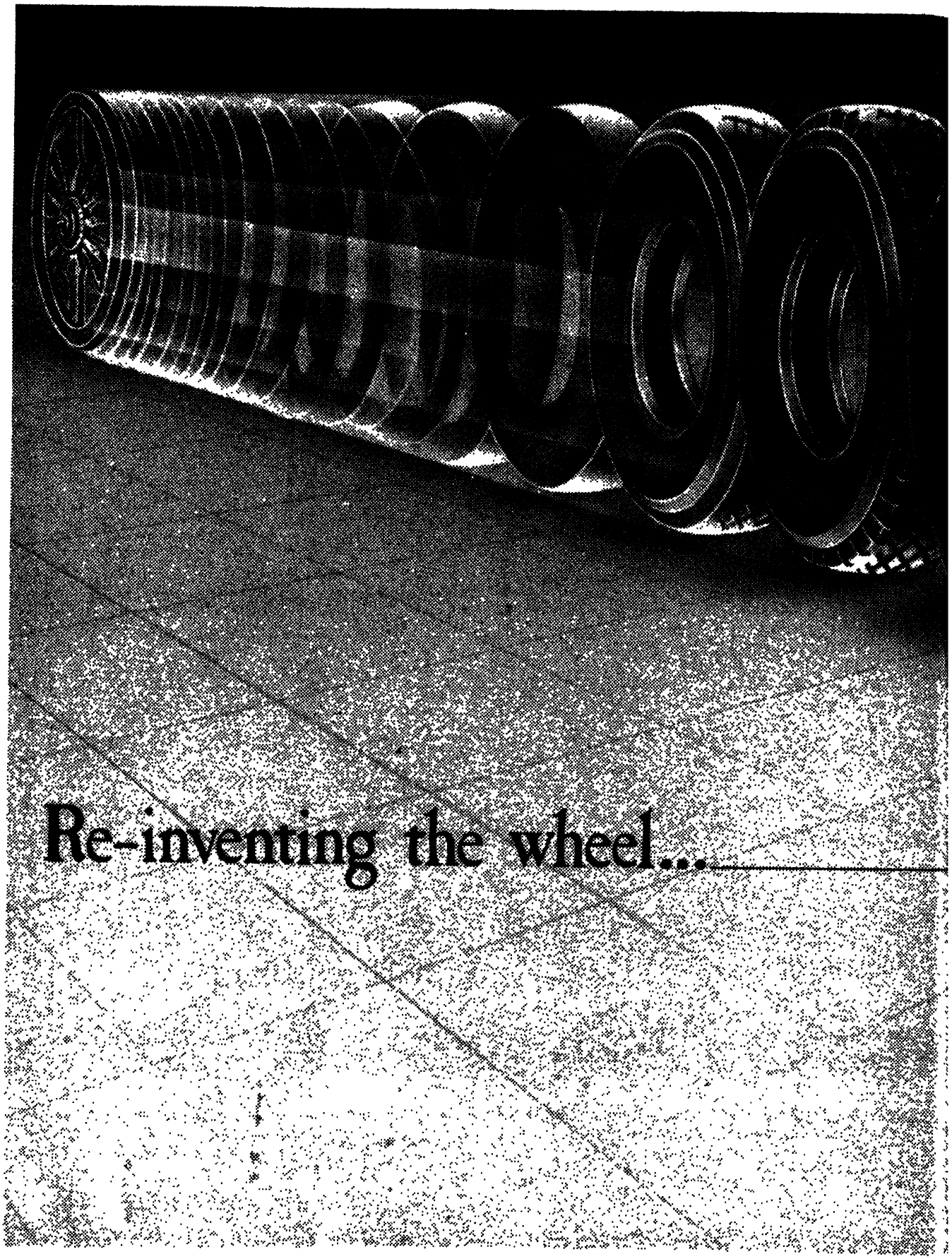
MINI-OVEN TOASTER-GRILLER
Drop-down front door, Stainless steel frame, 2-sheathed tubular heating elements 600W each and thermostat.

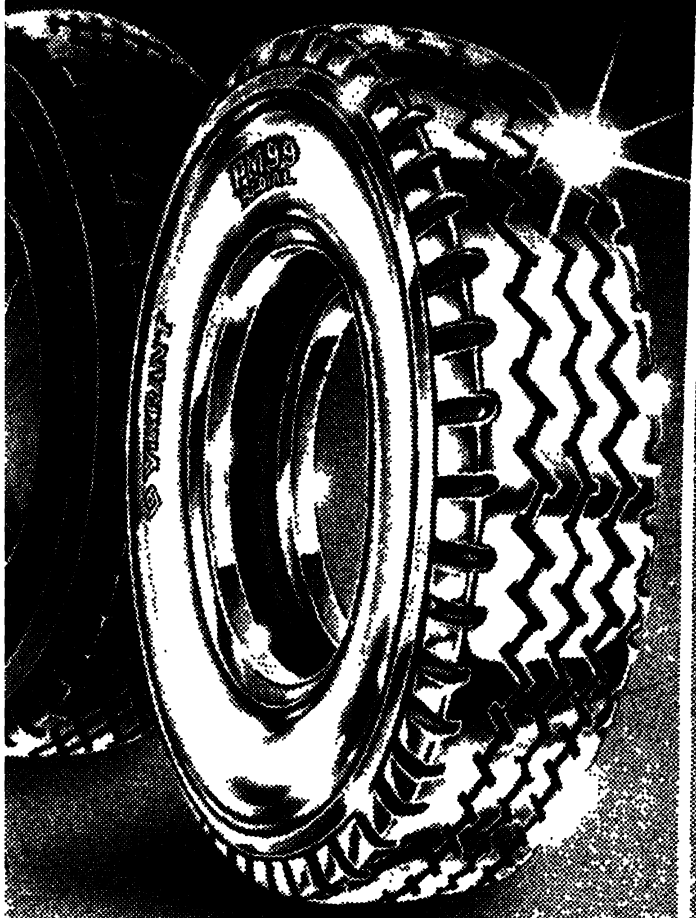


UTILITY ROUND BAKING OVEN
Automatic oven with bright aluminium body with cake pans and moulds.
Temp : 100°C to 200°C

ga 1541

RACOLD APPLIANCES LIMITED
Head Office Bombay-Pune Road, Pimpri, Pune 411 018
Bombay . 17, Ist Pasta Lane, Colaba, Bombay 400 005
New Delhi "Vandhna", 11, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi 110 001


Re-inventing the wheel...



with steel.

Vikrant pioneers India's All Steel Radial Tyres for trucks and buses.

The radial tyre technology swept in a dynamic change in the West as early as 1948. It took a responsible manufacturer like Vikrant to bring this state-of-the-art tyre technology to trucks and buses in India.

Five years of extensive research and development went into it. So did technological inputs from Avon of UK. Today Vikrant's All Steel Radials are rolling out in ever increasing numbers. An achievement that puts Vikrant way ahead of other tyre manufacturers in the country today.

Vikrant All Steel Radial. A tyre to give greater mileage and save fuel. To reduce downtime and maintenance losses. A tyre to fight punctures every inch of the way.

It's a tyre built tough – as tough as the people who live out their lives on the road. People who, come rain or storm, keep going on and on.

Carrying goods, carrying people, bringing the country closer together by a busy network of lifelines.

Vikrant dedicates its achievement to the truckers. And to the ever busy highways of India.

VIKRANT

The reliable tyre. The responsible company.

MAA COMMUNICATIONS 1182

ODDS AND TRENDS

Loss of Eden

■ The Mandela fever, which gripped Calcutta a few weeks ago, has left behind a casualty in its wake. The Eden Gardens was the



best venue the state government could offer Dr Nelson Mandela to speak to the people of Calcutta. The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) does not usually let out the field for non-cricketing purposes, but to keep the government smiling, the CAB offered the ground for the 18 October meeting. And paid a big price for it.

According to a senior CAB executive committee member, the grass at the Club House end has been totally ruined. Four to five kgs of nails used for construction have already been removed from the ground, with possibilities of "God knows how many more", yet to be discovered.

In fact, the condition was so bad that the authorities had to consider a change of venue, for the Cooch Behar Trophy match between Bengal and Assam. It will come as no surprise then, if the CAB's welcome to a foreign dignitary in future stops short of an offer of the free use of Eden.

Cure for Thalassemia?

■ Four Indian doctors have developed a drug which, they claim, can cure thalassemia among children. Dr Harsh Priyadarshi of Allahabad claims that he, together with Dr A.K. Sarkar and Dr S. Kumar (both scientists at the National Physical laboratory, New Delhi) and Dr Gajendra Singh (biochemist at the Hamdard College of Pharmacy, New Delhi), have developed an "oral chelating drug" which could remove the presence of excessive iron deposits in the tissues of thalassemia patients.

The new drug extracts two mgs of iron per day as compared to .80 mgs in the case of "desferol therapy". Moreover, the new drug is safe and has no side-effects while "desferol therapy" is quite expensive and painful.

Rodents at war

■ East Kemang, a district in Arunachal Pradesh, is facing the same problem that the residents of Hamlyn town of Brunswick must have faced years ago. Thousands of rats have overrun the area damaging crops and even attacking the grains in stock. According to folklore, this sudden rise in the rodent population is a result of the flowering of bamboo which, the saying goes, is an ill omen foretelling famine. And if the destruction caused by the rats is anything to go by, the saying couldn't be closer to the truth.

The residents of east Kemang, however, have discovered a novel way of tackling the problem. No, they haven't found a Pied Piper to rid the town of rats. Instead they have begun fighting the menace by opting for rat-meat. What with the shortage of food stuffs in the state, this solution seems to be the best one.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Farooq Abdullah



M.S. Swaminathan

MILESTONES

DIED: Vinod Mehra, noted film actor, of heart failure on 29 October in Bombay. He was 45.

DIED: V. Shantaram, reputed film maker, of a massive heart attack on 27 October in Bombay. He was 90.

DIED: Basudev Mahapatra, former minister of Orissa and Rajya Sabha member, on 28 October. He was 62.

DIED: Urmila Phadnis, renowned writer and political commentator, following prolonged illness on 29 October. She was 59.

DIED: Captain Williamson A. Sangma, former chief minister of Meghalaya, after prolonged illness on 25 October. He was 72.

DIED: Balkrishna Vishnu, alias Balasaheb Marathe, veteran freedom fighter and founder-editor of the *Daily Hindusthan*, on 27 October. He was 78.

AWARDED: Ustad Nazir Aminuddin Dagar, noted *dhrupdd* singer, the Tansen Samman for 1990, in Bhopal.

WON: East Bengal, the Durand Cup, defeating Mahindra and Mahindra by a 3-2 margin on 23 October.

ELECTED: Gurcharan Singh, former national cricket coach, as president of the All India SAI Coaches Welfare Association on 28 October.

SELECTED: Ravi Shastri, as captain of the Bombay cricket team, for the 1990-91 season.

BEGINNING 11 NOVEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



This will not be a favourable week for romance. The domestic front will not be peaceful. However, do not lose heart as your problems will soon tide over. Be careful about your health.

Good dates: 11, 15 and 17
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: North

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Pay attention to business and professional matters. A good time to go ahead with new ventures. Relatives and friends will make this week an eventful one. Your health may cause concern.

Good dates: 13, 15 and 16
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. The domestic front will be a happy one. However, an unlucky week for speculations. A love affair may suddenly come to end. Avoid disputes with friends and relatives.

Good dates: 12, 14 and 16
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: West

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



This is a favourable week for romance and matrimony. Do not take risks. A major incident may leave a serious impact on you. A proposed journey may be stalled owing to unavoidable circumstances.

Good dates: 11, 13 and 15
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July—20 August)



This will be a favourable week for businessmen. Be cautious about your acquaintances. Sportsmen will win prizes. Friends and relatives will contribute to your success. A good time for professionals.

Good dates: 15, 16 and 17.
Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: South-east

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



Conserve your energy this week. Be very tactful if you want to win over people who matter to you. Though the domestic front will be peaceful, you may have some problems with your spouse.

Good dates: 14, 16 and 17
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: West

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This will be a hectic week. You will be rewarded for your past efforts. However, be wary of launching new enterprises as you may encounter financial problems. An unexpected visit from a close relative is forecast.

Good dates: 12, 13 and 15
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: North-west

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



This is a lucky week for sportsmen. A long journey is on the cards. Businessmen should not embark an any new ventures this week. Be cautious in dealing with your superiors. Avoid extravagance.

Good dates: 12, 14 and 16
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 8
Favourable direction: East

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This will be a good week for you. Your financial prospects are bright. But check extravagance. The domestic front will be calm. Matrimonial negotiations may not prove fruitful. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 13, 14 and 17
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: South

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This is a lucky week for you. Your financial prospects are bright. Be patient and tactful with your colleagues. Artistes and intellectuals will be rewarded. On the domestic front there will be peace.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 14
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: East

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



Financially, this will not be a good week for you. Avoid gambling and speculation. Businessmen should not launch new ventures. Avoid matrimonials for the present. You might face problems from your near ones.

Good dates: 13, 16 and 17
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



Artistes will be awarded this week. You will gain through property matters and insurance policies. Friends are likely to inspire you. A journey may be in the offing. Letters might bring good tidings.

Good dates: 14, 15 and 16
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: East

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—PISCES

The Scorpio woman should be conscious of the Pisces man's feelings and emotions. She should be ready to make compromises. Otherwise, the relationship might run into rough weather.



Does your bald pate make you resemble your father more than you'd care to?... You don't have to.

Here's hope!

- There is a medically proven treatment available which stops hairloss and cures baldness
- Extensively researched, the treatment has been clinically tested on thousands of people all over the world, including India * – unlike other tall-claimed oils
- For the only medically proven treatment for hairloss & baldness consult your dermatalogist or family physician.
- For more information or free literature visit your nearest chemist or Write to KOPRAN DERMACARE DIVISION 1076, DR E Moses Road, Worli, Bombay-400 018.

Kopran

Montage Graphics

*Data on file

Which Arif is it anyway?

All the time the Raja was making public noises about not conceding the fight to communal forces, he was engaged in attempts to set up secret meetings with the BJP. And the man deputed to conduct negotiations on behalf of the government was minister of state for home affairs, Subodh Kant Sahay.

Sahay, with some help from Javed Habib, member of the Babri Masjid Action Committee, and Arif Baig, BJP member, arranged for a meeting at A.B. Vajpayee's residence. The BJP leader consented at first, but then, cancelled it at the last moment. The ostensible reason: he was scheduled to go on tour.

Vajpayee asked his staff to inform all concerned that the meeting was off. Arif (Baig) was among the people who were to be called. Only Atal Behari's staff—to whom one Arif was much like the other—called Arif Mohammad Khan instead, to inform him that the meeting had been cancelled.

Considerably mystified by the message, Khan began investigating into the matter. And soon stumbled on the truth, which he then shared with some of his Cabinet colleagues.

Needless to add, the Raja found himself the butt of some very strident criticism at the next Cabinet meeting.

But, of course, he waffled his way out of that one as well.

Dancing anyone?

Much speculation raged in political circles as to what political [illegible] would be cracked at [illegible] Devi Lal had

OVERHEARD AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY

Question: What does Saddam Hussein want for Christmas?
Answer: Turkey.

AN IFS OFFICER



ASHOK VAHIE

V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar at Devi Lal's dinner party: no politics, please

hosted on the occasion of Haryana day. But the Prime Minister took care of that one. An invitation had been despatched to V.P. Singh for the dinner but everyone had presumed that—given the fact that both Chandra Shekhar and the Tau would be in attendance—the Raja would decline.

But VP is, obviously, made of sterner stuff. For no sooner had the party got started that the Raja made his appearance, much to the horror of the assembled dissidents.

Of course, no politics could be discussed after that. So while Chandra Shekhar and V.P. Singh exchanged pleasantries, a couple of female dancers were put on the task of entertaining the dignitaries. And they did just that in their most robust Harayanvi manner.

THERMOMETER

Who's who in the Chandra Shekhar camp

■ **Yashwant Sinha:** Preferred Chandra Shekhar to a ministerial berth in the Raja's council. Staged a walk-out at the swearing-in ceremony and has continued to do so at periodic intervals. Is in the forefront of the movement to win over party MPs to Chandra Shekhar's side and maintains that his leader will be Prime Minister. And never mind the number.

■ **Harmohan Dhawan:** His animus against the Raja is well-known. Was one of the first party leaders to come out openly against VP's leadership. Initiated the signature campaign against the Prime Minister and has been hard at getting all dissident members together ever since.

■ **Kalyan Singh Kalvi:** Has thrown in his lot with Shekhar and does all the ground work preparatory to winning MPs over. Has also been in touch with various Congress MPs on behalf of the Shekhar camp and is said to have been instrumental in getting Nathu Ram Mirdha to Chandra Shekhar's side.

■ **Raj Mangal Pandey:** Was one of the first members of the Jan Morcha but has since then been disillusioned by the Raja. Is intent on removing VP any which way and is currently conducting talks with the Devi Lal camp asking that it unite with Shekhar's brigade against the Prime Minister.

Of sons and fathers

It has been one embarrassment after another for Tamil Nadu chief minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi at the hands of his arch-rival, AIADMK general secretary Jayalalitha. The latest is the mammoth rally she had organised in Madras to unveil a statue of MGR. That rally clearly overshadowed the DMK rally in the Tamil Nadu capital taken out only a few days earlier.

But what hurt the DMK chief even more than this was the desertion from his camp of his own son Muthu who added insult to injury by even declaring loyalty to Jayalalitha. He would now devote his life to selflessly serving the lady and her AIADMK party, Muthu declared.

Muthu is Karunanidhi's son through his first wife, and has been a sort of a rebel in the household for a long time, especially after his father began promoting Stalin, his son through his second wife.

In the years long gone by, Karunanidhi had found Muthu useful for getting at MGR, who was then the DMK treasurer; by promoting him (Muthu) as a film hero in an attempt to dent MGR's popularity in cinema. That strategy had bombed and Muthu was one of the reasons then for MGR's estrangement from Karunanidhi. ●

Namaskar Rajivji!

Now that Rajiv's comeback bid seems to be paying off—with more than a little help from the Raja—the number of those paying attendance at his court is increasing every day.

Nevertheless, the presence of minister of state for defence, Raja Ramanna, at a function held at Teen Murti to give the Indira Gandhi award for national integration to M.S. Subbulakshmi, occasioned some surprise.



Raja Ramanna: aisle seats are best

Ramanna got himself an aisle seat, along the route Rajiv was to take to the dias. And when Gandhi made his way past him, the minister was quick to execute a *namaskar* with a sycophantic smile playing on his lips.

Gandhi returned the greeting, readily enough. But alas, didn't stop to exchange pleasantries.

In search of a constituency

Obviously, all those caste calculations that inspired the Raja to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations haven't made Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan too sanguine about their electoral chances. For, the latest is that the two ministers are busy looking around for alternative constituencies.

While Paswan was elected from Hajipur—with a Bhumihar, Rajput majority—Yadav won from Badaun, which has a sizeable Jat population. Since these communities haven't gained from the Mandal bonanza, the ministers feel that they may well lose their deposits if they contest these seats again.

Hence, the search for safer pastures, with some help from Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav. Laloo has, apparently, found an alternative constituency in Saharsa, Bihar, with three lakh Yadav residents, for Sharad.

But Ram Vilas is still on the look-out. Any suggestions?

OVERHEARD AT 10 JANPATH

If V.P. Singh goes to Parliament and asks for an early election, it will be first time in history that turkeys will have voted for an early Christmas.

A CONGRESS MP ON THE APPARENT FOOLISHNESS OF V.P. SINGH'S STRATEGY

THERMOMETER

Ministers whose reputations have suffered the most

- **P. Upendra:** The single biggest disaster of this ministry. Every night, millions of viewers curse him when they see the distorted rubbish Doordarshan calls news. To make matters worse, Upendra has now taken to telling lies while briefing the press after JD meetings.

- **Arif Mohammad Khan:** It is not really his fault. Everyone concedes that Arif has been a good energy minister. The problem is that he was landed with the aviation ministry, forced to ground the A320s and then, not allowed to resign. He retaliated by ignoring the ministry and innocent passengers suffered.

- **Inder Gujral:** Sadly this celebrated India International Centre intellectual will be best remembered as the man Devi Lal dismissed as a wimp. Gujral's role in the foreign ministry will be best remembered by, "What? What did you say? What?"—his response to each crisis.

- **Mufti Mohammad Sayeed:** The invisible home minister. The ministry is run by Subodh Kant Sahay, who has the Prime Minister's confidence. Mufti is not a bad chap. He was just the wrong choice for the home ministry.

- **George Fernandes:** Remember him? What became of Dynamite George? Or even of the hero of Kashmir? Is this the man who spent the Emergency in jail—when the Raja was a minister?

- **K.P. Unnikrishnan:** In Opposition he proved to be a good parliamentarian, attacking the government on all issues of import. But as minister, he spent more time picking fights with Pitroda than getting the country's communication network going. Shifted out of that ministry, he maintained a low profile at surface transport, until the Indian refugees in the Gulf roughed him up to protest the unsatisfactory arrangements made by the Dal regime.

Changing sides

Those who live by intrigue, must in the end, die by intrigue. Around the time that the Janata Dal had been formed, the Raja had begun working on the loyalists belonging to other camps, with a view to winning them over to his side.

V.P. Singh had some success in this endeavour, with some liberal handing out of ministerial posts. He weaned away Subodh Kant



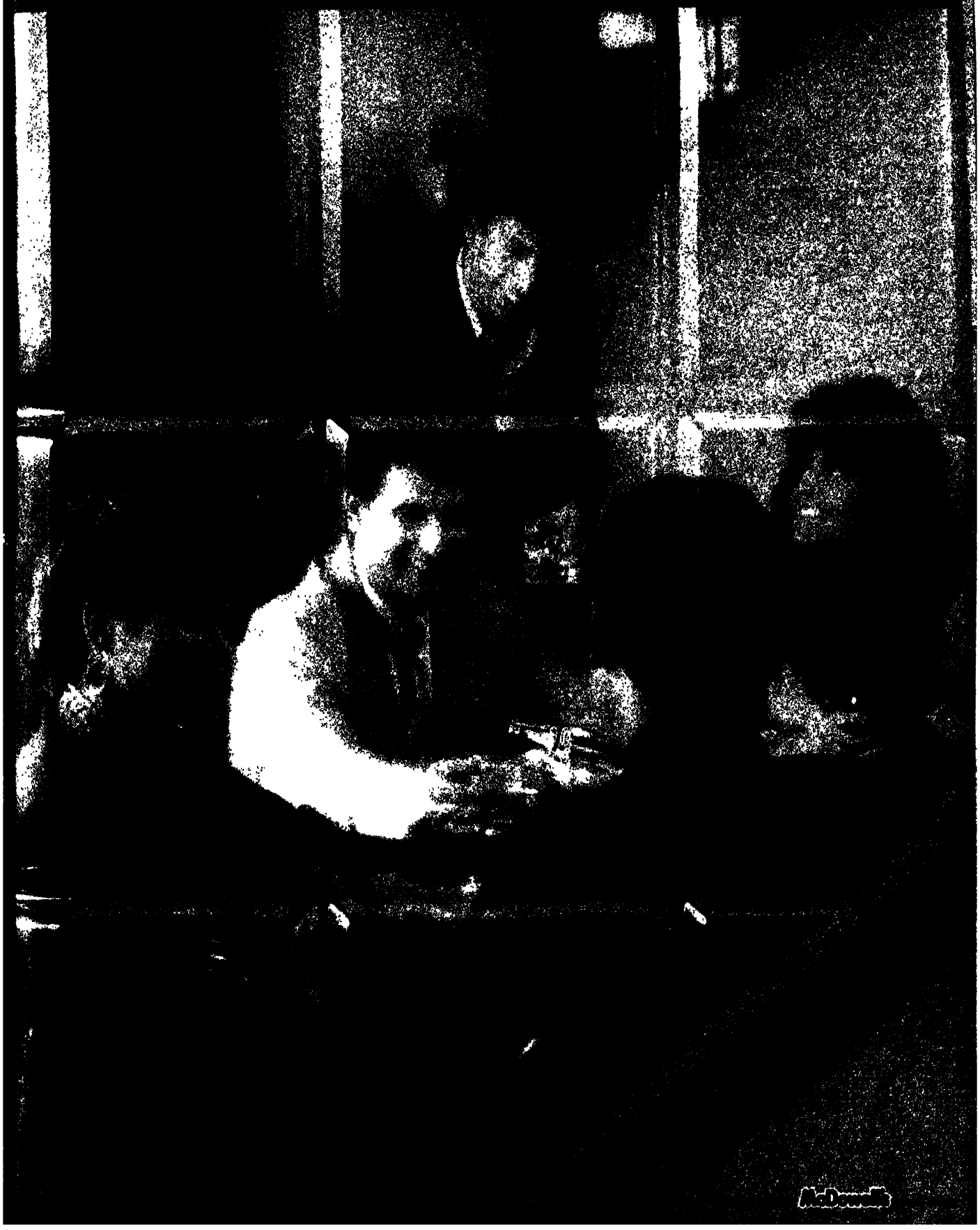
Ajay Singh: rallying the dissidents

Sahay and Bhakta Charan Das from Chandra Shekhar, Ajay Singh from Ajit Singh, among others.

But not for long. For, at the first sign of trouble the defectors began threatening to pull the same trick yet again. A meeting was held at Ajay Singh's residence, with Anil Shastri a surprise invitee. The decision arrived at after hours of discussion was that the Raja had to go.

The only debatable point was when and

Golden moments. McDowell moments.





A BRAND OWNED
BY ITC LTD.
MADE IN INDIA

STATUTORY WARNING
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS
INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Wills Filter set the filter trend in cigarettes long years ago. Today it's still the finest. In taste, in satisfaction. Hand-picked virginia tobaccos married to an efficient filter make it so. Millions of smokers have discovered it, then stayed with it.

WILLS
FILTER

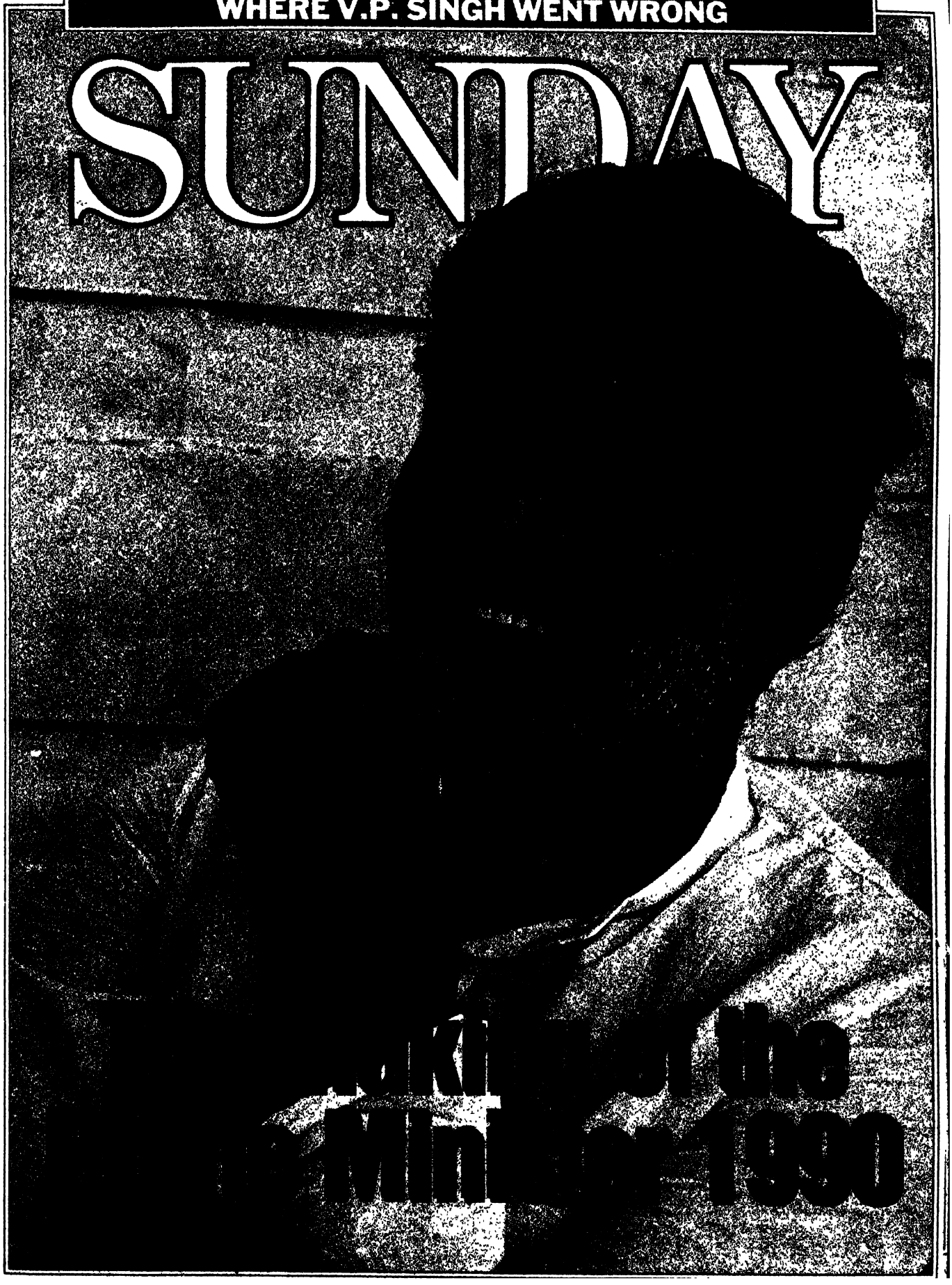


Filter and tobacco perfectly matched

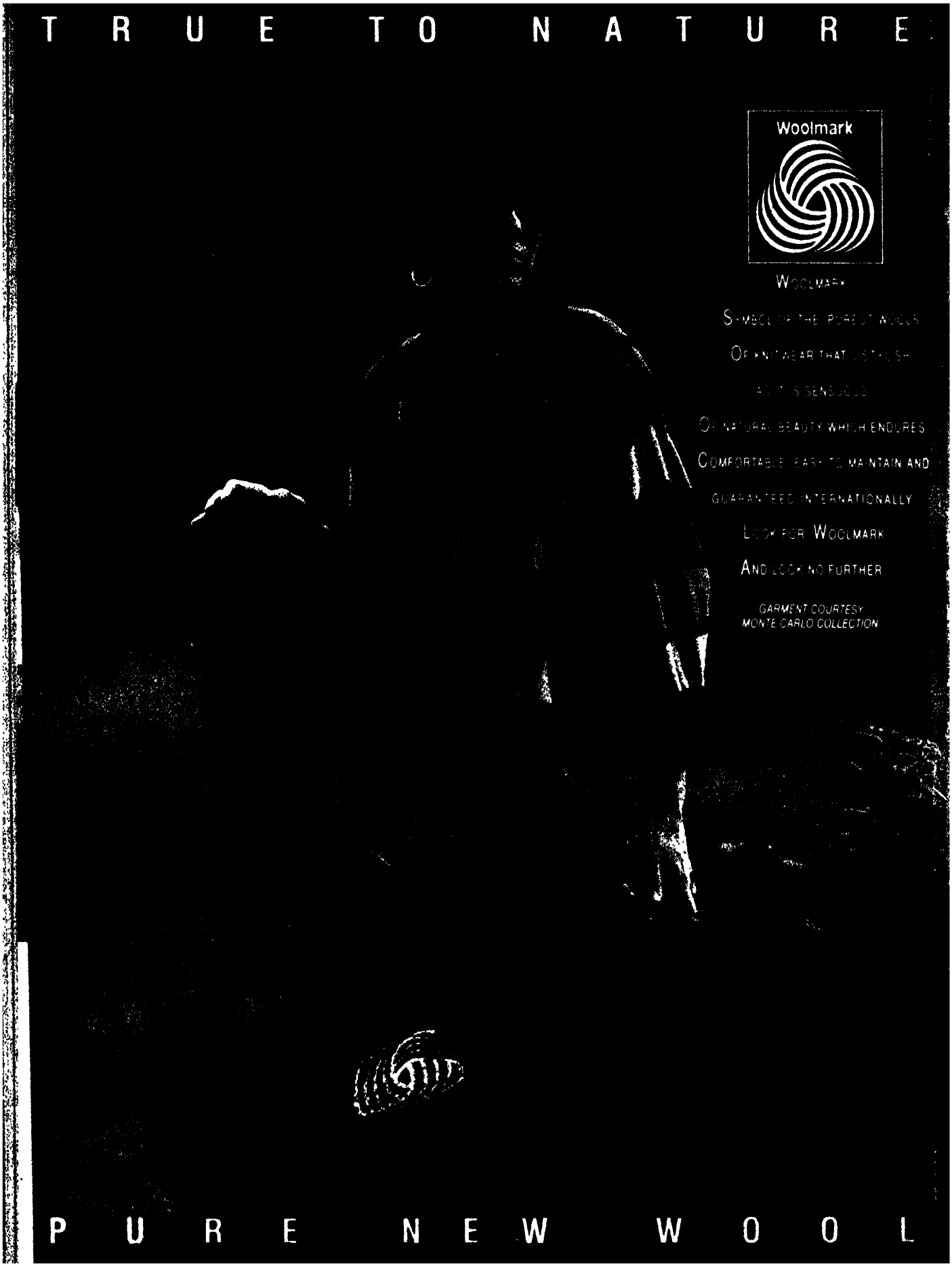
HTA 3987

WHERE V.P. SINGH WENT WRONG

SUNDAY



TRUE TO NATURE



Woolmark

WOOLMARK

SYMBOL OF THE PUREST WOOLS

OF KNITWEAR THAT IS STYLISH

AS IT IS SENSUOUS

OF NATURAL BEAUTY WHICH ENDURES

COMFORTABLE, EASY TO MAINTAIN AND

GUARANTEED INTERNATIONALLY

LOOK FOR WOOLMARK

AND LOOK NO FURTHER

GARMENT COURTESY
MONTE CARLO COLLECTION

PURE NEW WOOL

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 45 □ RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
18—24 NOVEMBER 1990



28
COVER STORY

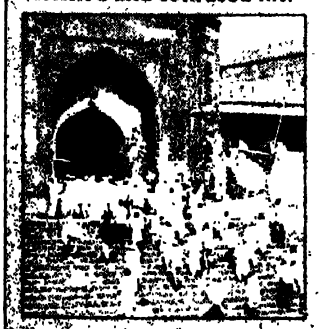
The making of the Prime Minister 1990

How Chandra Shekhar did it. The full story.

14
FOCUS

Groping in the dark

With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, the Muslims today are a terrified and confused lot.



17
BEAT

Distant tremors

New political equations are being worked out in Assam following the change of guard in Delhi.



24
DEFENCE

In deep waters

The Indian Navy could be in for a shock in the event of an Indo-Pak conflict.

43
BOOK EXTRACT

The final days

How Rajiv Gandhi lost his first prime ministership. An extract from his latest biography.

55
IN-DEPTH

Post mortem

Where did V.P. Singh go so wrong?



67
TRENDS

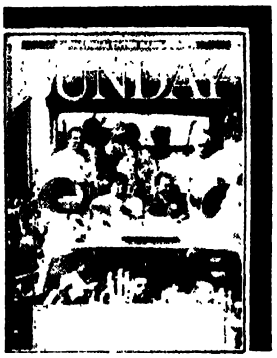
The Indipop boom

West and East meet in a new genre of rock music.

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
SIGHT AND SOUND 9
COUNTERVIEW 12
SOUTH BLOCK 19
PROFILE 22
Who's that man?
MANI-TALK 52
SPOTLIGHT 72
KHAAS BAAT 74
MEDIA 75
Paper chase
NEWS 76
MEDIA MUSINGS 83
NEWSWATCH 84
Change of guard
THIS INDIA 86
SUNDAYWEEK 87
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency: Nitin Rai

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise; North-eastern states: 30 paise



The temple of doom

The cover story (*Crunch!*, 28 October—3 November) was thought-provoking. Going by the recent developments sparked off by L.K. Advani's *rath yatra*, he seems all set for a showdown. And the National Front government, sans BJP support, is in deep trouble

But what is unbelievable is the fact that for the first time in the history of Indian democracy, a government is being challenged on the basis of an irrelevant issue – the building of a temple. There are numerous Ram temples in Ayodhya. So, why this militant desire to build another one? And what's worse, in the din, issues of national importance— the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations, inflation, border disputes with neighbours and terrorism in Punjab, Kashmir and the north-east— have taken a backseat. What's more, the government is spending a neat sum on security for Ayodhya. All this for a crisis created by a group of politicians and some communal elements. It's time the secular-minded citizens of India put their foot down.

Nanda Dulal Roy Chowdhury, Kharagpur (West Bengal)



L.K. Advani: looking forward to a Ram Rajya?

Double-dealing

The author deserves praise for his article (*The Hollow Man*, 21—27 October) where he pointed out that V.P. Singh is crafty, deceitful and deals in chair-based politics. Under his leadership the country is teetering on the brink of a disaster.

Abbas Ali Mahdi, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)

V.P. Singh: the chameleon



■ The analysis was deep and penetrating, showing great insight into the character of V.P. Singh

A metamorphosis took place when V.P. Singh decided to opt for 'self-based' politics, best exemplified by his decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report without even consulting his Cabinet colleagues.

What the country needs now is a patriotic leader who can weave the vast tapestry of this great nation into a cohesive and prosperous unit. V.P. Singh is not that man.

Ramakuri James, Ootacamund (Karnataka)

Duty bound!

I invite your attention to the article, *Cesspools* (14—20 October). I am constrained to point out that the article contains factual inaccuracies with regard to the working of the customs at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, and has been written without checking the facts from concerned officials.

It is totally wrong to say that nearly all luggage of the incoming passengers are X-rayed by the customs. The factual position is that more than 90 per cent of the passengers pass through the Green Channel. It is pertinent to mention that the passengers themselves can opt for Green Channel if they have no dutiable articles. The luggage of a Green Channel passenger is subjected to X-ray check on a very selective basis in about 10 per cent cases and the process of X-raying baggage takes only a couple of minutes. The waiting period is about five minutes excepting in rare cases when several flights land within short intervals. And on numerous occasions it has been found that in spite of having substantial dutiable goods and contraband, passengers have deliberately chosen the Green Channel. Faced as we are with the problem of smuggling, the department is justified in exercising the option of checking the correctness of the declaration by the selective X-ray check. In fact, concealment of contraband like gold can only be detected through X-ray and majority of such cases have been detected through X-ray.

The article quotes only the version of the passengers who apparently had a grievance with regard to their clearance. I may mention that while we too hear occasional criticism from the passengers, we have also on numerous occasions received appreciation from the members of the public regarding speedy clearance of the passengers at the Delhi Airport.

I have been misquoted with regard to payment of



Passengers awaiting baggage clearance

rewards to the officers. All that I had stated was that, as the government has given good incentive by way of rewards, there is enthusiasm in the officers for detection of smuggling cases. That the officers are too harsh with the passengers is the writer's own conclusion.

The two photographs of the Green Channel and the detained baggage room are also misleading. The detained baggage room is meant for keeping the goods at the passengers' own request pending payment of duty. There is nothing for the officers to gloat over this. Similarly, the photograph of the Green Channel shows the passengers in the Green Channel passage leading up to the exit gate. The passengers shown in the photographs are, in fact, in the process of moving to the exit gate and not waiting for their luggage to be X-rayed.

Shiraz Sidhva had talked to me some time back about the trends of revenue collection and the number of passengers cleared at the airport. However, the subjects of corruption and harassment of the public, both debatable issues, where we too have something to say, were not raised by her. She has, however, chosen to write about these matters without even ascertaining the department's views on these matters, which, to be fair, she should have done. At this stage, therefore, I can only say that the department attaches highest importance to any complaint of corruption or harassment. Action has been taken in all cases where complaints relating to these two issues have been found to be true.

A.K. Pande, collector, customs, New Delhi

Reply

1. We contest Pande's claims that firstly, only ten per cent of baggage is X-rayed. And that secondly, the process of X-raying the baggage takes five minutes. Both assertions are false. Scores of passengers complained about the tendency to X-ray at will. And the X-ray machine is so incompetently managed that delays of 20 minutes are not uncommon.
2. As for his assertion that customs officials receive more "appreciation" from the members of the public "than complaints", no rebuttal is necessary. Any passenger will be able to set him right.
3. We stand by Pande's quote. He said it. We quoted him.
4. The picture of the detained baggage room clearly shows pleased customs officers. If Pande thinks that there is nothing for them to gloat over, perhaps he should tell them that.

The Green Channel picture shows passengers queuing up for the Green Channel—supposedly a walk-through channel! Nowhere does it say that they are waiting for the X-ray. They are certainly not queuing up for the exit as Pande claims.

5. We accept Pande's assertion that his department is concerned about corruption at Delhi airport. But considering how bad things are—and his apparent inability to rebut any substantial point in the story—perhaps he should be even more concerned.

—Editor

And now, the good news

This is with reference to the article, *First, the bad news* (28 October—3 November). While not going into the allegations against individual ministers, I am directed to make clear the position of the ministry of commerce on the issues raised.

The production of coffee depends upon the annual cycle and consequently, this year the production is low. Besides, the International Coffee Agreement is not working and the international coffee prices have also declined by about 40 per cent. Consequent upon this important international trend, the unit value realisation of coffee has gone down. Similarly, the current trends in East European countries and the USSR are beyond anybody's control. The rupee trade agreement with the USSR will continue till 1995 although the rupee agreements have to give place to trade in free foreign exchange in the East European countries. So the quotations attributed to the ministry of commerce in the article are not correct.



Tea tasting in progress

The tea situation is not so alarming as reported in the article. The tea exports are in fact going up in spite of the need to find a balance between exports and local consumption. Apart from taking various measures to increase the exports of tea, the ministry of commerce has also taken up the problem of law and order in Assam, in consultation with the ministry of home affairs of the Government of India and with the government of Assam.

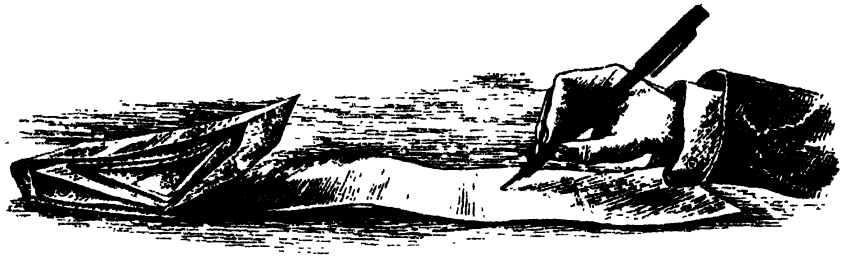
The ministry of commerce has also helped the tea industry by withdrawing the condition of alternative auctions for local sale so that the exports could be boosted. This, in fact, helped the exporters. However, as stated above, the requirements for high local consumption has to be kept in view.

The minister of state for commerce had stated in a general way that the government will not object to anyone importing tea for value added exports.

In regard to rubber, although it is the admitted policy of the government to support farmers, the prices are determined after a cost study by the ministry of finance. In fact, this study is presently in progress and the price is yet to be announced.

The pepper prices are now looking up and we hope the trend will continue.

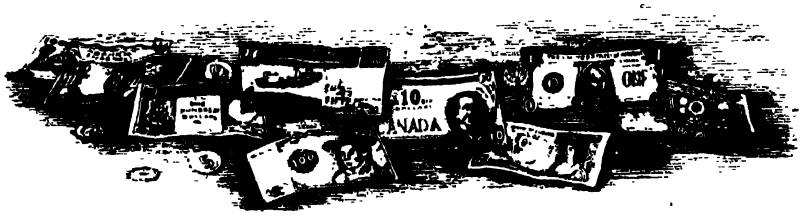
[illegible] of the ministry of commerce, New Delhi



A MINIMUM OF PAPERWORK.



EXPERT KNOWLEDGE OF WORLDWIDE CUSTOMS REQUIREMENTS.



ONE ALL-INCLUSIVE PRICE.



IMMEDIATE DESPATCH OF YOUR SHIPMENT.

CAN YOU EXPECT THE SAME DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE FROM YOUR FREIGHT FORWARDER?

RAKA:3150:B:90

When shipping around the world, most freight forwarding companies depend on outside agents to handle your packages. At DHL, however, we offer you one door-to-door service, one all-inclusive invoice, and one truly global network. You can depend on the dedication of over 20,000 professionals, spanning more than 180 countries, and supported by over 7,000 vehicles and aircraft. So why not call us if you need an immediate pick-up today?

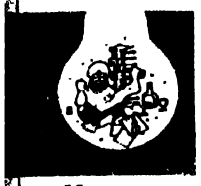
We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories.

DHL WORLDWIDE EXPRESS®

DHL. THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.

KHUSHWANT SINGH

A bard from Bangladesh



I don't know of any Bangladeshi poets writing in English who have found acceptance in English or American literary journals except Kaiser Haq, currently, associate professor of English at Dhaka University. Forty-year-old Haq is a product of Dhaka and Warwick University where he got his doctorate in English literature. After receiving a crash course with the Indian Army, he fought in the Bangladesh War of Liberation with the Mukti Bahini and received a commission as 2nd Lieutenant from the Bangladesh government in exile. He retains his military bearing with his upwards turned, greying moustache and a martial gait; the rest of him is a jovial litterateur writing articles and poems for a variety of journals including *London Magazine*, *The Cambridge Review*, *Chapman* (Glasgow) and *Inter Arts* (Edinburgh). He has edited a volume of Indian poetry published by the Ohio State University Press and translated poems of Shamsur Rahman into English.

The influence of Nissim Ezekiel, to whom he has dedicated one of his poems, is evident in his attempt to emulate Nissim's poems in Indian-English. His poem *Welcome Tourist Sahib!* has echoes of Ezekiel's *Farewell to Usha*:

When you come I go to airport
(International Wing) to receive you
and conduct with welcome.
You are very Important Person,
VIP to me,
full of £ and/or $. I am BA pass in
History, Economics, Philosophy
and General English and Bengali
are the compulsory of course.
Now I training for tourist guide.
I practise in front of mirror (I have
good-
looking face) what I say to you in
English conversation.
I make vernacular conversation
with local
and interpret and translate, both
ways.
I have ambition for writing tourist
handbook
and printing-publishing in Big Uncle's printing press;
I sell you with concession
If price payment is £ or $

Kaiser Haq's strength lies in controlled sentimentalism as on recalling the memory of a beloved uncle:

Chill as the sudden news had been
the wind that marked your passing
Is back, bringing unknown birds
Of passage: a rush like a breathing
Amplified. Then, again, the silence of
memory.

Like Nissim Ezekiel, Kaiser Haq has a macabre sense of humour. This comes through in a short poem on a naked beggar:

Nanga pagla the sky-clad one
Terror and delight of children
Halts the traffic to announce his name
Is Badshah Akbar, Henry Ford, Aga
Khan.
Then marching to the department
store
Stops before assistants can bar his way
And dismisses them with a laugh:
'From you I will buy nothing'.

What distinguishes Kaiser Haq from his Indian contemporaries is the essential Bangladeshiness of some of his poems. This is illustrated in his *Peasant's Lament:*



Kaiser Haq is a jovial litterateur writing articles and poems for a variety of journals including *London Magazine*, *The Cambridge Review*, *Chapman* and *Inter Arts*. He also has a macabre sense of humour similar to that of Nissim Ezekiel

Your name on granny's lips
mumbles
Put me to sleep
sang in my dreams
Allah
On hungry nights
filled half the belly
the other half cried
for you, to you,
Allah
I stole a chicken and fled
Your wrath in nightmares
but no one found out
and I thanked you
Allah
Five times a day your name
cried from minarets
scatters pigeons from the corn
and people knock their heads
proclaiming your greatness
through grunts of anguish
Allah

There is nothing strait-laced about Kaiser Haq when it comes to Brotica: The snake-charmer charms more than her dancing snakes,
He wants them put away
and a different dance to start,
bends his fingers into a hook,
large banknotes for bait

but she draws back
giggling refusal, glinting eyes

saying Look at mine,
a stiff cobra in her hand.

Two slender volumes of Kaiser Haq's poems, *A Little Ado* and *Starting Lines*, have been published in Dhaka. Although he has earned recognition abroad, he has yet to make his debut in Indian journals and publishing.

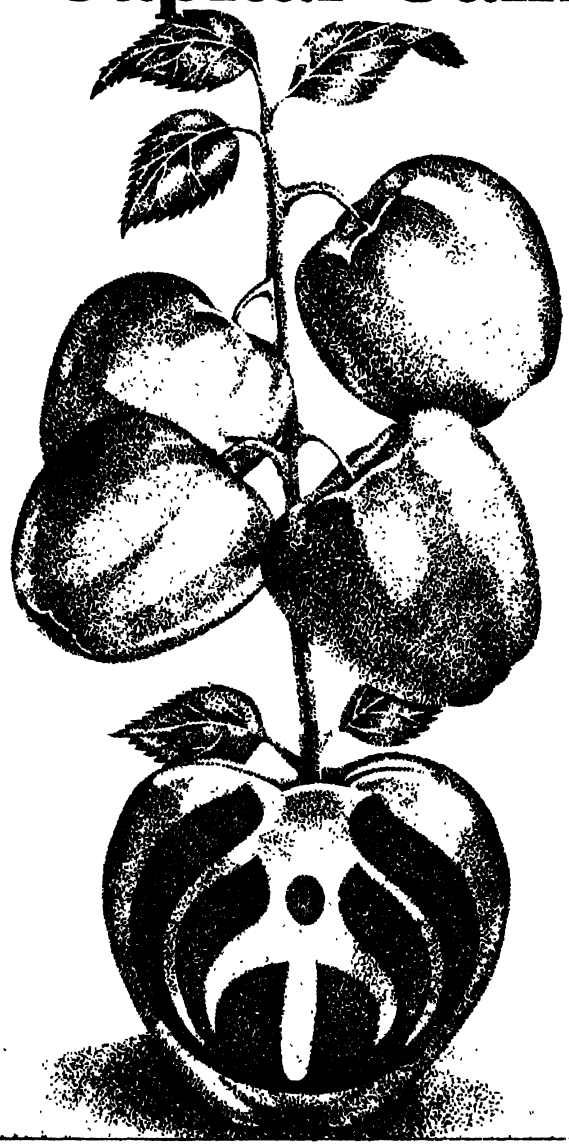
Heart of the matter

A pretty girl was looking at a large collection of greeting cards labelled, "For your sweetheart." She read each card carefully before rejecting it. Finally she settled on one which said simply, "Because I love only you."

She took the card to the shopkeeper and said, "Please give me a dozen of these."

(Contributed by Mehtab Ali Amrohvi, Amroha) ●

IDBI Capital Bonds
An attractive instrument for exemption from Capital Gains Tax.



- Available at par throughout the year.
- Exemption from Capital Gains tax under Section 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Exemption from Wealth tax under Section 5(1) (xvie) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957
- Income tax benefit under Section 80L.
- Interest at 9% p.a. payable half yearly.
- At the investor's option, interest for the full period of 3 years can be paid in advance on discounted basis.
- No deduction of tax at source.
- Outstation cheques accepted and cost of collection will be borne by IDBI.

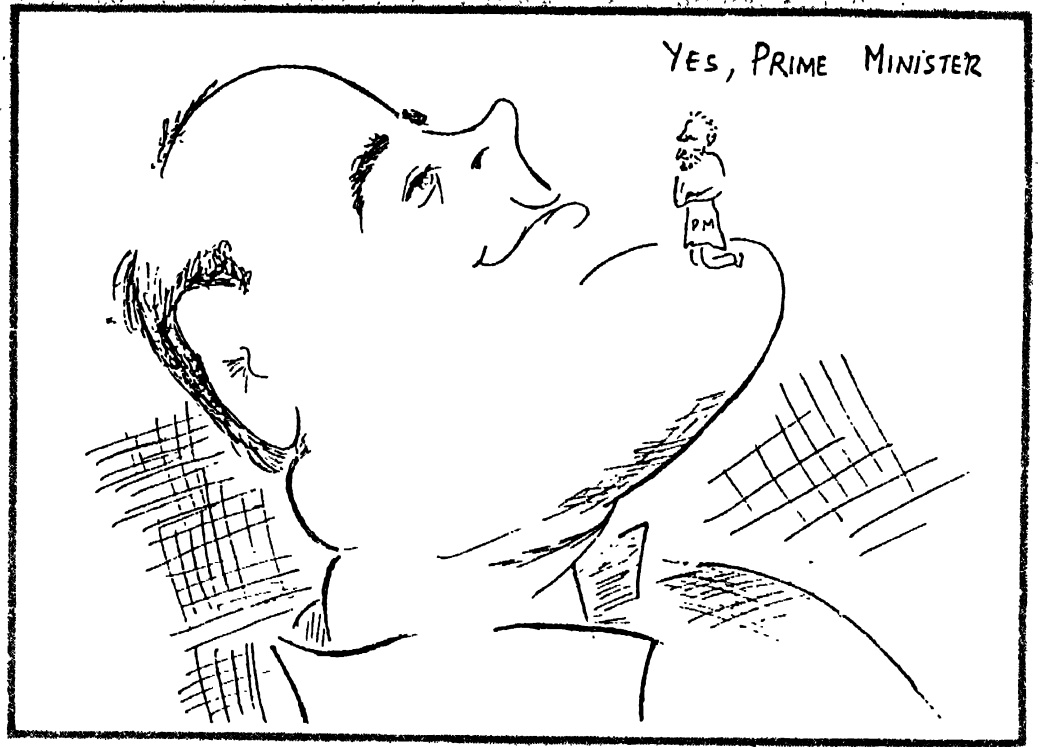
For further details contact the nearest IDBI office or write to Manager

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA

IDBI TOWER, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay 400 005.

Sobhagya-B/IDBI/89

SIGHT AND SOUND



A READER'S CARTOON/*THE TELEGRAPH*



■ A government led by Chandra Shekhar with the support of the Congress(I) will be like a 25 horse-power engine pulled backwards by its huge trailer. One can imagine what would happen once the trailer goes in reverse gear.

V.P. SINGH, *former Prime Minister, in Parliament*

■ What matters is that who is in the driver's seat. The Prime Minister can neither drive a jeep nor pull a trailer.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Prime Minister, in reply*

■ The damage that you (V.P. Singh) have done, the social tension that you have brought about will take decades to cool.

RAJIV GANDHI, *Congress(I) president*

■ If Chandra Shekhar replaces V.P. Singh what will he do? What can he do which V.P. Singh had not been able to do?

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister*

■ The silver lining in the crisis is that though we are losing a government, we are left with a cohesive party.

JAIPAL REDDY, *Janata Dal spokesman*

■ We were guilty by running a Congress government. V.P. Singh is a Congressman.

DEVI LAL, *former deputy Prime Minister, on decision of the Chandra Shekhar camp to take the Congress(I) support to form a new government*

■ Would you have withdrawn support on 23 October if your *rath yatra* had not been stopped?

SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY, *CPI(M) MP, to Mr Advani during the debate on the confidence motion*

■ He (Laloo Prasad Yadav) rides a bicycle which is followed by three four cars and claims to be saving petrol.

JAGANATH MISHRA, *leader of the Opposition in Bihar Assembly*

■ Gone are the days when kings or leaders used to come out of queen's womb. Now they come out of ballot boxes.

LALOO PRASAD YADAV, *Bihar chief minister*

■ To become globally competitive is a must—yet India is still the most highly regulated economy in the world, despite recent liberalisations.

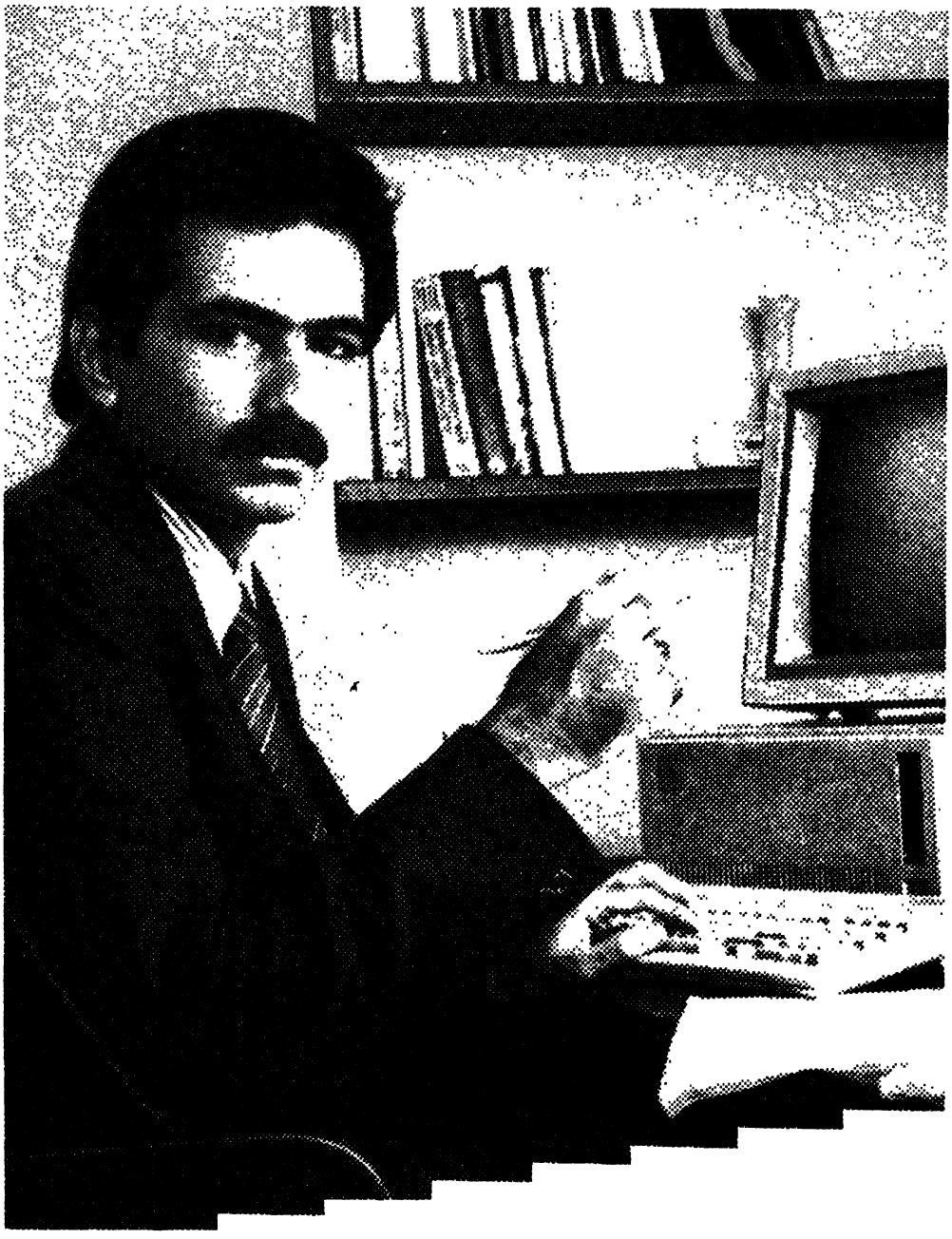
RAHUL BAJAJ, *chairman-cum-managing director of Bajaj Auto Ltd*

■ I don't know how many fathers I've got...everyone wants to father me.

POOJA BHATT, *actress*



HOW TO GAIN ON THE STOCK MARKET WITHOUT ANY RISK



D:2436

ISSUE OPEN

Get capital appreciation with minimum risk. Seek the safety and security of Ind Jyothi. The unique Growing and Assured Income Scheme. Plus bonus too.

Highlights of the Scheme

- Ind Jyothi is yet another winner from Indian Bank Mutual Fund. The people who brought to you Ind Ratna and Swarna Pushpa.
- It's totally secured. And assures high returns. From 12.75% in year one to a high 15.25% in the 7th year.
- Plus bonus.
- Allotment is assured.
- To be listed at Bombay and other Stock exchanges after one year.
- Special incentives for subscribers before November 15, 1990.

Application forms available and accepted at all branches of Indian Bank.

MINIMUM ASSURED INCOME

Year	Income	Period	
		From	To
1	12.75%	Allotment Date	31.3.92
2	13.25%	1.4.92	31.3.93
3	13.75%	1.4.93	31.3.94
4	14.25%	1.4.94	31.3.95
5	14.75%	1.4.95	31.3.96
6	14.75%	1.4.96	31.3.97
7	15.25%	1.4.97	31.3.98

Choose from either of two plans.

Plan A: Assured return is payable annually.

Plan B: Assured return declared annually, will be added back to the investment and accumulated sum will be paid on maturity.

Indian Bank
MUTUAL FUND
Principal Trustee: Indian Bank

D.G. Chambers, Nanak Motwani Marg, Fort, Bombay 400 023.

HELPS BUILD YOUR FORTUNE

IND JYOTHI

7 YEAR INCREMENTAL GROWTH FUND

Brighten up your life.

VINOD MEHTA

Success, at last

For sheer doggedness, Chandra Shekhar deserves a try



Two days before the momentous vote in the Lok Sabha, Chandra Shekhar, jostled by cameramen journalists and acolytes, made a brief appearance on our TV screens. I forget whether he was coming out of Devi Lal's house or going to Rajiv's or on his way to one more late night cabal. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair dishevelled, his usually neat beard in urgent need of scissors and razor, his nerves quite clearly on edge. For a front runner, who for 10 years and more had single-mindedly pursued a single goal, a goal that was now almost within his grasp, his appearance seemed odd, even absurd. Is this what happens to men who make one deal too many in pursuit of an ambition from which there seems no release?

When he is pressed by unfriendly critics, Mr Chandra Shekhar snaps, "Yes, I want to be the Prime Minister. Is it a crime?" Vishwanath Pratap Singh mastered the ploy of donning the garb of the reluctant candidate, but we all know the tenacity with which he fought to protect his 'chair' once it was threatened. Mandal was going to reserve jobs for not only the backward classes, but for V.P. Singh and his select group. VP's hypocrisy notwithstanding, the impression persists that the MP from Ballia nurses an altogether different species of ambition, one that is relatively rare in Indian public life. Indira Gandhi nursed it, Charan Singh perhaps, but who else? Of course, Chandra Shekhar is unlikely to go so far as to impose another Emergency to stay put, yet a vast number of voters feel uncomfortable with the personality of the Prime Minister-in-waiting. He has been in the wilderness for too long, and disappointment piled upon disappointment tends to make people unpredictable and treacherous. If finally power does reach his grasp, will he go around the bend?

Since treachery is the natural business of those who run for high office, we shouldn't lose sleep on that count. Neither should Mr Chandra Shekhar's protracted and bitter quest for the ultimate prize cause concern. Indeed, his nearly 20 years of experience in politics at the grassroots and organisational level—he has never held a ministerial position— renders him in some ways unique. Chandra Shekhar cronies insist that their man understands 'power', both urban and rural, from the inside, and is therefore ideally placed to exploit it for the public weal. Amateur do-gooders, they emphasise, are no match for Chandra Shekhar's hard-headed understanding of politics as the art of the possible. Mental balance while holding office? Well, unlike the previous incumbent, no one has yet sued him for lunacy!

He comes with one additional advantage: Chandra Shekhar is no English speaking Devi Lal. He does not make judgements on people on the basis of their postal address—all this phoney India for the farmers rhetoric is alien to his temperament. He is bound to contain and possibly reverse the damage done by those who seek to divide India into antagonistic village-city categories. Neither is he a casteist.



JAGDISH YADAV



ASHOK VAHIE

For once **Rajiv Gandhi** is playing his cards with uncharacteristic cunning. Two objectives are being pursued. First: discredit the Janata Dal. Second: invite the JD leaders to get at each other's throats

I do not quarrel with the identikit portrait of the person currently moving heaven and earth to secure the prime ministership. We can even add a few details to the sketch—modern, progressive, internationally-minded (the last time I met him we had a spirited discussion on Saddam Hussein and US intentions in the Gulf), left-of-centre social democrat who, unmindful of the reverses socialism has suffered recently, had little hesitation in christening his breakaway faction, Janata Dal (Socialist). Perhaps Mr Chandra Shekhar's public posture on socialism is a trifle strident as is his hostility to big business and multinationals, but considering the fact that his unacknowledged benefactor is Dhirubhai Ambani, we shouldn't get too alarmed if he sometimes sounds like George Fernandes.

In short, India is getting no village rustic with half-baked pretensions to ushering in a just social order, but a genuine nationalist who is equally at home in Ballia and Bombay, Kathmandu and Khartoum, London and Los Angeles. He has the confidence of the Muslims because his commitment to secularism is known and tested; the



To be appointed Prime Minister is a great honour. But to be sustained in office by the **Rajiv Gandhi**-led Congress, which **Chandra Shekhar** swore to oppose, marks a new low for democracy

Sikhs admire him because he has been a most vocal critic of pandering to terrorists on one hand, and police excess on the other; the rural lobby respects him because he is perceived as pro-agriculture.

The perfect Prime Minister-in-waiting? A model others should emulate? Even habitual Chandra Shekhar baiters (this writer could conceivably be counted as one) will have to concede that on paper at least, the MP from Ballia has a lot going for him. This country could do worse—consider Arun Nehru, Devi Lal, Biju Patnaik as the alternatives—than settle for the leader of the Janata Dal (Socialist). Finally, here is a man who since 1977 has openly, insistently, and unashamedly been hustling for the prime ministership. For sheer doggedness he deserves a try. We should give him the job so that he can get it out of his system—and ours.

We could, but let us take cognisance of the attendant dangers. Even before the 1989 general elections, Chandra Shekhar had been marginalised. As Vishwanath Pratap Singh's hold on the Janata Dal tightened, as the formation of the National Front was finalised, Chandra Shekhar found himself increasingly isolated in the party as a result of his crude hostility to the unanimously accepted leader. The high command of the Janata Dal-led National Front left no one in doubt that it had only one candidate for the top job. The electorate was asked to vote for the Opposition on the understanding that if they could form a government it would be led by V.P. Singh.

Mr Chandra Shekhar did campaign for the party, but he did so without enthusiasm or conviction. He was clearly not one of the star campaigners—a fact that did not seem to bother the party since the dissident leader's vote-winning capacity was not held in high esteem. In the cow belt for instance, Ajit Singh and Devi Lal were more visible than the Old Turk who spent most of his time sulking and complaining about how he was being deliberately ignored. Thus, in north India, the Janata Dal's success had very little to do with the exertions of Chandra Shekhar. In many ways he was the forgotten man of the 1989 poll.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the last general election was fought on a single issue—Congress *hatao*, or more precisely Rajiv *hatao*. All 145 Janata Dal MPs were elected because Vishwanath Pratap Singh managed to dramatise and highlight the ineptitude and corruption of the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress government. Even Mr Chandra Shekhar, who lost the 1984 election, won his seat in Ballia on an anti-Congress wave thrust into the electoral arena via the personality and the leadership of Vishwanath Pratap Singh.



ASHOK VAHIE

The last general election was fought on a single issue—Congress *hatao*. All 145 Janata Dal MPs, including Chandra Shekhar, were elected because **V.P. Singh** managed to highlight the corruption of the Congress government

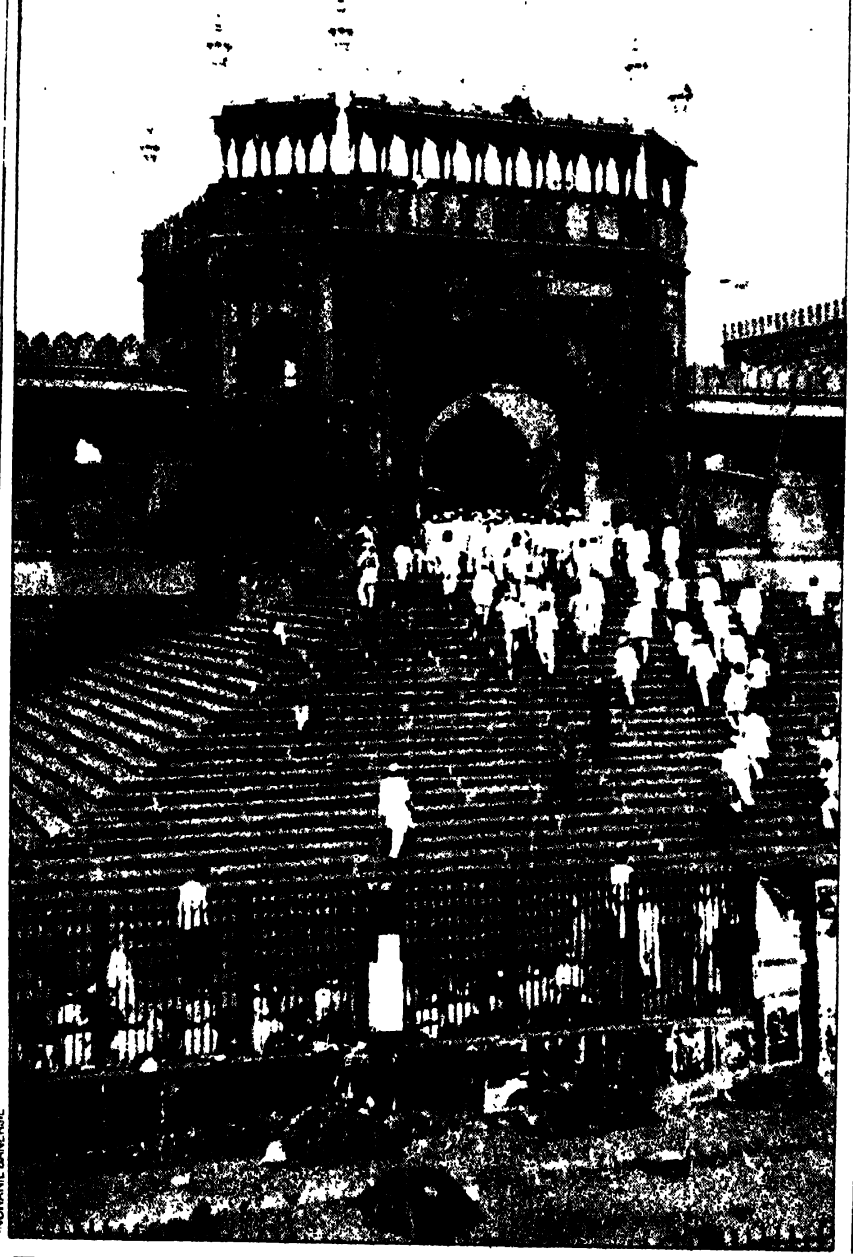
With around 10 per cent of the total membership of the Power House backing him, Chandra Shekhar has staked his claim to form a government. It is for the President to decide whether such a claimant is deserving of an invitation, especially since 25 of the MPs making up the 10 per cent are officially 'unattached'. What moral and legal legitimacy a government thus constructed would enjoy is a matter that will surely exercise Mr Venkataraman's fine mind. That this motley 'independent' group would be sustained in office solely by the party, which individual members of this group swore to oppose in the 'people's court' less than a year ago and on which promise they got duly elected, marks a new low for democracy in this country. Even the always-fooled Indian electorate would find such a gigantic fraud hard to stomach.

For once Rajiv Gandhi is playing his cards with uncharacteristic cunning. Two objectives are being pursued. First: discredit the Janata Dal in the eyes of the voting public, something which to a large measure he has already achieved. Second: invite Janata Dal leaders to get at each other's throats so that the party is split into various factions. The Congress is well on its way to achieving this goal too with the help of Chandra Shekhar and friends.

To be appointed Prime Minister of India is a great honour. The victory is not merely a personal milestone, it is a unique opportunity to do things that have been left undone for four decades. There is no reason to doubt that Mr Chandra Shekhar is animated by such noble thoughts as he awaits the call from Rashtrapati Bhawan. But even someone possessed with so notoriously ferocious an ambition as his must pause and consider the means by which that ambition is being realised. If he succumbs to the bait dangled by Rajiv Gandhi, Chandra Shekhar's government will be a short-lived swindle. Alas, there seems no escaping it now. •

Groping in the dark

With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, Muslims are a terrified and confused lot



©NORANIL BANERJEE

When BJP leader L.K. Advani drove his chariot through Old Delhi like a Hindu conqueror invading the bastion of the Muslims, almost everybody expected trouble. For, the ancient alleys of the old city are testimony to many a communal carnage. This part of the city is also soaked in faded memories of a once glorious Muslim empire. For many Muslims this is the last refuge. And the entry of the BJP chariot only further pushed a declining community to the wall. But oddly enough on that day, there was not the slightest reaction. There was no battle or blood on the streets.

"Not that there was no provocation," recalls Sayeedullah Khan, a young garment exporter, who was among the many hundreds watching Advani's procession inching through the old city. He says that minor scuffles had broken out and there was some stone throwing. More serious was the case of the vice Imam of the Fatehpuri Jama Masjid, Mohammad Muazzam, whose chest was pierced by

History at times throws up frightening parallels. Forty four years ago, there was the Muslim League's Direct Action programme with the slogan: "*Lad ke layenge Pakistan*" (We will fight to get Pakistan). Today, we have the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, saying, in so many words: "*Lad ke layenge Ram Janmabhoomi*" (We will fight to get Ram Janmabhoomi). In both cases, the net effect is communal hatred. And in both cases, the casualty is secularism.

The similarities do not end there. What Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of the Muslim League and ultimately of Pakistan, achieved in 1946, BJP president L.K. Advani, if given a chance, could well match in the coming months. Jinnah, it will be recalled, had called for Direct Action when his attempts to get a separate homeland for the subcontinent's Muslims was meeting little success in the face of Congress opposition. Jinnah claimed that the Muslim League spoke for every Muslim in undivided India. He claimed that the Hindus had [illegible] towards the Hindus and argued that Muslims should [illegible] given the right to [illegible]

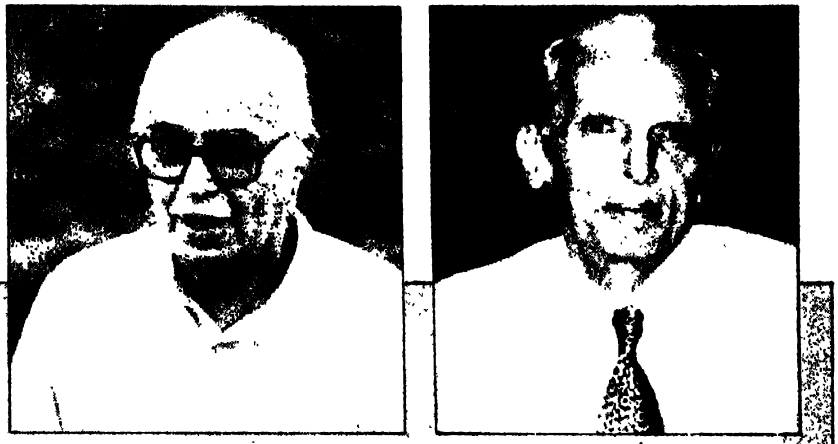
a *trishul* while he was being escorted home by two policemen Muazzam had to be hospitalised and news of his injury sent shock waves through the city.

Yet nothing happened. It was just another day of shuttered shops and garbage putrefying in the sun. The Muslims had retreated, overwhelmed by the fear of starting something they could not contain. Then there was the police. "For the first time we found the administration ready to crack down on anybody trying to take the law into their hands," says Mirza Farooqi, a shopkeeper of the Lal Kuan locality. Middle class residents, both Muslims and Hindus, of the area pointed out that communal violence, as in 1984, is always spearheaded by anti-socials who are more interested in looting than in hacking down religious opponents. "We have seen that if the administration is alert and strict, anti-socials do not dare go on the rampage," explains Shabbir Ahmad Falahi, a small businessman who also works for an Islamic trust that distributes scholarships to bright Muslim students.

The non-event of Advani's *rath yatra* through Old Delhi holds all the clues to the current thought processes of Indian Muslims. The BJP and its ally, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), are terrifying. Their arguments against the appeasement of minorities etc., while sounding perfectly rational to many Hindus, are seen as aimed at further stifling a community which is considered as the underdog of the nation.

The minority community leaders do not, however see any immediate way out of the political blind alley they are trapped in. If anything, today they are more confused than they were ever before. Rajiv Gandhi and his Congress(I) has long been discredited and conclusively rejected. V.P. Singh momentarily emerged as their champion but he bowed out prematurely. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the tough chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, still holds some promise. But his alliance with Chandra Shekhar is viewed with uncertainty. And Chandra Shekhar himself cannot be wholly trusted after his faction of the Janata Dal supported Rajasthan's BJP chief minister, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

A majority of Muslims admit that the past one year has witnessed a



Advani (left) and Jinnah: frightening similarities

Jinnah of the Hindus

L.K. Advani could well be remembered that way

homeland, complete with their own government and laws.

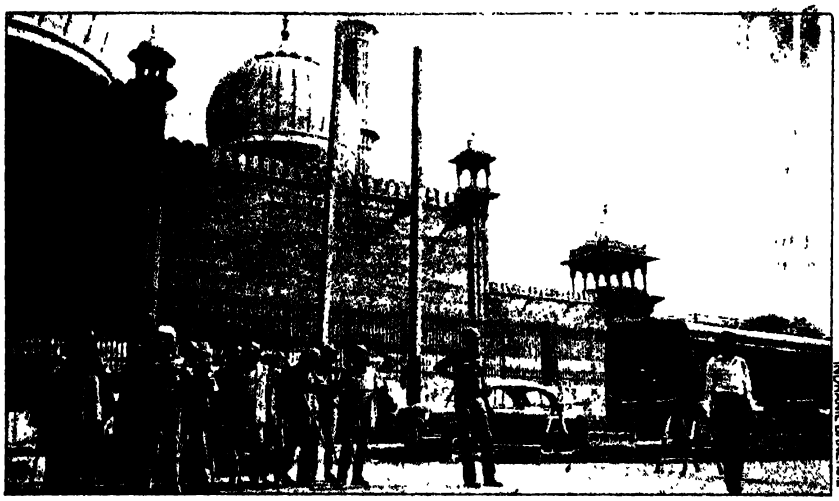
Mahatma Gandhi did not agree. The Congress had several prominent Muslim leaders, including Maulana Azad and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and refused to accept Jinnah's claim. Ultimately, faced with the prospect of political death, the Muslim League called for Direct Action. The decision to precipitate lawlessness soon turned into carnage. Communal violence flared up all over the country, leaving thousands dead. From then on, things would never be the same again in the subcontinent.

Advani's decision to flout judicial procedures and ride on his chariot to Ayodhya in support of militant actions bent on pulling down the Babri Masjid and building a [illegible] is motivated by a desire to create a political constituency. The BJP for the first time in independent India had secured a sizeable number (88) of seats in Parliament and felt that Vishwanath Pratap Singh by upholding secularism and implementing the Mandal Commission was undercutting their support base. The BJP had to get back in the game. It chose to be the champion of Ayodhya.

The result: countrywide communal violence and the reawakening of the feeling that Hindus and Muslims cannot co-exist.

The point is not that Advani wants a separate Hindu state, minus the Muslims. He knows it is not possible. Nor does he say that Muslims must be suppressed. But he too, like Jinnah before him, is floating his campaign on myths. The biggest of which is that Muslims in this country are being pandered to. The facts, as any sociologist knows, is that the Muslims of India are largely landless, illiterate, and steeped in grinding poverty. This is in utter contrast to what the community was during the British raj.

At one time, Muslims ruled this country and then became the favoured community under the British. Today, they are disappropriated. Babri Masjid is a symbol, in fact the last symbol of their past glory. Today, the BJP and the militant Muslims have made the Ayodhya structure a matter of communal prestige. Neither side can afford to back out. By saying that the issue can be settled forcibly, Advani is merely claiming that Hindus have more clout than the Muslims and the latter must recognise it. Jinnah drove a wedge between the two communities, and splintered the country. Advani's ultimate achievement could well be the same. For, 120 million people cannot permanently be pushed to the wall. Not even if the majority is composed of many more millions.



INDRANIL BANERJEE

Security outside Delhi's Jama Masjid: a threatened bastion

great flux in their community's political attitudes. "Muslims at one time traditionally supported the Congress, which was a party that preached secularism," says Aftab Alam Khan of Bihar's Siwan district, who is currently doing his M Phil from Delhi University. "Today, even the most simple-minded Muslim does not consider the Congress(I) to be his saviour." The reasons, he says, are clear enough: the Babri Masjid locks were opened during the Congress(I) regime and subsequently the *shilanyas* was allowed during their tenure.

"Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I) cheated Muslims in the name of secularism," declares Shabbir Ahmad Falahi. "During their time,communal riots continued for days. The Congress(I) always spoke against communalism but secretly encouraged the communalists for political purposes." Syed Yusuf, the secretary of the powerful Jam a at-e-Islami Hind, a non-political organisation that has more clout in the community than any Imam in the country, adds: "Muslims no longer consider the Congress(I) to be secular ...and it's not just because of Babri Masjid and the *shilanyas*. The history of this country shows that successive Congress governments have not given very much to the Muslim community, they have not even been able to secure the safety of our lives and properties."

Vishwanath Pratap Singh, in dramatic contrast, had emerged as the undisputed champion of the Muslims for his decision to abide by the court verdict on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy and treat anybody who refused to abide by the judicial process as common criminals. The stance and actions of Janata Dal chief ministers, especially UP's Mulayam Singh Yadav and Bihar's Laloo Prasad Yadav, strengthened the view that here at last was a government and a party that practised what it preached. For instance, Laloo Yadav's message that the administration would be pulled up if they failed to douse any communal conflagration and his conviction, publicly stated, that sustained communal violence was not possible if the state government did not want it, made enormous sense to the Muslims.

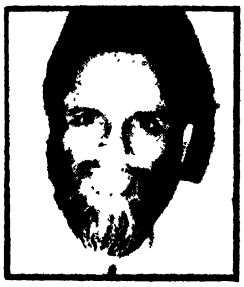
"Vishwanath Pratap Singh remains the most popular leader as far as the Muslims are concerned," asserts the Jamaat's Yusuf Syed. "We don't believe what Shourie wrote about V.P. Singh making a deal with the BJP, we only believe in his actions," adds Aftab Alam Khan. Many Congress(I) Muslim leaders also admit in private that Singh had won the hearts of Muslims for his stand on the Babri Masjid. Now, however, the break-up of the Janata Dal has compounded confusion. Muslims would in all probability have sided with the Singh faction had Mulyam Singh Yadav not gone over to Chandra Shekhar's camp. The tussle for Muslim votes in the Hindi belt will consequently be between Mulayam Singh and V.P. Singh.

"The Congress(I) will not benefit from the break-up of the Janata Dal as far as the Muslim vote is concerned," believes Shahid Imam, a Calcutta lawyer and a Youth Congress(I) member. For one, Chandra Shekhar's decision to break the Janata Dal at a moment of crisis is viewed as a blatantly opportunistic move. The overwhelming majority of Muslims interviewed felt that the party leadership was not the issue at this juncture. This was crisis time. "Perhaps it would have been wiser for Rajiv Gandhi to have supported V.P. Singh and proved to the electorate that for him the national crisis is more important than personal vendetta," says Imam. "Instead, we are once again viewed as opportunists cashing in on a crisis to destroy a political opponent."

But all the goodwill in the world cannot put together V.P. Singh's Janata Dal together again. And this is precisely where the Muslim support might just turn against him. For, Indian Muslims are not an ambitious community. They have modest and very fundamental aspirations, the most important of which relate to personal safety. A politically weakened V.P. Singh might not be able to ensure their safety any longer. Nothing will be the same for the Muslims after the BJP's *rath yatra* and the subsequent collapse of the government. It looks like a free for all and the Muslims do not quite know where their besieged alleyways lead to. •

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi and Calcutta

REACTIONS



SYED YUSUF
SECRETARY, JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI HIND

Muslims no longer consider the Congress(I) to be secular. The party has not been able to secure our lives and properties

AFTAB ALAM KHAN
STUDENT, DELHI UNIVERSITY

We do not believe that V.P. Singh made a deal with the BJP. We only go by what he did



Distant tremors

New political equations are being worked out in Assam following the change of guard in Delhi

The drama, the tension and the uncertainty in New Delhi has cast a shadow thousands of miles away. The ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam, where Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in December, suddenly finds itself in an awkward position with the collapse of V.P. Singh's National Front government, of which the AGP is a constituent. The Opposition Congress(I), which was pressing for a spell of President's Rule before the polls—the party feared that the AGP might rig the elections—has changed tune and is now demanding elections on time. The AGP leaders, too, were so long undecided about whether to go to the people or not. But the changes in Delhi—after all, Chandra Shekhar will not be as friendly to the AGP as V.P. Singh—have spread panic among the rulers in Guwahati and they are eager to seek a fresh mandate from the people before the new government at the Centre settles down.

Apparently, the only political party which has gained substantially from V.P. Singh's fall is the Congress(I) Over the last five years, the party in Assam has suffered considerable erosion in its ranks and was all but wiped out from the state. Overnight, following the change of guard in Delhi and the re-emergence of Rajiv Gandhi as a key player in the power struggle, the state Congress(I) is back in action and crowds have begun thronging the palatial hosue of the Assam Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (APCC-I) president Hiteswar Saikia once again.

However, the party finds itself in an uncomfortable position because the two issues that have brought about the downfall of the National Front government—the Mandal report and the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute—which had been exploited by the Congress(I) to embarrass V.P. Singh as long as he was in power are both crucial for the party's survival in Assam. For, the Congress, chances of returning to power in the state are largely dependent on whether it can garner the support of the backward classes and the minorities. True, the backwards and the Muslims, who provided a solid base for the Congress in the Seventies under the leadership of Dev Kant Barooah and Sarat Chandra Sinha, no longer constitute a unified force, but they are nevertheless receptive to any policy that might threaten them.



Chief minister Prafulla Mahanta is a worried man. His party, the AGP, is in a tight spot following Rajiv Gandhi's re-emergence as a key player in New Delhi's power politics

No wonder then that Hiteswar Saikia has been carefully cultivating the backwards and the minorities with an eye to the elections. As many as 21 backward communities in the state have been agitating for scheduled tribe status and it is well known that the Congress is behind some of the movements. But Saikia's plans received a setback after V.P. Singh dropped the Mandal bombshell. Today, the backwards and minorities



Saikia (left) with a delegation of the minorities: banking on their support

look upon Singh as their saviour. And Saikia has definite cause to worry beause the backwards and the minorities constitute almost half the state's electorate.

Not that the AGP is ignoring this crucial vote bank. Being a constituent of the National Front, which implemented the Mandal Commission Report, the party has a distinct advantage over its rivals as far as wooing the backwards are concerned. But what really worried chief minister Prafulla Mahanta and his colleagues are the minorities. Though V.P. Singh has taken a tough stand on Ram Janmabhoomi and the BJP, the electorate of Assam are yet to forget that the anti-foreigners agitation spearheaded by the All Assam Students Union (AASU)—the AGP is the political wing of the student's body—in the Seventies was in fact a movement led by the caste Hindus directed against immigrants from Bangladesh—mostly Muslims.

Moreover, the agitation was backed by such fundamentalist organisations as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Realising that the AGP would not be able to go very far without the support of at least a section of the Muslims, Mahanta and his men have tried hard to shed its pro-Hindu image: during Advani's *rath yatra*, the AGP had come out strongly against the idea and the BJP. The ULFA's—the militant outfit is said to have links with the AGP—public denouncement of communal forces and warning them to keep away from Assam has only given strength to the AGP's stance. But despite such honest efforts, some of the mud obviously got stuck.



Osmani's faction of the UMF has been roped in by the LDA. This will undoubtedly give the alliance a solid minorities base

Political observers in the state feel that apart from the AGP, the Congress(I) has to contend with yet another formidable coalition in the forthcoming polls: the Left and Democratic Alliance (LDA) under the leadership of Sarat Chandra Sinha. The Osmani faction of the United Minorities Front (UMF) has already been accommodated in it to give the alliance a minorities base. And if the efforts to rope in the Karbis, the Bodos and other tribal organisations succeed, both the AGP and the Congress(I) could well be in for a shock.

There is, however, one problem for the LDA. Can some of the constituents of the alliance, especially parties like the Janata and the Congress(S) which form the National Front at the Centre, afford to oppose the AGP, which again is a NF ally? But if the mood in the LDF is anything to go by, both the Janata Dal and the Congress(S) are determined to take on the AGP, no matter what the consequences at the national level. And, now that the National Front is no longer in power at the Centre, both the parties can well afford to take such a militant stand.

The AGP, too, has other problems. According to reliable sources, a section of the party is in favour of striking an alliance with the Congress, however ridiculous that may sound. The argument of this group runs as follows: the AGP has done nothing worthwhile during its tenure and there are distinct signs that the people are disillusioned with the party. Moreover, the state government has failed to implement the Assam Accord—the one issue that catapulted the AGP to power five years back. This, despite the fact that a "friendly" National Front government was in power in New Delhi for the last one year. Thus, it would be disastrous for the party to face the electorate alone, especially since the LDF is already a formidable force to contend with.

Moderates within the AGP led by the chief minister are naturally opposed to such an idea. Whether the party will split on this issue is difficult to say at this juncture. Other combinations are also being worked out. The Opposition parties too are busy parleying and working out strategies.

Election fever has finally hit Assam.

Rabijit Choudhury/Guwahati

INDER MALHOTRA

The war within

The Indian Army is busy fighting its own people



In this column, being written at a time when the ramshackle V.P. Singh regime is crumbling fast, let me concentrate on one of its egregious follies on which there can be little scope for difference of opinion even in the present highly polarised atmosphere. I refer, of course, to the abominable practice of calling out the army, often without any justification, to the aid of civil authority to quell very emotive political conflicts on the streets.

Regrettably, the malaise is not new. It has afflicted the body politic practically since Independence though, over the years, its frequency has seen ups and downs. During the Raja of Manda's eleven-month reign, however, especially since his cynical decision to Mandalise India, the disease has turned into a raging scourge.

This is sad and surprising. For, VP—despite all his faults, some of them wholly unsuspected until his rise to the top—is a sensible man, no less patriotic than any of his contemporaries. Moreover, he is an experienced administrator, having been, successively, chief minister of UP and Union minister for commerce, finance and defence in his previous incarnation as a "loyal" Congressman. Since becoming Prime Minister, he had retained the defence portfolio. He was therefore better aware than most people of the pitfalls of casually dragging the armed forces into civil strife with dangerously political overtones. And yet he has recklessly gone on doing so.

Let the facts speak for themselves. 1988 was not too bad a year as far as the calling out of the army, for tasks which ought to be none of its business, was concerned. There was a bad patch in Gujarat where the armed constabulary went on "strike" and an infantry division and two independent brigades of the army were needed to tame it. For the rest, there were only four cases of the troops being called out to do the policing job—for a day each at New Delhi and Chandigarh, for nine days at Ahmedabad and for a fortnight at Muzaffarnagar in UP. During the subsequent year, 1989, which was also the election year, the Rajiv government's record in this respect was appalling.

Before both the year and the Rajiv regime ended, the army was out at Bhagalpur, Samastipur and Sitamarhi in Bihar, putting down horrendous communal carnage, for more than two months. Earlier, large army contingents had to be deployed for full five months in, of all places, Leh which is usually an oasis of peace. The Bodo upsurge in Assam necessitated the commitment of the army at a fairly large scale in Assam.

With the formation of the Janata Dal government, amidst enormous goodwill and much rejoicing, it was expected that the myriad conflicts would finally subside and that the country might settle down to something approximating civilised rule. The subsequent story turned out, alas, to be precisely the opposite. On the morrow of the new Cabinet's formation, Kashmir blew up. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's daughter was kidnapped and the army's long-term and somewhat unfortunate involvement in the Valley began.

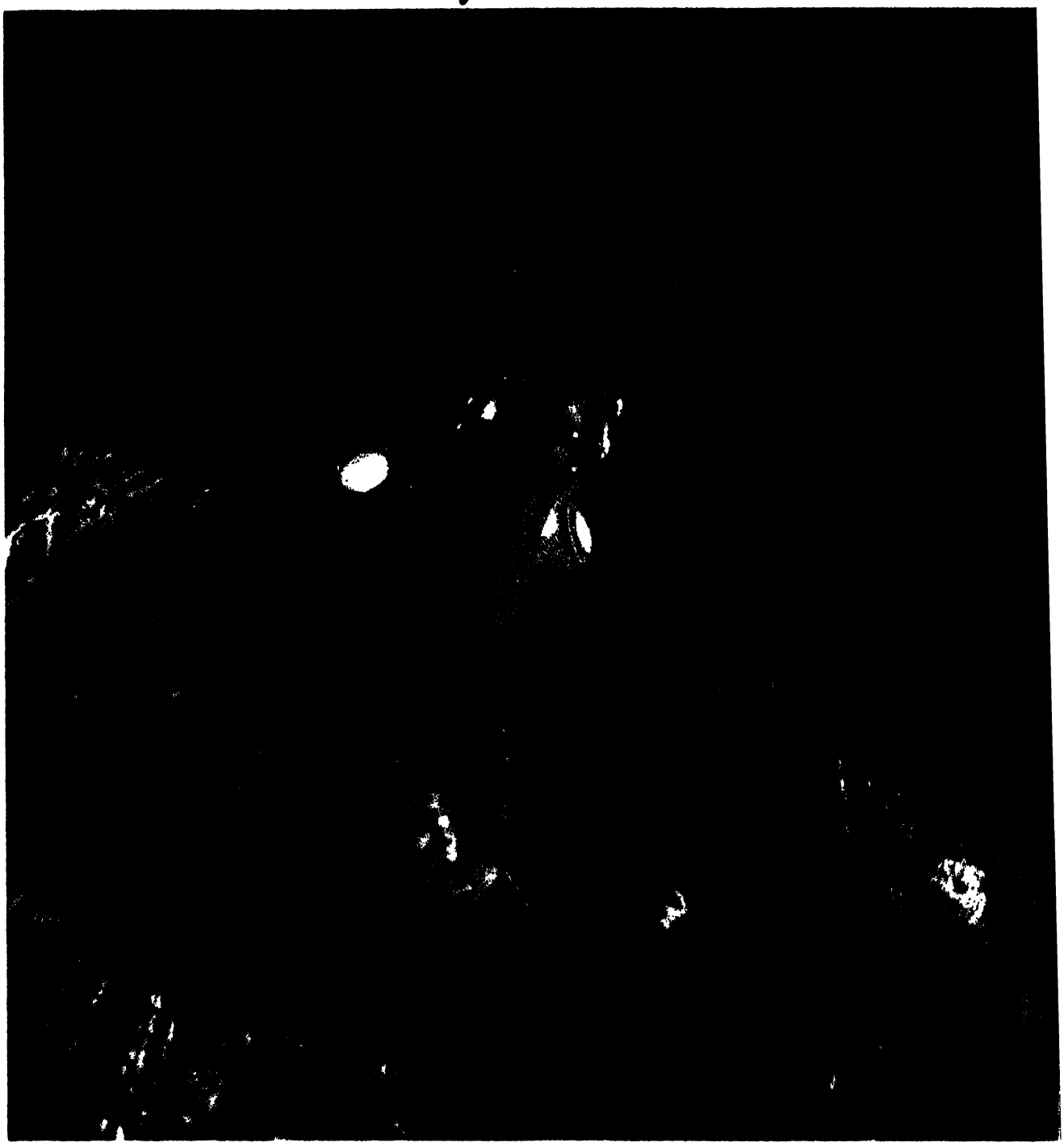
And then came the obscenity of Meham where the Haryana police was ordered to abdicate and the army was asked to move in. It did so also at Abohar. Communal riots at Jamshedpur in Bihar and Ahmedabad and Baroda also set into motion the govenent's Pavlovian reflex. Since then, especially after the Mandalisaion of India, all hell has broken loose. Fourteen columns of armymen were called out in Haryana alone and were engaged for 19 days running. The story was equally dismal in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Chandigarh and Jaipur. As the *mandir* tussle overtook the Mandal question, the situation become infinitely worse.

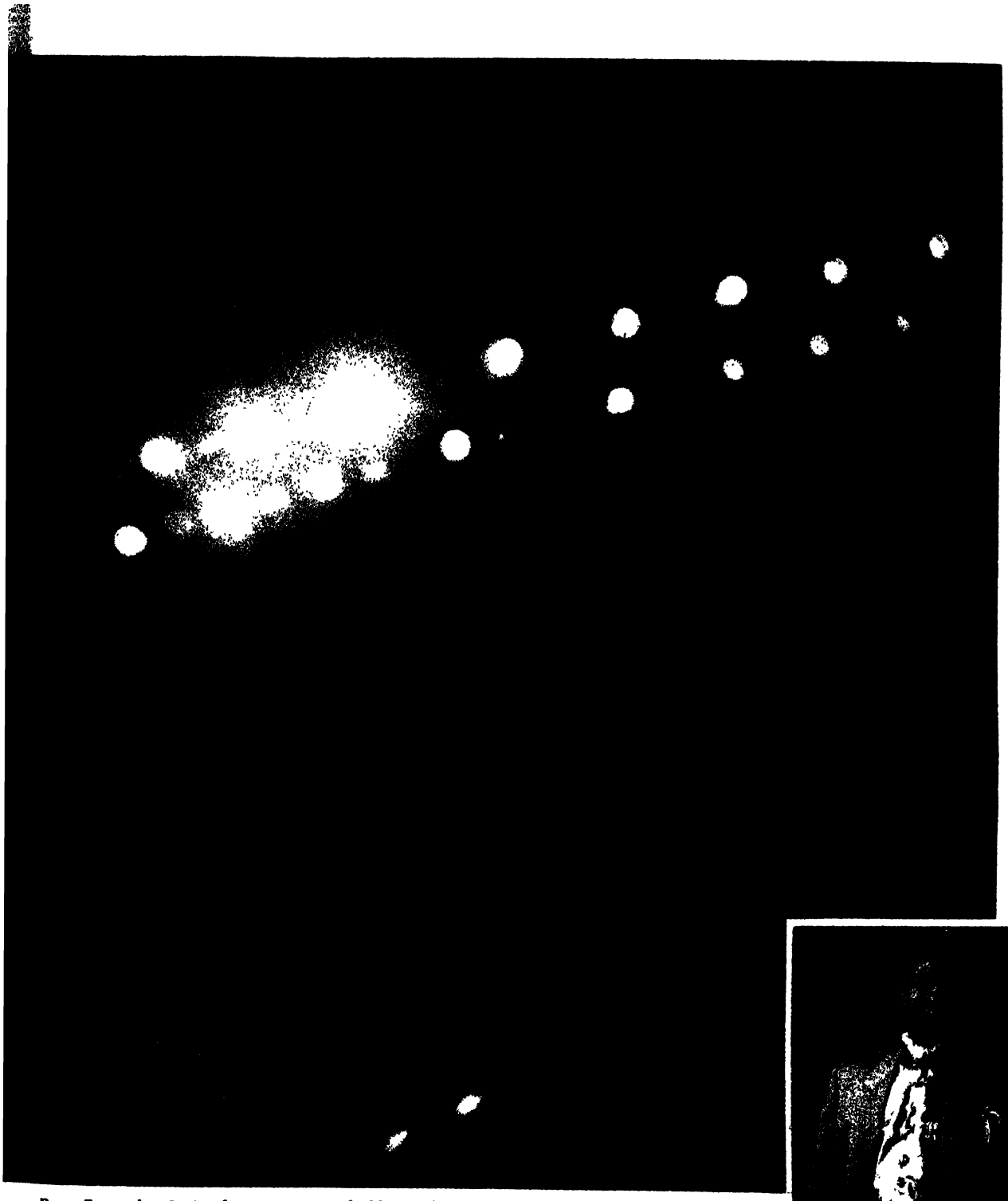
Much worse than the shocking frequency of this outrage were the utterly strange circumstances in which the troops were asked to be out. Under the law of the land, the calling out of the army is absolutely the last resort. Under the Raja it became the first option To give only one representative instance, at the height of the anti-Mandal agitation at Sonepat in Haryana, 200 buses and a train were burnt in the course of one day. The Haryana armed police did not fire a single shot. The army was called out. Is it too much to hope that whoever succeeds V.P. would set a better example? ●

The army has been called out, often without any justification, to the aid of civil authority to quell very emotive political conflicts on the streets



You don't have to be India's greatest rock star to be a Raymond's man.





Remo Fernandes, Goa's gift to Rock, writes his own lyrics, composes the music, plays, sings and performs, wowing them from Dresden to Tokyo.

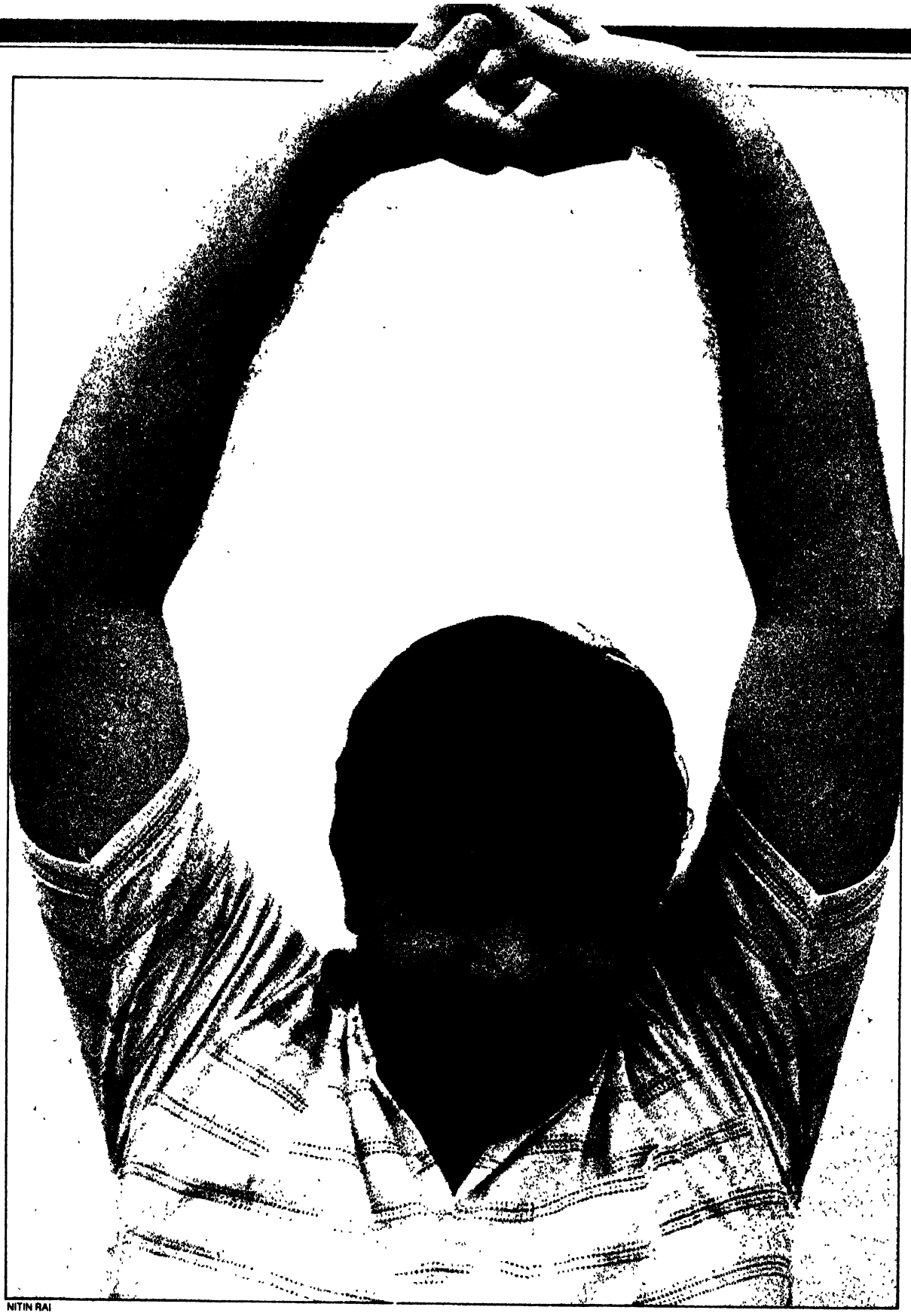
When he's not sending audiences into orbit, you may, on occasion, find him making the scene in a sparkling polyester / wool / silk combination aptly named "Silverene".

You don't have to be India's first rock personality to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

...but it helps.

Raymond's

Never say no to life.



NITIN RAI

Who's that man?

Introducing the ubiquitous Jagdeep Dhankhar

How does one best describe Jagdeep Dhankhar? The man himself has his answers ready. He was—till V.P. Singh submitted the resignation of his government—deputy minister of parliamentary affairs. (By the time you read this, he'll probably have got an even more grandiose title in the new dispensation.) Until he was elected to the Rajya Sabha last year, he was one of the most sought-after advocates in the High Court in Jaipur. And, as he is not too modest to remind us, even in the Supreme Court, he had a higher ranking than such key luminaries of the *Express* lobby as former additional solicitor general Arun Jaitley.

All of this is true. No doubt, Dhankhar was a senior advocate, is a legal wizard and performed impressively as a minister in the last government. But sadly, these descriptions fail to capture the essence of the man.

To every newspaper reader in India; Dhankhar is something more than this.

Simply put, he is the man who always cranes his neck into the frame in every picture of Devi Lal.

Does the name *now* ring a bell? Has the face suddenly begun to seem familiar? Remember when the Tau first threatened to resign over Meham? Who do you suppose it was who appeared in every photo standing loyally beside the towering frame of his leader?

Or the time Arun Nehru and party resigned over Chautala's reinduction and the deputy prime minister came under terrible pressure? Who was it who loyally sent in his resignation on Tauji's behalf and then grinned into the camera each time Devi Lal glowered at assembled photographers?

Now, Dhankhar has found a new role. Check out recent pictures of Chandra Shekhar. There, in the corner, pushing his way across the throng of supporters is a familiar figure dressed in white. Could it be...?

You've guessed it.

It's Dhankhar again.

TO BE fair, Dhankhar is not some pushy groupie who gets his jollies being photographed with the famous and the mighty. The reason he always turns up in pictures of Devi Lal is that the Tau depends on him to an extraordinary degree.

What makes Dhankhar so indispensable to the Tau? The simple explanation is that he is the only sophisticated, English-speaking member of that camp. Whereas the rest of Devi Lal's supporters are sons of the soil who are happier stuffing ballot boxes than making speeches in Parliament, Dhankhar's legal background makes him the Henry Kissinger of the Tau's group.

Thus, each time Devi Lal wants to know how the media will react to his latest outrage, it is Dhankhar he sends for. If there are statements to be drafted, letters to be rendered from Haryanvi to English (or even Hindi), the call goes out for Dhankhar. (But Dhankhar did not write the famous letter that got Devi Lal fired from the Cabinet. The Tau did that pretty much on his own with a little help from a friend in the media.)

Moreover, Dhankhar's accommodating personality makes him the ideal go-between. Whereas Devi Lal is likely to insult those he wishes to win over (and Chautala is liable to assault them to ensure that they see things his way), Dhankhar knows how to put his case across.

It helps too that he is on good terms with most political leaders. He is friendly with Chandra Shekhar and has cordial relations with Ajit Singh.

But his most interesting friendship is with Rajiv Gandhi. Most members of Dhankhar's family are staunch Congressmen: his older brother Randeep is a senior leader of the Rajasthan Congress. Consequently, Jagdeep has never regarded Rajiv as an enemy or a political untouchable.

A few months ago, Dhankhar met Gandhi in Parliament's Central Hall and they sat and chatted amiably for three quarters of an hour. The Raja, who was passing by, noticed this tête-à-tête and grew quite alarmed.

The next day, some of V.P. Singh's close associates approached Dhankhar. Why, they demanded, was he consorting with the enemy? Why not? he responded. Besides, he did not see Opposition politicians as enemies. And moreover, surely it was his job as deputy minister of parliamentary affairs to keep in touch with MPs from all parties?

The Raja let the matter drop.

THOUGH NOBODY has noticed this, Dhankhar was the real success story of the V.P. Singh government. He only joined politics a year and a half ago and contested the elections for the first time in 1989. To everyone's surprise, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Jhunjhunu after securing the highest number of votes cast in Rajasthan during the polls.

The Tau was so impressed by Dhankhar during the first few months of the government that he insisted that V.P. Singh include him in the ministry. And so, despite being a first-term MP and political novice, Dhankhar became a deputy minister.

Then, he was fortunate that as the deputy prime minister fought his battles, he came to rely more and more on Dhankhar, giving the former lawyer a ringside view of politics at the highest level.

While the Tau is notoriously fickle about his favourites, Dhankhar does appear to have it made. He is a Jat, comes from a rural background and understands the concerns of his natural constituency. Add to this his legal acumen and sophistication and you get an unusual combination—one that should stand Dhankhar in good stead in the years to come.

Perhaps one day, he will be the centre of attention for photographers and others will crane their necks to get into the same frame as him . ●



Courtesy Defenders of Pakistan

In deep waters

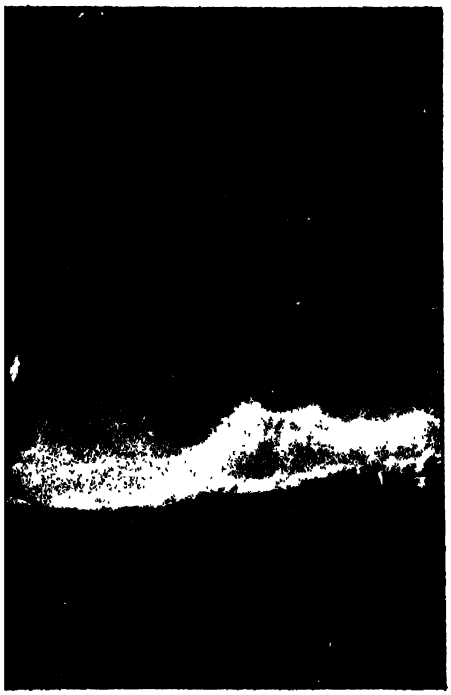
The Indian Navy could be in for a shock in the event of an Indo-Pak conflict

In the December 1971 war, just four tiny Indian patrol craft had succeeded in blockading virtually the entire Pakistani Navy in Karachi harbour. The Indian boats armed with Soviet-made Styx missiles had surreptitiously crept into Pakistani waters, sank two ships—one destroyer and a merchantman—and set the Karachi oil terminal ablaze. The Pakistani Navy had no idea of what had hit them and for the remaining period of the war did not even venture out of port.

Nineteen years later a lot has changed. The Pakistanis have acquired modern ships and weapons system, while the Indian Navy, in quantitative terms, has grown into one of the most powerful sea forces of the region. India today possesses a formidable fleet of 140-odd vessels including two aircraft carriers, 17 submarines (including a nuclear-powered SSKN) and two dozen sophisticated frigates. The country also operates a mix of 168 aircraft which include Sea Harriers, shore-based Jaguars and helicopters fitted with anti-ship missiles. The Pakistani Navy, in contrast, has just 76 vessels and 30-odd aircraft, including a squadron of shore-based Mirage-5PAs.

This remarkable growth of the two sea power is, however, not significant in itself. The really astounding part is that the Indian Navy, despite its growing size, has lost its one-time edge over its Pakistani counterpart. In the event of war, the Indian Navy is unlikely to come anywhere near Karachi, let alone blockade it. And if it does attempt to control the seas around the Pakistani coast, it could prove to be a highly expensive exercise. The Pakistani Navy, on the other hand, might lack an offensive capability but it is extremely capable of keeping the powerful Indian fleet at bay. In naval parlance, while Pakistan is incapable of controlling the adjoining seas, it is nonetheless quite capable of denying use of the sea to the Indian Navy.

The emergence of this remarkable naval scenario is directly related to technological developments and the choices made by Pakistani naval planners. The Pakistanis had long realised that they cold not compete with India in the race for acquiring expensive, modern warships. India not only had more money but it also had the added advantage of having built up an indigenous naval industry. To counter this, the Pakistanis appear to have opted for a small but highly effective navy, equipped with accurate and highly sophisticated weapons systems. The aim of such a modern, compact sea force would be to prevent the blockade of its only major port, Karachi, by inflicting unacceptable losses on an intruding enemy naval force. International naval analysts, while publicly decrying India's



A Pak Navy missile boat powers through the rough seas: on the offensive

attempts to create a Blue Water Navy, privately admit that the Indian Navy cannot bludgeon its Pakistani counterpart to submission without paying an inordinately high price for such an attempt.

Pakistan's naval planners have been able to accomplish their aims chiefly because of the availability of two modern missile systems: the American Harpoon and the French Excocet. Both missiles have been proven in combat and are unique in their class. The Excocets with the Pakistanis are air launched versions capable of striking targets up to a range of about 50 km. The 150-km range Harpoons can be launched from surface ships, submarines and even from aircraft. Both missiles are highly accurate and Indian Navy ships have no weapons systems capable of intercepting them once they have been launched. Anti-ship missiles like the Harpoon and the Excocet can only be stopped by a very fast reaction anti-missile missile (AMM) or by close-in-weapons-systems (CIWS) like the American Phalanx fitted on Pakistani frigates. Indian Navy planners, strangely enough, have not inducted any anti-missile systems for their warships.

The most effective use of Excocets is likely to be made by the Pakistani Air Force Mirage-5PAs based in Karachi and used exclusively for maritime attack purposes. Each of the 12 Karachi-based Mirages is capable of carrying one Excocet missile (and one external fuel tank) upto 500 miles into the high seas. Skimming just above the waves, the Mirages can approach their targets without being detected by ship radar. Even high flying maritime surveillance aircraft would not be able to spot the low flying Pakistani planes without look-down radar. This means that an Indian naval force can approach within 500 miles of Karachi only at great peril. Moreover, it would be highly risky for the Indian Navy's principal warships, the medium carriers Vikrant and Viraat, to approach the Karachi waters till the point from where the short-range Sea Harriers could be deployed.

Equally dangerous to Indian Navy ships would be the six Pakistani submarines equipped to launch Harpoons from under the sea surface. The Harpoon is designed to fly along a complex course while on its way to the target and, consequently, even if the missile is spotted it is impossible to determine the direction or the place from where it was launched. Moreover, it is impossible to detect a quiet, electric-powered submarine more than a hundred kilometres away. On the other hand, Indian warships are likely to be spotted much more easily and would consequently be easy targets for the Harpoon-laden Pakistani subs.

On the flip side, it would be extremely difficult for Pakistani submarines to detect and monitor moving targets more than a 100 km away. In practice, these subs would require the support of maritime surveillance aircraft, surface ships or satellite data for target information. This might not be possible, but at a closer range a submarine waiting silently below the surface could easily pick up the sounds of passing surface ships, get a fix on its coordinates and launch the Harpoon. The operation of Pakistani attack subs could be thwarted by heavy underwa-

SEA FORCE: INDIA & PAKISTAN

	INDIA	PAKISTAN
Submarines	17	12
Aircraft Carriers	2	Nil
Cruisers	Nil	1
Destroyers/Frigates	24	16
Corvettes/Fast Attack Craft	34	29
Other Craft	63	22
Total Ships	140	80
Helicopters	69	10
Maritime Attack Aircraft	35	12
Maritime Surveillance Aircraft	64	5+3 (expected this financial year)
Total Aircraft	168	27

CHART BY SANTOSH DUTTA

Sky



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Shirt. To rise above confusion.

To stand apart and gain strength

in quietness. The key to the ascent of man.

Park Avenue

Style. It never goes out of fashion.

LINTAS PA 141 2316

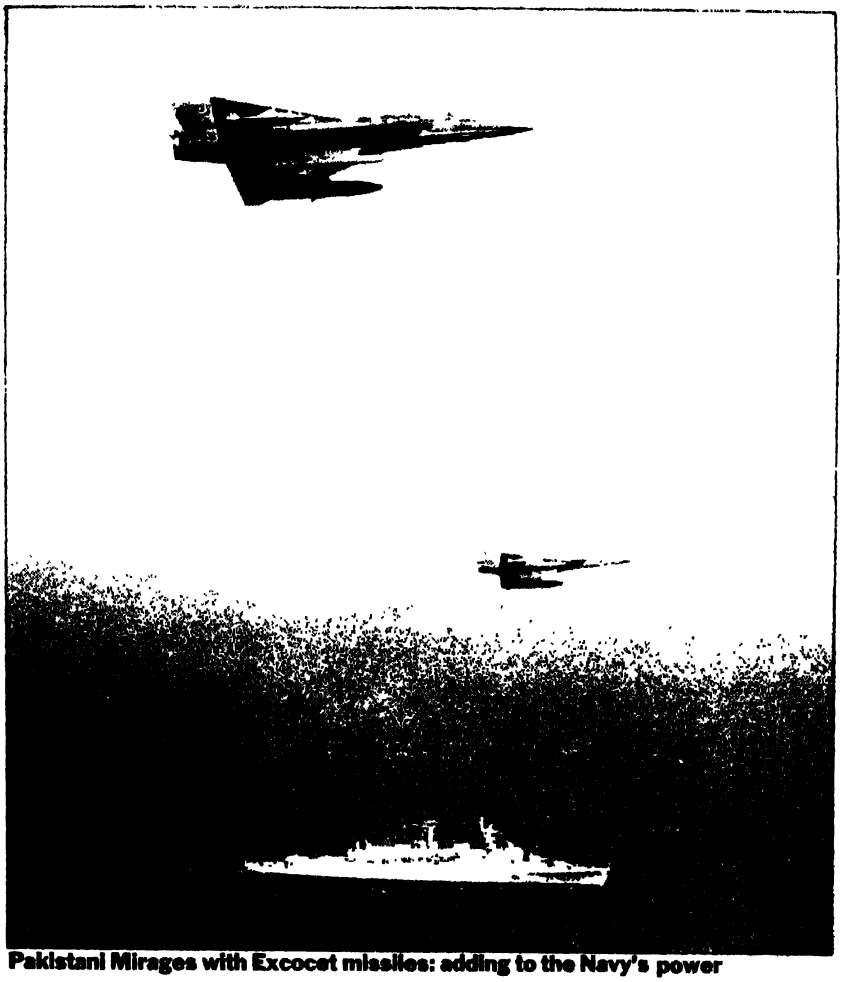
ter, surface and air surveillance. But the moot point is that the advantage would nevertheless lie with the Pakistanis.

The United States has also agreed to transfer three P-3C Orion Maritime aircraft to the Pakistani Navy during the current financial year. These state-of-the-art aircraft carry advanced radar that can scan the sea for miles in front of it and launch Harpoon missiles. The four long-range French Atlantiques with the Pakistani Navy can similarly detect enemy ships and launch Excocet missiles. These aircraft, submarines and the squadrons of Chinese-made fast attack craft equipped with Styx-type missiles, if used in conjunction would constitute a formidable defence against any Indian naval attack on Karachi.

Most Western defence analysts have tended to make too much of India's acquisition of the Soviet nuclear submarine, renamed INS Chakra. The analysts have claimed that the acquisition of this submarine gives an unfair advantage to the Indian Navy. Nothing could be further from the truth. For, reports suggesting that the submarine is equipped with the 64-km range SS-N-7 Soviet missiles are incorrect. As a matter of fact, the lease agreement between the Indian and the Soviet government clearly stipulates that the nuclear-powered submarine is meant solely for training purposes and is not to be used in the event of hostilities. Moreover, the Soviets have not supplied any missiles with it.

In fact, none of the Indian Navy's 17 submarines are equipped with missile systems. They do, however, have a variety of advanced torpedoes. But the average effective range of torpedoes is about 15 km, which means that Indian subs will have to come very close to Karachi harbour to sink ships and render the port ineffective. Till very recently, the biggest chink in the Pakistani Navy's armour was the absence of sufficient numbers of anti-submarine frigates. The only ones the Pakistanis had were 6 obsolete Gearing class frigates constructed in the 1940s and equipped with 1960s electronics. Every attempt to acquire more frigates came up against one constraint: funds.

The British offered the Pakistani Navy three of their latest Type 23 frigates with a 1.5 billion dollar price tag. Turkey offered their frigates, so did the West Germans and the Chinese. But the ships were either too expensive or they were unsuitable. The Pakistani Navy got its big break when the US secretary of the Navy decided to abandon the grand American plan for a 600-ship navy and decided to get rid of all its Brooke and Garcia class frigates. By end 1989, all the eight frigates the Pakistanis wanted had been transferred And the Pakistanis got the ships dirt cheap—only US $7 million a year for their annual lease payments The accompanying weapons systems were, of course, more expensive. It was a bargain nevertheless. For, the frigates were excellent anti-submarine warfare ships, equipped with sonars, anti-submarine rockets, guns and long-range standard anti-aircraft missiles. These ships are also capable of carrying Sea King helicopters armed with homing torpedoes.



Pakistani Mirages with Excocet missiles: adding to the Navy's power

With the induction of the new frigates, the Pakistani Navy has strengthened its defence against Indian submarine attacks. In short, Pakistani naval planners have succeeded in building up a credible deterrence to India's Blue Water capabilities. The Indian Navy does not consider its aircraft carriers and other major surface ships expendable in a war with Pakistan. The bigger Indian goal seems to be the creation of a large fleet, which over the years will deter any foreign navy, superpowers included, from flexing their muscles in the Indian Ocean. While the Indian Navy cannot risk exposing its carriers and major surface ships like the Kashin class destroyers, the Pakistani Navy can afford to send an odd submarine to Bombay High and set a few oil rigs on fire. Fortunately, Pakistan just cannot afford to buy large numbers of Harpoons (costing US $1.5 million apiece). But what it could demonstrate in the event of a short war is a psychological victory that would cast a permanent shadow over the Indian Navy's Blue Water ambitions.

Indranil Banerjie/Islamabad

THE MAKING OF THE

How Chandra Shekhar did it. The full story

In the end, the noes had it. And with the Lok Sabha voting overwhelmingly against the confidence motion moved by the Dal government (346 in favour and 142 against), the V.P. Singh regime fell on 7 November, a fortnight after the BJP had pulled the plug on it by withdrawing support. But even as the Opposition rejoiced at the fall of the Raja, it was far from clear how the situation would develop. Would President R. Venkataraman dissolve the House and announce mid-term polls, despite his alleged distaste for this option? Or would he invite the leader of the Opposition to form an alternative government? Would Rajiv Gandhi accept the invitation or would he offer to support a Chandra Shekhar-led minority government from the outside?

As it turned out, Chandra Shekhar got the nod. But not before the country was put through two days of agonising uncertainty.

It was, once again, the Raja who further complicated a far from clear situation. Soon after the Chandra Shekhar-Devi Lal combine held its parallel meeting on the lawns of the Chaudhary's Willingdon Crescent bungalow, claiming the support of 68 MPs and announcing the formation of the Janata Dal (Socialist), V.P. Singh retaliated by expelling 30 of its supporters (25 Lok Sabha MPs, including Chandra Shekhar, among them).

It was a masterstroke. By this one move, the Raja reduced the strength of the dissident camp to below 47, the magical figure required to affect a split in the party. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha was brought on to do his bit and Rabi Ray obliged by declaring the 25 expelled members 'unattached'. The rump would, however, be regarded as members of the Janata Dal and risk disqualification if they voted against the party whip.

For the moment, at least, V.P. Singh appeared to have stolen the initiative.

But the rebels weren't going to give up so easily. As claims and counter-claims about the strengths of the respective camps made the rounds, Shekhar met Ray to persuade him to reverse his decision. The Speaker remained adamant.

Apprehensive that all their efforts would come to nought, the rebels decided that Ray had to go. It was planned that the moment the House convened, a no-confidence motion would be brought against the Speaker. In accordance with parliamentary procedure, he would then step down with his deputy Shivraj Patil taking over. Once that happened, all their troubles would be over.

Rajiv Gandhi, however, disapproved of this plan. Opening a dialogue with Ray and getting him to see reason was the more attractive option, the Congress president felt. So, on 7 November, before the session commenced, Gandhi accompanied by Shekhar, Devi Lal, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel went to meet the Speaker, who finally relented and agreed to review his decision.

Things finally seemed to be going right for the rebels.

With the BJP, the Congress and the dissidents ranged against the government, the result of the vote of confidence was a foregone conclusion. Nonetheless, there was a record turnout in Parliament, forcing some Rajya Sabha MPs—who'd arrived a little late—to stand in the corridors outside and listen to the proceedings over the sound system.

After the Speaker had gone through the condolence messages, the Prime Minister got up to speak in defence of his government. Only, he didn't so much defend his regime as attack his *bête noire* Chandra Shekhar, who had the temerity to dream of forming a government with only 24 MPs on his



JAGDISH YADAV

SUCCESS, AT LAST: Chandra Shekhar being sworn in as Prime Minister

PRIME MINISTER 1990



side. Resorting to metaphor, the Raja declared that such an arrangement could be likened to a jeep which had a trolley leading it. As long as the jeep went in reverse gear it was okay, said VP fleshing out the story, but what happened if it ran over the trolley?

Shekhar, whose turn came next, had his answer ready. Never mind how the trolley was positioned, he retorted, the Raja should remember that the jeep also had a driver. In a style reminiscent of V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar lapsed into poetry to defend himself: "*Phoolon ko pani dete hue/Jhad gayi honge kuch patiyan mujhse/Par jinhone ronda hain kaliyon ko/Woh baat karte hain chaman ko bachane ki?* (While I watered the flowers some petals may have fallen off. But how can those who have destroyed the buds talk of safeguarding the garden?)."

Rajiv Gandhi launched a frontal attack on the PM, turning to VP as he levelled each allegation and beginning his sentences with a fiery, "You, Mr Prime Minister..." Ridiculing the Raja's claim of being secular, Gandhi pointed out that less than a month ago, he was allied with the BJP.

But it was left to L K. Advani to demolish the Raja's secular plank. Revealing that V.P. Singh had reached an understanding with him, in accordance with which he would be allowed to proceed to Ayodhya, the BJP president alleged that the PM had promised to participate in the *kar seva*. The furore in the House only increased as charges that the Raja had tried to engineer defections flew thick and fast.

In his final summation, V.P. Singh seemed to accept that it was all over for him, maintaining bravely that he was going out of government with his head held high.

Sure enough, the vote went overwhelmingly against him. And the Raja's became the first government to fall on the floor of the House.

The voting concluded at 10.40, but by then the President had already retired for the night. So, V.P. Singh sent his resignation letter to P. Murari, secretary to the President. At 11 o'clock the following morning, the Raja finally met Venkataraman. But

most of the 20-minute meeting was devoted not to apprising the President of the latest political developments, but persuading him not to invite an 'unattached' MP to form the government. Venkataraman remained non-committal. So, VP went further and insisted that Chandra Shekhar not be approached. But the President had had enough by then and he, reportedly, told the Raja that he shouldn't mention any names. Suitably chastened, the former Prime Minister left soon after, telling the mediamen assembled outside that an alternative arrangement would soon be made.

An hour later, the leader of the Opposition arrived at Rashtrapati Bhavan to meet the President. The meeting lasted 45 minutes and Venkataraman asked Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the largest single party in the House, if he was interested in forming the government. Gandhi declined the offer, but told Venkataraman that his party was willing to support a Chandra Shekhar-led minority government from outside.

Venkataraman wasn't completely assured and handed Gandhi a list of questions to satisfy himself that the new government would be a stable one and that the Congress wouldn't pull the rug from under the new Prime Minister's feet whenever the fancy took it. A meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party was held, where the leaders formulated suitable answers and despatched them to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The answers, obviously, satisfied the President, for his office phoned



L.K. ADVANI



RAJIV GANDHI



CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Voting VP out

What happened at the special Lok Sabha session on 7 November

Minutes before the special session to test the Dal government's majority got under way, Congress MP Ram Nehor Rakesh plonked himself in the Prime Minister's seat with considerable aplomb. He sat there, busily scribbling on a piece of paper, while his partymen egged him on with raucous laughter. After a few minutes, having penned what he called the PM's resignation letter, he left to occupy his own seat. This farcical episode best summed up the spirit that pervaded the parliamentary proceedings on 7 November.

The outcome of the session was a foregone conclusion: the Raja was bound to be voted out of power. But that didn't deter spectators—VIPs, diplomats, mediapersons and others—from turning up in record numbers to witness the downfall of the Dal regime. A record 6,000 passes were issued that day and such was the rush that Rani Sita Devi, the PM's wife, had to station herself in the diplomats' gallery, where she sat facing not her husband, but the leader of the Opposition, Rajiv Gandhi.

Sonia Gandhi was in attendance as well, in a maroon *salwar kameez*, with a cream shawl draped over one shoulder, while Rajiv Gandhi made do with an *angavastra* in the colours of the Indian flag. Priyanka, in saffron despite the Congress' aversion to the BJP, sat beside her mother, chatting and smiling throughout the proceedings. They seemed especially amused by George Fernandes' statement that Rajiv was the man who had suddenly changed from jeans, T-shirt and T-cap to become Prime Minister.

The BJP contingent was present in full force, resplendent in saffron and yelling *"Jai Siya Ram"* with due vigour. Uma Bharti, her head shorn after the Ayodhya misadventure and clad in her usual *sanyasin's* robes, was the centre of attention. Though Vasundhara Raje Scindia, with her hair loose, provided stiff competition. While the BJP ladies followed the proceedings with rapt attention, Maneka Gandhi sat behind. Nilamani Routray and made her disinterest clear by concentrating on the *Evening News* crossword puzzle.

V.P. Singh was the day's first speaker, but by the Raja's usual standards, his speech was pretty tepid stuff. There was the spiel about upholding secular traditions and safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country, but it semed as if the PM's heart was not in it this time. The continuous heckling from the Congress benches didn't improve matters either. Nor did the fact that the Raja had to put up with a self-righteous

Chandra Shekhar that same evening to inform him that he would be called to form the new government the next day, 9 November.

The Raja wasn't through as yet, though. And sent a delegation to Venkataraman to plead that Shekhar not be invited. The President listened patiently, but didn't commit himself either way.

The attempts at spreading disinformation continued. The VP camp put it about that Devi Lal had called Inder Kumar Gujral to negotiate a deal by which he would become Prime Minister, not Chandra Shekhar. Another version had it that Rajiv Gandhi had decided that he would take over as PM instead of propping up Shekhar.

Shekhar was determined to get rid of V.P. Singh at any cost—even if it meant sacrificing his own political credibility in the process

But none of that worked. And a jubilant Chandra Shekhar emerged from his meeting with Venkataraman to disclose that he'd been invited to form the government. Security personnel already seemed to be granting him prime ministerial treatment, putting assembled newsmen through the metal detector test before they were allowed into hailing distance of the Prime Minister designate.

Shekhar announced that the swearing-in ceremony would take place in the courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan at 11 am on the following day, 10 November.

The Ballia leader's ambitions were finally being realised and he was hard put to contain his glee.



V.P. SINGH



RAJESH KUMAR

DEVI LAL

Rajiv Gandhi hurling charges at him on such issues as Punjab, Kashmir, Ram Janmabhoomi and the price rise.

When his turn came, Rajiv tore into VP, accusing him of having divided the country on caste lines and creating such chaos that over 5,000 people lost their lives in less than a year of Janata Dal rule. "You joined hands with Pakistan on Kashmir!" alleged the Opposition leader, looking straight at the discomfited Prime Minister.

It was left to railway minister George Fernandes to come to the Raja's rescue. Had Rajiv Gandhi forgotten that over 5,000 people had died in the first week after his swearing-in alone, asked Fernandes in an impassioned speech. Quoting from *The Economist*, the minister said it remained to be seen whether the Indian electorate chose the stability promised by the Rajiv Gandhi mafia or preferred to be ruled by petty, small-time crooks.

Shot back Congress MP M.J. Akbar, "Thank you for pointing out that you are petty, small-time thieves."

Chandra Shekhar, sitting next to BJP president L.K. Advani, railed against his arch-rival VP and concluded by saying : "I want you to step down or the House will be forced to discharge its national duty."

Advani, for his part, embarrassed the Prime Minister by disclosing that he'd offered to perform *kar seva* in Ayodhya, while BJP MP Baburao Paranjpe charged that the Raja had called him in Bombay to ask him to defect. V.P. Singh could only splutter in reply.

Arun Nehru and camp follower Arif Mohammad Khan chose to stay away until the evening, when Khan finally took the floor to lecture members on his kind of secularism, his speech peppered with Sanskrit *shlokas*.

Then it was over to VP for the final summation and the usual noises about quitting office not being the end of politics. For by then, it was all over bar the anointing of Chandra Shekhar.

Shirin Shikre/New Delhi

The demise of the V.P. Singh government had an almost immediate fall-out at the state level. While the rebels, now in government, set out to destabilise Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar, the Raja expelled Mulayam Singh Yadav from the Uttar Pradesh unit of the party. In Gujarat, the Chimanbhai Patel government hung on with Congress(I) support and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat remained in power in Rajasthan because of Janata Dal(S) backing . Only Biju Patnaik in Orissa remained inviolate.

Laloo Prasad, because of his equation with Sharad Yadav, stood by the Raja and expelled rebel leader Raghunath Jha from the party for siding with Shekhar. Jha, for his part, mounted an offensive against Yadav, persuading Ram Sundar Das—the Harijan leader who lost the contest for the chief ministership by eight votes—to lead a revolt against Laloo.

In Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh Yadav was thrown out of the party and Kailash Nath Yadav made the president of the state Janata Dal. Five UP ministers, Reoti Raman Singh, Mukhtar Anees, Diwakar Vikram Singh, Sachidanand Vajpayee and Mohammad Aslam Khan, resigned from office, while both groups claimed to be the *real* Janata Dal.

The VP camp hopes that with the help of Ajit Singh loyalists, who number around 70, it will be able to destabilise if not topple the Mulayam Singh government. The chief minister, on the other hand, is relying on

The price of an MP

Money power played an important role in the recent political crisis

At first, the going price was Rs 25 lakhs. But as the political crisis in the capital escalated and the survival of the V.P. Singh government seemed increasingly doubtful, it mounted to an astounding Rs 1 crore.

That was what a Janata Dal MP was worth, if the stories floating around Delhi were to be believed.

There may well have been an element of exaggeration in these stories, but there can be no doubt that money power played an important role both in the attempts to prop up the Raja and install Chandra Shekhar.



K.K. BIRLA

The power-brokers, leading industrialists of the country among them, descended on New Delhi as soon as the BJP withdrew support to the government. They stationed themselves at five-star hotels and the residences of important political leaders and lobbied feverishly in favour of their candidates for the prime ministership. While nobody was willing to corroborate the rumours about the price quoted,



LALIT THAPAR

several MPs maintained that they had been offered monetary inducement to change sides.

While the leader of the erstwhile Jan Morcha, Ram Dhan, claimed that he'd received threats to his life, Mrinal Gore of the Maharashtra unit of the Janata Dal alleged: "It is the Ambanis and the Birlas who are actually behind V.P. Singh's ouster."

Communist leader Somnath Chatterjee reiterated the charge on the floor of the House while the debate on the no-confidence motion was in progress. "I hear the footsteps of the Ambanis and the Birlas," the veteran CPI(M) leader told the assembled MPs.

Though unproven, the charges made some sense. Dhirubhai Ambani's antipathy to the Raja is well-known. Contrary to popular expectation, V.P. Singh had not mounted a concerted campaign against the Reliance chief on coming to power, being far too preoccupied on various other fronts. But Ambani still regarded the Raja with extreme suspicion and didn't mind spending a few crores to ensure VP's exit from the government.

Others who are believed to have made a financial contribution to the install-Chandra Shekhar campaign include K.K. Birla and Abhey Oswal. Birla has been a Congress camp follower for long and invited Rajiv Gandhi for dinner around the time the Janata Dal split. The presence of his daughter, Shobhana Bhartiya, in Parliament to witness the downfall of the Raja was interpreted by some to indicate that the Birlas are behind Shekhar.

Oswal, on the other hand, was opposed to V.P. Singh on more specific grounds. The government gave him a tough time on his proposed fertiliser project, as well



DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

as the HBJ pipeline.

The Raja had his supporters as well. Lalit Thapar, for one, whose Rs 200-crore worth nylon fibre unit in Goa was sanctioned due to the efforts of industry minister Ajit Singh. The sugar barons of western Uttar Pradesh, stopped for many years by the Kalpi regime, also benefited from former premier's Ajit Singh's [illegible] gratitude for [illegible] Raja's cause.

But in the end, it wasn't enough power for the Raja [illegible] from [illegible]

Congress support to bail him out. But that may well be unforthcoming, for a section of the party, led by Balaram Singh Yadav, considers Mulayam Singh, with his anti-Hindu rhetoric, to be a lia' ility. But Yadav can take cheer from the fact that N.D. Tiwari is in his favour.

But with the strength of both camps being nearly equal, in the end, it will depend on who thinks up the superior strategy.

It was on strategy that the Raja failed. In retrospect, it seems obvious that V.P. Singh blundered—and played right into Chandra Shekhar's hands—when he refused to step down immediately after the BJP withdrew support. Had the Raja resigned at that point, he could have succeeded in keeping his arch-enemy Shekhar out of the running. For Shekhar only had around 10-12 supporters and was ill-prepared to stake a claim to form the government. By hanging on until 7 November, VP gave him the time to get his act together and throw the Raja off centre-stage.

What made matters easier for Chandra Shekhar was V.P. Singh's avowed preference for a mid-term poll. While the Raja believed that he would come back with a comfortable majority with backward and Muslim support, most of his party members didn't share his conviction. By their reckoning, they were bound to lose their seats in the next poll and, therefore, the last thing they wanted was to go back to the people.

Shekhar understood their fear and capitalised on it, reiterating time and again that he was against a mid-term poll. He was in favour of an alternative arrangement as the situation in the country was far too volatile to permit elections. The Raja cottoned on in time and clarified that if he lost the vote of confidence in the House, he would sit in the Opposition, instead of recommending dissolution of Parliament. But by then, it was too late.

The fortnight's grace gave Shekhar the opportunity to approach the Congress for support. And Rajiv, wishing to get rid of VP at any cost, agreed that if Shekhar won over around 70 MPs he would back his attempt to form a new government. From then on, it was only a matter of time before VP made way for Shekhar.

But why did Chandra Shekhar set himself up as another Charan Singh-like figure? Staying in power with Congress support meant that Gandhi

And now, to the people

What V.P. Singh will do next



For V.P. Singh, it's on to the final court of appeal: the people of India. Now that it's all over for his government despite the defensive stratagems, the former Prime Minister has decided to go on the offensive. And the stragglers who turn up at his 1 Teen Murti residence are treated to glimpses of the new, aggressive Raja. Explaining his stand on such issues as Mandal and the *mandir*, VP uses all his rhetorical skill to portray himself as a martyr.

This, insist insiders, is only for starters. The Raja will soon embark on a tour of India, primarily the northern parts, to put his case before the masses, proving, in the process, that he is only a hapless victim of political chicanery. However, this ambitious, if rather optimistic, venture will have to wait until passions, both casteist and communal, have cooled. For, party leaders fear that with public feelings running high on both issues, the former PM may well be lynched before he is half-way through the programme.

Therefore, for the present, VP is content to devote his Machiavellian skills to keeping his faction of the Dal together. With Chandra Shekhar having formed the government and acquired the right to distribute largesse, the danger of Dal fence-sitters going over is only too real. And the Raja knows that if the strength of the Shekhar group approaches 70, the new PM could well take over the entire party. So, further defections have to be stopped at all costs; though VP isn't yet decided on how best he can achieve this goal.

After the split, the party organisation, right down to the district level, is in shambles. And, unless put right on a priority basis, could cost the Raja the next election, which, according to some, is only a year or so away. But if he wants to amend matters, V.P. Singh will have to rise above his casteist coterie (Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan and the like) and learn to see things from a pre-Mandal perspective.

A drastic revision of his script will also be called for, especially on the Bofors question. The electorate is hardly likely to have forgotten the Raja's promise of revealing the names of the Bofors recipients a fortnight after assuming office. It will be looking for answers and VP will have to get his explanations ready.

For, his next journey through the country is, for all practical purposes, going to assume the character of a pre-election tour. And the outcome of the next poll will decide the Raja's fate in Indian politics.

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

could topple him at will. So, why did Shekhar get into such an untenable position?

Simple. He meant to get rid of VP—even if it meant sacrificing his own political credibility in the process. Also, Shekhar had been nursing prime ministerial ambitions for a long time and knew that this was his best chance to realise them. If the Raja's actions led to another general election, either he or Rajiv Gandhi would win a majority. And Shekhar would be left out in the cold, yet again.

Even before Shekhar had been sworn in, along with Devi Lal, who became deputy prime minister once again, the trappings of power were much in evidence at his 3 South Avenue Lane bungalow. The Special Protection Group (SPG) moved in and took charge of the PM designate's security. Metal detectors were set up and visitors frisked before they were let in. The contrast to the laid-back air that usually prevailed at the house couldn't have been more marked. It was clear that things had changed.

On 10 November, Shekhar and the Chaudhary arrived at the courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan to be sworn in before a motley crowd of former ministers, politicians, diplomats and supporters from Haryana and Ballia. In a departure from tradition, the

The woman behind Chandra Shekhar

A profile of the new Mrs Prime Minister, Dijya Devi

No man, the saying goes, is ever a hero to his wife. But those who swear by this axiom haven't met Mrs Dijya Devi, wife of the newly-appointed Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar. Of a shy and retiring disposition, the lady speaks very rarely. But when she does, it is always to quote her husband: "*Mere Netaji kahte hain... Agar Netaji kahenge to...* (My Netaji says...If Netaji says so...)."

However the world rated Shekhar's chances of becoming the PM, Dijya Devi has always been confident that fate had great things in store for her better half: "I knew that my Netaji would be Prime Minister one day."

Small wonder then that the honour, when it finally came, left Dijya Devi unmoved. While Shekhar's supporters, delirious with joy, beat drums and performed excited jigs on the lawns of his 3 South Avenue Lane bungalow, the lady of the house stayed indoors, doing *pooja* oblivious of the drama outside. And of the political intrigues that led to her husband grabbing the hot seat. Says Devi: "I know nothing about Rajiv Gandhi or V.P. Singh, so do not ask me about them. I never ask Netaji anything. He tells me what he has to."

Combined with this respect is absolute faith in her husband's ability to lead the nation. Dijya Devi insists that only Chandra Shekhar can improve the lot of the deprived. "Now that Netaji has come into power," she says with quiet confidence, "I am sure the prices will come down. He has done a great deal for the poor people of Ballia. Now he will work for all the poor in the country."

So low profile has the Shekhar family been that, until recently, it was believed by most people that the leader was a die-hard bachelor. On the contrary, the new Prime Minister married Dijya Devi, then

DIJYA DEVI: "I knew that my Netaji would be Prime Minister one day"



JAGDISH YADAV

ceremony wasn't held in Ashoka Hall and the loud cheers of "Chandra Shekhar *zindabad*" resulted in a distinct lowering of tone. But Shekhar wasn't complaining, though appearances suggested that he didn't enjoy being mobbed by the crowd after the event.

The mandatory visit to Rajghat over, the new Prime Minister called on his predecessor V.P. Singh to hug him in a rare show of *bonhomie*.

around "ten years or so" (she's not sure what her age is), while still in high school.

Both families were resident of Ballia district and since Dijya Devi's mother had passed away, her father was eager to get her married at an early age. "At that time I didn't know the real meaning of marriage," recalls Mrs Shekhar, "I went to live in Netaji's house, but he was still in school. He would come to the village one or two times in a year."

In 1962, Chandra Shekhar became a Rajya Sabha MP and shifted to New Delhi. His wife accompanied him and stayed on. "I only go back to Ballia if there are any weddings," she confides. In Delhi, she manages the household affairs at 3 South Avenue Lane and admits: "I only make Bhojpuri food, but that's when Netaji is at home. Otherwise, the servants take care of the work."

The Shekhars live with their two sons, Pankaj and Neeraj. The elder, who is married to Rashmi, daughter of former home minister Om Mehta, runs a printing press in the capital. The younger, Neeraj, has just completed college. But it is Rashmi who keeps her mother-in-law abreast of the latest political developments.

As Mrs Prime Minister, however, Dijya Devi promises to be an entirely different commodity from the elegant and sophisticated Sonia Gandhi or the fiercely political Rani Sita Devi. Always clad simply in a *seedha pallav sari*, she spends most of her time in the kitchen or the *pooja* room, and in Bhondsi when her husband is out of town. And, by her own admission, never reads the newspapers.

What her husband chooses to tell her is good enough for her.

Rita Sarin / New Delhi



JAGDISH YADAV

TRAPPINGS OF POWER: The Special Protection Group moved into Shekhar's bungalow even before the swearing-in



JAGDISH YADAV

BONHOMIE: V.P. Singh congratulates Shekhar after the swearing-in ceremony

Then, it was on to Maharashtra Bhavan for lunch. Around 4.30 in the evening, Shekhar arrived at his South Block office to hold meetings with home secretary Naresh Chandra, foreign secretary Muchkund Dubey and cabinet secretary Vinod Pande. The PM asked the home secretary to scale down his security, but was told that Chandra had to follow the Blue Book. "But I am the Prime Minister," countered Shekhar, "and I am overruling the Blue Book."

Next, the new Prime Minister had to deal with the hijacked plane, which had been forced to land at Calcutta airport. Shekhar gave the appropriate advice and left for dinner at Jagdeep Dhankhar's place.

On the 11th, the PM went to his Bhondsi farmhouse, along with such supporters as Yashwant Sinha, Subodh Kant Sahay, Raj Mangal Pandey and Digvijay Singh, to finalise his ministerial team. The evening was devoted to meetings with BJP leaders Advani and Vijayaraje Scindia and VHP general secretary Ashok Singhal, with a view to affecting some sort of compromise on the Ayodhya issue. The day after, Shekhar flew in an Indian Air Force aircraft to Bombay to seek the blessings of his mentor and former Prime Minister Morarji Desai.

And to celebrate the fact that power had finally come to rest with the 'legitimate Opposition'. Never mind if it was with Congress support. ●

Seema Goswami and Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

The man behind the myth

What kind of Prime Minister will Chandra Shekhar make?

After his 30 high-profile years in politics, it sometimes seems that there is very little left to be said about Chandra Shekhar. Certainly, the media have made up their minds about him and his erstwhile colleagues in the Janata Dal have missed no opportunity to declare that he is the Charan Singh of his generation.

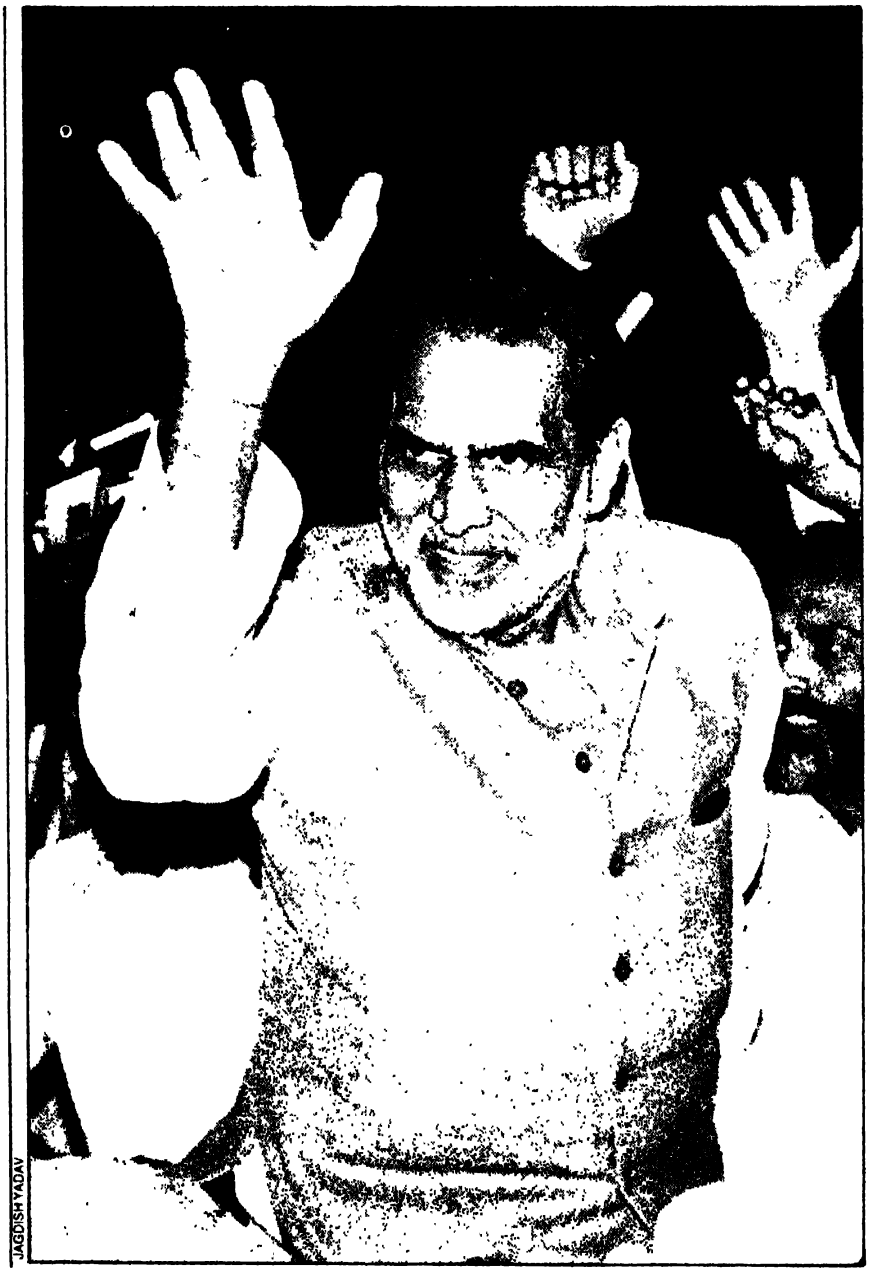
In fact, as Chandra Shekhar likes to point out, much of what is said about him is far from the truth. Take the small matter of his birthday. According to the news agencies and the official Press Information Bureau biographies, he was born on 1 July. In reality, his birthday is on 17 April. Somewhere along the line, an error was made in the records and it has never been corrected.

Then there is the slightly more significant matter of his background. Shortly after he was sworn in as Prime Minister, the media had it that he was the son of a middle class Thakur, a description that made him sound rather like Vishwanath Pratap Singh with a full head of hair.

The way Shekhar says it, there was nothing middle class about his background. "My family had 12 acres of land among four brothers. Can that be called middle class? My father was a poor farmer and I had a tough childhood. I had to walk miles every day to go to school."

Does it really matter how poor anybody's father was? In today's politics, perhaps not. Rajiv is proud of his aristocratic lineage; V.P. Singh urges followers to refer to him as "Rajasaab"; and the most efficient minister of the 1980s was a former maharaja: Madhavrao Scindia.

It is in that sense that Shekhar is a misfit in the current political environment: to him, it matters very much whether you come from a rich or poor family.



JAGDISH YADAV

As he says, "Nobody who has not been poor himself can understand poverty. Name one great leader who has done a lot for the poor who has come from a rich family?"

He argues the point with great vehemence, finally conceding that yes, Mahatma Gandhi was an exception and perhaps there were a few others. But the general rule, he insists, is still valid.

To remain this obsessive about poverty in the 1990s suggests to many people an unhealthy preoccupation with the ideas of a bygone era. Consequently, Shekhar's reputation as the Rip Van Winkle of Indian politics has taken firm root. His critics believe that he clings to the rhetoric of the socialist 1950s: a distrust of multinationals, a hatred of consumer goods, a misunderstanding of the role of market forces and a childish faith in the value of the public sector. As SUNDAY itself has put it, he seems to have travelled from 1950 to 1990 without learning any economics. At a time when the socialist world is busy reconstructing itself, such an attitude seems hopelessly out of tune with the times.

Shekhar bristles when the subject is raised. He rejects entirely the notion of himself as the last Brezhnevite. To him, that is simply another misconception.

And like the false date for his birthday and the misrepresentation about his background, it needs to be corrected.

First of all, he is not impressed by those who point to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's restructuring of the Russian economy. "They are going from a system in which they had no market forces to one in which they are combining central planning and the market," he explains. "That is the system that we have had since Independence. What is so new in it? We are not some communist country that we need to liberalise. Even now, we are more liberal than Russia."

The way he tells it, his economic views are not very different from those of somebody like Rajiv Gandhi, though there are some important differences. He is not a great advocate of the public sector and believes that it must be made efficient. He concedes that it served a historical purpose, but is not for further nationalisation. Nor does he object to increasing the role of market forces. All he says is that in a less-developed economy like ours, too much reliance on the market will lead to scarce resources being diverted to non-productive sectors. Hence the need for planning and some regulation of the market. But he accepts that this must be done without excessive red-tape and an over-reliance on the bureaucracy.

He differs with the Rajiv Gandhi-kind of politician in two areas. The first is poverty. He believes that any government that wins the approval of the middle class by stepping up the production of consumer goods has its priorities wrong: it should concentrate instead on helping the poorest members of society.

The second area of difference is self-reliance. Shekhar prefers a South Korean or Japanese model in which the doors are not thrown wide open to foreign investors, but in which the government directs the investment into areas it regards as crucial.

"Is that very old-fashioned?" he concludes.

What kind of Prime Minister will Chandra Shekhar make? There are genuine grounds for concern. Firstly, he is dependent on the support of the Congress(I), which sees him as a caretaker PM who will hold office till Rajiv Gandhi decides that the time is right for an election. Secondly, he has few MPs on his side who will make good ministers. The big question in the Shekhar camp last week was: who will run the home and finance ministries? By common consent, Yashwant Sinha was a perfect home minister.



JUBILANT: The new PM's supporters at his 3 South Avenue Lane residence

If Shekhar fails as a Prime Minister, he will be an honest failure: a man who went down because of what he believed in and not because he hoped to play caste and communal cards to win votes

But wouldn't it make more sense to give him finance because of the economic crisis? Then, who would be home minister? There were no obvious candidates.

And finally, there is a question mark over Shekhar's own abilities. He has been at the forefront of Indian politics since the 1969 Congress split. But incredibly, he has never held ministerial office—not even as a deputy minister in a state government. Was such a man up to the job? Rajiv Gandhi responded to these doubts by pointing out that he too had become Prime Minister without any experience. Considering the mess Rajiv made of his mandate, this was not a

"There is no parallel with Charan Singh"

The Prime Minister speaks his mind on V.P. Singh, Ambani and his dealings with the Congress(I)

On Monday, 12 November, a mere 48 hours after he was sworn in, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar gave SUNDAY *one of the first formal press interviews of his term. Initially, the Prime Minister was reluctant to go on the record arguing—with some justification—that it was too soon to say anything very different from the stand he had taken in his now celebrated* SUNDAY *interview in August, when he had first come out openly against V.P. Singh.*

But on a rushed trip to Bombay—his first official visit as the Prime Minister—he relented and, as the special Indian Air Force Boeing 737 flew from Jaipur to the Maharashtra capital, offered this brief insight into his thinking.

SUNDAY: How does it feel to be Prime Minister?
Chandra Shekhar: Frankly, having seen the files, I am deeply concerned. My oath of secrecy prevents me from saying more, but we are in a worse situation than anybody realised. We knew that the economic situation was bad, but it was this bad was not told to anybody.

Q: Are you suggesting that the last government kept the truth from the country?
A: It is not my intention to cast aspersions on anybody, but having seen that the reality is different from what we were told, I have no explanation for why this should be so.

Q: Let me ask you the question that is on everyone's lips: are you the Charan Singh of the 1990s?
A: I don't know why people indulge in this kind of talk. Where is the parallel?

In 1979, Charan Singh split the party and brought the government down. I have not destroyed the government. Whatever happened to Mr V.P. Singh's government took place as a result of his own actions.

I may have been unhappy with the way things were going, but I never said anything or did anything to bring down the government. Mr V.P. Singh lost his majority after the BJP withdrew support and that was not the consequence of my actions.

So where is the parallel?

Q: I think what people mean is that, like Charan Singh, you went to the Congress(I) for support.
A: What was the alternative? After Mr V.P. Singh's government lost support, who was in a position to form a government?

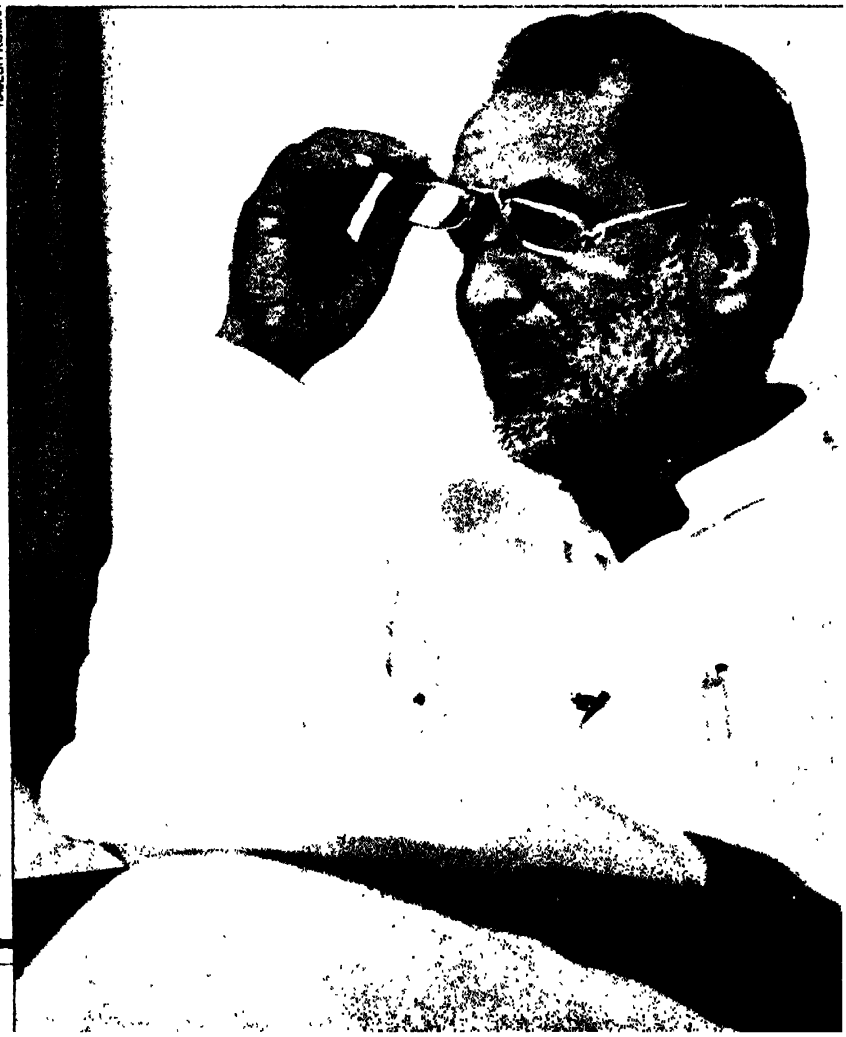
We were agreed that nobody wanted elections immediately. The country could ill-afford them in the present crisis. When a state is in that situation (for example, Punjab), then we have President's Rule. But that is not possible at the Centre.

So, what could be done? V.P. Singh could not command a majority. Rajiv Gandhi said he did not want to form a government. And in any case, he could not have got a majority without Janata Dal support.

So any government formed during this crisis—because of realities—had to have Janata Dal and Congress support.

Q: What about the argument that,

RAJESH KUMAR



the mandate of the last election was against the Congress(I)?
A: If that was so, then only a Janata Dal government supported by the left parties and the BJP would have commanded a majority and fulfilled that mandate. We had such a government and it fell not because of any of my actions.

If anybody failed to respect any anti-Congress(I) mandate, then it is those people who were unable to keep such a government going.

Q: Do you think that the two Janata Dal factions can reunite?
A: Why not? We had never wanted to split the party. We would have preferred unity.

Q: In that case, will you readmit V.P. Singh into your Janata Dal?
A: It is not a question of personalities. I do not bear any ill-will to any persons. I would be happy to support any move to readmit him. The question is: in what capacity will he be readmitted? That will have to be seen.

Q: Many people are concerned about your economic views. We've said in SUNDAY that you sometimes give the impression that you've travelled from 1950 to 1990 without learning any economics along the way.
A: And have the problems of India changed drastically from 1950 to 1990?

I am not one of those who changes his views according to the prevailing fashion. I think that we have two basic problems in India: scarcity of resources and great poverty. Of course, they are interrelated and we have to find a means of tackling them.

That was our problem in 1950. That is our problem in 1990. But people keep on writing all kinds of things about my economic views that are not true. I have never said that I believe in inefficiency in the public sector. I have never stated that I do not believe in market forces. I am not for the bureaucratisation of the economy.

What I have said is that if you depend only on market forces, then there is a danger that you will squander scarce resources in the production of luxury, consumer goods. This may please a small section of society in the short run, but in the long term, it will be in nobody's interests.

Q: So what do you suggest?
A: I think we must have some centralised planning to allocate resources. And within that framework, we should encourage market forces.

This is not some old-fashioned view. You look at Gorbachev. What is he doing in the Soviet Union? It amounts to the same thing.

You cannot run an efficient economy if you ignore the market. But you cannot leave resource allocation to market forces either.

Q: How do you respond to the familiar allegation that you are an Ambani man?
A: I do not know why all my friends in the press are so obsessed by Dhirubhai Ambani. Is he that important? Last time you interviewed me, the same question was asked.

I hold no brief for any individual industrialist, either for or against. It is you people who keep thinking about Ambani.

Q: When can we expect your Cabinet?
A: Wait till the 16th. I will announce it by then.

Interviewed by Vir Sanghvi/On board the PM's plane

terribly reassuring explanation.

Despite such genuine fears, there is little doubt that Shekhar has a lot going for him. He is one of the most humane of Indian politicians, a man with an almost infinite tolerance and a remarkable capacity for forgiveness. While V.P. Singh tried to divide to rule, Shekhar will seek to heal and unify. And even his worst critics concede that he is startlingly straightforward. Not for him any management of contradictions or any dissembling: he speaks his mind. After 11 months, India will have a Prime Minister who can look his people in the eye.

None of this suggests that he will necessarily be a success as Prime Minister. But if he fails, he will be an honest failure: a man who went down because of what he believed in and not because he hoped to play caste and communal cards to win votes.

Already, the bureaucracy has had a taste of his style. Shortly after he was sworn in, he ordered that the PM's motorcade be cut by half and his personal security apparatus (600 SPG men work round the clock to guard the Prime Minister) be scaled down.

The civil servants were polite but firm.

"We can't do that sir," they chorused in unison. "We have to go according to the book."

"Show me the book," said Shekhar.

It was brought to him.

"There you are," he said and as horrified bureaucrats watched goggle-eyed, proceeded to draw a line through those sections that specified excessive security.

"Now it doesn't say that in the Blue Book," he stated with grim finality.

If only running India were as easy as rewriting the Blue Book!●

Vir Sanghvi


NITIN RAI

UNLIKELY ALLIES: How long will the Chandra Shekhar-Rajiv Gandhi partnership last?

Once is not enough

L.K. Advani decides to go on a second yatra *to step up the BJP's political offensive*



The organisation that seems least affected by the present political uncertainty in the country is the Bharatiya Janata Party. Having served as a catalyst in the collapse of the National Front government which it propped up for 11 months, the party is all set to launch a nationwide pre-election offensive, as it is convinced that mid-term polls are round the corner.

BJP leaders have assured party workers that their withdrawal from the political chessboard was only temporary. At a two-day meeting of the BJP's national executive held in the capital on 9 and 10 November, the party concluded that the present political arrangement could at best postpone elections, but would not be able to solve the existing deadlock. Party president L.K. Advani pointed out that the new government lacked a popular mandate, as it was propped up by the Congress(I), which was voted out in the last elections.

Formally endorsing the leadership's decision to sit in the Opposition, the BJP parliamentary party stated that it would now concentrate on fulfilling the needs of the common man. Expressing relief over the ouster of the V.P. Singh government, a statement issued by the party said: "The BJP, now freed from the responsibility of supporting and defending a government whose record has been dismal, would discharge its responsibilities as a vigorous and effective Opposition party, zealously guarding the interests of the people." The idea of forming a national government as a solution to the current crisis was also discussed. The suggestion was made by Atal Behari Vajpayee but the national executive resolved that nothing would come of it at this point.

The BJP's prime concern in the coming months will be to ensure that the Ayodhya issue is kept alive. The party has decided that Advani, its star campaigner, will embark upon an intensive all-India tour in the third week of November for about a month and a half. "We will continue to press for the Ram temple in Ayodhya," declares party vice-president Sunder Singh Bhandari. "Mr Advani's mass campaign will focus on this. We will also explain to the people why we were forced to withdraw our support to the National Front government."

During this sequel to his *rath yatra*, giant rallies will be organised at nearly 600 places, the details of which are being finalised at the party headquarters on Delhi's Ashoka Road. The tour, commencing in Kerala (Advani would not use his *rath* this time), will cover territories that remained untouched by the *rath yatra*. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar figure prominently on Advani's agenda, but the date of his arrival in Ayodhya is yet to be finalised.

BJP leaders were evasive when asked if they intended discussing the temple issue with the new Prime Minister, Chandra Shekar. "We are for a dialogue between Hindus and Muslims," stated party general secretary, Murli Manohar Joshi, without mentioning Shekhar. But not taking any chances, Chandra Shekhar has held out the olive branch to the BJP, declaring that he wanted to seek their cooperation, as well as that of the left parties. There were certain vital matters in which the cooperation of the BJP was essential, said the Prime Minister. And certainly, Ayodhya was one of them.

On what was only his second day in office, the Prime Minister called on both Advani and Vajpayee and discussed the *mandir* dispute and other political issues. Apparently, a preliminary attempt at "building bridges" was made between Chandra Shekhar and the senior BJP leaders, but it was premature to divulge details yet, said party sources. However, Vajpayee later said that the new Prime Minister gave a "fresh mind to the subject", and seemed "keen to take an initiative on the Ayodhya issue." Corroborated Advani: "Chandra Shekhar is endorsing our stand, he is not trying to corner us into any position."

However, the BJP leaders clarified that the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav was "very much a contributing factor" to the present dispensation at the Centre, and that the BJP held Yadav and V.P. Singh "equally responsible" for the events in Ayodhya last month. "Unless there is a marked change in attitude, it is likely that the stalemate will continue," said a senior party official, reiterating the *rath yatra* slogan: "*Hum mandir wahin banayenge* (the temple will be built there—the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi site—and nowhere else)."

Will the BJP's strident revivalist campaign translate into votes? The *rath yatra*, which was clearly a knee-jerk reaction to V.P. Singh's decision to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations, served to instigate

NITIN RAI





L.K. Advani's *rath yatra*: the large turnouts do not automatically translate into votes; (above) Vajpayee and Advani: their strategy is to keep the Ayodhya issue alive

Hindu chauvinism. But will the electorate opt for a party that mixed religion with politics to serve its own ends? While Advani himself often exhorted party workers not to mistake the huge turnouts at most places during his *yatra* as an indication of support to the party, other leaders are convinced that the party will do better than ever before in the next elections. "The Congress is in a dilemma, the Janata Dal is in a quandary," says general secretary Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, who is tipped to become the party's next president. "Only the BJP is marching ahead with its message that the country comes first, that nationalism comes first, and everything else is last."

According to Advani, the next elections would be fought on issues and negative votes will not determine the outcome. "In all elections until now, anti-Congressism has been an important factor," says the soft-spoken hardliner. "The verdict thus had invariably been influenced by a negative vote. In the forthcoming elections, it is very likely that the electorate may be influenced by the positive attributes and policies of the competing parties. If this happens, it would be a distinct gain for the health of the political system."

And a distinct gain for the BJP, feel leaders. Corroborates Joshi: "We don't have anything negative in our ideology," he says. "We will go to the people and tell them that we want to give the country prosperity, a decentralised economy, and, above all, secularism. We want to build a strong, modern India, deeply and firmly rooted in its glorious traditions."

The party has decided to contest as many seats as possible and, in most places, go it alone. The present juncture, it feels, is too premature to discuss seat adjustments. That would be considered, if at all, at a later stage.

The BJP is all set to launch a nationwide pre-election offensive, as it is convinced that mid-term polls are round the corner

But some of the factors that would influence the BJP's performance are beyond its control. Much will depend on the performance of the new government, on whether the Ram Janmabhoomi movement intensifies, and, of course, on the timing of the next election.

Observations that the BJP reached its zenith in 1989 and was set on a declining course thereafter do not worry the party leaders. They are not ready to compromise on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. "Let others call us communal. This country is secular, democratic and socialist because it is Hindu," insists Joshi. Party ideologues point out that winning or losing elections is not the *raison d'être* of the BJP. "The other parties may not be able to comprehend it, but we can never be as political as they are. We owe our being to a school of thought, not to wresting power for ourselves," explains one.

For the moment, however, the party is busy gearing up for another bout of populist campaign. But it remains to be seen if its efforts to grow into a political force to reckon with are seen as part of some divine design or as mere exigencies of political survival. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

A matter of principle

The left parties decide to oppose Chandra Shekhar's government

After the last general elections, every Opposition party that had managed to put up a good showing at the hustings agreed on one point: that the people's mandate was against Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I). They argued, quite high-mindedly at the time, that the Opposition's sacred duty was to form a non-Congress(I) government. Anything else would amount to a betrayal of the popular mandate. A year later, most Opposition parties and leaders seem to have forgotten all that. But not the communists.

When Chandra Shekhar was appointed Prime Minister, the left parties unanimously cried foul. When the Janata Dal split and Vishwanath Pratap Singh lost the confidence motion in Parliament, all the major left parties—the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party (CPI), the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and the Forward Bloc (FB)—issued a joint statement condemning the action of Chandra Shekhar and his group of dissident Janata Dal MPs. "If this group, having neither a popular mandate nor any policy platform, is installed in power, it would amount to violation of all accepted norms of political propriety," the statement read.

The most vociferous in criticising Chandra Shekhar's coup was West Bengal's Marxist chief minister, Jyoti Basu. On returning to Calcutta, Basu declared at a public meeting that Chandra Shekhar was completely bereft of any notions of principles or political ethics. "I cannot work with these people who have no principles," he said. "During my stay in the capital, I almost fell ill after seeing what was happening. I feel much better to be back with you."

In today's confused politics, the left believes that principles, apart from imparting credibility, is the only means to remain afloat and survive. Its trenchant criticism of Chandra Shekhar stems from the belief that by breaking up the Janata Dal and joining hands with the Congress(I) to form a government, the MP from Ballia has forfeited his political future. The left also believes that the break-up of the Janata Party in 1979 and that of the Janata Dal in 1990 is not a mere instance of history repeating itself.



Jyoti Basu (right) with V.P. Singh: extending support

As the grand old man of the CPI(M) Politburo, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, pointed out: "The difference is that Charan Singh with all his factional and group clashes with Morarji Desai, had a policy question on which he broke and that was the dual membership issue. Chandra Shekhar does not have any policy issue."

The left, for the moment, is not presenting any well-defined strategy. What it is making clear right now is that it has nothing to do with Chandra Shekhar, the Congress(I) or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In fact, the CPI(M) does not consider Chandra Shekhar to be a legitimate leader of a legitimate faction of the Janata Dal. Shekhar's camp has consistently been termed as a mere 'splinter group'. The defeat of V.P. Singh is viewed not so much as a victory of the Dal dissident chiefs, Shekhar and Devi Lal, but of the Congress(I) president Rajiv Gandhi.

In other words, the CPI(M) feels that three main political forces are emerging in the national scene: the Congress(I)-Chandra Shekhar combine, the BJP and the secular, democratic forces represented by V.P. Singh's Janata Dal and the left parties. Any individual or party which do not clearly identify with one or the other of the three forces are likely to be wiped out. The BJP, for instance, could not continue to equivocate and had to adopt a clear pro-Hindu stance. The BJP today, for all its utterances, is not viewed as being particularly secular and is counting on polarising the electorate into two antagonistic camps along communal lines.

The Congress(I), on the other hand, believes that no other party can provide a stable government. Rajiv Gandhi seems to feel that his party's main task is to prove to the electorate that no Opposition party can provide a viable government. In this respect, Chandra Shekhar is bound to lose out sooner or later.

V.P. Singh's Janata Dal, in contrast, has clearly taken a middle position in Indian politics. While Singh cannot hope for an early electoral victory, the left knows that social and historical conditions prevailing in the country favour a mainstream, democratic and secular party. Only such a mainstream force is capable of remaining in the running in the long term. The left consequently feels that it is best to align with V.P. Singh. ●

Indranil Banerjie/Calcutta

BOOK EXTRACT

THE FINAL DAYS


JAGDISH YADAV

How Rajiv's first prime ministership ended. An extract from a new biography

On 17 October it was announced that the 1989 elections would take place on 22, 24 and 26 November. Four days earlier, constitutional amendments designed to give effect to Rajiv's much-vaunted programme of 'power to the people' were defeated in the Upper House. The Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Bills failed by just three votes to win the requisite two-thirds majority in this latest parliamentary challenge to Rajiv. Needless to say, he had no trouble getting the legislation through the Lower House; Congress's massive majority combined with the fact that almost all Opposition MPs had resigned in August, after the Comptroller and Auditor General's report had criticised the Bofors howitzer contract, ensured the Bills an easy passage.

Rajiv's decision to call the election seven weeks before he had to—most observers were expecting the poll in early January—was based on a number of factors. There was undoubtedly concern amongst his advisors that there would be more embarrassing disclosures in the Bofors affair. Five days before the polls were announced, the associate editor of *The Hindu* newspaper had accused the government of bringing economic pressure to bear on his paper in an effort to prevent further disclosures. Another fear was that prices would rise sharply over the next few weeks—despite a favourable monsoon, which was expected to result in a record grain crop, prices of some other staples had rocketed. The price of sugar in particular had shot up. After a poor crop, the government had been slow to arrange for supplies to be imported to meet the shortfall. By the time the election was called, sugar (one of the most widely used foodstuffs in India) was fetching Rs 12 a kilogram, double its price when Rajiv came to power five years earlier.

Rajiv also had worries about a resurgence of communalism with the threat by militant Hindus to march to the disputed shrine at Ayodhya to build a temple on the site of the Babri mosque. The way in which religious passions had been aroused was highlighted when severe communal rioting broke out at Bhagalpur in eastern Bihar within days of the announcement of the elections. Many hundred Muslims died in more than two weeks of communal blood-letting. Though not directly connected, there was a feeling that the politicisation of the Ayodhya issue and resulting communal polarisation had played their part in unleashing communal forces at Bhagalpur.

However, it was Congress's assessment of the extent to which Opposition parties could maintain their fragile unity that was the major factor in the decision to go for early polls. The

"A minister admitted that Rajiv was "a negative factor"





Rajiv Gandhi kept a punishing schedule during the four-week campaign, addressing 170 meetings in as many constituencies. Only someone with Rajiv's stamina could have kept it up

Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika Bills had been narrowly defeated in the Upper House by a coalition of Opposition interests which, beside the middle-of-the-road National Front alliance—dominated by the Janata Dal—included the Communists and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP. Despite their shared objective of ousting Congress from power, it was becoming abundantly clear that the Communists and the BJP would not cooperate in an election. Furthermore, the Communists were saying that if the Janata Dal formed an electoral alliance with the BJP they would not support it. Since the Opposition's hopes of throwing Congress out rested on their degree of unity—the extent to which they did not contest against each other at the hustings but fielded common candidates—this represented the best hope Congress had of retaining power.

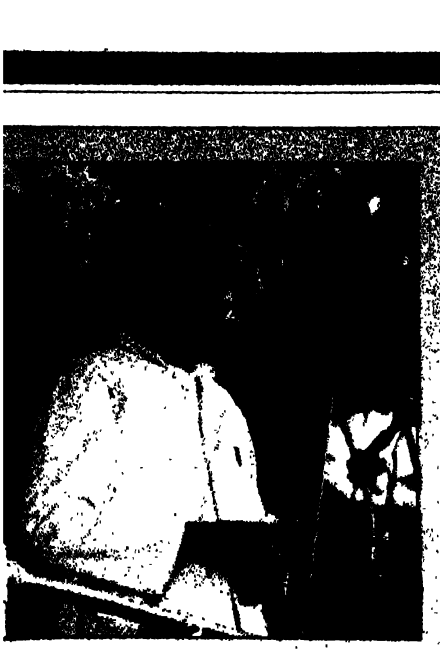
Indeed, differences between the parties which comprised the Opposition were not the only weakness on which Congress hoped to play. Bickering was continuing within the National Front itself, especially within the electorally important state of Uttar Pradesh, over who should hand out the election 'tickets'. The announcement that elections to state Assemblies would take place at the same time as the Lok Sabha polls in five states, including Uttar Pradesh, for the first time since 1967, was further evidence of an attempt by Congress to catch the Opposition off their guard. It noped, with good reason, that the simultaneous polls would bring the National Front leadership bickering to the fore, and would test the state level organisation of the newly formed alliance against the Congress party organisation.

In fact, by the time nominations had closed and the time for withdrawal of nominations had passed, the Opposition parties had achieved a high degree of unity. This was mainly the result of agreements between the two dominant Opposition forces, the Janata Dal-led National Front and the BJP, not to contest against each other in around 85 per cent of the seats where the two would otherwise have fielded candidates. The National Front also reached a smaller number of seat-sharing agreements with one or other of the Communist parties.

Before the campaign commenced, Congress suffered another setback. Defence minister K.C. Pant learned on the final day for filing nominations that he was not being allowed to contest from the Nainital constituency in Uttar Pradesh that he regarded as his family seat. He declined two other constituencies offered him and declared he would not contest the election. At a press conference, he complained that the party apparatus had fallen victim to 'state bossism', a return to the days when party leaders in the state rather than in Delhi handed out electoral 'tickets'. He also complained of the role of 'inexperienced and unelected coteries' whom he accused of interfering in political decision making. Mr Pant was criticising, and in a very public manner, the small group of political aides on whom Rajiv depended, people like R.K. Dhawan, Mani Shankar Aiyar and Satish Sharma, who had come to play a key role in political decision-making. This criticism from one of Rajiv's longest-serving ministers, who had been moved from the steel and mines ministry to defence when V.P. Singh was forced to resign, was the most public indication that morale in the Congress party was low. Another senior minister admitted off the record that Rajiv was 'a negative factor' in the Congress campaign, adding: "We should have got rid of him, but it's too late now."

By the time the campaign opened on 5 November, observers who had been predicting a narrow Congress victory—perhaps the largest party in Parliament without necessarily gaining an overall majority, they said—were giving the two sides even chances of victory. Everything would depend on the campaign itself. What was evident from the beginning was that there was no 'electoral wave', like the sympathy wave that had swept Rajiv to power five years earlier, shortly after his mother's assassination, or the anti-Emergency wave that had swept his mother out of power 12 years earlier. There were few national issues, though the sharp rises in prices was the main one. The Opposition tried hard to make Bofors and corruption in public life an electoral issue, with pic-

It was apparent that the election result was





As Rajiv travelled all over India, Sonia and Priyanka campaigned in Amethi. Said Sonia about her foreignness: "I may be a daughter of Italy, but I am the daughter-in-law of Amethi"



Towards the end of his campaign some of Rajiv's scheduled meetings were cancelled. This was because of indications that large crowds could not be guaranteed to turn up

tures of the Bofors gun used as part of their election advertising. The single word 'Boforsgate' in Hindi greeted visitors to V.P. Singh's Fatehpur constituency in Uttar Pradesh, proclaimed from a banner straddling the road near the railway station

To an extent the bid to make corruption a key election issue succeeded. Much of V.P. Singh's own following were derived from his campaign against corruption and a belief that he really would try to clean up public life, in the way that he had started to as Rajiv's finance minister. His campaign against black money, which he described at election meetings as 'robbing the poor', earned him much respect, rather as Rajiv's father, Feroze, had won widespread support and respect for his own parliamentary drive against corruption in the 1950s.

This was also the election in which the Nehruvian concept of secularism was on trial. The BJP, in particular, made it a central part of its campaign, asking "Why should we not be proud of our Hindu heritage and why should we pander to Muslims and other minorities?" Anyone who doubts the effectiveness of this argument has only to look at how the BJP, in alliance with another Hindu fundamentalist party, the Shiv Sena, increased its parliamentary seats at this elections from two to 88. At any rate, Congress seem to have lost the Muslim vote from an early stage; probably due to the feeling that the party was backing the fundamentalist Hindu line over Ayodhya. However, the failure of the Congress government to protect Muslims from being killed at Bhagalpur, whilst the election campaign was underway, was also a factor in bringing about the Muslim alienation from Congress.

It was at the insistence of the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, N D. Tiwari, that Rajiv went to seek the blessing of the Hindu holy man, Deoraha Baba, three days before the foundation stone of the Hindu temple was to be laid at Ayodhya. Rajiv says Deoraha Baba "sent me a message asking me to come to see him, indicating that he had convinced the various groups not to precipitate the Ayodhya issue". He says he called on the holy man in an effort to defuse the Ayodhya dispute, and prevent it leading to violence.

Deoraha Baba, who died in June 1990, used to speak of India being a home for followers of all religions, but he was undeniably a Hindu holy man, living as he did on the banks of the river Jamuna,close to the birthplace of another Hindu god, Krishna. He would not reveal what passed between him and Rajiv at their hastily arranged meeting, but said people came to seek his guidance for the well-being of the country. If there was a message of peace and reconciliation over Ayodhya, Rajiv did not share it. He made no effort to ban the laying of the foundation stone of the Hindu temple at a ceremony in which thousands of bricks brought from all over India were blessed. Nor did he condemn the action, which was bound to cause concern to all India's Muslims that Hindu nationalism was on the march again.

Indeed, about the only positive thing that can be said about Rajiv's role in the Ayodhya dispute is that he turned down a suggestion that he himself lay the temple's foundation stone, a suggestion that reportedly emanated from his own home minister, Buta Singh. Buta Singh had several meetings with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the period leading up to the foundation stone ceremony on 9 November. That may have been a legitimate role for a home minister, but it strengthened the belief that Congress were quietly supporting this provocative enterprise. Was Rajiv really putting into effect a Congress decision to exploit the dispute at Ayodhya for political advantage, a decision which, according to Arun Nehru, had been taken nearly four years earlier? The suspicions grew ever stronger.

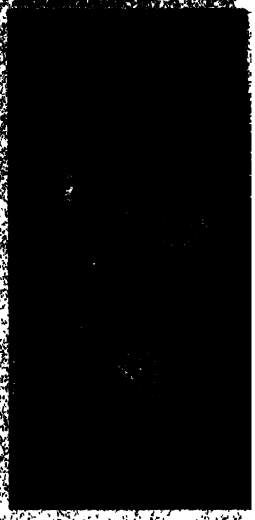
Launching his election campaign at Ayodhya's district capital of Faizabad, Rajiv claimed that only Congress could restore 'Ram Rajya'. Mahatma Gandhi had first coined this concept of India's Golden Age. He had in mind a land in which minorities of all sorts were protected by the existence of perfect justice, tolerance, equality and freedom But, in an age where religious fundamentalism was on the verge of becoming religious bigotry, the notion of 'Ram Rajya' was all too easily misinterpreted to mean the rule

:cided by a negative not a positive vote

JAG DISH YADAV







Much of V.P. Singh's following were derived from making Bofors and corruption an electoral issue, with the Bofors gun used as part of his election advertising

of the god Ram, in other words, Hindu rule. It was a dangerous appeal to introduce into the election campaign, and one which risked further alienating Muslims who had already been alienated by the Bhagalpur communal massacre. Congress has always regarded the Muslim vote as a 'vote bank' on which it could depend, though the beliefs that Muslims vote *en bloc* for one party, or that Congress deserved to be regarded as the main protector of Muslims and other minorities, are both open to question.

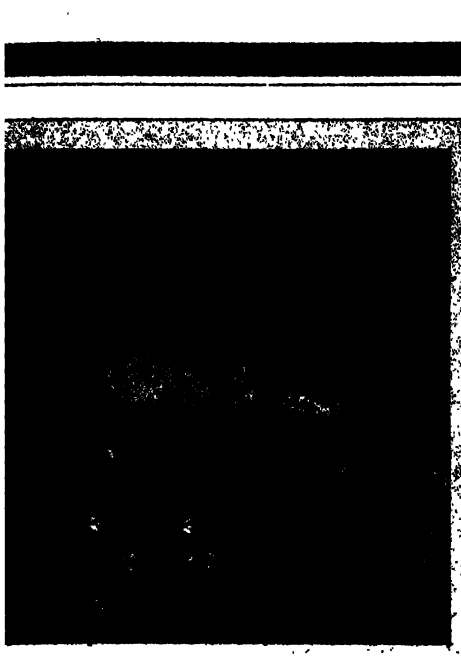
If Congress was 'playing the Hindu card', it seems to have backfired. The foundation stone ceremony on 9 November passed off peacefully thanks to a heavy police presence. But this dangerous appeal to Hindu sentiment did not appear to win Congress any support, and may indeed have helped lose Congress the election. The Janata Dal picked up the mantle of secularism, and with it the votes of the minorities. Voters who were of a Hindu fundamentalist persuasion rejected Congress in large numbers in favour of the BJP.

Rajiv himself kept a punishing schedule during the four-week campaign, addressing 170 meetings in as many constituencies. The choice of constituency visits was made on the strength of a computer assessment of the challenge to Congress. Rajiv would leave Delhi well before dawn on the Air Force Boeing which, for reasons of security, the Election Commissioners had allowed him to use, though the costs of operating the Boeing and the fleet of helicopters, which took him to locations without air strips, were charged to Congress. The Prime Minister took light meals only *en route*, and availed himself of shower facilities on board the Boeing allowing him to arrive at meetings even late in the day still looking fresh and relaxed. He also kept pretty closely to the timetable. A typical day took him to three or four states, addressing two or three meetings in each. Two fleets, each of three Soviet-built helicopters, had gone ahead, practising their landings in sometimes difficult locations on the previous day. His last meeting of the day would be well after dark, and after midnight he would take off by Boeing for the first port of call of the following day, catching a few short hours' sleep on the aircraft, or else in the circuit house on arrival. Only someone with Rajiv's stamina could have kept it up.

Towards the end of the campaign, some of Rajiv's scheduled meetings were cancelled. This was because of indications that large crowds could not be guaranteed to turn up—something which was already being exploited by the anti-Congress press—rather than because Rajiv was flagging. Opposition leaders had criticised the ruling that only Rajiv could use government aircraft, especially since they found their own movements by air were limited by the effects of a strike by Indian Airlines' engineers. Nor did it necessarily enhance Rajiv's image in the eyes of the people. As one of his political opponents asked: "How can he know what's happening on the ground while he's moving around in the sky?"

As Rajiv travelled the length and breadth of the country, accompanied on at least one tour by his son, Rahul, Sonia and daughter Priyanka campaigned in his constituency, Amethi. It is a prospering constituency of 1½ million people, clearly showing the benefit of having the Prime Minister as its MP. Most roads are metalled and most villages have both drinking water and electricity. There had also been a mini industrial boom with many small factories setting up there. Sonia was the main attraction for curious villagers, anxious to see this foreigner who always wears a sari, and speaks good Hindi. She preferred to enter homes and talk to people at the roadside rather than address public meetings. She handed out Rajiv stickers and badges, and, to the ladies, caste marks to stick on the forehead in the shape of the Congress election symbol, the hand. Sonia's message was to point out how the situation in the villages of the constituency had improved since Rajiv became Amethi's MP eight and a half years earlier, and to appeal in Hindi: "Brothers and sisters, if you want our

In Uttar Pradesh the election was portraye





Rajiv made no effort to [illegible] the foundation stone laying ceremony at the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid area, causing Muslims to feel that Hindu nationalism was on the march



The extent of violence at Amethi shocked many. Rajmohan Gandhi, Rajiv's rival, refused to accept the election result

work to continue, vote for my husband." She moved quickly between villages, earning herself the title 'the whirlwind of Amethi'. Explaining away her foreignness, Sonia told the electorate: "I may be a daughter of Italy, but I am the daughter-in-law of Amethi."

Rajiv made several fleeting visits to Amethi, campaigning as much for the Congress candidates in the state Assembly elections, which were taking place in Uttar Pradesh simultaneously with the parliamentary poll. Though he was confidently expecting to be re-elected, the Janata Dal had chosen as its candidate the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Rajmohan Gandhi, which introduced both a rival dynastic appeal and a confusion of names into the electoral battle. Rajiv had entrusted the organisation of his campaign in Amethi to his pilot friend, Satish Sharma, who is sure that religion was an important factor in the constituency. He believes the BJP took advantage of the heightened Hindu awareness, promoted by the *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* on television, whilst Congress lost the Muslim vote because Muslims were 'confused' about the party's position over Ayodhya and as a result of the Bhagalpur massacre which was, he says, 'a big factor'.

Cassettes and videos were widely used to help candidates put their message across. The major parties had special election songs composed and had them recorded by well known singers and movie stars. Candidates had themselves filmed meeting important people, and then showed the videos from the backs of campaign vehicles to enhance their appeal to an electorate that is addicted to films and television. Loudspeakers also blared forth political messages at street corners. Walls were bedecked with colourful posters displaying the party symbols—a hand for the Congress party and a wheel for the Janata Dal—which appear on the ballot paper to help illiterate people cast their votes. Posters of Rajiv, his mother and grandfather demonstrated that Congress considered the dynastic factor to be a plus point in their favour. They took advantage of the fact that the centenary of Nehru's birth and the 72nd anniversary of Indira's birth both fell during the campaign period. One of Rajiv's campaign slogans was *Mera Bharat Mahaan* or 'My India is Great'. Both the slogan and Congress's use of Nehru and Indira Gandhi as campaign symbols were criticised by the Opposition, who resented the implicit suggestions that India belonged to Congress, or that Congress had a monopoly on patriotism.

V.P. Singh's face was noticeably absent from Janata Dal and National Front posters, probably because neither the party nor the alliance had been able to agree for sure that V.P. Singh was their candidate for Prime Minister. Had they done so, it might have improved their electoral prospects. Opinion polls suggested that an overwhelming majority of those planning to vote for the National Front wanted V.P. Singh to become Prime Minister, rather than any other National Front leader. In many respects, the election was a personality contest between Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh.

All large parties are entitled to television airtime for election broadcasts. However, there was a row when Doordarshan, the television service, refused to allow a broadcast which mentioned Bofors. Opposition parties argued that Doordarshan had no legal right to censor or edit campaign broadcasts, and most of them decided to boycott television. In its own election coverage, Doordarshan showed a remarkable degree of balance, considering how unbalanced it had been over the previous few months. It was now subject to additional rules on impartiality imposed by the Election Code. Significantly, all major parties, including Congress, were making much of their plans to reduce government controls over radio and television by granting the broadcasters greater autonomy. Inevitably, Opposition parties wanted to know why, if Congress believed in autonomy now, it had not already loosened the government's control over the electronic media.

Polling itself was an elaborate affair with just under 500 million people en-

[illegible] a contest between Rajiv and the Raja [illegible]









PHOTOS

(Anticlockwise from left) K.C. Pant publicly criticised the role of Satish Sharma, R.K. Dhawan and Mani Shankar Aiyar. It was an indication that morale in the Congress party was low

titled to cast their votes. This included about 35 million who had newly gained the franchise with the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18. Three and a half million officials were deployed to staff 5,89,449 polling booths in the largest exercise of democracy anywhere in the world. It was an awe-inspiring thought that the entire process took place on three days, with two rest days in between. The Election Commission, which is entrusted with organising elections, estimated the total bill was around Rs 1600 million (£ 66 million), not including what the political parties spent on their campaigns. In the circumstances it was more surprising that voting passed off peacefully at the vast majority of booths than that repolling was ordered at around 1200. It was, in fact, the most violent election India has ever had, with over 100 people killed in poll-related violence. There were many examples of 'booth capturing', especially in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, with thugs employed by one party literally to capture polling booths and either mark all the ballot papers in favour of their candidate, or only allow known sympathisers to cast their votes.

What shocked many people was the extent of the violence in the Prime Minister's own constituency of Amethi, from where there was little doubt that Rajiv would be re-elected. It caused V.P. Singh to remark that the last action of the ruling party was to kill democracy. A prominent member of the Janata Dal and relative of V.P. Sanjay Singh, who was contesting for a state Assembly seat from Amethi, was shot and badly injured in the stomach. Rajiv's Janata Dal-rival for the Amethi Lok Sabha seat, Rajmohan Gandhi, refused to accept the election result, pointing out that both the returning officer and the superintendent of police were implicated in attempts to rig the polls, and were transferred before the repolling took place. He brought an election petition which, if successful, would result in the Amethi result being declared null and void, and repolling ordered. This had happened to Indira Gandhi in 1975, prompting her to declare the Emergency rather than bow to the court ruling. The rigging and violence in the Prime Minister's constituency left a stain on the 1989 electoral process. According to Rajiv's campaign manager, Satish Sharma, it was unnecessary anyway since Rajiv had a clear lead over his nearest rival and namesake.

It was apparent to those reporting the campaign that many people were planning to cast their vote for negative rather than positive reasons. Many were rejecting Congress rather than endorsing the National Front alternative. This was especially true in traditional Congress territory like Bihar, where the party's almost universal renomination of its sitting MPs backfired. Voters showed their dissatisfaction with the sitting MPs' performances by voting them out. In south India, where Congress did well in a reverse of the trend in the north, the biggest single factor seemed to be that people were casting their votes against the ruling state governments. There, it was not so much a pro-Rajiv or anti-V.P. Singh vote but rather it was a vote against the ruling DMK government of Tamil Nadu, or ruling Telegu Desam government of Andhra Pradesh, that allowed Congress to retain a majority of southern seats at the same time as it was losing most seats in the north.

It was clear as soon as counting started that no party would gain an overall majority of the 525 seats being contested. Indeed, the opinion polls were predicting that for the first time ever India would have a hung Parliament. What was less easy to anticipate was which party would be best placed to form either a minority or a coalition government. There was much discussion about the obligations of the President. Constitutional authorities agreed that he was not bound to call on the leader of the largest party if no party had an overall majority, but was obliged only to call on whoever he thought could command majority support in the Lok Sabha. Some authorities pointed to the precedent set in Britain in 1923 when King George V called on Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour leader, to form a government, even though Labour had won fewer seats than the Conservatives. The King had correctly anticipated that Stanley Baldwin's Conservative gov-

Despite rumours that Rajiv would flee t





The swearing-in of V.P. Singh was as graceful a transition of power as one could hope to witness. Rajiv Gandhi was the first to congratulate the new leader

ernment would be defeated on the floor of the House by the combined votes of Labour and Liberals. The precedent could well have been held to apply to India since British precedents prevailing at the time of Independence have been held to apply to India.

The President's decision became easier when Congress made it clear that, despite having the most seats (193), they would not attempt to form a government. They accepted the fact that the Janata Dal (141), supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (88) and the Communists and other leftists (51), had a better chance of forming a government, given the fact that these three groups had already enjoyed a loose alliance by their agreement not to contest against each other in many constituencies. Congress made no attempt to seek the support of any other party to help them form a government, but decided instead to accept defeat gracefully and to go into Opposition. The decision was Rajiv's, though obviously he had the endorsement of senior Congress leaders.

The widely expected horse-trading, to induce elected members to change parties after being elected, did not take place, despite the fact that two well-known industrialists were sitting in Delhi hotels with cheque books at the ready, willing, it was said, to purchase support for Congress. The fact that this did not happen was due to Rajiv's Anti-Defection Act which had effectively outlawed this practice by providing that any member changing his party would forfeit his seat, unless more than a third of elected party members changed sides. No newly elected MP would risk losing his seat in this way. So Rajiv offered his resignation, and broadcast to the nation: "The people have given their verdict. In all humility, we respect their verdict."

It was as if he had looked back at the address his mother had given twelve years earlier on the only previous occasion that Congress had been defeated in a general election. Wanting to demonstrate that she continued to abide by the rules of democracy, even after the Emergency, she had said: "My colleagues and I accept the verdict unreservedly, and in a spirit of humility." Indira Gandhi in 1977 went on to offer her "good wishes to the new government that will be formed". So too did Rajiv in 1989. He said: "A new government will be formed. We extend to them our good wishes, and offer them our constructive cooperation." Rajiv pledged that Congress would re-dedicate itself to "the cause of India's greatness", and expressed the hope that "the basic pillars of our nationhood—democracy, socialism, secularism and nonalignment—would be maintained".

Once Congress had accepted defeat, the focus of interest turned to the National Front to see if they could put together a government. Ideological differences ruled out the possibility of the Communists and the Bharatiya Janata Party serving together in government, but both groups agreed to provide support from outside government to a minority National Front administration. The final hurdle was for the National Front to agree its leaders and candidate for Prime Minister. There was a challenge to V.P. Singh from at least one veteran politician, Mr Chandra Shekhar, who, as one columnist wrote, had spent more years being Prime Minister-in-waiting than most others had in politics. His candidacy was thwarted, though, after some nifty manoeuvring behind the scenes and V.P. Singh was appointed firstly by the Janata Dal and then by the National Front as leader. His decision to revive the post of deputy prime minister and to offer it to the Haryana chief minister, Devi Lal, owed more to the need for a balance of factions within the Front than anything else.

The swearing in of V.P. Singh was as graceful a transition of power as one could hope to witness. It took place under the glittering chandeliers and painted ceiling of the Ashoka Hall in the presidential palace, Rashtrapati Bhawan. Journalists outnumbered politicians, many of whom could not find seats. Rajiv Gandhi took his seat in the front row. When the Prime Minister-designate walked in, he made a bee-line for Rajiv, exchanging the clasped hands *namastaye* greeting with him. After President Venkataraman had administered the oaths of

Italy, he continued to lead the Congress



Posters of Rajiv, his mother Indira and grandfather Jawaharlal dominated the election campaign, demonstrating that Congress considered the dynastic factor to be a plus point in their favour

office to V.P. Singh and his appointed deputy, Devi Lal, in a ten-minute ceremony, Rajiv Gandhi was the first to offer the new leader his congratulations. It was as if he were saying 'no hard feelings' to this former friend and Cabinet colleague, who had so strongly attacked Rajiv since being forced out of the government and out of the Congress party two and a half years earlier.

The glamour of the occasion, with invited guests wearing their best apparel and the elegant presidential guard in turbans and red tunics, was a far cry from the sombre occasion five years one month and two days earlier when, in a hastily arranged ceremony, Rajiv Gandhi had been sworn in as Prime Minister a matter of hours after his mother's death. It marked the end of a politically-charged week which had seen the defeat of the Congress party for only the second time in 42 independent years. Speaking to journalists after the swearing in, an unrepentant Rajiv said he thought India had never had the sort of development and progress of the previous five years. This was one of the rare occasions on which representatives of the media had been able to speak to Rajiv since the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the Bofors deal had appeared some months earlier. He had been cocooned by his aides throughout the election campaign. One journalist asked the former Prime Minister: "Who got the Bofors money?" Noticing the editor of *The Hindu* in the circle of journalists, Rajiv replied: "Why don't you ask N. Ram, he knows better than me?"

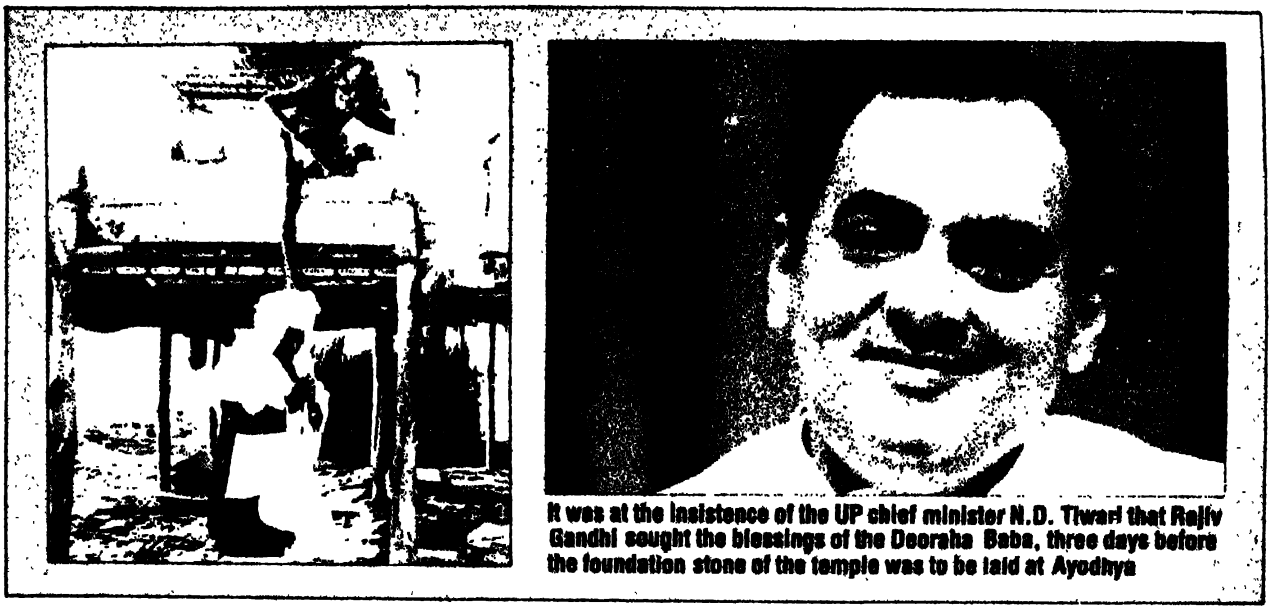
The new Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, scion of the small princely family of Manda in eastern Uttar Pradesh, is a very different man from Rajiv Gandhi. Despite his princely origins and university education, he has a better claim than Rajiv to be considered as a man of the people. He had cut his teeth in Uttar Pradesh state politics, rising to become chief minister, only to resign two years later after failing in his pledge to end banditry in the state. His strong principles, manifested in his determination as Rajiv's finance minister to crack down on corruption, bribery and other sorts of malpractice in public life, had both forced him out of Congress and won him popular support. This had also set him against Rajiv, and in Uttar Pradesh, from where both men draw their electoral support, the election was portrayed as a contest between Rajiv and 'the Raja', as V.P. Singh is known.

Curiously Rajiv and V.P. Singh have at least two things in common. Both received their secondary education in Dehra Dun; Rajiv attending the well known Doon School and V.P. Singh—Rajiv's senior by 13 years—going to Colonel Brown's School. V.P. Singh still owns property in Dehra Dun, where he is regarded as a model landlord. Both Rajiv and V.P. Singh also regard the Uttar Pradesh city of Allahabad as their home town. All but one of India's seven Prime Ministers have come from Uttar Pradesh, but then three of the seven have come from the same family.

The day after resigning as Prime Minister, Rajiv was re-elected unopposed to lead the Congress party. There were many who believed Congress would dump him after the defeat. He owes his survival as party leader in the face of electoral defeat to two factors. First, the party's impressive showing in the four southern states, from where it won 103 of the 130 seats (more than half its total seats). It also recaptured control of the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the simultaneous state Assembly polls, some consolation for losing Uttar Pradesh. Congress was certainly not the losing party in south India, and the Congress MPs elected from there had reason to be grateful to Rajiv for the part he had played in their campaign. Unlike V.P. Singh, who confined his campaign to the north, Rajiv had campaigned extensively throughout the country.

The second factor that worked to Rajiv's advantage was the fact that all potential rivals for the Congress party leadership—men like N.D. Tiwari of

After the Assembly polls Rajiv looked

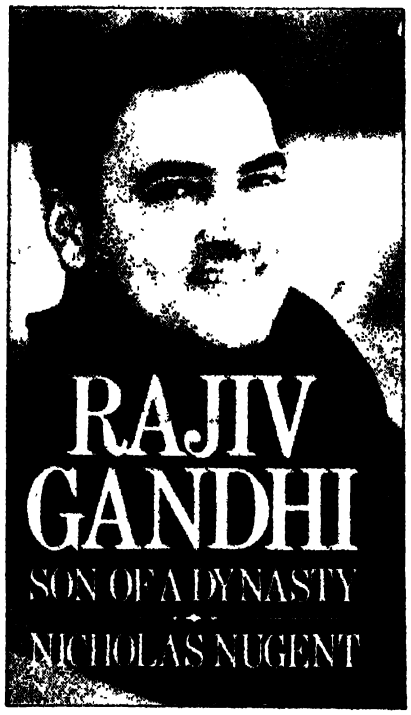


It was at the insistence of the UP chief minister N.D. Tiwari that Rajiv Gandhi sought the blessings of the Deoraha Baba, three days before the foundation stone of the temple was to be laid at Ayodhya

Uttar Pradesh, Jagannath Mishra of Bihar and Arjun Singh of Madhya Pradesh—found their power bases severely eroded by the election result. There were no clear contenders for leadership from the states where Congress remained strong, such as Maharashtra, Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh. Despite rumours that Rajiv already had a flight booked to Italy in the event of defeat, he made it clear he would contine to lead Congress, and repeated his pledge to bring democracy to the party. Sonia was said to have been strongly in favour of his remaining in politics.

Three months later, Rajiv suffered further setbacks when Congress fared badly at elections to eight more state Assemblies. Only in Maharashtra and Arunachal Pradesh was Congress able to form governments. Rajiv had once again campaigned extensively, piloting himself in a light aircraft for much of the tour. He had greatly enjoyed the return to flying, but as far as the elections were concerned the results were, he said, "very much as we had expected". In other words, after losing the Lok Sabha elections, Congress had considerably reduced it's expectations at the Assembly polls.

By this time, Rajiv seemed to be enjoying Opposition, or at least had adjusted to his new role. In Parliament, Congress had not opposed some early measures by the V.P. Singh government, including the repeal of the notorious 59th Amendment, which had provided for special emergency powers in Punjab. It also supported the constitutional Amendment to extend President's Rule in Punjab. Rajiv had adjusted to a reduced level of security, which remained reasonably tight, had moved home a short distance to Janpath, one of New Delhi's elegant avenues, and had surrendered his much loved Mercedes and Range Rover to the government. They were the 'perks' of office that he had to leave behind. He also had to get used to travelling by public transport—scheduled flights and trains—except when Congress chartered the aircraft for his election tour. Till the state Assembly polls were over, he was hardly less busy than he had been as Prime Minister, but was looking forward to spending more time with his family.



Shortly before the Lok Sabha elections, a music-loving friend from outside the political arena had put it to Rajiv: "Suppose you lose the elections?" He replied: "That would be peace for me. I shall just sit and listen to music with the children." He was also hoping to take up old hobbies again; apart from the flying, he wanted to resume his interest in amateur radio. But remaining as Congress president, he also faced the tough task he had set himself four years earlier in Bombay of reforming the party, a task he said was still determined to carry out and which he thought would be easier to accomplish in Opposition. •

Nicholas Nugent

Rajiv Gandhi: Son Of A Dynasty by Nicholas Nugent. Published by BBC Books. Distributed by UBSPD, Calcutta. Price: Rs 240.

forward to spending time with his family

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Famous for 15 minutes

All the men who nobody will remember



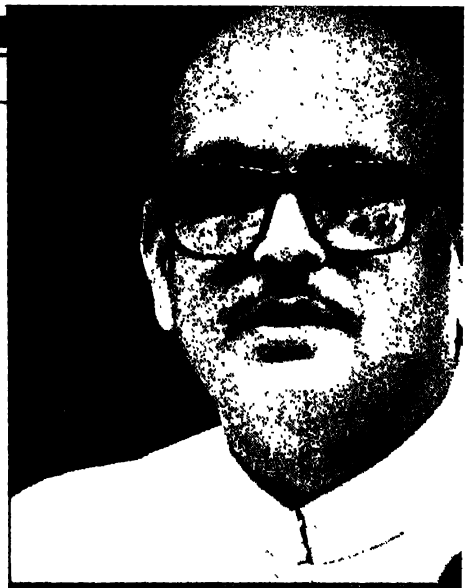
As he exited from Parliament after the vote that brought down the V.P. Singh government, waiting newshounds asked Chandra Shekhar for a comment and—so say the papers—he replied that the vote signalled "the end of a Chapter". Now that, to my slightly startled surprise, I find myself on the same side as Chandra Shekharji (not to mention the Tau, with whom, henceforth, we are as two peas in a pod!), may I, as usual, set off on the wrong foot by immediately disagreeing with our new Prime Minister?

No, the fall of the National Front government was not "the end of a chapter"—it was but the closing of a footnote! Within weeks, perhaps days, the characters who have filled our lives these last 11 months with so much fun and excitement will have receded into the remoter recesses of our memory. Who, we will say to each other in faint perplexity, was Sharad Yadav? The thin one with the beard? Or the festooned one who came in the economy pack?

Well, since parting, as Romeo told Juliet (or was it the other way round?) is such sweet sorrow, before we reach the stage where we have to ask a JNU Professor of Ancient History (or, alternatively, Menaka Gandhi nee Maneka Gandhi) whether Nilamony Routray was an animal, mineral or vegetable, this column would wish to put on record a Who's Who of Who They Were.

First, the glycerine Prime Minister, Vishwanath Pratap Singh. An outstanding deputy minister of commerce, he will be much missed in the ministry of commerce where, aeons ago (can it be but 15 years? How time flies!) he blinked his way past the *babus* lounging in the corridors (taking time off from mulcting itinerant garment exporters) in that friendly, informal way of his that endeared him to all and sundry—missed because former PMs, however short-lived, can never really qualify again for reappointment to what they are best at—be it no more than a humble niche in an undisturbed corner of Udyog Bhavan. So, farewell, dear heart (or however many pieces are left of it!).

Next, the home minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, whose ministrations truly began at home as, within days of his being pitchforked into North Block (to the astonishment of even his best friends and squeals of delight from the Hizb-ul-Muslimeen), he converted his high office into an internal combustion engine. Ah, the ifs of history: if VP had not decided that a token Muslim was what Home needed, no one would have kidnapped Rubaiya. If no one had kidnapped the home minister's daughter, no one would have released a bunch of thugs. If no one had released a bunch of thugs, Jagmohan would not have gone to Srinagar. If Jagmohan had not gone to Srinagar, Farooq and his Assembly would have remained where they were. If they had remained where they were, we would have gone back to Kashmir this summer for our holidays. And the apples would have grown red. And the honey golden... Truly, terrorism, like charity, begins at Home!



V.P. SINGH

Across the road to South Block, where the foreign service wipes its eyes at the departure of their resident billy-goat, the mild-mannered Inder Kumar Gujral. One of us, we thought. None of this ethnic fancy dress about him: *kurta*, pyjama, *fatoi* and what-not. Instead, a natty suit. Quiet tie. Trimmed goatee. A man among men. Who could, besides, actually read and write. Alas, chairing luncheon meetings at the India International Centre



P. UPENDRA

How will history remember him? A crusader for media freedom? As the Voltaire of Indian revolution? Or as the McLuhan of Indian broadcasting?



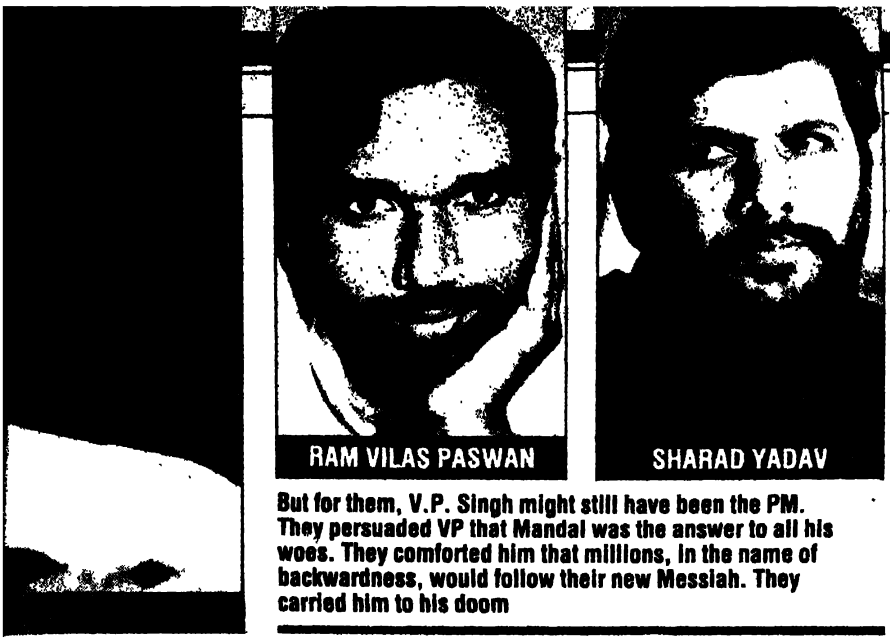
AJIT SINGH

He has entertained us to a carnival of combinations quite matching his Prime Minister's "carnival of principles"



GEORGE FERNANDES

When he becomes a minister, he assumes a benign aspect. Then, when comes the fall, reverts to type: mean, vicious and foul-mouthed



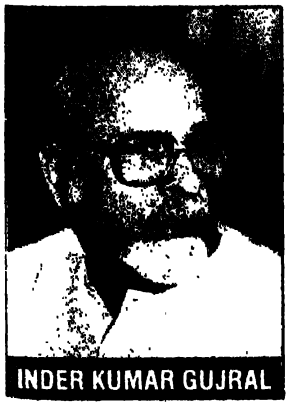
RAM VILAS PASWAN

SHARAD YADAV

But for them, V.P. Singh might still have been the PM. They persuaded VP that Mandal was the answer to all his woes. They comforted him that millions, in the name of backwardness, would follow their new Messiah. They carried him to his doom

(IIC) turned out to be but little qualification for running reality. Quickly sizing him up for the small town Rotary Club president that he is, our neighbours, one by one, took the mickey out our clockwork EAM (IFA-ese for external affairs minister).

So, the Sri Lankans showed him how the tail can wag the dog. And the Nepalese, deeply embarrassed, pleaded with Gujral to please remove his foreign secretary from Kathmandu, where Gujral had sent the man in the very week that shook the Himalayan kingdom—with that expert sense of timing which makes the serving of lunch at the IIC such a delight—so that they could, please, get on with their Revolution! And Gujral's Pakistani counterpart, Sahibzada Yaqub Khan—the Imran Khan of subcontinental diplomacy—demonstrated with consummate skill how to bat against the feeble bowling of well-meaning but vaguely intentioned liberals: a six off every ball—and Gujral applauding in the pavilion, apparently not quite sure which side we were supposed to be on, his mind preoccupied either with the imminent prospect of lunch or the toast in Urdu to follow. In the mind's eye of history, the enduring image of foreign policy *a la* Gujral will always remain that of Saddam Hussain locking Gujral in a bearhug on TV, then looking up all the Indians, putting the keys away, and asking our EAM to ask the Prime Minister (of India, no less!) to 'phone' him when he wanted the Indians out.



INDER KUMAR GUJRAL

He solemnly informed the House, in words that ensure immortality, "We do not know what our policy is!"



ARIF MOHAMMAD

He started it all by walking out on Rajiv Gandhi. A figure of tragedy, his goodness and naivety were exploited by others more ruthless than him



MUFTI MOHAMMAD

Pitched into North Block, he converted his high office into an internal combustion engine

Which, of course, VP could not do—because, as Gujral solemnly informed the House (in words that will ensure immortality for him in the annals of any parliamentary history), "we don't know what our policy is"! No, not goodbye, Gujralji—only *au revoir*. For we shall see you anon at lunch time—at the IIC.

Of Arun Nehru at Udyog Bhavan, what will history remember? A man who got on with his job—till the politics of intrigue intervened. For the first six months—right down till June—the wide-bodied Nehru put himself in a wide-bodied Boeing and took himself off—as commerce ministers must do—to all those unlikely nooks and crannies of the world where a hapless foreign buyer is waiting to snap up an Indian geegaw sold to him by the country's commerce minister (no less!) at bargain basement prices. Performance: oustanding. Exports: booming. Imports: under control. Then, a fatal interview to the editor of SUNDAY: the ace played by the Master Manipulator to trump the Artful Dodger. In weeks, he'd brought the whole National Front *manzil* crashing down. And with it—a minor detail in a minor footnote—the whole of our balance of payments as well.

At the other end of Udyog Bhavan sat Ajit Singh, disproving the conventional belief that a Jat can't be a computer boy. Years of modern education—and 21st century money-making in America—made Ajit Singh into one of the most competent ministers of industry we have ever seen. But history will recall him only in the words of a famous London tabloid headline reporting a mining accident:

"Sons of Toil
Buried Under
Tons of Soil!"

For, as he shuttled between Bagpat and Lucknow, Lucknow and Delhi, Delhi and other centres of the Jat heartland, now seeking out Tikait, now hiding from him, now proclaiming undying fealty to the Tau, now disclaiming the wretch and all his works, now confabulating with Chautala, now playing footsie with his brother Ranjit, now cozying up to Mulayam Singh, now egging on Reoti Raman, stretching, contracting, splitting, reforming, reproducing one cell into a myriad, then resuming the myriad into one, this Amoeba of Indian politics has entertained us these last 11 months to a carnival of combinations quite matching his

Prime Minister's "carnival of principles". The carnival has ended. The roller-coaster ride is over. The swings are as silent as the roundabouts. The pickpockets have gone home. Good night, Ajit Singhji. Sleep well. And may your dreams be purple.

Across Rajpath, opposite Nirman Bhavan, stands the imposing Shastri Bhavan—home till but the other day of that Crusader for Media Freedom, P. Upendra, minister (and who does not know? Who can ever forget?) for information and broadcasting. How will history remember him? As the Voltaire of the Indian Revolution? As the Marshal McLuhan of Indian broadcasting? As the K.K. Tewari of the National Front? What hopes our innocents reposed in him—all those B.G. Vergheses and Khushwant Singhs, those Pran Chopras and Nikhil Chakravartys, those Shoba Des and Amita Maliks ("Dear VP, may we call you VP? For that is what all of us so affectionately call you when we are among ourselves"—*sic!* I swear, and a representative sample of the Mills and Boon school of *Express* television reviewing!) How they excoriated the Congress! How fondly they gawped at their Hero! And how splendidly he showed them in the end the Great Principle of Indian Politics: once a clapper-boy, always a clapper-boy. Upendra's vast experience of the small screen and the big screen, the lapel microphone and the NF megaphone will now stand NTR in final good stead as his once-upon-a-time *chela*, now turned Prodigal Son, returns to the Ramakrishna Studios in Hyderabad to give one last exquisite touch to the scene where Menaka dances to the Maharishi in the Telugu Desam update of that great Indian epic, *Vishwamitra!*

And as he packs his crumpled pyjamas into his decaying bags and prepares to depart from Rail Bhavan, George Fernandes, late minister for the railways (and sometime minister for Kashmir affairs and sometime NF minister for Tibet affairs and always NF minister for putting-foot-in-mouth) grouches, grumbles and growls. When once every decade George becomes a temporary minister, he suddenly assumes a benign aspect: gentle, considerate, balanced, courteous. Then comes the fall—as, inevitably, anything that contains George must come to. And George promptly reverts to type: mean, vicious, foul-mouthed, the garbage he spouted in his swan-song in the Lok Sabha signalling his return to vintage Fernandes. Ta-ta, George. See you again at the barricades.

Saddest of all, Chimanbhai Mehta, the minister for human resource development (HRD). For months, V.P. Singh kept this vast behemoth of a ministry without a head. Then he fought with the Tau—and thus discovered the virtues of education and culture. So, arch-defector Chimanbhai Mehta (not to be confused with our new-found friend in Ahmedabad, Chimanbhai Patel: i.e. *our* Chimanbhai—as against *their* Chimanbhai) was made the minister for HRD. Alas, however, at the precise moment that the National Front decided that the purpose of government was not governance but fraternal fisticuffs. And thus it came about that it was all over for poor Chimanbhai even before he had got started. So, how will history remember Chimanbhai Mehta? Doubtless as the Chimanbhai that history does *not* remember!



ARUN NEHRU

In weeks he brought the whole National Front crashing down. And with it, the whole of our balance of payments as well

But no history can forget the noble contribution of Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav to the retrieval of India's destiny. But for these two, V.P. Singh might still have been Prime Minister! T.S. Eliot once said—and I may have quoted this before—that "history has many cunning passages". And one of the most cunning ever devised was the backward passage that Paswan and Yadav treaded with such devious cunning. They persuaded V.P. Singh that Mandal was the answer to all his woes. They held his hand as the Tau and the Jan Morcha deserted him. It was they who picked up the pieces as bits of the Prime Minister's heart kept breaking off. It was they who wiped VP's tears when he'd given the glycerine tube too sharp a squeeze. They it was who comforted him that millions, in the name of backwardness, would follow their new Messiah. They it was who carried him to his doom. They were the ultimate coterie (now known in its standard Hindi version as *kothdi)* who danced for him his final *mujrah*. If Paswan and Yadav had not been, V.P. Singh might have been. History, indeed, has many cunning passages.

And, in the end, the noble Arif. He it was who started it all—by walking out in a huff on Rajiv Gandhi. A political adolescent who has, mentally and emotionally, never got beyond being President of the Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union. A figure of tragedy, his goodness and naivety exploited by others more ruthless than him, more Janus-chinned (Janus—for the uninitiated—being the Greek god with two faces!). I cannot make up my mind: is Arif's end pathos? Or is it bathos? No matter. His speech in the Last Debate was as full of *dharmic* truths (culled from every religion of India) as it was innocent of any understanding of the politics of his mentors. So impressed was I by his knowledge of every scripture of our scripture-filled land that, if now he finds time hanging somewhat on his hands, I offer, as the farewell gift of this column to one whom it has always secretly admired, to resign in his favour my position as President of the Society for Secularism!

The American comic genius, Andy Warhol, once said that in the next century everyone would be famous for five minutes! It is the only sense in which VP & Co. have taken India into the 21st. century!

So, as the Captains and the Kings depart, each carrying in his personal urn the ashes of his hopes and the despair of his countrymen, this column clears the lump from its throat and (in words that hurt like hell when they were first pronounced last year on Rajiv Gandhi's departure from Race Course Road, and which the original author—my fellow-columnist, Vinod Mehta—must now rue) says to all those departing gently into the night: "Thank you—and goodbye!" ●

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.


JAGDISH YADAV

POST MORTEM

Where did V.P. Singh go so wrong?

Whatever he may say now, Vishwanath Pratap Singh came to power on a two-point programme. Firstly, he was the Great Conciliator. The way he told it, many of India's problems were the consequence of Rajiv Gandhi's confrontational style. He would change all that.

Secondly, he was The Clean Up Man. Not only was he incorruptible himself, but he was going to right the wrongs committed by the Rajiv. Gandhi regime. At one level, this related to Dhirubhai Ambani's apparent stranglehold on the government, to the 'kickbacks' on the purchase of the Airbus A320 and to the St Kitts forgeries. But at a more crucial level, it related to Bofors. The Raja appeared to believe that Rajiv Gandhi, his family and his friends had made money on the deal and that he, as the new Prime Minister, would expose the robbing of the nation's resources.

Now that V.P. Singh's disastrous prime ministership has finally come to an end, it is apparent that he did not deliver on the first point of that programme—never before has India been as divided as it is today.

But equally, there can be no denying that he started out seeking to reconcile and heal. His visit to the Golden Temple, the release of the Jodhpur detenus and other such measures only make sense if viewed in that perspective.

When he was asked about the obvious dissensions in his party, he argued that these were an integral part of democracy and represented a healthy, even desirable, phenomenon. Questioned about the apparent contradiction in trying to govern on the basis of policies that would have to earn the approval of both, the left parties and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he responded with the familiar dictum that politics was the art of managing contradictions.

Today 'managing contradictions' is widely interpreted as a euphemism for lying. But perhaps V.P. Singh did mean what he said: that only through compromise could a diverse country like India be governed.

What is intriguing is not that he sought to play the Great Conciliator—given the nature of his support, he had no choice—but that by August 1990, he had abandoned that stance and recast himself as a man with a mission to transform society: as the Raja of Mandal and the Thakur Who Loves Backwards and Muslims.

IT IS now also obvious that the second point of V.P. Singh's programme came to naught. Despite whispers about the allegedly shady role played by Bharat Business International, few will deny that Madhu Dandavate and Bimal Jalan ensured a degree of honesty in public life. But a clean government still seemed unable to clean up.

Shortly after the Raja took office, his men filed innumerable FIRs directed at uncovering the alleged misdeeds of the Rajiv regime. After a point, there were howls of "vindictiveness", but it is clear that initially, these FIRs were welcomed by the country. Nor was there any lack of support for moves to put the industrial barons of the Rajiv era (men like Dhirubhai Ambani) back in their places and to ensure that no special favours were accorded to them.

Yet, the fact remains that the FIRs amounted to nothing. We know nothing more about the HDW deal than we did last year. The same is true of St Kitts. Nobody was convicted of anything and no new evidence surfaced. The sole legacy of the FIR raj was the crippling of Indian Airlines because of the decision to ground the Airbus A320.

And even the attempt to cut Dhirubhai Ambani down to size amounted to nothing. True, he stepped down as chairman of Larsen & Toubro, but this was, at best, a temporary setback. Given the size of his shareholding, it is inevitable that he will seize control of the company again by next year.

Meanwhile, Reliance's share price boomed in the second half of V.P. Singh's term and the extravagant claims made by the Raja's groupies about reviving the Wadia-Babaria case proved to be lies.

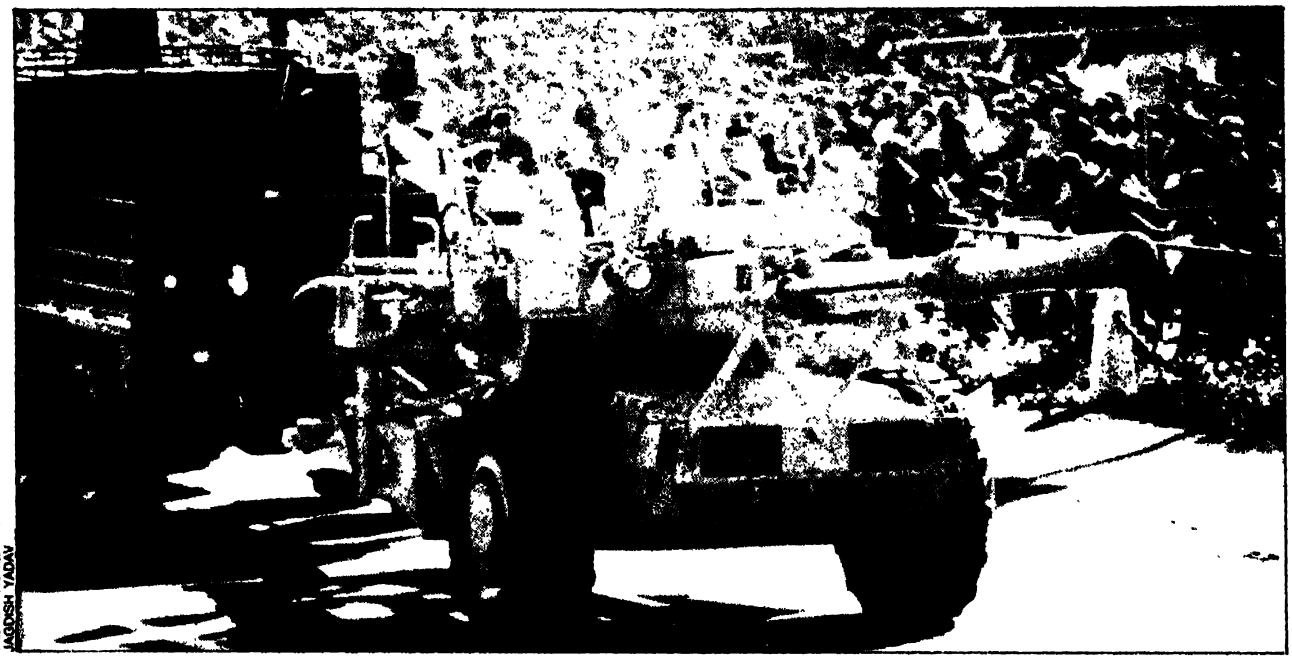
The greatest failure, however, was on Bofors. After promising dramatic revelations that would seal Rajiv's fate forever, V.P. Singh watched helplessly as the case first became a national joke (as the deadlines for revealing the names came and went and the Letter Rogatory was thrown out by a Swiss judge) and then, a national disgrace as his investigators were shown up as inept liars who planted stories against Indian citizens in foreign publications.

WHAT WENT so wrong? How could a government that started out with so much goodwill mess up every single thing it touched? At SUNDAY, we never believed that V.P. Singh was a noble, otherworldly figure. But we believed that he was, at least, shrewd and calculating. How could such a man self-destruct so completely?

To answer these questions, SUNDAY begins a series of in-depth articles that will examine the Raja's failures on both parts of his programme. Some will look at the collapse of the Great Conciliator: the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, the Kashmir problem, etc. And others will focus on the cleaning-up.

This week, in the first of the series, we look at the Bofors fiasco. ●

Vir Sanghvi



JAGDISH YADAV

The curse of Bofors

Nearly everyone who has been touched by the howitzer scandal has been damaged by it

Last winter, Vishwanath Pratap Singh told the people of India that Bofors was more than a gun: it was a symbol of corruption. This winter, he probably believes that it is even more than a gun or a symbol: it is a curse.

Nearly everyone who has been touched by the Bofors affair has been damaged by it. In Sweden, former Bofors chief executive Martin Ardbo lost his job, his successors are still fighting to keep the company from going under and the late Prime Minister Olaf Palme's reputation now lies in tatters.

The same is true in India. Win Chadha and the Hindujas who were to profit from the deal have spent two years fighting to retain their good name. Rajiv Gandhi lost the last election because of Bofors. General K. Sundarji will always be remembered as the man who suddenly changed his recommendation from Sofma to Bofors and still hasn't been able to really explain why. Former defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar ended up being accused, after his retirement, of having behaved improperly and perhaps having even profited from the deal.

And now, the curse of Bofors has done in the other side as well. Vishwanath Pratap Singh won an election chanting a Bofors *mantra* and then had to drop the issue when he could not substantiate his innuendo. N. Ram earned himself a Padma Bhushan and a short-lived reputation as a crusader for truth, but ended up being marginalised in *The Hindu* and found his behaviour being questioned by those leery of his ethical standards. Chitra Subramaniam uncovered the Bofors scandal. But she got no awards, no Padma Bhushans and was abused and pilloried by the very men who hoped to base their political careers on her work. And the Raja's

V.P. SINGH **He won an election chanting the Bofors *mantra* and then had to drop the issue as he could not substantiate his innuendo**

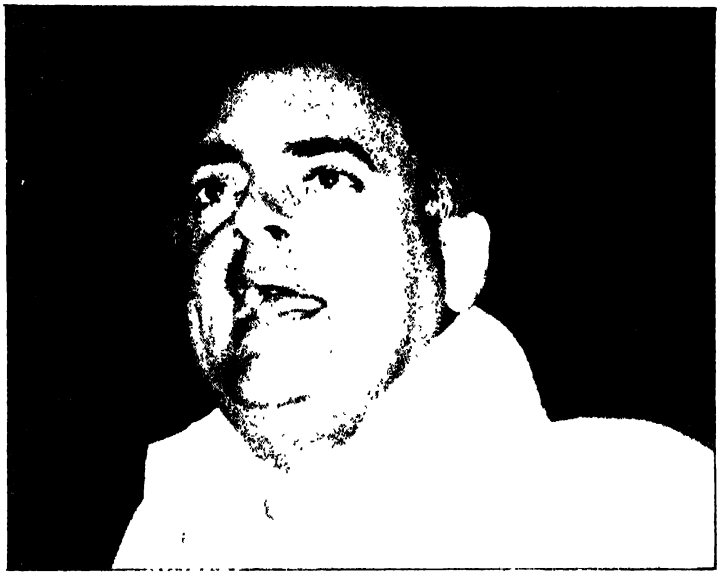


JAGDISH YADAV

so-called 'crack investigative team saw its image crumble as the media likened its performance to the Keystone Cops.

The failure of the V.P. Singh government to make any substantial headway on Bofors caused the Raja to abandon the Mr Clean image he had so assiduously cultivated since 1985 and to recast his prime ministership in a more populist mode with such measures as the Mandal Commission.

But in early January, shortly after the National Front government took office, it all seemed very different. Those were the days when the Congress party fretted that evidence that would incriminate Rajiv was on the verge of being discovered and the regime's investigators (or the hit team, as they were soon called) boasted that they would have the names of the holders of the five Bofors accounts in a few weeks. Stories were leaked to the press to suggest that the legal geniuses of the hit team had uncovered a sixth account which contained not just the Bofors kickbacks, but also commissions from the HDW deal. Additional solicitor-general Arun Jaitley told journalists that he had a cast-iron case against Ajitabh Bachchan and CBI sources suggested that the Bofors codenames Mont Blanc and Tulip applied to Sonia Gandhi's relatives.



RAJIV GANDHI **He reacted hysterically to the Swedish Radio broadcast and lost the last poll because of Bofors**

All of this, it would later be established, was untrue.

So why did the investigators pass it off as fact?

There are two views of the path of the Bofors investigation. The first is the uncharitable one, favoured by many of the hit team's victims. They believe that the investigators told lies and fabricated stories to smear reputations and advance their own political careers. The Congress(I) inclines to this view. So perhaps do the Janata Dal dissidents. Consequently, it may well become the accepted wisdom on the case.

At SUNDAY, we incline to a second view. The investigators were more buffoons than villains; their stories owed more to cock-ups than conspiracies; and their failures stemmed from simple ineptitude. More than anything else, they committed one cardinal sin: they suspended the rules of logic and evidence and believed their own propaganda.

To understand the mess the hit team made of the Bofors case, you need to recall the background of the scandal.

It all began in 1987 when Swedish Radio alleged that Bofors had channelled bribes to Indian politicians to swing a crucial howitzer deal. By then, Rajiv's honeymoon was ending. He had fired Arun Nehru. V.P. Singh was at the centre of the Fairfax controversy and had been shifted from finance to defence, a move he clearly resented. At the same time Singh was playing his own games; leaking stories that the shift in portfolios had come about at the behest of Amitabh Bachchan, then an MP and Rajiv's best friend. Bachchan's motivation: V.P. Singh was investigating his accounts abroad.

At around the same time, the *Indian Express* had finally given up on Rajiv Gandhi because of what it regarded as his unwillingness to prosecute Dhirubhai Ambani. As finance minister, the Raja had backed the *Express:* now the two sulked together and made common cause.

All these were straws in the wind. They needed something to bind them together.

That something was Bofors.

A mature Prime Minister would have responded to the Swedish Radio broadcast by denying that bribes were paid and challenging anyone who believed otherwise to provide proof. Instead, Rajiv's government reacted hysterically. The Prime Minister denied that any agents had been used in the deal and asserted that no commissions had been paid. Moreover, his regime suggested, the broadcast was part of a nasty Western plot to destabilise India.

It was an absurd reaction. By changing the issue from *bribes* to *commissions,* Rajiv suddenly made himself more vulnerable. Now, all his detractors had to do was prove that Bofors paid agents—and he would be shown up as a liar. It was not even necessary to demonstrate that these agents had shared the loot with ministers or officials to swing the deal. Moreover, the over-reaction and the sudden concoction of the destabilisation theory suggested panic.

Rajiv's detractors now smelled blood. As far as they were concerned, the only explanation for the curious response was guilt. Rajiv had taken the bribes; perhaps Ajitabh had collected the money for him along with Sonia's Italian relatives; and when V.P. Singh had tried to probe into the Bachchan family's affairs, a panic-stricken Prime Minister had shifted him. As for Ambani, it was easy to fit him into this scenario. He was a friend of the Bachchans and so, was being protected by the regime.

Suddenly, it all added up. And Bofors was the glue that bound seemingly unrelated events together.

All of this may have had a certain superficial plausibility, but evidence was hard to come by. No matter. The *Indian Express* and its friends—especially Ram Jethmalani—found ways of linking Rajiv to corruption.

The Bachchans and some Italians

owned a drug company called Macny Adol Brothers in Switzerland, said Jethmalani. Swedish Radio had reported that some of the payments went into an account code-named Lotus. Well, Jethmalani found a company in Switzerland called Lotus. Moreover, the Bachchans own an investment company in Bombay called Lotus. Therefore, they owned the Swiss company which, in turn, owned the code-named account.

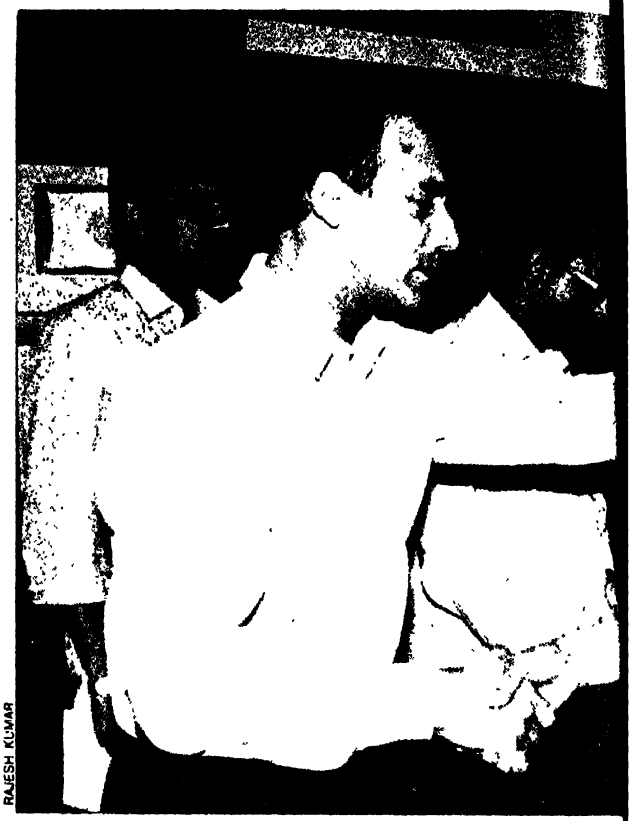
The *Express* got in on the act. It printed a list of companies which it claimed had received the Bofors money. One of them was called Gerard Finance and belonged to the Shivdasanis, a wealthy Lagos and Geneve-based family of non-resident Indians. One of the Shivdasanis' executives was married to a woman whose sister was married to Ajitabh. That was the Rajiv/Bachchan connection.

And so on.

All the allegations were unsubstantiated. And all were wrong. Jethmalani stopped talking about Macny Adol after a few weeks. (There is no evidence that any such company exists.) The Lotus payments had nothing to do with the Lotus company that Jethmalani found in Switzerland. The *Express*' list of companies was false. It now accepts that Gerard Finance received no money and ate humble pie after the Shivdasanis sued.

None of this stopped the *Express*. The paper had some luck when it found a document suggesting that Ajitabh Bachchan owned a flat in Switzerland. The Bachchans claimed that Ajitabh did not own the flat, but the *Express* dismissed this denial. Assuming that the Bachchans were lying, there was a simple enough explanation: Amitabh had been a top star for over a decade and like all other actors, he probably had black money stashed away somewhere. Perhaps this black money had paid for the flat.

Such a hypothesis was damaging enough to Bachchan—and by extension to Rajiv—but Jethmalani decided to go for broke. No, he said, the money for the flat did not come from Amitabh's film earnings. It came from the Bofors kickbacks. The proof? Well, said Jethmalani, he bought the flat a little after the Bofors deal was signed and this conclusively established that Ajitabh had received the bribes.



RAJESH KUMAR

SHOURIE AND RAM

Apparently, V.P. Singh their forces. But, in effec the investigators

It was all pretty hysterical—if not nonsensical—stuff and had Rajiv not been so thin-skinned, he would not have let the irresponsibility of the *Express* lobby worry him. Even if he had taken the money, judging by Jethmalani's antics, he was never going to be found out.

Unfortunately for Rajiv Gandhi, he had not counted on Chitra Subramaniam and *The Hindu*. Subramaniam, a stringer for the venerable Madras paper, filed general interest stories from Geneve till she got interested in Bofors. But approaching the case with an open mind—unlike the *Express* lobby—she won the confidence of Swedish officials.

The Swedes, according to Subramaniam, "were morally outraged" by the activities of Bofors and by the attitude of the Indian government. Their response was to leak a veritable treasure trove of documents to her. These established:

- Commissions were paid, regardless of whatever Rajiv and Bofors claimed.
- These commissions went into five Swiss accounts identified only by code-names.
- Nobody at Bofors would say who the ultimate beneficiaries were or what they had done to deserve payments running into crores.
- Two of the agents were identified:



GEN. K. SUNDARJI

He still hasn't been able to explain why he suddenly changed his recommendation from Sofma to Bofors



S.K. BHATNAGAR

He ended up being accused, after his retirement, of having behaved improperly and perhaps having even profited from the deal



e *The Hindu* and the *Express* combine s the *Express* approach that guided

Delhi's Win Chadha and the London-based Hinduja brothers.

• After Rajiv had told the press that no commissions had been paid, the Swedes had hastily forged contracts cancelling agency arrangements and terming them "winding-up charges".

• The diary of former Bofors chief executive Martin Ardbo suggested that a cover-up was masterminded by the Hindujas. He was told to protect 'G' (presumably, a reference to Rajiv) and wrote in his diary that Bob Wilson, frontman for one of the agents, had met with a "Gandhi trustee lawyer".

While the significance of the Ardbo diaries would be hotly contested by Gandhi's defenders, no objective person could deny that Subramaniam's documents established that Bofors and the agents had launched a cover-up. Rajiv Gandhi now had the option of coming to the same conclusions as everyone else, getting tough with Bofors and cracking down on those identified as agents.

Incredibly, he did nothing. Instead, his spokesman attempted to dismiss *The Hindu* documents as forgeries.

Faced with this response, many concluded that he had something to hide. Even his most charitable supporters could only conclude that if dishonesty was ruled out, then ineptitude was the only explanation left.

At SUNDAY, we took the line that while there was no solid evidence linking Rajiv to the payments, it was clear that he was covering up. That alone, we argued, was damaging enough. Richard Nixon resigned not because he bugged the Democratic National Committee's offices himself, but because he tried to shield the guilty.

Soon after the V.P. Singh government took office, having promised to get to the bottom of Bofors, it found that it had two options. It could follow *The Hindu* approach and slowly, painstakingly, go for the agents. Once it had got them, it would have proved that Rajiv's regime—which had the same opportunity—did nothing and then, perhaps some of the agents would have talked about the ultimate beneficiaries of the commissions.

Or, it could take the *Express* line, decide that Rajiv had taken the money and work backwards to prove this.

Officially, V.P. Singh chose neither approach, but for all practical purposes, he handed the investigation over to the *Express* lobby. The *éminence grise* of the enquiry was S. Gurumurthy, the paper's celebrated accountant-cum-investigative journalist. He was assisted by Arun Jaitley, a BJP member, who V.P. Singh had appointed additional solicitor-general. Jaitley had been one of the *Express*' lawyers during its battles with the Rajiv regime and was later credited by its then editor Arun Shourie (who calls him "my brother") with saving the paper. From the CBI, the team chose K. Madhavan, a deputy inspector general (DIG) who had once interrogated Gurumurthy, but had since won his approval. And the Raja's representative was Bhure Lal, his trusted joint secretary.

These men divided the work among themselves. Gurumurthy helped write the FIR (which did not name Rajiv, though Jethmalani thought it should have), Jaitley and Madhavan handled the meetings with foreign police forces and Bhure Lal kept a watch on the proceedings.

Then, the Raja personally intervened to co-opt *The Hindu* into the investigation. N. Ram, who had been sidelined in the paper by editor G Kasturi, agreed at once—he also accepted a Padma Bhushan from Singh for his role in editing Subramaniam's stories. Subramaniam was less willing, but after the Prime Minister asked her to assist the enquiries, went along with Ram, who, in turn, openly declared that he was cooperating with the CBI.

Apparently, V.P. Singh had made *The Hindu* and the *Express* combine their forces. But, in effect, it was the *Express* approach that would guide the investigators.

Soon after the FIR was filed, the hit team began telling journalists off



THE AGENTS **Win Chadha and the Hindujas who sought to profit from the deal have spent two years fighting to retain their good name**

the record that it would be easy to get the Swiss to lift the veil of bank secrecy and once this was done, it would be revealed that Rajiv was the ultimate beneficiary of the accounts.

In fact, it is not easy to penetrate Switzerland's secrecy laws and nor was there any evidence that Rajiv's name was on any of the accounts. This did not deter the investigators who made much of the fact that the Swiss had agreed to freeze the five accounts, neglecting to mention that this was a routine procedure and did not necessarily mean that the names of the account-holders would also be revealed.

But what the team trumpeted as its biggest breakthrough came on its first visit to Switzerland. Jaitley, Madhavan, Bhure Lal and Subramaniam met Dr Pierre Schmid, the Swiss official in charge of processing requests from foreign countries. He agreed to freeze the five accounts—that much is certain. What happened next is a matter of some controversy.

According to the version offered to the press by the team after it returned to India, Schmid turned to the investigators and said, "But there are six accounts."

The team asked him to freeze the sixth account. "I can't do that," said Schmid. "It isn't in the names you gave me."

At this, the team hastily wrote out another list of names. Schmid looked at it, crossing out names till he came to Ajitabh Bachchan's.

"All right," he said significantly, "I can freeze the sixth account."

The investigators were delighted. They told everybody that they had not only found a sixth bank account, but that they had a direct link to Rajiv—the account was in Ajitabh's name.

This version appeared in the Indian press until the CBI contradicted it. Now, it denied that the team had 'stumbled' on the account or that Schmid had volunteered it. According to the new story, the team itself had found the sixth account as a result of its enquiries. That it was Ajitabh Bachchan's, however, was never denied and off the record, it was confirmed. Impressed journalists praised the acumen of Jaitley and/or Madhavan for having found the account.

The sixth account then became the centre-piece of the Bofors enquiry. *The Statesman* was told that it was a 'named' account. SUNDAY was briefed that it probably contained kickbacks from the HDW submarine deal as well. *India Today* reprinted the investigators' assertion that it was Ajitabh's account. The *Indian Express* went a step further and even named the bank, Pictet and Company (which it called "a little-known financial services company"), where the account was held. *The Illustrated Weekly* speculated that the reason why Ajitabh chose it was because Yves Pirenne, his lawyer, was married to Caroline Pictet, the daughter of the bank's founder. And a supremely confident Gurumurthy told an interviewer from *The Illustrated Weekly* that the sixth account was the key account, that the money for Ajitabh's flat and for his other clandestine purchases was transferred from there.

We know now that every single one of these assertions was false. And to be fair to Subramaniam, she refused to carry any of them, arguing that they were unsubstantiated. But that didn't make much difference, because the rest of the press—dependent on briefings from the hit team—was carrying them anyway. In effect, the entire media was accepting the word of men whose standards of verification were the *Indian Express*': the briefings were in direct descent from the grand tradition of Macny Adol and Lotus.

So were the investigators lying? Particularly as Schmid now says that the conversation on which the whole hypothesis was based never took place?

The cynical view is that the sixth account story was a fabrication created to ensure that V.P. Singh swept the Assembly elections. At that time, there was much speculation that the Congress would break because its members were terrified that Rajiv would be nabbed in the Bofors affair. The sixth account story, many people now believe, was invented to help split the Congress and to project Rajiv Gandhi as a crook who was on the verge of getting his just desserts.

At SUNDAY, we believe that the investigators probably thought that they were telling the truth: it was just that when it came to identifying the truth, they used the standards of verification that had resulted in embarrassment after embarrassment for the *Indian Express* in its Macny Adol/Lotus/Gerard Finance phase.

Whatever Schmid may say now, it is clear that some conversation did take



JAVED A. JAFFERI

THE BACHCHANS **The investigators were shown up as inept liars w action case against *Dagens Nyheter***



ltabh and Ajitabh won the libel

place between him and Madhavan and Jaitley, because shortly afterwards, Madhavan wrote him a letter referring to their discussions about the sixth account.

We know now (thanks to Chitra Subramaniam's investigations) what the sixth account really was. Apparently, one of the five accounts (Mont Blanc) was pledged against a loan taken by a company called Jubilee Finance. The bank took the line that it could not freeze Mont Blanc because it was owed the money against loans taken by Jubilee.

That was the backdrop to the conversation between Schmid and the hit team. Because of the stringency of Switzerland's secrecy laws, Schmid could not reveal the details of Jubilee and Mont Blanc. What he probably did say was that there was a problem which could only be resolved if Jubilee was also frozen. Except that neither Jubilee nor its owner, S.P. Hinduja, featured in the Indian FIR, which made it difficult for him to freeze the account. Could the Indians submit a more complete request?

Madhavan then sent in a list of 19 names which included S.P. Hinduja's and the account was duly frozen.

It was this simple—almost routine—exchange that gave rise to the mythology of the sixth account. Jaitley genuinely believes that Rajiv got the Bofors money and that Ajitabh was the conduit. When he heard that there was a sixth account, he jumped to the conclusion that it was Ajitabh's. When Schmid confirmed that it belonged to somebody on Madhavan's list, he treated it as confirmation that this was Ajitabh (whose name was also on the list) and regarded it as his big breakthrough.

The rest of the story consisted of guess-work, most of which was wrong. If the Bofors money had been transferred into a sixth account, which belonged to Rajiv's money manager, then obviously other kickbacks (such as HDW) had ended up in the same place. The Pictet connection was based on another guess. Pirenne is Ajitabh's lawyer and his wife is part of the Pictet family. Hence, the investigators concluded that the sixth account must be at Pictet and Company. They were wrong on all counts: Pictet is not "little-known", it is one of Switzerland's largest private banks; Ajitabh has no account there; the Jubilee account—the real sixth account—is at Credit Suisse.

Having made all these wrong guesses on the basis of a false premise, the hit team now included them in the Letter Rogatory(LR). Going far beyond the framework established by *The Hindu* documents, it added Ajitabh, his Swiss companies, Yves Pirenne and Pictet and Company in the Letter Rogatory.

It was a classic instance of the Macny Adol mentality overcoming the rules of logic and evidence.



ARUN JAITLEY **He genuinely believes that Rajiv got the Bofors money and that Ajitabh was the conduit**

Obviously, Chitra Subramaniam had begun to have her reservations about the investigators and their standards of verification. And they, in turn, regarded her as patronising and smug. Further, there were differences in style. The investigators were ill at ease in Geneve, saved on their daily foreign exchange allowances by subsisting on cartons of yoghurt and mispronounced Swiss names. Subramaniam was tall, svelte and sophisticated. American-educated, she was married to an Italian, spoke four languages, drank only good wine and had travelled widely. Obviously, there was a cultural gulf. Moreover, as a journalist, she believed in talking to everyone. The investigators had a them-and-us mentality. When Ajitabh and Amitabh Bachchan dropped into her Geneve apartment, to proclaim their innocence, she offered them a drink and heard them out. At first, the hit team was delighted. "This proves they are guilty," they declared. But when it became clear that Subramaniam did not share this view and remained in touch with the Bachchans, the investigators were appalled. First, they concluded that she was a 'mole' and then, they wondered aloud if she was having an affair with Ajitabh. ("Why Ajitabh? Why not Amitabh too?" she retorted flippantly—but clearly, she was deeply hurt.)

The Subramaniam-hit team clash came into the open when the Letter Rogatory leaked. Officially, the sleuths were still only investigating the people mentioned in the FIR. In reality, however, they had thrown 47 names into the LR. This list included, in addition to

the Bachchans, two of Sonia Gandhi's brothers-in-law. As there was no *prima facie* evidence against them, their inclusion in the LR was kept a closely-guarded secret.

Unfortunately for the hit team, the names leaked to *The Telegraph*, and to SUNDAY (both are Ananda Bazar publications). At first, Jaitley told SUNDAY's Rajiv Shukla that the names of Sonia's relatives had been withdrawn. When *The Telegraph* quoted him (though not by name) as saying so, the CBI issued a denial. No names had been withdrawn, it said. But had 47 names been submitted in the first place? The CBI would not comment. *The Telegraph* retaliated by printing all the names. This time, there was no denial.

The investigators, caught on the wrong foot, turned on Subramaniam and accused her of leaking the LR. She was bemused: she didn't know that 47 names had been submitted either as the LR had been kept from her.

By then, it was clear to anybody who cared to look that the investigators were barking up the wrong tree. It was possible that Rajiv had been the ultimate beneficiary, but the way to prove it was by going step-by-step; by starting with the agents and building on *The Hindu's* impressively-documented case. Instead, the hit team had settled on the wrong account in the wrong bank and claimed a breakthrough!

It was as obvious that the investigators were out of their depth in Switzerland and that while the LR would have gladdened a metropolitan magistrate, it was regarded as a tedious, badly-written, ill-conceived document by the Swiss.

Unfortunately, few people in the Indian press reported these conclusions. Subramaniam, who could have, found her independence compromised by her involvement with the investigators. And others still depended on briefings from the hit team.

Then the Swiss rejected the Letter Rogatory.

This marked the first time in Swiss history that a small cantonal court had thrown out a document submitted by the government of a major country. It was a deep embarrassment, particularly as the Swiss raised the questions the hit team's critics had been asking: why was a piece of paper with 19 names stuck onto the LR? Where was the evidence of corruption by public officials? How could anybody be expected to read a document that was partly illegible, so badly drafted and overlong?



CHITRA SUBRAMANIAM **She always had her reservations about the investigators. And the rejection of the LR brought the break into the open**

The rejection brought the break between Subramaniam and the hit team into the open. In a series of articles, she pointed out the flaws in the LR, lambasted the investigators and suggested that with enemies like these, the Bofors agents did not need friends.

Suddenly, the rest of the media awoke to the realisation that something was going very wrong with the investigation.

That embarrassment was quickly followed by another: the Bachchan libel case.

While the most embellished version of the sixth account story (complete with references to Pictet and Company) had appeared in the *Indian Express*, the first time the story made it to the foreign media was when it turned up in *Expressen*, a Swedish paper which has often pooled information with the *Express*.

As *Expressen* has a reputation for sensationalism, the story would not have had much impact but for a coincidence.

Shortly after Jaitley and Madhavan had their famous meeting with Schmid, they told Chitra Subramaniam the first version of the sixth account story (in which Schmid volunteered the account and confirmed that it was Ajitabh's).

Subramaniam has, for many years, shared information with Bo Andersen of *Dagens Nyheter (DN)*, Sweden's most respected paper. She told Andersen that she wasn't using the story because it was unsubstantiated and urged him to do the same.

A while later, she received a call from Stockholm. *Expressen* had used the story, Andersen told her. He now felt that he had to go ahead. Was she sure that the story had come from the hit team? Yes, said Subramaniam, the investigators had offered this account of events to several journalists.

Andersen printed the story and, because of *Dagens'* credibility, it was picked up by the news agencies and reproduced widely. The agency reports, however, did not mention that Andersen had sourced his story to those "close to the investigating team" and many Indian papers suggested that this was a new breakthrough that had emerged out of Swedish investigations into the affair.

The Bachchans protested their innocence and then sent legal notices to SUNDAY, *India Today*, *Janmabhoomi* and the *Indian Express*. But because nearly all Indian publications had treated the *DN* story as independent

verification of the hit team's version, it was *DN* they sued for libel in London and Stockholm.

DN huddled together with members of the *Express* lobby and there was talk of flying Ram Jethmalani out to assist with the defence. Arun Jaitley was approached by *DN's* lawyers to appear in London, but pointed out that as a law officer of the Government of India, he could not do so even if he wanted to.

By the time the case came to trial in London, *DN* had realised that the sixth account story was false. Chitra Subramaniam had, in any case, found Jubilee Finance, the real sixth account, by then and there seemed no point in defending the libel action. At the start of the trial, *DN's* barrister got up and read out a prepared statement to the effect that because of information discovered in Geneve (the Jubilee account, presumably), *DN* was now convinced that it had been misled by the investigators and wished to pay damages to Bachchan.

Coming as it did, on the heels of the rejection of the LR, this was the second major setback for the hit team. Not only did *DN* admit that there was no truth in the sixth account story, but it also confessed that it had been led astray by members of the investigating team.



RAJESH KUMAR

N. RAM **He earned himself a Padma Bhushan and a short-lived reputation as a crusader for truth, but ended up being marginalised in *The Hindu***

The *DN* case, more or less, finished off the hit team's reputation with the public. Concerned by rumours that Bachchan would now sue Arun Jaitley for conspiracy (though, to date, Bachchan has never stated that Jaitley planted the story), the investigators scurried to shift the blame.

The public stance was that the libel case was a "private matter of no concern to the government," but behind the scenes, the hit team ran around denying that it had planted the story. Well, in that case, who had?

Why, Chitra Subramaniam, of course! Hadn't she told Andersen about the sixth account? An agitated Subramaniam pointed out that the sixth account story was the official position of the Government of India: it even appeared in the LR! Had she planted it there as well? And anyway, who planted it in the Indian press? Who 'discovered' Pictet? Who gave the story to *Expressen?* And so on.

The hit team was undeterred. Much was made of the fact that when she had finally traced Jubilee, she had sent Ajitabh a fax telling him so. Ah, said the investigators, we told you she was a Bachchan mole.

To Subramaniam, this made no sense. If she was on the side of the Bachchans, then why would she plant a story that libelled them and caused them so much damage?

As this unseemly squabble continued, one thing was clear: nobody was bothering to defend the sixth account story. Only a few months ago, it had been the great breakthrough: the smoking gun.

Now the same story was being dismissed as a figment of the imagination of Chitra Subramaniam—who was the one journalist who had never carried it!

It was downhill from then on. For about a year and a half, Subramaniam had in her possession documents suggesting that Arun Nehru had played a role in negotiating the Bofors deal. The documents did not suggest he had made any money, just that he had talked to Swedish diplomats about the purchase.

Nehru had a perfectly adequate explanation. He was then an important figure in Rajiv's government and had been entrusted with the job of blacklisting the Hindujas. He had heard that Bofors had hired the Hindujas to swing the deal and so, had called the Swedes to ensure that the agents were fired. (As it turned out, they were not.)

Subramaniam had sat on the story for months, first, because her editor at *The Hindu*, N. Ram, chose not to carry it and then, because she was too busy with the investigations. Now, with her involvement in the enquiry at an end, she filed the story for the *Indian Express* (to which she had shifted once Ram had been forced out of *The Hindu).*

The *Express* delayed the story for some weeks, offering a variety of explanations. Then, Subramaniam got a call from a friend. The story and the documents were floating around De-



NITIN RAI

RAM JETHMALANI **He was determined to establish the Rajiv/Bachchan connection—and never mind that evidence was hard to come by**

lhi, she was told, and gossip had it that Nehru had persuaded the *Express* to kill the piece.

Surprised, she asked around and was astounded to discover that various people appeared to have read her copy. The last straw was when it came into the possession of *The Independent*, a Bombay newspaper which printed the documents and ran a story on the *Express'* reluctance to carry the piece. Subramaniam was quoted as being outraged by the delay and, as a result of the controversy, terminated her agreement with the *Express*.

This episode provoked another controversy and led to the inevitable allegations that the *Express* lobby was playing politics with the investigation: fabricating some stories and suppressing others. By then, Subramaniam's image had also been dented by the rows: many people thought it was too late to complain about politics and journalism being mixed up when she herself had offered to assist the official investigation.

However, one thing was clear: the Raja's attempts to combine the approaches of *The Hindu* and the *Express* had failed. Subramaniam, who represented *The Hindu's* way of doing things, had been driven out, while the irresponsibility and overenthusiasm of the sleuths had destroyed the investigation's credibility.



S. GURUMURTHY

The Letter Rogatory he helped to draw up was regarded as a tedious, badly-written and ill-conceived document by the Swiss

Or perhaps not: In an interview granted after he was fired from the *Express*, Arun Shourie denied that he had taken the documents to Arun Nehru. It was N. Ram, he said, who had done that.

So perhaps, there hadn't been that much difference between the two to begin with.

Shortly after he lost his vote of confidence, V.P. Singh told the press that he had written to President R. Venkataraman asking him to take custody of all Bofors-related papers. To journalists who pointed out that for all the big talk, we know no more about Bofors today than we did a year ago, the Raja fell back on that old stand-by: at least we got the accounts frozen, he said.

Now with Madhavan's career prospects dim, Bhure Lal on the verge of being transferred, Shourie fired, Jaitley out of the government and N. Ram an increasingly marginal figure at *The Hindu*, it seems clear that the curse of Bofors has struck again. And not all of V.P. Singh's attempts to revive interest in the case by invoking the President or bragging about freezing accounts will work.

The losers in all this are the people of India. As the Raja's hit squad stumbled from fabrication to fiasco what we lost sight of was this: why did Rajiv find it necessary to scupper the investigation during his time? Was he just inept? Or was he shielding somebody?

In the long run, a payment of Rs 64 crores is not of lasting significance. But that the system was subverted to obstruct justice is. Sadly, it now looks as though we will never get the answers. Because those who were entrusted with uncovering the truth subverted the system for their own irresponsible ends and let this opportunity slip away.

Perhaps, we will all pay for the curse of Bofors. ●

Vir Sanghvi/London, Geneva and New Delhi

The 11-hour ordeal

Two Burmese youths hijack a Thai Airways flight to Calcutta

Initially, there was no sign of any trouble. A Thai Airways aircraft on a routine flight (TG 305) between Bangkok and Rangoon on 10 November sought permission from the air traffic control (ATC) at Calcutta's Dum Dum airport to land. The reason: refuelling. The ATC promptly cleared one of the runways and at exactly 3.54 pm the giant Airbus made a perfect landing. It turned towards the taxiway and came to a dead stop in one of the bays.

It was then that the ground support staff realised that something was wrong. The aircraft's communication with the tower failed miraculously. What's more, the pilot was seen making a signal to the ground staff, which indicated that the plane had been hijacked.

The security at Dum Dum airport was clearly caught unawares. For a while there was confusion and bewilderment, compounded by the fact that the hijackers had cut off the aircraft's communication with the ground control. There was no way for the cops to ascertain the identity or the demands of the hijackers. At around 5.30 pm, a full 90 minutes after the plane landed, communication was suddenly restored and the hijackers asked for assistance to repair the aircraft's air-conditioning unit. By then senior officials of the West Bengal government had reached the airport and the state home secretary, Manish Gupta, established contact with the hijackers. Even then, it was not known who the hijackers were and what they wanted. In fact, not many at the busy airport were even aware of the hijacking. And, all the flights landed and took off on schedule.

Then came the break. Between 6.25 and 7.15 pm, the hijackers released 11 out of the 204 passengers on board.

And the first among them, Ms Khin Mey Win, carried a note from the hijackers which revealed their identity and indicated their demands. Home secretary Manish Gupta called a press conference immediately after and said that the hijackers were two Burmese youths, Ye Marn (23) and Htin Kyaw (22), who belonged to an outfit called the Justice and Liberty Warriors which was carrying on a struggle against the ruling Burmese military government. Their demands were.

- The release of all political prisoners in Burma.
- The withdrawal of martial law in Burma.
- The cancellation of all military tribunals and all sentences passed by these courts.
- The reopening of the universities that were closed after the 1988 pro-democracy movement.
- And, the handing over of power to the democratically elected representatives.

The hijackers even sent a letter of apology regretting the "inconvenience" caused to the passengers and stated that they did not mean to harm anyone.

From then on, the two Burmese youths released passengers in batches. By 11 pm, as many as 113 hostages were freed. And finally at around midnight, Marn and Kyaw emerged from the aircraft and surrendered to the authorities.

Soon after, the two baby-faced youths faced the press, one of their pre-conditions for the surrender. "All we wanted is the world to listen carefully to Burma's cry for democracy," said a poised Marn, adding, "the Burmese

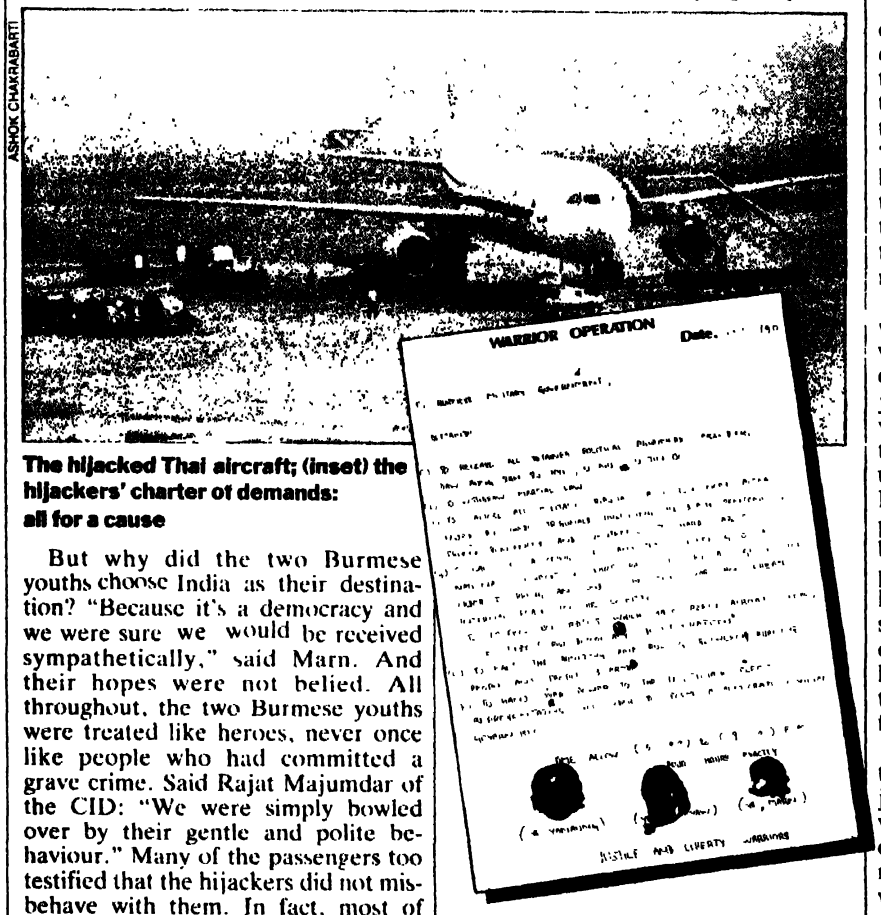
Marn and Kyaw being produced in court: hijackers-turned-heroes



RAJIB BASU

mese people are tired of the oppressive military regime and the terrible human rights violations in that country."

But how did two youths manage to hoodwink so many people and hijack the aircraft. Very simple. "We fled the jungles of Burma, crossed the border with the help of friends. In Bangkok, we managed to get fake passports, bought two tickets on the Thai Airways flight to Rangoon and hijacked it midway with the help of a 'time-bomb', fashioned out of soap and wire." According to them, one of their friends Ye Yanaung, whose thumb impression is also given in the written demands, *(see document)* was also supposed to take part in the mission, but was left behind because they didn't have enough money to buy an additional ticket.



ASHOK CHAKRABARTI

The hijacked Thai aircraft; (inset) the hijackers' charter of demands: all for a cause

But why did the two Burmese youths choose India as their destination? "Because it's a democracy and we were sure we would be received sympathetically," said Marn. And their hopes were not belied. All throughout, the two Burmese youths were treated like heroes, never once like people who had committed a grave crime. Said Rajat Majumdar of the CID: "We were simply bowled over by their gentle and polite behaviour." Many of the passengers too testified that the hijackers did not misbehave with them. In fact, most of them looked relaxed and were far from being tense.

The midnight conference over, the two youths were transferred to the airport's rest room in police custody. By then the stranded passengers of the Thai flight too were shifted to the nearby Hotel Ashok. The next day, they were flown to their destination by a special flight.

But what about the fate of the hijackers? After all, they had committed a serious international offence. The police lodged a complaint under Sections 3 and 4 of the Anti-Hijacking Act and on Monday, 12 November, the two were produced at the Barrackpore court (the airport falls within its jurisdiction). Here, the police had a trying time keeping off the people, who had turned out in hundreds to greet the two youths. Many garlanded them amidst slogans of *"Ye Htin zindabad. Hum tumhare saath hain."* On his way to the courtroom Marn told SUNDAY that he "was overwhelmed by the response of the people." Several lawyers too pleaded for their unconditional bail, but the judge rejected them and remanded both the youths to police custody till 25 November. "But we are obviously not treating them as terrorists...they are political prisoners and they have been given better classification," informed H.A. Safwi, the deputy commissioner (detective department) of the Calcutta Police.

Will the two Burmese youths be deported or will they be granted political asylum in the country? Though the latter question will come up only if the two hijackers make such an appeal before the Indian government, one thing is clear: there is no question of handing over Marn and Kyaw to the Burmese authorities. "There is no extradition treaty between Burma and India," said a senior external affairs ministry official. "In all probability, they will be given political asylum in India," confided a police official in Calcutta. Marn and Kyaw also said that they will be appealing to the home ministry for asylum.

What was perhaps most perplexing during the hijack drama was the indifferent attitude of both the Thai and the Burmese authorities. A senior external affairs ministry official said that the Burmese government acted "strangely": all it said was that the hijackers were criminals and should be treated accordingly. And the Thai authorities were more keen to contact their Burmese counterparts than to negotiate with the hijackers.

There were other questions which remained unanswered. Firstly, why didn't the pilot inform the ground control that the aircraft had been hijacked? Even if the hijackers prevented the pilot from communicating the message verbally, he could have used the code for transmitting it. Moreover, how is it possible for two persons who had never been on flight before to keepoffa crew of 16 and 204 passengers? Could it be that the pilot helped out the hijackers in their mission? When reporters asked him this embarrassing question, the pilot simply evaded the issue. And, most important, why didn't the Thai authorities file an FIR, as is the normal practice?

These questions are the concern of the respective governments. The hijackers, however, were clearly motivated by a desire to draw the attention of the world to the plight of the Burmese people. Only time will tell whether they succeeded in their mission. For the moment, the two daredevil hijackers have turned heroes overnight. At least for the Calcuttans. ●

Shafquat Ali and Avirook Sen/Calcutta



GAUTAM PATOLE

The Indipop boom

West and East meet in a new genre of pop music

Over two decades ago, George Harrison, then lead guitarist with the Beatles made the first breakthrough. He gathered Indian musicians at the Gramaphone Company of India's studios in Bombay and recorded a song with a distinctly Indian flavour. *The Inner Light* will not be remembered as one of the classic Beatles songs (it only made the B-side of a single and Paul, who overdubbed harmony vocals, was the only other Beatle involved) but it broke the mould.

Sadly, few followed Harrison's lead. The rock musicians who came to India studied classical music and gave contemporary pop a miss. And so, while the rhythms of Kingston, Soweto and Sao Paulo made the international charts, Indian pop and Western rock remained miles apart.

No longer.

Earlier this year, English pop star Boy George (O'Dowd) journeyed to Bombay to record with singer Asha Bhosle and her husband, film composer Rahul Dev Burman. George was here because he liked Indian pop and believed he could assimilate it with his own kind of music. But even before George's arrival—and the resultant media blitz—there were signs that the gulf between Indian and Western pop was being filled.

- Indian film music has moved closer to pop. Apart from the obvious plagiarism (*Oye oye*, the *Maine Pyar Kiya* soundtrack, etc.), the newer songs use Western rhythm and instruments. Says jazz maestro Louis Banks: "These days producers just want me to replicate the sounds from the Western pop charts."
- Whereas once, Western pop was the preserve of bands that played in restaurants and clubs in the big cities, Indian pop musicians now find it easy to get recording contracts—and to sell cassettes. Recent releases by 13 AD a hot rock group from south India and Bombay's Rock Machine have kept the cash registers ringing.
- The record companies now actively seek out new talent and try and promote Indian pop stars. Some recent examples: Mubina, Jasmine Barucha, etc.
- Most of today's pop stars take the line that it is the music that is important not the words. Thus, they sing in English and Hindi. Sharon Prabhakar, the queen bee of the pop scene peppers her live shows with Hindi numbers; Alisha Chinai, a Westernised rock singer, is now notorious for her Hindi *Log mujhe* Baby Doll *kahte hain* routine; and Goan singer Remo Fernandes, the author of such English



hits as *Pack That Smack* has also composed Hindi film songs (for the film *Jalwa*) and sung in his native Konkani.

• As if this were not enough, the record companies are now busy encouraging Indian singers to record Hindi versions of Western pop hits. Some instances: *Chariots of fire* has become *Tu mera janu*, and the beat of *Walk Like An Egyptian* turns up in *Your (sic) In Love*.



GAUTAM PATOLE

Today's Hindi film music is littered with copies of Western pop hits. Viju Shah combined the *Oye oye* refrain from a Miami Sound Machine song with a more Indian melody to create the super-hit from *Tridev*

Sometimes the process is reversed. *Hawa Hawa* has two English versions *Super Star* and *I am Dizzy*. *Aap jaisa koi* has been reincarnated as *My Feelings Inside*.

The phenomenon has now taken such firm root that perhaps it deserves a name of its own: Indipop

The most notable aspect of the phenomenon is the willingness of the record companies to sign up pop stars. In the Sixties and Seventies, such talented groups as The Savages, Human Bondage, Atomic Forest, Savage Encounter and the Jets failed to get satisfactory record contracts. When the Savages did make an album (the *Live* album), a sale of 3,500 was considered extraordinary.

Contrast that with today. Says Mark Selwyn, guitar player with Rock Machine, one of today's top bands, "We played together for five years before we could cut an album because record companies were not interested. But our record *Rock And Roll Renegade*, which was released in November 1988 sold 22,000 copies. I think the real figure is even higher: at least 15,000 pirate copies of the album have also been sold." For Rock Machine's next album *Second Coming*, the record company is considering an initial run of 40,000.

Nor is Rock Machine the exception. The current music sensation is 13

An Indipop who's who



GAUTAM PATOLE

Joe Alvarez

Like Nandu Bhende, a relic of the original rock scene. Though Alvarez is lesser-known than his peers, many credit him with having one of the strongest voices in the Indipop.

In 1980 he dropped out of the rock scene (after stints with Atomic Forest, Sky and Savage Encounter) to join his father's business ("I hated it," he says now).

He returned to music in 1981 with a new band, Spirit, a new self-financed album called *Alleigance India*. The album sold only 3000 copies which failure he attributes to "the crossfire of a big management dispute at CBS".

More recently he has composed the lyrics for *Mera Bharat Mahaan*, sung at New Delhi's pre-Olympic games and recorded a new album for Venus records.

"I used to trip on hash and acid but those days are long gone. Today I do not drink or smoke. For today's scene, you need energy man, energy!"



GAUTAM PATOLE

Mubina

Part of the new generation. Very young and currently being promoted by her record company as a fresh new face.

Only one album has been released so far with mean, gutsy lyrics that fit into the Madonna groove. Sample "The girls who are over 20/old as they may be/they got no chance/standing next to me/I'm a mean machine."

She writes her own lyrics with collaborator Suresh Thomas, cannot read music and plays everything by ear. It is an indication of her youth that she lists among her 'early influences' such late Seventies successes as Boney M.

"People wonder how come a Muslim girl is into rock. They prefer to believe that I run around with a wild crowd who take dope and have sex on their minds. I'd like to tell them that my parents love what I'm doing."



Nandu Bhende

The Alexis Korner of the Indian rock scene, Bhende sprang to fame in the early Seventies as Judas in Alyque Padamsee's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Since then, he has set the trend for Indian rock singers. As lead singer with Savage Encounter, he did successful covers of Doors songs (and less successful covers of Moody Blues classics like *Nights in white satin*).

The son of a noted Marathi stage artiste, Bhende tried briefly in the Seventies to make it in the commercial world before returning to pop. He now makes a reasonable living from

AD, a band from Cochin that had no national exposure till Magnasound, the Bombay-based record company released *Ground Zero* in August, 1990. In the first 30 days of its release, the album sold 14,000 copies and now seems set to become a best-seller.

Says Bashir Sheikh, a former drummer with the Savages who once handled Western music for Music India and now functions as general manager of Magnasound: "We believe that some of the groups here are on par with international bands and one of them is certainly Rock Machine."

Agrees Pervin Tata, promotion manager of CBS Records and Tapes: "Rock music is beginning to find a market in India. Look at Remo Fernandes. He has managed to become a star and his music sells today."

Not everyone can make money out of rock records, though the music companies have high hopes for such new discoveries as singers Jasmine Bharucha and Mubina. Nevertheless, for many musicians, the thrill of being recorded is enough. Says CBS's Tata: "We keep getting demo tapes from all over India and many of these people are really talented. If their dedication matches their talents then they can be as successful as Remo or the others."

But those who want to make a living out of rock can do so even if record royalties aren't enough. Joe Alvarez,



GAUTAM PATOLE

Says Louis Banks: "I'd rather be playing jazz. But I am caught up in the Hindi music scene. The film producers do not want original music. That's how the game goes"

one of the great voices of Indian rock has had bad luck with his records but says that he makes upto Rs 4 lakh a year on the basis of live shows.

Moreover, there are enough ancillary industries—jingles, soundtracks, etc.—to keep a musician going if he decides to make pop his life.

The real money, of course, is in Hindi pop. Nobody disputes that. "Hindi pop is the money-spinner," says Tata of CBS flatly. Adds Nandu

jingles, Hindi pop, English rock and live shows.

"The future of pop music in India is Hindi pop. That's what sells. My next recording after* Get Organised, *which is an English album, will be a Hindi pop album."



Remo Fernandes

The mass market media-packaged pop phenomenon of the Eighties, Remo's latter-day success has come as a surprise to those who remember him as a shy folkie on the fringes of the Bombay pop/rock scene.

Aggressively promoted by R.V. Pandit of CBS records, Remo has composed film soundtracks, modelled for a fabric company, performed at the Festival of India in Russia, made hit records, played all the instruments on his last album, and transformed himself into a highly effective entertainer on stage.

Two years ago, on New Year's Day he played his own composition *Hello Rajiv Gandhi* to a capacity crowd at the Haystack resturant in Goa. Among the audience was Satish Sharma who summoned him after his performance, complimented him on the song and asked: "But how did you know that Rajiv's best friend was in the audience?

"I didn't" replied Remo. "Who are you?"

"Pack that smack and shove it up the dealer man's back. Pack that smack and come alive again."

From Pack That Smack—*his biggest hit.*



GAUTAM PATOLE

Sharon Prabhakar

Queen of the pop scene. A Delhi girl, she started out with folk, attempted unsuccessfully to make it abroad, returned to India and became its top night-club entertainer.

Her big break came when husband Alyque Padamsee cast her as Eva Peron in his production of *Evita*. Prabhakar showed that she could act as well as sing and though nothing came of a projected film career, she went on to make many successful records fusing Indian rhythms and lyrics with the techniques of Western pop.

Has avoided publicity in recent years, preferring to concentrate on building up a devoted following throughout the country through constant gigging. Her recent show, the Sharon Spectacular, rode the back of her new album *Blow Your Mind* and has sold out in seven Indian cities. Next stop: Australia.

"I am glad that the cutting of English songs has opened up here. But I will not restrict myself to cutting only English records. There will always be Hindi pop and theatre for me."







Bhende, one of Bombay's earliest rock singers: "I make English albums because I enjoy it. But commercially, all my success comes from Hindi pop." Agrees Sharon Prabhakar, queen of the Indipop scene: "You reach a wider audience if you sing in Hindi."

Within the record industry, there is some bemusement over the vernacular Indipop boom. In the early Eighties, music companies believed that the middle class had stopped listening to Hindi film songs because the sound had become too raucous and downmarket. This belief led to the short-lived *ghazal* boom and to the conclusion that the future of the music business lay in modern reworkings of such genres as the *ghazal* and the *bhajan*.

But while the record companies were pumping money into finding the Jagjit and Chitra of the 1990s or the next Anup Jalota, they missed an indication of things to come.

In the early Eighties, Biddu, the London-based Coorgi musician (who had been a member of the Bombay band The Trojans) had topped the charts with *Aap jaisa koi*, a Hindi reworking of a disco tune he had composed for Tina Charles, sung by newcomer Nazia Hassan. Biddu followed this up with another Nazia success, *Disco Deewane*. Both records used Western style backing tracks with Hindi vocals, thus setting a new trend. When *Star*, the soundtrack to a Biddu-produced Hindi film starring Kumar Gaurav failed to replicate the success of *Disco Deewane*, the music companies believed that the earlier hits had been flashes in the pan and turned their back on Indipop.

They were mistaken. While the record industry turned to *ghazal*, such film composers as Bappi Lahiri and Viju Shah began to explore the possibilities of merging Hindi lyrics with Western pop. Because the existing playback singers and musicians were uneasy with the music, a new breed sprang up.

Among them was the talented Nepalese jazz pianist, Louis Banks. Banks shifted to Bombay and made a good living as a keyboardist for the jingle industry and became a constantly in-demand musician for film orchestras.

Not all of it has been particularly rewarding, he concedes. "I'd rather be playing jazz," he says, "but I am caught up in the Hindi music scene. I admit that we copy Western music but what happens is that when Hindi film producers go abroad (which they do every other week), they come back with tapes and say, 'We want this just like it is.' The Hindi film producers do not want original music. That's how the game goes."

The point is that the plagiarism pays. Today's Hindi film music scene is littered with copies of Western pop hits: the *Maine Pyar Kiya* soundtrack, for instance. But even there, a certain kind of talent is required. Viju Shah combined the *Oye oye* refrain from a Miami Sound Machine song (*Rhythm's Gonna Get You*) with a more Indian melody to create the super-hit from *Tridev*. More recently, both Bappi Lahiri and Lakshmikant-Pyarelal ripped off the same tune (*Tama*) by African singer Mory Kante but, while Lahiri did a straight lift (called *Tama tama loge*), Lakshmikant-Pyarelal's version (*Jumma chumma de de*) stole only the instrumental intro. And the six-note chorus became a mega-hit because it was blended with Indian rhythms.

Indipop stars—outside of the film industry—have seen the merits of hybridisation. Remo and Sharon Prabhakar set the trend with the *Jalwa* soundtrack (on which Remo sang the title track while Sharon performed something called *Hot, hot, hot* on which orgasmic moans were later

AM PATOLE







(Anticlockwise from right) Remo; Ashley and Beverly; Jasmine Barucha; Joe Alvarez with Kenneth De Souza; 13AD; Rock Machine: keeping the cash registers ringing

overdubbed) before moving on to perform non-*filmi* Hindi material.

Alisha Chinai, a Westernised product of Bombay theatre started recording Madonna-like vocals in Hindi and even Nandu Bhende, one of Bombay's original heavy rockers was soon making best-selling Hindi albums.

As the trend has caught on, record companies have become more ambitious. For instance, Ashley and Beverly, a couple of musicians from the pop group Nightbirds were given an unusual assignment by Tips, one of the smaller record companies.

What Tips had in mind was an English record based on Hindi film hits. Says Ashley: "They would take the original instrumental backing tracks and ask us to lay down English vocals over them." The results were not to everyone's liking. *Ek do teen*, for instance, came out as:

Sing, sing, sing
Sing me a song of love
La la la, hm, hm, hm,
Wishing, awaiting an answer from you
Now don't you tell me you have not a clue.

And *Pappa kahte hain* was rather literally rendered as *Dad's always saying*. Sample lyric:

One can never say
What's gonna come my way
Tomorrow's another day
What will be, will be.

Despite the sniggers such lyrics might evoke, the record (called *Love Me*) has been a runaway success. It has outsold Michael Jackson's *Thriller* in India and spawned several imitators.

Other record companies are trying to get singers to lay down Hindi vocals to English pop songs. And some are using a mixture of Hindi and English in the same lyric. For instance, in *Super Star* (on Venus cassettes), a reincarnation of *Hawa Hawa*, Brian Tellis sings:

I can do double role
Jo kuchh bhi mujhe bol
Comedy or fighting
I'm expert in acting

While all the lyrics appear to be written by semi-literate school children, what is significant is that the barriers between Western and Indian rhythms have collapsed. Regardless of the language of the lyrics, (Hindi or English) the backing tracks seem equally appropriate.

Is Indipop here to stay? The current view within the music business is that this is the wave of the future. Record company executives offer the following reasons:

- The cassette revolution of the last ten years has led to a massive expansion of the music market and there is a dearth of product. The output of the film industry alone is not enough.
- A generational change in the profile of music buyers. The new generation is more Westernised and therefore is more interested in Western rhythms.
- The growth of the middle class. Whereas earlier, the upper middle buyer was content to listen to English and American artistes, the Indian middle class is now large enough to have an identity of its own and support indigenous artistes.
- The growing Westernisation of the film industry. Just as the movies have got slicker and more Westernised in recent years (perhaps because of the availability of American videos), the soundtracks have also kept pace. Consequently, there is more scope for Western music.

All of this suggests that Indipop is going to be around for a long time. And perhaps, as the genre matures, it will take on a creativity of its own like reggae or ska in Jamaica. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay with Ananda Lal/Calcutta

POEMS IN COLOUR

It was Pritish Nandy's show at the Sophia Duchesene Art Gallery in Bombay on 5 November. The celebrated editor's poems, as "interpreted" by Samir Mondal in water colours, were on display. And of the 15 exhibits on show, 13 carried Nandy's face, portrayed in brilliant colours, beside his hand-written verse. Said Nandy: "It seemed like a great idea to present poetry like this. The effect is fantastic and it seems to have worked."

GAUTAM PATOLE



At the exhibition: Pritish Nandy with star guest Amitabh Bachchan

The guest list, certainly, was impressive enough. Megastar Amitabh Bachchan arrived with wife Jaya, to sip champagne and exchange jokes about the V.P. regime with Nandy. Later arrivals included Suresh Oberoi, Anupam Kher, Mario Miranda and other Bombay socialites.

But the surprise guest of the evening was, without a doubt, Haji Mastaan, who made a beeline for Bachchan. While photographers made the best of this photo-opportunity, Nandy retreated into the background. Bachchan, who was quite the cynosure of attention in the crowded gallery, departed before dinner. But Mastaan hung around, distributing his visiting cards to all the beautiful people.

According to Ashish Nagpal, the organiser of the exhibition, all but two of the creations were sold before the evening was over.

HIRAK SEN



Satyajit Ray: relating the script to his cast

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Nobody had thought that Satyajit Ray would make another film when he lay in hospital recovering from a heart ailment. The director took care of that one with *Shakha Prashakha*. And now, to put any lingering doubts at rest, he's announced yet another film, shooting for which will commence in the third week of November.

Titled *Agantuk (The Stranger)*, the film has Utpal Dutt in the lead role. Other members of the cast include Mamata Shankar, Deepankar De, Robi Ghosh and Dhritiman Chatterjee.

Ray, who has done the screenplay, will have his son Sandip operating the camera at the Indrapuri Studios in Calcutta, followed by a week on location in Birbhum.

SAY NO TO DRUGS

Say no to drugs.

Now, it's Ananda Shankar's turn to relay this message to the deluded youth of India. And Shankar, along with wife Tanushree, intends to take the help of the latest electronic equipment from Hong Kong and Singapore to do so, staging an extravaganza in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi on the anti-drugs theme.

The show, sponsored by S.M. Shetty of S.Y. Dychem, will have a "strong message behind" it.

And, in the best traditions of the Ananda Shankar school of synthesis, it will comprise a judicious mix of Western music and what the artiste calls "Indian character".

Ananda and Tanushree Shankar: music gives the best high

DHARMVIR JAYKER



ALL AT SEA

With Partylines, being at sea has acquired an entirely different meaning.

Founded by a former multinational executive, Aditya Singh, a year and a half ago, the outfit specialises in organising parties on a boat—or a barge—about ten minutes away from the Gateway of India.

Short of ringing up your guests, Partylines does everything: decides on decor, plants, food and drink. Says Singh: "Whether you want a Hawaiian ambience, ethnic one or a garden look, we do it all. We even arrange for a band if you feel like dancing to live music." The average cost comes to about Rs 200 per head and the concept has caught on, especially with corporate concerns such as Cadbury's,Glaxo, Hindustan Lever and Citibank, which recently hosted a party for its president on one of Aditya's boats.



Aditya Singh (inset): partying at sea

But the most unusual party Singh ever arranged was for a couple who he says, "were getting to know each other". Partylines created a romantic atmosphere, with soft music, muted lighting, plants, with the help staying discreetly in the background. The party lasted from 9 to 2.30 am, but adds a rueful Aditya, wasn't much of a success.

The couple split soon after.

SHOURIE IS BETTER THAN SINGH

The beleaguered former editor of the *Indian Express*, Arun Shourie, has found an unlikely ally: cine star Shatrughan Sinha.

In an interview to *The Independent*, Sinha has gone on record to say: "During my personal meeting with V.P. Singh in the first week of October, he told me what he has told Arun Shourie."

Standing up for Shourie, Sinha added: "The politicians who are making fun of Shourie should remember that he was responsible for the Janata Dal coming to power. Then he was a demi-god. Just because he criticised the government's faulty policies, now Shourie has become a villain in the eyes of VP's followers."



Arun Shourie: Shatrughan makes an unlikely ally



As Shatru saw it, the Raja was the villain of the piece. And if he wanted to get elected to the next Parliament, he'd have to ask Karunanidhi to find him a safe constituency in Tamil Nadu.

In Uttar Pradesh, he didn't stand half a chance.

AT HIS DRAMATIC BEST

Fiery Sixties communist-turned-mild television broadcaster, Tariq Ali, has now established himself as a successful playwright. Ali's latest play *Moscow Gold*, on the political situation in the Soviet Union, currently on view at the Barbican Centre, London, has drawn rave notices. As did his earlier effort, *Iranian Nights*, on the Rushdie affair.



COURTESY THE TIMES

Tariq Ali: you've got to take the good with the bad

Alas, the same isn't true of his fiction. The Pakistani radical's latest novel *Redemption*, a satire on revolutionaries, has horrified critics. Ali's obsessive use of sexual metaphor has come in for particular abuse, "a talking and ejaculating book" and "a novel bedecked with male genitals" being only some of the phrases used.

Tariq Ali, however, is unrepentent. "I knew I'd lose a lot of my friends after the book was published," he says.

But, perhaps, he hadn't bargained for the bad press. •

The beautiful way to get rid of your dandruff



Most people think that dandruff is just an irritation on the scalp. But it can also affect the way your hair looks. Dandruff makes it dull and lustreless. **New Clinic Special gets rid of your dandruff gently. Gives you great looking hair.**

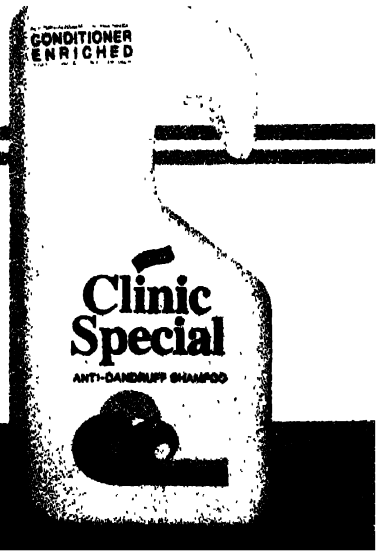
Its new international formulation loosens and lifts out dandruff from the scalp, where it really begins.

And it has a rich, creamy conditioner which leaves your hair soft and shiny. So you can use it regularly even after your dandruff's gone.

Use New Clinic Special to prevent your dandruff from coming back. And to keep your hair looking good.

NEW **Clinic Special**

ANTI-DANDRUFF SHAMPOO



KHAAS BAAT

One thing you've got to say for Shantanu Sheorey. When it comes to protecting Kimi's interests he doesn't distinguish between friend and foe.

Ask Rakesh Roshan. Casting the female lead of his forthcoming release *Jaahil*, with Amitabh Bachchan (no less!) as hero, Roshan decided to make the first offer to Kimi.

A phone call to the Sheorey residence and Rakesh was soon set right. Retorted a furious Shantanu: "I thought you were a friend! We are planning a family and she is not doing any films."

Well, at least, it makes a nice change from Mama Katkar.

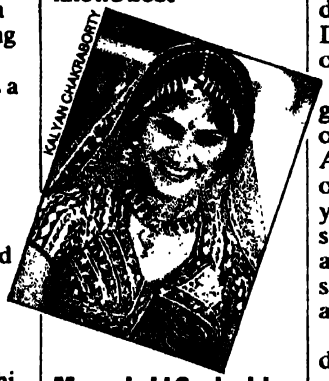
Right, Kimi?



Kimi Katkar: Shantanu knows best

Just when things seemed to be working out for Meenakshi Seshadri, the icy Iyengar had to go and spoil it all.

Or, Raj Kumar Santoshi had to go and spoil it for her. For, the director of *Ghayal*—the first hit Seshadri had had in years—fell hopelessly in love with his heroine. And once it was established that his film had done nothing but good to her career, went ahead and proposed to Meenakshi.



Meenakshi Seshadri: no to Santoshi

Seshadri declined the offer of marriage. And Santoshi promptly dropped her from his forthcoming projects.

So, Meenakshi is back to being a loser, *sans* suitor and hit director.

Amrita Singh's favourite topic of conversation is her influential family and moneyed background. So, how does the he-woman of the film industry react to all those stories about her mother, Rukhsana Sultana, defaulting on a payment to Diners, the credit card organisation?

According to the film glossy, *Stardust*, Sultana owes Diners Rs 8,000-odd. And the payment has been outstanding for over five years now. Everytime, the story goes, Rukhsana was asked to settle her dues, she'd say: "That small amount I'll clear in a day."

But five years later, that day hadn't come.

Diners, however, live in hope. ●

Paper chase

Bangalore witnesses a newspaper boom



Bangalore is no longer just a haven for pensioners. It is, today, a boom town where the yuppies from Bombay and Calcutta are migrating in search of jobs. And they have brought with them their double incomes, the nine to five work ethic, and newspaper reading habits. While the conservative Bangalorean is content to read the *Deccan Herald* or *The Hindu* with his early morning cup of coffee, the yuppie crowd is reaching out for the better laid-out Bangalore edition of *The Times of India*, *The Economic Times*, and now an array of Sunday papers that are available to him—the Bangalore edition of *Sunday Mid-Day*, the Madras edition of *Sunday Mail* and the Bombay edition of *The Sunday Observer*. With hoardings, neon signs, teaser ads and champagne parties there's a media war on in Bangalore.

Says Monu Nalapat, the resident editor of *The Times of India*, "Bangalore is the only other cosmopolitan city in India besides Bombay. Calcutta, Madras and Delhi are much too ethnic," he remarks. Agrees Prashun Dutt, media controller at Ogilvy and Mather: "The average Kannadiga may be conservative. He may be reluctant to try out a new product. But the cosmopolitan yuppie crowd which is moving to Bangalore with its disposable income is willing to try out a new product whether it is noodles or a newspaper."

Nevertheless, with the sudden influx of newspapers and Sunday papers into Bangalore, media watchers are wondering whether the city which has 8,56,000 potential readers of English newspapers is capable of sustaining so many publications.

The *Deccan Herald* with a circulation of one lakh copies in Bangalore, is clearly the market leader, followed by the Bangalore edition of the *Indian Express* with a circulation of 35,000, and *The Hindu* with a circulation of 20,000. *The Economic Times* has a circulation of 8,000 to 9,000 copies, while *The Times of India* despite the efforts of five resident editors, has not gone beyond 12,000 copies on weekdays, and 16,000 copies on Sundays.

Into this saturated newspaper market, enter the hard-hitting Sunday papers. *Sunday Mid-Day* made a quiet debut in early October. A few teaser ads and a champagne party for the who's who in Bangalore marked the second launch of the paper. An edition was started in 1981, circulated all over the south, and at the time of its closure in 1985 had a circulation of 23,000. "The management was in too much of a hurry. We were doing well, but they wanted a growth rate in Bangalore of what they had in Bombay," says V.N. Subba Rao, former editor of *Sunday Mid-Day* in Bangalore.



Bangalore city: a cosmopolitan population makes it a good test market

The Dalmia-owned *Sunday Mail* which launched three English and one Hindi editions in six months wanted to enter the Bangalore market before it did Madras. "A survey showed that *Mail* was likely to do better in Bangalore than Madras, but being a metro paper they wanted to link the four metros first, and instead, started the Madras edition," says I. S. Nayak, the branch manager of *Sunday Mail* in Bangalore.

The first two issues of *Sunday Mid-Day* are believed to have sold around 2,000 to 3,000 copies though the print order is around 6,000 to 7,000. *The Sunday Observer* is estimated to sell around 600 to 700 copies, while *Sunday Mail* sells 2,200 copies.

The *Deccan Herald*, is still a smug number one often missing out on interesting stories or burying an important story inside. The *Indian Express* and *The Hindu* have their loyal readers, while *The Times of India* is changing editors, lay-outs and journalists in an effort to get somewhere. "We are ranked fourth in circulation, but first, quality-wise," says Nalapat.

Interestingly, the market for most English magazines is shrinking, while that of daily papers and Sunday papers is growing. And the trend in most newspapers seems to be for opinion, analysis and commentary. "Newspapers themselves are becoming magazines," says Subba Rao. More and more newspapers are bringing out weekend supplements to compete with the Sunday papers.

"The need for information among the urbanites has gone up," says Dutt explaining the popularity of Sunday papers. "With political and economic upheavals, people like you and me are feeling insecure. They want to know what's going to happen. They want news analysis and in-depth commentary. Instant news is provided by television. What is needed is weekend reading on current subjects which the Sunday papers can provide," he says.

This clearly is the decade for Sunday papers. But no one knows who the winners and losers will be in Bangalore. •

Ratna Rao Shekar/Bangalore

Saved by the rebels

Janata Dal dissidents help Shekhawat survive



RAJASTHAN

The tit-for-tat tactics did not work in the end. When the BJP withdrew its support to the V.P. Singh government at the Centre following the arrest of its president, L.K. Advani, the Janata Dal retaliated by withdrawing support to the Shekhawat regime in Rajasthan. The idea was to bring down the coalition government—in which the Janata Dal itself was a partner—and pay the BJP back in its own coin. But Bhairon Singh Shekhawat has turned out to be a survivor.

On 8 November, during a trial of strength in the Assembly, the BJP managed to cling on to power by a curious alignment of forces. While the breakaway Janata Dal faction led by Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal teamed up with the Congress(I) to pull the rug from beneath V.P. Singh's feet on the plea that the former Prime Minister had pampered a communal party such as the BJP, the rebels in Rajasthan, owing allegiance to Shekhar had no qualms about going along with that organisation.

In the 200-member Rajasthan Assembly, the BJP-Janata combine had a strength of 140 members. The BJP had 85 legislators while the Janata Dal had 55. Besides, there are 50 Congress(I), one CPI(M) and nine Independent members. So, when the Janata Dal pulled out of the coalition, Shekhawat's fall seemed not only imminent but also inevitable. In the end, however, the chief minister survived, with 116 votes in favour and 80 against.

So what pulled the BJP back from the brink? Some of the credit goes to an unlikely quarter: the Congress(I). Ex-chief minister Harideo Joshi, a long-time friend of Shekhawat, came to his rescue in a devious way. As soon as the Dal announced its decision to quit the coalition, Joshi issued press statements offering his party's support to the Janata Dal in forming a non-BJP government. This gesture was at once rebuffed by the Dal high command which staunchly opposed the idea of the party having any truck with the Congress(I).

As the day of reckoning approached, Joshi issued another statement saying that the arrangement with the Janata Dal had been finalised. This led the Dal state chief Natthi Singh to issue a whip to party members asking them to vote against the Shekhawat government. Unnerved, the rebels, who feared that the end was near, formed a breakaway group, which was christened the Janata Vidhayak Dal. Initially, there were only 12 MLAs in this group, but its rank swelled to 23 at the time of voting. Obviously, the rebels, some of whom were in the ministry,were reluctant to lose their ministerial berths and face the electorate at this juncture, as the fall of the Shekhawat regime would have meant fresh polls.

Interestingly, despite Natthi Singh's forceful speech against communal violence,for which he blamed the BJP, three Muslim members sided with the chief minister. One of them, Ghulam Mustafa,tried to refute the allegation that the BJP was anti-Muslim. "If the BJP was communal and the riots in the state of Rajasthan were the outcome of its being in power in the state, what explanation could the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal offer to the riots in Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and UP?" he asked.

The contention of the rebels was that the people's verdict in the last elections was clearly in favour of BJP-Dal coalition and hence the government should not be allowed to fall. But idealism apart, the real reason may have been the fear to face the people again so soon. •

Milap Chand Dandia/Jaipur



ASHOK VAHIE



Bhairon Singh Shekhawat (left): propped up; Harideo Joshi (above): playing the numbers game

Laloo's last days?

The Bihar chief minister's fate hangs in the balance



BIHAR

For a long time, chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav was sitting pretty in Patna, but the developments in Delhi have left him a deeply disturbed man. Laloo claimed that he valued principles more than anything else and lent unflinching support to former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, knowing full well that the National Front government at the Centre was heading for a great fall. He was not going to compromise on secularism, Laloo had declared stridently, and went on to back Singh, when the likes of Chandra Shekhar, Devi Lal and Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Janata Dal's other chieftains in the Hindi heartland, decided to forsake him. But for all that he did – including the arrest of BJP chief L.K. Advani at Singh's behest—Laloo now finds his own house tottering dangerously.

The Janata Dal in Bihar is clearly heading for a split between the Singh and the Shekhar factions, and Laloo, at the moment, is not sure of securing majority support. The chief minister will have to strain hard to even muster the support of half the 122 Dal MLAs in the 324-member House, if Chandra Shekhar's protege, Raghunath Jha, decides to press home the advantage he presently enjoys. In the event of a showdown, Laloo's only support bank would be the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), and the two communist parties—CPI and CPI(M)—which together have 44 MLAs. And if the stand taken by the Indian People's Front (IPF) in the Lok Sabha, where its lone member voted in favour of V.P. Singh, is any indication of the posture the party would adopt in the state Assembly, Laloo can hope to have seven more members on his side. But the state IPF has accused the CM of shielding the killers of some of its activists, and the anger still seems to run high.

This crucial game of numbers has rendered the Janata Dal government in the state fragile. But Laloo's position was never entirely secure. In the Dal Legislature Party elections held soon after the February Assembly polls, when three contenders staked their claim to the chief ministership, Laloo scraped through by the skin of his teeth. He secured barely three votes more than his nearest rival Ramsundar Das. The veteran leader was outmanoeuvred because Raghunath Jha, a Chandra Shekhar lobbyist, joined the fray and split the votes.

Even before the party's vertical split in Delhi, there were serious rumblings of dissent in the state unit. Laloo managed to stave off a virtual revolt by 51 legislators in the initial round of the Shekhar-Lal manipulations. But those who opted for truce earlier are expected to resume their belligerence, now that the power matrix has changed completely at the Centre.

The Laloo regime was being propped up by a set of disparate forces: the BJP, the left parties and the JMM. But the 39 BJP members withdrew their support back in August when Laloo refused to arrest a CPI MLA accused of attacking BJP supporters. Since then, Laloo has banked heavily on the communists and JMM, the latter having thrown in its lot with the chief minister in order to counter the growing influence of the BJP in the tribal areas of south Bihar.

Another important segment in the Assembly—the Independents—is also wavering. Of the 30 Independent MLAs, 22 had extended their support to Laloo, but at present most would prefer a change of leadership. Muneshwar Singh, one of the fiery Independent MLAs, is going about saying that the chief minister has lost majority support and might force a mid-term poll on the state.

Others, however, rule out such possibilities. They argue that Laloo is a member of the Legislative Council and as such cannot recommend the dissolution of the Assembly. Besides, there is always the possibility of the Congress(I), which has 71 members in the House, extending support to a breakaway faction to avert fresh poll.

But whichever way the wind may blow, there is sure to be a lot of horse trading in the present circumstances and the price of each MLA is likely to soar. And if money power is really going to decide matters, it is the highest bidder who is going to win. Principles are sure to take a back seat in that case. ●

Subodh Mishra/Patna



CNS

Laloo Prasad Yadav: help!

Come what may

Biju remains unruffled despite the changes at the Centre



ORISSA

The upheaval at the Centre has left the Orissa Janata Dal strongman, Biju Patnaik, quite unruffled. Biju has not repeated history. During the crisis in the Janata Party in 1979, Biju had sided with Charan Singh and helped bring down the government of Morarji Desai. This time, he consistently backed former Prime Minister V.P. Singh and spurned all enticement from dissidents who have been propped up by the Congress(I). And in Orissa Biju and the official Janata Dal continue to hold their ground without any immediate signs of instability. Although five of the 16 Dal MPs have sided with Chandra Shekhar, they have too little support among the Dal MLAs to pose a challenge to Biju. Of them, the most influential seems to be Bhakta Charan Das, who has three MLAs supporting him, including his brother, Ajit Das. Anant Narayan Singh Deo, an old Chandra Shekhar faithful, would have a tough time stringing in anybody other than his wife, Shanti Devi. And Balgopal Mishra is unlikely to get any MLA at all to switch loyalties, not even Narasingha Mishra, his brother-in-law and law minister in Biju's Cabinet. "I cannot support Balgopal on this issue," he says with total conviction. "Even if Biju Patnaik had backed Chandra Shekhar, I could not have toed his line." The other two MPs who have joined Shekhar, Nakul Naik and Mangaraj Mallik, hardly have any hold over the party.



ASHOK VAHIE

Biju Patnaik: still going strong

V.P. Singh's party is the "mainstream of the Janata Dal", says state Dal president Ashok Das, and 123 Dal members in a House of 147 feel the same way. And there is little doubt at the moment that Biju would be the guiding spirit of the Dal in the next Assembly polls.

However, the developments at the Centre are bound to have their impact on the state. The various pressure groups in the party will make Biju's balancing acts even more difficult. And the MLAs denied ministerial berths might demand their pound of flesh. "Attempts to run a dictatorial administration will no longer be tolerated," says a gleeful Prafulla Ghadei, a senior anti-Biju MLA. "Many significant developments may take place if an alternative government is formed at the Centre."

This observation, however harsh, does not seem much out of place. A Biju-loyalist admitted in a sad sympathetic tone that "Bijubabu would have to pat everyone on the back to carry on the government" which was far from his usual style of functioning.

In the diametrically opposite camp, the Congress(I) leaders in the state, jubilant over the recent developments, have intensified their infighting in a desperate bid for the chief ministership, hoping that their days of political exile is nearing the end. While former CM J.B. Patnaik is gearing himself up for a comeback, a powerful lobby is working against him. This includes MP and PCC(I) chief Giridhar Gomango, CLP(I) leader Basant Biswal, ex-CM Hemananda Biswal, and Ramachandra Rath, former Union minister.

With all this activity and enmity inside the main parties, the future promises to be politically supercharged for Orissa. ●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar



Check that exposure

Bureaucrats in Karnataka are unhappy with the Lokayukta raids



KARNATAKA

Chief minister Bangarappa is in a Catch-22 situation. He is under tremendous pressure to remove some "inconvenient elements" from the Karnataka Lokayukta. If he succumbs to the pressure, he will invite charges of the government protecting corrupt officers. If he does not, he will have quite a few angry members in his Cabinet and a sulking bureaucracy.

Government officials have been quite upset since A.J. Anandan was appointed inspector-general in the Lokayukta last December. Earlier, this people's court was satisfied with nabbing an occasional small government official. But of late the Lokayukta has caught some real big fish.

With two IAS, two IPS and one IFS (forest) officers being caught, the straying bureaucrats have gone scurrying for cover. "Why are they raising such objections about our raids?" asks a Lokayukta officer, requesting anonymity. "It is only when you have something to hide that you become so





(From left) Koshal, Bangarappa and Anandan: playing hide-and-seek

belligerent."

And some officers do have a lot to hide—as was proved by the recent raids. The biggest haul was J. Alexander, former excise commissioner. It took six painstaking months to unearth all that Alexander had acquired, including bungalows, estates and luxury cars. Subsequently, he was sacked from the post of chairman-cum-managing director of the Mangalore Chemicals and Fertilisers. His case is still pending before the central administrative tribunal.

Last month, the Lokayukta made another sensational hit: B.S. Patil, the industries and commerce secretary. But this blew the lid off the IAS-*wallahs*. Patil was a senior officer, that too of the powerful Lingayat community. That lent the IAS lobby the clout it had so far lacked.

With two ministers in Bangarappa's Cabinet taking up the cause of the IAS lobby, the liquor barons, too, joined the fray. They have not only demanded Anandan's sacking but also want the clipping of Lokayukta Justice A.D. Koshal's wings. Reportedly, the two senior ministers have forced the CM to restrain Anandan from raiding IAS officers.

"But I am just doing my job," says Anandan. "These raids were not conducted with any prejudice towards anyone. We based our raids on facts By doing my duty, some people think I am inconveniencing them." The Lokayukta officers point out that their actions are not mere allegations, but are based on evidence, including government documents. Despite this, the Lokayukta office has drawn much flak, and Justice Koshal has been termed a "Hegde-agent".

One point raised by the accusing lobbies was that the "pre-trial" public exposures of an officer's assets—as was being done by the Lokayukta—was bad for the morale of the bureaucracy's top brass. But "a crime is a crime," retorts a Lokayukta officer. "How can one accept the publication of crime reports based on FIRs but ignore the FIRs filed on IAS officers? What gives them the holier-than-thou status?"

It is well known that the CM is not very fond of either Justice Koshal or his institution. When Koshal was appointed by the former CM, Ramakrishna Hegde, Bangarappa had protested. More recently, Bangarappa was among those politicians who did not submit statements about their assets. "I had lost the statement I had filed last year," the CM explained. "I asked the Lokayukta's office for a copy to check what I had filed, but they have not sent it to me yet." However, Justice Koshal says that a copy had indeed been sent to the CM's office, but there has been no response.

The current drive against corrupt government officers was initiated by former CM Veerendra Patil. Soon after taking charge last year, the ex-CM had asked for details of all officers' assets and, after a scrutiny, had handed over a short-list to be checked out by the Lokayukta. But the present CM's attitude is not clear. Will he continue the fight against corruption with much opposition from his own men? Or will he wait till January, when Justice Koshal and his team's term comes to an end? •

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

The blast

An explosion at an IPCL plant leaves 23 dead



MAHARASHTRA

The explosion could be heard miles away. At 7.15 pm on 5 November, when the second shift at the Nagothane plant of the Indian Petrochemical Corporation Limited (IPCL) was in full swing, a devastating blast reduced the giant factory's chilling and storage unit to a mass of mangled metal. The explosion, caused by leaking gas, has so far claimed 23 lives and maimed 18 people.

P.S. Mehta, a senior IPCL manager says; "The investigations are on and it will be premature to blame anything on anyone till they are complete. As soon as the leak was detected, engineers in the control room shut down the rest of the plant and isolated the affected section."

But somehow, the preventive operation was not totally effective. Project manager B.N. Kaul and others had to rush to the risk zone and shut off the controls manually, knowing fully well that the vulnerable section could be blown sky high. And that is precisely what happened moments after the desynchronisation was complete.

The blast set the chilling and storage section ablaze, and eight Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel died fighting the fire. Fire brigade reinforcements were rushed in from Roha and Bombay as well.

The injured were taken to the Sion and J.J. Hospital in Bombay. Sources at the two hospitals say that some of the victims have suffered over 50 to 100 per cent burns. "The death toll is certainly going to rise," says a doctor who does not want to be named.

Presently, investigations are on to find out what really happened and why. Experts from Stone and Webster, the consultants, have arrived, and they are preparing their own report on the accident. Meanwhile, in the hospitals, the victims of Nagothane fight for survival, and it is too early to tell how many of them will live to know who or what was responsible for the tragedy. •

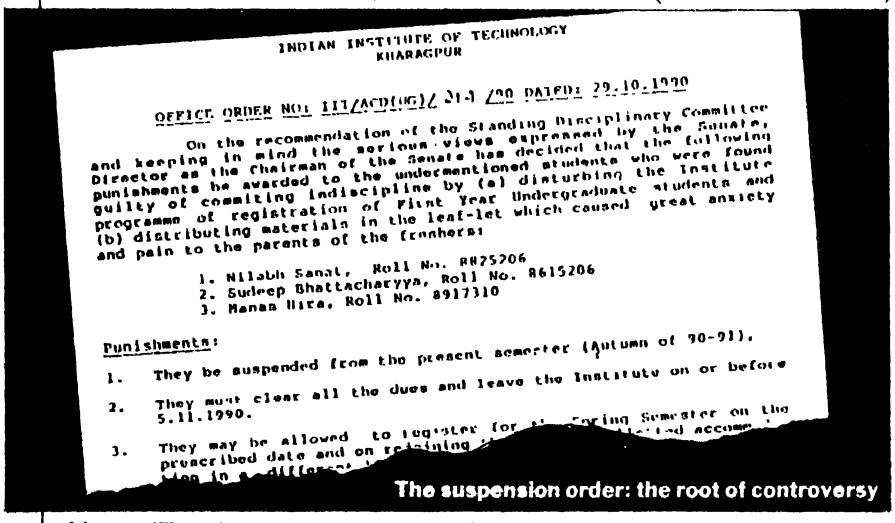
Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

Rag-time blues

IIT authorities suspend three students campaigning against ragging

WEST BENGAL

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, of brilliant minds and brutal ragging fame, is making news lately. On 7 August 1990, the students' registration day, three senior students solemnly wound their way through the crowd of bright new faces, handing out a leaflet promising help and support against ragging. It was essential, the leaflet declared, for "all of us who love this institution, to root this out. Therefore, let us pledge to do our best to stop this immoral and unethical practice." About three months later, the three were suspended from the institute for "indiscipline".



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
KHARAGPUR

OFFICE ORDER NO: III/ACD(UG)/ 313 /90 DATED: 29.10.1990

On the recommendation of the Standing Disciplinary Committee and keeping in mind the serious views expressed by the Senate, Director as the Chairman of the Senate has decided that the following punishments be awarded to the undermentioned students who were found guilty of committing indiscipline by (a) disturbing the Institute programme of registration of First Year Undergraduate students and (b) distributing materials in the leaf-let which caused great anxiety and pain to the parents of the freshers:

1. Nilabh Sanat, Roll No. 8825206
2. Sudeep Bhattacharyya, Roll No. 8615206
3. Manas Hira, Roll No. 8917310

Punishments:

1. They be suspended from the present semester (Autumn of 90-91).
2. They must clear all the dues and leave the Institute on or before 5.11.1990.
3. They may be allowed to register for the ... Spring Semester on the prescribed date and on retaining ... [illegible]

The suspension order: the root of controversy

The punishment would completely mess up the brilliant academic career of the trio. Manas Hira, an M. Tech. final-year student, would effectively lose an academic year and his scholarship. Nilabh Sanat, a final-year mathematics student and the topper of his department, and Sudeep Bhattacharya, M. Sc. (chemistry) final-year student, were supposed to take their exams on 28 November. "They could have avoided this (suspension) if only they had apologised," says R.K. Banerji, the deputy director officiating in place of director K.L. Chopra. Three other students, suspended for indulging in severe ragging, had publicly apologised and were let off. "But why would the anti-ragging students apologise?" asks a professor of the institute. "They did nothing wrong!"

Even a request from Russi Modi, chairman, board of governors of the IIT, to revoke the suspension order did not help. "I have no information about Mr Modi's request," says Mahinder Singh, dean of students' affairs, who heads the disciplinary committee (DC) that recommended the punishment. "These students were breaking rules."

The IIT-TA (teachers' association) protested vehemently against the action and declared in their bulletin (22 October) that the whole process was "nauseating and senseless", concluding that "the Dean and the Director...have really tarnished the image of the institute and not the students".

Ragging was banned eight years ago, but it still flourishes in this institute. Several freshers, unable to endure the torture, have left. A case was highlighted by the press last year. And Hitabrata Chowdhury, who tried to fight the cruel custom, was expelled. So, Ignatius Koilparampil, a research student, sent a protest note to director Chopra criticising him for not taking steps against the offenders while punishing those who tried to stop the practice. Wiser from Chowdhury's experience, Koilparampil sent copies of the letter to the chief minister, Chief Justice, Prime Minister and the President. And when the authorities tried to expel him, he got a stay order from the Calcutta High Court, in a public interest litigation case filed on the basis of his letter. That case is still on, and the IIT has pleaded for mercy.

But instead of trying to stop the custom, the authorities have tried to stop news of ragging from spreading. Manas, Nilabh and Sudeep were idealists, who went to nearby villages to teach kids, and to Baliapal to protest against Agni. They had tried to make dean Singh take action and had shown him how freshers were harassed. In the bargain, two other students opposed to ragging, got severely beaten up but the dean refused to do anything. The next day, a complaint was lodged with the police. No action was, however, taken against those named in the diary. "I don't know what you are talking about," says the dean. "If the police have not done anything, you can't blame me." And the concerned police officer-in-charge, (OC) admits that Singh requested him to drop the case.

The dean, it seems, makes those who protest against ragging drop the charges. So during the tenure of the two directors succeeding Ashok Mukherji—who was vehemently against ragging—no "ragger" was penalised. Till last month, when a fresher refused to take back his written complaint and the IIT-TA raised a stink about the anti-ragging students being punished. So the three "raggers" were suspended along with the three do-gooders.

"But how can you treat them equally?" fumes an IIT-TA spokesman. And the director has also been accused of shifting ground. From accusing the trio of tarnishing the IIT's image, he finally penalised them for disturbing the registration process and causing "great anxiety and pain" to the parents of freshers. "Not for a moment was the registration disturbed," says an IIT-TA official "Besides, if the parents knew that their children had friends in the institute who were ready to protect them from ragging, they would naturally be relieved. Why the pain and anxiety?"

Even with a large section of the students and practically all the teachers condemning the institute's decision to suspend the trio, there are no signs of reversing the decision. Probably Russi Modi's visit will help change matters. ●

Antara Dev Sen/Kharagpur

RAVI SHANKAR





"I know LIC's Group Gratuity Scheme benefits my employees...

"But what's in it for me?"

- 100% income tax deduction on contributions made (up to 8.33% of salary).
- Contributions for past liability can be made in five installments —and be eligible for 100% income tax deduction in the year of payment.
- The task of management of funds and actuarial valuation is entirely borne by LIC.
- Saves employers the botheration of providing for large sums, for unforeseen circumstances.
- A yield of 11.4% to 12% p.a, depending on the size of the Gratuity Fund under the Cash Accumulation Scheme.

For more information and advice about the scheme, send this coupon to the P & GS Department at your local LIC Divisional Office.

Life Insurance Corporation of India

daCunha LIC 13 90

I'd like to know more about LIC's Group Gratuity Scheme. Please send me full details.

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Organisation: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ PIN: _____

V. GANGADHAR

What next?

How will this drama of deception and intrigue end?

The morning of Thursday 8 November. The previous night, a government had fallen. It was, of course, an anticipated event, yet there is something different in the air when it actually happens.

I have just enough time to glance through the headlines and editorials of half a dozen Bombay papers. Pro or anti-V.P. Singh, there is a distinct air of relief. In a front-page editorial *Indian Express* proclaims: "There will be few who will not recall with poignancy the hopes with which the National government was installed in office a bare 11 months ago." Memories, obviously, are short at the *Express*, with or without Arun Shourie. The bitter truth, as expounded by *The Times of India* and other papers seems to have eluded them. Says *The Times* editorial, "Mr V P. Singh was able to assume office on 2 December, 1989, thanks to last-minute intrigue and deception; the same factors were at work when he stepped down on Wednesday." Concludes *The Daily*, "The epitaph on the V.P. Singh government would proclaim that good intentions were not enough and that people can see through the hypocrisy of the rulers." A day earlier, *The Times* had its own epitaph on the former PM: "He diminished India in the eyes of the world, and, infinitely worse, he diminished us in our own eyes."

It is also clear that none of our political pundits have any clue to what is going to be the next act in this sordid political drama. The only ray of hope, according to *The Times*, is that "President R. Venkataraman, whose sense of impartiality and commitment to uphold the letter and spirit of the Constitution are acknowledged by one and all, can be trusted to act in the vital interests of the nation."

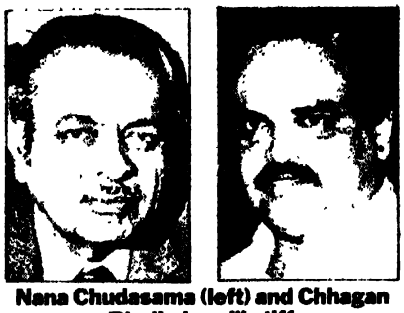
Quite suddenly, the *Express* has discovered the virtues of a 'national government', consisting of "men and women of unimpeachable credentials—of whom there should be no dearth, even in these unregenerate days—would be welcomed by all patriotic Indians". Obviously, *Express* has in mind some of our 'intellectuals'. Looking at their antics over the years, one shudders at the very thought of a government consisting of men like Rajni Kothari, L.C. Jain and Nikhil Chakravarty, selfish, self-centred, self-seeking and totally blind to the realities around them. That old conservative from Bombay, Minoo Masani, has already issued a call for the 'national government', minus all politicians. Does anyone want to jump into the fire from the frying pan?



THE TIMES OF INDIA

The *Times* editorial said: "V.P. Singh assumed office on 2 December, 1989, thanks to last minute intrigue and deception; the same factors were at work when he stepped down"

Too much publicity



Nana Chudasama (left) and Chhagan Bhujbal: a silly tiff

Among Bombay's media-hungry public figures are two clowns, Mayor Chhagan Bhujbal and Sheriff Nana Chudasama. The 'Sheriff' is a purely ornamental post, though in the past, it had been held by distinguished men like Vijay Merchant, Dilip Kumar and Sunil Dutt. Chudasama is a failed politician (contested polls twice, losing deposits both times), a 'giant', a 'social worker' whose hunger for publicity can only be matched by that of Dr Rashmi Mayur, who calls himself a futorologist. Chudasama puts up hoardings with 'humorous' messages which are reprinted in Bombay's dailies. Most of these are plain silly.

Bhujbal is a Shiv Sena heavyweight who has tried to grab Belgaum from Karnataka by sneaking into the town incognito during agitations launched by the Samyukta Maharastra Samiti.

Recently, Chudasama announced an 'I love Bombay' gala show on Marine Drive featuring skits by film stars, a Kalyanji-Anandji nite, floats along the Drive and whatnot. The show, he claimed, would make Bombayites aware of their love for the city and lead to efforts to keep it clean. While inviting all and sundry for the show, Chudasama overlooked the First Citizen and other corporators. Bhujbal ridiculed the programme pointing out that all that Chudasama had done over the two terms as Sheriff was to whitewash some walls in his affluent Malabar Hill locality.

What was astonishing was the publicity received by the Mayor-Sheriff war. Morning papers, afternoon papers, magazines highlighted the mini-war. It surely provided comic relief to readers, but what about the oft-repeated complaints from the media about the high prices of newsprint? If they can devote so much space over the silly tiff between two clowns, the industry is awash with newsprint. ●

Testing times

The new Ananda Marg chief faces an uphill task

Can the Ananda Marg survive the Anandamurti? When Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, popularly known as Anandamurti, the high-profile founder of the Ananda Marg, died on the evening of 21 October, that was the question on most lips. Taken aback by the sudden demise of their 'guru', the Margis soon reorganised themselves: they called an emergency meeting and elected Shraddhananda Avadhoot, the senior-most monk of the organisation, as the successor. But with Anandamurti and his charisma gone, the future of the socio-religious outfit suddenly seems uncertain.

Six years ago, when Anandamurti was asked by some devotees to write his autobiography, he had responded by saying: "I was a mystery, I am a mystery and I will ever remain one." Strangely true, considering that the Ananda Margis have always been at the centre of one controversy or the other. More so because a veil of secrecy surrounds the activities of the saffron-robed monks.

Speaking to SUNDAY about the void left by Anandamurti, Shraddhananda insists that it is a misconception. "He is within us and guides us, and he will be guiding us in our individual and social work." Initiated into the order in 1954 by his predecessor, Shraddhananda Avadhoot formally joined the organisation in 1964. Since 1981 he worked as head of the social security and communications department of the Marg. Now, faced with the responsibility of leading the worldwide organisation with "over four million followers", Shraddhananda believes that the Ananda Margis have a great role in promoting peace.

Who are the Ananda Margis? And why does the CPI(M), especially in West Bengal, insists on crushing them? Literally, the Ananda Margis are "travellers on the path of bliss." They insist they are opposed to violence and, that *atma mokshartam jagat hitayacha* (selfless service for self-liberation) is their only goal. But the West Bengal government has its doubts. However, the fact that CPI(M) cadres have never missed an opportunity to wipe them out speaks volumes for Anandamurti and his growing influence.

Founded in 1955, the Ananda Marg has grown over the years under P.R. Sarkar, who began his career as a small-time railway employee. The headquarters at Tiljala, on the outskirts of Calcutta, is the focal point of all Marg activities and houses many followers. But the fort as well as their bases in Purulia and North Bengal have been the target of repeated attacks by the CPI(M).

Why is the CPI(M) so hostile towards the Margis? According to Jagadishanda Avadhoot, law secretary and one of the 14 central committee members, the basic reason is "ideological difference". "There's is a matter centre, ours is a god centre," he insists and adds that "the CPI(M) sees us as a potential political force in the future." He dismisses any political connections and stresses that the Ananda Marg is strictly "socio-spiritual". "It has nothing to do with Amra Bangalee or the Vishwa Hindu Parishad," he adds.

But, the CPI(M) thinks otherwise. It feels that the saffron-clad *sanyasis* are up to no good. Apart from charges like subversion, conspiracy against the state and murder,



ASHOK CHAKRABARTI

which are pending decisions in courts of law or have been found baseless, the government also suspects a nexus between the Margis and drug mafias operating in the country's north-eastern borders. Added to that, the shift of headquarters from Purulia to Tiljala has been interpreted by the Marxists as a direct challenge. Marg offices in the state were repeatedly raided by the police. The cops even claimed to have seized arms and ammunition from the monks, something which is hotly contested by the Ananda Margis.

Replying to whether the Margis were against communism, Jagadisharananda observes that "Margis are anti-communist as well as anti-capitalist. Capitalism makes a man a beggar and communism makes a beggar a beast. We believe in a progressive socialism based on a balanced economy...and our education encourages Eastern spiritual values as well as Western scientific knowledge."

The Margis have done a lot of good work in the social field, claims Jagadisharananda. Two colleges, one under Bardhaman University and the other under Mysore University, are run by the organisation. "We have 1,500 schools and have done work in the social field. We have hospitals, ambulances, master units for small scale industries and conduct relief operations also", say the Margis. But, where does the money come from? Jagadisharananda replies: "The principal sources are 2 per cent of the income of each Margi, unconditional public donations ,sale profits of literatures, the profits from the 200-odd presses we have in India and also from our master units. We are law abiding people but the CPI(M) has already killed 35 of our followers. We do not want any confrontation."

Isn't the Ananda Marg then an intellectual and a predominantly urban organisation, and why does the country fail to recognise its worth? The Avadhoot smiles. "We are mostly working in the villages and we do not feel that we are pro-urban. Modernism is a curse. And about India not recognising us, well, its always difficult to be acclaimed on home soil, isn't it?"

According to statistics doled out by the Marg, the organisation has 180 bases covering most countries. Margis claim that their outfit is still going strong despite the fact that the CPI(M) is trying everything up its sleeve to cut them to size.

Take the instance of the controversy surrounding the *tandava nritya*. The West Bengal government had banned the performance of the dance in public on the grounds that it encouraged violence. And the Margis promptly went to court. Soon after taking over, the new chief of the Ananda Marg met with his first victory. On 8 November, a division bench of the Calcutta High Court held that the performance of the *tandava* dance in public was a part of religious rites under Article 26 of the Constitution. It meant that the controversial 'skull and knife' dance would continue.

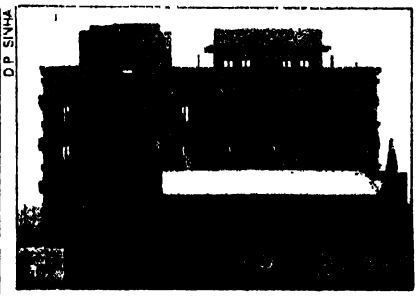
But, wasn't the metaphor too violent for a peace loving organisation? Jagadisharananda Avadhoot stresses that most people fail to see its significance. The skull is a reminder that death is behind you and before you. It emphasises the fact that *now* is important. The knife is there to cut all fetters obstructing the path to salvation, while the dance brings in the essential trio towards optimism—dynamism, rhythm and hilarity. The fear, he insists, is of ignorance. He cites Rabindranath Tagore's *Nataraj* to show its presence in literature and argues that *Nataraj In Art, Thought And Literature* written by the director of National Library and forwarded by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, is ample proof of its acceptance as a cultural performance. But the people still have their doubts. It is the stories circulating about the *avadhoots*' fanaticism that have sparked such a violent reaction.

And the stories have not been favourable. Although the Margis claim that their organisation is only for the "good of mankind", they have earned a bad name in certain quarters. Who they really are and what they mean is something of a mystery still. •

Sourav Mukherjee/Calcutta



D P SINHA



RAJIB DE



UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The *tandava* dance (left) will continue, and the new chief, Shraddhananda Avadhoot, (above) has achieved his first victory. But their headquarters at Tiljala (top) still remains the centre of controversy

ODDS AND TRENDS

Rising high

■ Adventure has lured man ever since time immemorial. Some have crossed ragged mountains, others desolate deserts. But with Belur Bhavani, the adventurous spirit has reached a new high.





An accident at the age of 13 incapacitated him and his family ruled him an invalid. But Belur hit back. A year later he resorted to the use of artificial limbs, and now, at 22, is gearing up to conquer the skies. His medium—hang gliding.

He has already participated in two competitions and won "special awards", but that was only for starters. His confidence is commanding and he believes that he can out-do the rest. "I'm as good as anybody else with all his limbs intact," he says, and adds, "I don't think there's any feeling like being airborne, all on your own, when logically, you should be sitting on terra firma—pitying yourself."

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



N.T. Rama Rao — Begum Akhtar

Fruit for thought

■ The latest to hit the fashion scene is the pineapple-leaf skirt. No, not in the fig-leaf style; this is breakthrough yarn we are talking about. And the pioneer in the manufacture of yarn from pineapple -leaf fibre is none other than South India Textiles Research Association (SITRA).

The use of "unconventional fibres for manufacture of fabrics" did not stop at skirts. Carpets, furnishing materials, wall coverings and reinforced plastic sheets were other items made, to name just a few. The stage, thus, is all set for a pineapple revolution.

THIS INDIA



BOMBAY: Policemen in Bombay with paunches will shortly have to go on a strict diet. The offices of the state director general of police (DGP) and the police commissioner are not willing to stomach this any more. Plans are, therefore, afoot to make city policemen shed their extra weight. Over 3200 police officials and the 27000-strong constabulary will have to adhere to minimum prescribed standards of physical fitness. The chief minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, is said to have shown avid interest in the scheme. At a recent meeting of top police officials, Mr Pawar suggested that primary health facilities be made available at local police stations to help the men shape up their muscle. Some of our policemen are twice my size, Mr Pawar is learnt to have jocularly remarked at the meeting—*The Sunday Times of India* (R.P. Chaddah, Chandigarh)

JAMSHEDPUR: The deputy commissioner of Singbhum (east), Mr B.K. Haldar, has ordered an enquiry into reports that two doctors attached to the Chakula government hospital had been drawing their salaries for the last two years without attending the hospital. The doctors, Madan Mohan Thakur, and H.A. Ansari, had gone to the hospital twice or thrice a year to draw their salaries and allowances and to manipulate the attendance register—*The Telegraph* (B.N. Bose, Calcutta)

MADRAS: Titters of amusement were raised in the auditorium when port workers presented the Union minister, Mr K.P. Unnikrishnan, with a momento that seemed to resemble his portly figure. But the minister himself set the embarrassed organisers at ease by saying the wooden idol reminded him of both his size and responsibilities. In his opening remarks at a function in the Madras port trust, Mr Unnikrishnan said very few people knew that the figure of a paunchy ascetic with raised hands depicted the Buddha and was understood to represent "wisdom" in some south-east Asian countries—*The Times Of India* (V. Balaji, Bhopal)

NEW DELHI: Cashing in on the popularity of the TV serial 'The Sword Of Tipu Sultan', three enterprising persons started minting coins of Tipu's era and of the erstwhile Mysore State but ultimately landed behind bars. Central District police yesterday claimed to have arrested three residents of East Delhi and recovered several hundred Indian and antique forged coins from them, besides implements and raw material used for minting the coins—*The Hindustan Times* (Prem C. Sinha, Patna)

ILLUSTRATIONS DEBASHISH DER

BEGINNING 18 NOVEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



Domestic affairs will keep you busy this week. Relatives will prove helpful. A favourable time for romance and matrimony. However, do not take hasty decisions. You may face some financial problems.

Good dates: 18, 20 and 24
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



This is a favourable week for you. Professionals will gain recognition from their superiors. However, much will depend on your own initiative. Look after your health. Scientists will do well.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 23
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: South

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



A favourable week on the whole. Some of you may gain through inheritance. Businessmen will make profits. New entrants in the film industry may be successful. Doctors will do well.

Good dates: 19, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Promotions or transfers are in store for professionals this week. A raise in your salary is imminent. A favourable period for factory workers. Businessmen should be cautious in their dealings.

Good dates: 21, 22 and 24
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and9
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July—20 August)



A good time for businessmen to go ahead with fresh investments. Your relatives may come to your aid. Children will be a source of joy. The time is ripe for courtship and marriage. Your health is likely to improve.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 21
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 9
Favourable direction: North

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



This is not a good week for you. Problems might crop up. Professionals may run into rough weather. However, the time is favourable for love and marriage. Teenagers should avoid socialising.

Good dates: 21, 23 and 24
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



A fairly successful week lies ahead of you. Be discreet in your professional matters. Romance is not in the offing. Your relatives may cause problems. Avoid changes in your plans.

Good dates: 19, 22 and 23
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



Quite a few opportunities are in store for you this week. You may, however, lose something which is very precious to you. Financially, this is a favourable period and you may be able to clear your debts.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 24
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: West

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is not a favourable week for you. You may face some financial problems. Be on the guard against deceit. Do not rely on too many people. The time is ripe for romance. School children may go out on an excursion.

Good dates: 22, 23 and 24
Lucky numbers: 6, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: East

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



Your children will be a source of joy to you. Letters will bring good news concerning your business or career prospects. You will be appreciated by your seniors. You may have to go on a journey.

Good dates: 18, 21 and 22
Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: North

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



An eventful week lies ahead of you. Professionals are likely to excel in their disciplines. Social engagements will keep you busy. Speculation will yield good results. An elderly relative will prove helpful.

Good dates: 20, 22 and 23
Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 4
Favourable direction: South-west

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This is a successful week for most of you. Speculators will do well. Property disputes may be resolved. A favourable time for romance. Your relatives may prove uncooperative.

Good dates: 19, 21 and 23
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—PISCES

The Scorpio woman might not be as effortlessly charming as the Pisces man, but her practical sense comes in handy. Especially since her partner is a dreamer.

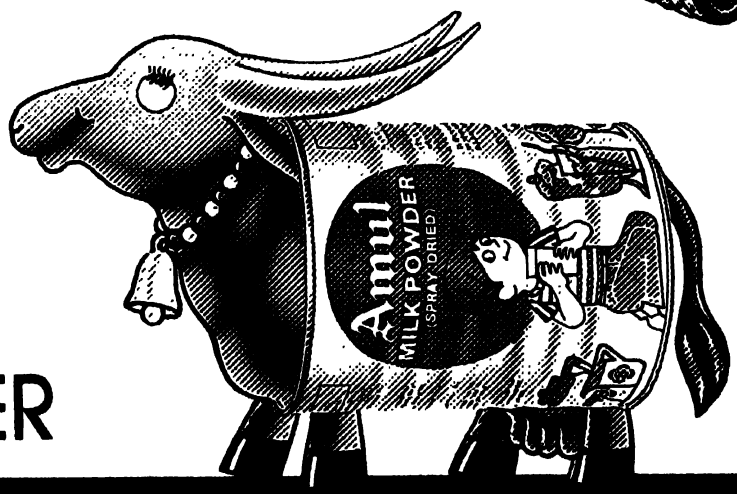
Does your dudhwalla serve you milk on the train?



My dudhwalla does.

You must be careful about your food and drink when you are travelling. Milk gets contaminated or turns sour fast. Always take a tin of Amul Milk Powder along.

With Amul Milk Powder you have pure, rich, creamy milk, mixed and ready in minutes. Good to drink, good for tea and coffee, dahi, lassi, kheer, custard, cakes, rasgollas...



Amul
MILK POWDER

It's like having a dairy in your home

Marketed by: Gujarat Co-operative
Milk Marketing Federation Ltd., Anand 388 001

OPERATION FLOOD

Wanted: a Cabinet secretary

No sooner had the V.P. Singh government officially resigned that a search was mounted for a new Cabinet secretary, it being generally recognised that Vinod Pande had to go.

The candidates of the 1955 batch are Shiromani Sharma, secretary, heavy industry and S.K. Mishra, secretary, agriculture. All other things being equal, Sharma has a disadvantage in that no influential politician is rooting for him. On the other hand, Mishra has the support of Devi Lal (he was the Tau's secretary for a brief while) and Mulayam Singh Yadav, who is said to be especially close to Sukhda Mishra, a minister in his Cabinet and the wife of SK.

But if Chandra Shekhar prefers to appoint someone from the 1956 batch, the job may either go to Varadarajan or to defence secretary Naresh Chandra. The latter has the edge because Varadarajan is due to retire shortly.

The dark horse in the race is the Gujarat chief secretary, H.K. Khan (former petroleum secretary), who, apparently, played an important role in getting Congress support for the beleaguered Chimanbhai government. The Gujarat chief minister is squarely behind him and the general feeling is that even if he misses out on the Cabinet secretaryship, he will make it to the Prime Minister's office in some other capacity.

Drama of the absurd

As the Tau walked up to take his oath, the scene had a touch of [illegible] about it. For, in a repeat of his earlier performance, Devi Lal insisted on taking the oath as *up-pradhan mantri*. And President Venkataraman, well-used to his ways by now, didn't attempt to put him right.

The Chaudhary's clan was out in full strength, with Ranjit Singh's son standing out in his red coat and bow tie. And, as indication of the changed equations in the Tau's camp, Chautala was conspicuous by his absence.

But one wrong 'un turned up, utterly unrepentant. And, almost as if to prove a point, Dr Sanjay Singh sat on the seat behind the Raja, who spent all his time pretending that he wasn't aware of his former protege's presence.

HEARD AT THE DELHI UNIVERSITY

No wonder he supports the Mandal Commission. That's the only way he will find a job.

A STUDENT ON SHARAD YADAV'S EMPLOYMENT PROSPECT



Dr Sanjay Singh: on the Raja's back

CHECK-LIST

The necks on the block

■ **Montek Singh Ahluwalia:** A particular bug-bear of Shekhar's. The former Young Turk has managed the difficult feat of travelling from the Sixties to the Nineties without letting any reason or logic come near his economic philosophy. So poor Ahluwalia, the most brilliant economist in government will go because the PM hates anyone who ever worked for the World Bank.

■ **Vinod Pande:** Three months ago, Chandra Shekhar condemned Pande's tendency to give political interviews (in a conversation with SUNDAY) and called him a 'fool'. The most politicised Cabinet secretary in memory is on extension and will be glad to resign. It turns out he isn't even a good astrologer: he told us V.P. Singh was safe till next March!

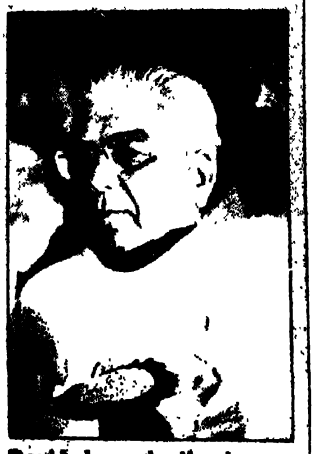
■ **Bhure Lal:** From obscurity to obscurity with a brief patch in the limelight. Lal was the Raja's hatchet man in his finance ministry days before being consigned to limbo. He emerged when VP became PM and now will return to obscurity. Has some goodwill though and people regard him as being basically straight-forward.

■ **Rajendra Shekhar:** There is pressure on the Prime Minister to fire the director of the CBI but if he does so, it will be a mistake. Shekhar is an upright, decent person who had no role to play in the fiasco of the V.P. Singh regime's Bofors inquiries. He professionalised the CBI after the scandal of Mohan Katre's tenure.

The Tau of agriculture

As far as the Devi Lal camp is concerned, nothing has changed. Even while the Chaudhary was out of power, his supporters insist, he was running the agricultural ministry from his Willingdon Crescent residence, what with farming on the back lawns and the selling of quality seeds outside.

Yes, Devi Lal will continue tending the prize



Devi Lal: conducting tours

Jersey cows he rears in his backyard. And if you're particularly good, the Tau will present you to them as a special, special treat.

Prime Minister of the people

With Chandra Shekhar taking over as Prime Minister, it's boom time for the shopkeepers of South Avenue Lane, especially those who have been catering to the needs of the bearded man from Ballia.

While Peter, his tailor, kept a short-sleeved jacket ready for Chandra Shekhar to wear during the swearing-in (yes, the Prime Minister did wear it for the



Chandra Shekhar: true democrat

all-important occasion), the leader's barber stationed himself on the steps of Rashtrapati Bhavan—resplendent in a formal suit—to watch the ceremony.

Well, at least, he had a better luck than Yashwant Sinha, Digvijay Singh and such other close associates of Shekhar, who were hard put to find a seat for themselves.

Holy cow!

As far as personal habits go, Mulayam Singh Yadav is quite an ascetic: no smoking or drinking for the UP chief minister. But the state exchequer bears witness to the fact that Yadav has his share of expensive idiosyncrasies.

For instance, Mulayam Singh finds it impossible to go through the day unless he starts off with a large tumbler of buttermilk and an hour-long body massage. The CM, therefore, keeps his cow tethered outside his Lucknow residence, while a masseur is kept on call every morning.

But what happens when Yadav travels to New Delhi for a couple of days, or more? How does Mulayam Singh manage without his buttermilk and massage?

Simple. He doesn't. After the day's work is over, the chief minister goes back to Lucknow in the state government plane. And flies back everyday after his early morning rituals are over.

The cost: Rs 27,000 every trip.

HEARD AT CHANDRA SHEKHAR'S RESIDENCE

Does this mean that we have to build a badminton court at South Avenue Lane? Or will a shooting range do?

A JANATA DAL MP ON SANJAY SINGH'S SURPRISING DEFECTION TO THE SHEKHAR CAMP

BAROMETER

All those who deserted the Raja

■ **Sanjay Singh:** Everyone who watched the evening news on TV wondered why Kamal Morarka suddenly looked so different. Only it wasn't Morarka sitting beside Chandra Shekhar at his daily press conference. It was Dr Sanjay Singh, protege and close relative of the Raja, who had switched loyalties at that late hour.

Not too late, though. For, he may yet manage to resurrect his flagging political fortunes with this realignment.

■ **Subodh Kant Sahay:** Was wooed out of the Shekhar camp by the wily V.P. Singh with a ministerial bait. The Raja even made Sahay *de facto* home minister of India, reducing the Mufti to a veritable cipher. But that wasn't enough to buy Sahay's loyalty; not for all time, anyway.

For, no sooner did VP begin to look like a loser than Sahay went right back into Shekhar's waiting arms.

■ **Raj Mangal Pandey:** Became a close associate of the Raja's during his days as UP chief minister. Some differences developed between the two men on principles when VP took over as Rajiv's finance minister. But that didn't prevent Pandey from walking out of the Congress behind Singh to join the Janata Dal.

Mandal and mandir later, Pandey began to have his doubts about the Raja. And after hectoring the unfortunate VP at a tea party, went over to the dissidents.

■ **Bhakta Charan Das:** Like Subodh Kant, began as a close associate of Chandra Shekhar's. But went over to the other side once he was promised a ministerial berth. As deputy minister in-charge of sports, Das became a close confidant of the Raja. But only as long as VP was in control.

As the Raja's future began to seem uncertain, however. Das was the first minister to put in his resignation.

Gallows humour, anyone?

The cheeriness most National Front ministers adopted on their last day in office, seemed, to most observers, to smack of false bravado. With a touch



George Fernandes: off with his *chotti*

of gallows humour, to further enliven the sombre atmosphere.

As the Raja went through the routine of thanking the bureaucracy and other officials for all the help they had rendered him during his stint in government, George Fernandes chipped in with his two-bit worth. The only thing he would look back at in regret, he told the assembled gathering, was that he had failed to chop off Vinod Pande's *chotti*.

While all by-standers—including the Raja—tittered, the Cabinet secretary tried bravely to go along with the joke.

But despite his best efforts, didn't manage anything more than a weak smile.

What did the Skypak Man say to the girl from Singapore?

"Don't kill me with your charm! I have a job to do..."



We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

When You Grow Up With The Best You Stay With It.

Lal Imli Dhariwal. Suitings that have remained classics through the years

Yet, contemporary too! Keeping with to-day's fashion trends they offer you a range to



choose from. Tweeds, Worste
Blazer Material. Woollie
Blankets, Cosy Shaw
And mor

Lal Imli Dhariwal. Alway
in style. Never out of fashio

The Original Dress Circle!



THE NEW TEAM

But will Chandra Shekhar's government be able to deliver the goods?




MAYUR PAVONIE FROM MAYUR PAVONIE FROM MAYUR PAVO
MAYUR PAVONIE FROM MAYUR PAVONIE FROM MAYUR PAVONIE FROM MAYUR
Pavonie
Ready to Wear
SHIRTS ■ TROUSERS
CRAFTED
TO PERFECTION.
DISCOVER THE EXQUISITE
STYLING. THE
SUPERIOR FABRICS.
THE SPLENDID RANGE.
AND ITS UNMISTAKABLE
For trade enquiries, contact
Rajasthan Spg. & Wvg. Mills Ltd.,

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 □ ISSUE 46 □ RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
25 NOVEMBER—1 DECEMBER 1990



27
COVER STORY
The new team
But will Chandra Shekhar's government be able to deliver the goods?

12
ANALYSIS
The options
What next for the Janata Dal(S)-Congress(I) relationship?

24
FOCUS
Life without power
What do V.P. Singh's ministers feel about their leader now and what are their future plans?



21
NEWSWATCH
Rumbles of a tumble
Changes at the Centre might spell trouble for Karunanidhi.



35
SPECIAL REPORT
Fighting for survival
Will the Congress(I) bail out Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and how long will it let him rule?

48
BUSINESS
"We are leaving behind a difficult legacy"
Madhu Dandavate, former finance minister, on what went wrong with the economy.

70
CINEMA
Mississippi Masala
Mira Nair's bold new film delves into the problem of racial discrimination.

82
BOOK EXTRACT
Bikaner
A celebration of the legendary kingdom. An extract from Naveen Patnaik's book, *Bikaner*.

LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 10
MEDIA MUSINGS 16
DIPLOMACY 18
Leaving London
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 19
DE JURE 22
MANI-TALK
PROFILE 42
SPOTLIGHT 44
SOUTH BLOCK 67
HEALTH 69
Boil that egg
CULTURE 73
Dancer's dilemma
KHAAS BAAT 74
NEWS 75
SPORTS 81
Guarantee for gold
MILESTONES 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise; North-eastern states: 30 paise



Uncertain times

The cover story (*Running out of tricks*, 4—10 November) is an excellent analysis of the prevailing situation in the country. Ever since India gained Independence, the country has never had to undergo such a period of crisis. The problems have been exacerbated by the National Front government at the Centre.

As soon as the BJP withdrew support for V.P Singh, it was his moral duty to submit his resignation to the President. This was not the case.

It is high time the new government took steps to solve the problems confronting the nation.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ V.P. Singh, the artful dodger of Indian politics, has finally run out of tricks. The Raja, who came to power with the promise of eradicating corruption and everything that was wrong in politics could not hold out any longer when Advani was arrested and the BJP withdrew support. VP, who seemed to be an expert at managing contradictions, had to bow out, rather disgracefully. For, as the saying goes, one cannot go on fooling all the people for all the time.

Amitava Sen, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ It seems that at last the wolf has been exposed and the cat is out of the bag. For, did not V.P. Singh know that the BJP was not secular when Advani has been declaring for the last few months that he would have a *rath yatra*? Did he not know that the Bofors issue which brought him to power had no substance in it?

A period of 11 months is enough to do something productive but it was not so for the National Front government. Hence its collapse. Let us hope that the next government will be more sensible in tackling sensitive issues. The country needs progress. Therefore, in all fairness, all those who supported V.P. Singh in his motion of confidence should be thrown out, as their only concern was to cling on to power at any cost. It is good that the V.P. Singh chapter is finally over.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

■ The cover story was timely and forthright. The National Front government under V.P. Singh was full of uncertainties since its inception. As Prime Minister, V.P. Singh failed to solve the burning problems of the country. Moreover, he divided the nation along caste lines by implementing the Mandal Commission Report.

Therefore, with the collapse of the VP regime, one hopes that things will take a turn for the better.

Dipon Roy, Barrackpore (West Bengal)



V.P. Singh: leaving in disgrace

Dreams and despair

The article on V.P. Singh (*The Hollow Man*, 21—27 October) was inspiring. The close-up of this political personality reminds one of Shakespeare's view: if the hour reveals the man, it also remorselessly exposes the washout. India's development has taken a backseat after the advent of V.P. Singh. He has been accused of being bankrupt of ideas. The troubled situations in Assam and Punjab still exist. There are shortcomings in economic and foreign policy, yet he was not ready to step down.

Sanjay Kumar, Purnea (Bihar)

Postponing the polls

The outburst of Simranjeet Singh Mann regarding the extension of President's Rule in Punjab is surprising (*Losing ground*, 21—27 October).



Simranjeet Singh Mann: advocating elections

The previous National Front government had taken a timely step in the right direction considering the deterioration of the situation in Punjab. The allegation that the elections have been unnecessarily deferred in the state is totally unjustified. It is even more mortifying to note that neither Mann nor Badal has condemned the killings of innocents in Punjab by the terrorists. Mere elections is not the answer to the problems confronting the state: the government should strengthen security measures all over the state in order to safeguard the life and property of the people, which is the priority at the moment.

B. Nithyananda Rao, Tezpur (Assam)

■ The extension of President's Rule in Punjab betrays a lackadaisical attitude towards the people of Punjab. However, the calling off of Assembly elections cannot be faulted as the political climate is hardly conducive for holding polls.

Plans formulated by the government should be implemented instead of letting politicians gain mileage out of what is a national tragedy.

P. Sivaram Prasad, Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh)

Welsh exposure

In his column Khushwant Singh has said that the Scottish, Welsh and Irish languages have now become relics of the past (*Scottish exposure*, 21--27 October). That may be true for the other languages mentioned in the article but is certainly not true as far as Welsh is concerned. Welsh is still spoken in Wales and in the last 40 years or so the British educational policy has actively tried to promote the language. It is compulsory in all junior schools in Wales. The festival of Chairing the bard is held every alternate year at Bangor and Cardiff where Welsh poets are honoured. And, what's most heartening is that most Welsh people are bilingual.

Incidentally, Welsh patriotism is still very much alive. They have not forgotten that they are a conquered race. They are not Anglo-Saxons. The word Wealas (Welsh) means strangers or foreigners.

B.Ranganathan, Nachuni (Orissa)

A dancing wonder

Madhuri Dixit is truly a phenomenon (*Ek, do, queen*, 7—13 October). She has danced her way into the hearts of many.

Madhuri Dixit: a sensation





L.K. Advani addressing a BJP rally: breathing fire

The reason behind Madhuri's success seems to be her traditional good looks coupled with her vivacity and charm. She is like a whiff of fresh air, with the right blend of beauty, verve and histrionic abilities. And, she is too gorgeous and talented to be drawn into the numbers game with lesser mortals.

B. Venkat Ramaiah, Washington D.C. (USA)

Caste consciousness

My sincere gratitude to the writer for revealing my backward status (*Checklist*, 14--20 October). I was always under the illusion that just because my caste had produced two nobel laureates, one President, and scores of bureaucrats over the years, I belonged to a forward caste.

Now as a result of the Mandal report I might be forced to adopt my caste name two generations after it was dropped. I will have to rush and get a domicile certificate from my state (Andhra Pradesh). I will have to don my sacred thread and speak with a strange accent lest people think I am a fake OBC. What luck!

Rudra S.Aiyar, New Delhi

Danger signals

The write-up (*BJP vs Rest of India*, 28 October--3 November) points out that in this rhetorical battle, there will be two casualties: the Mandal report and V.P. Singh. It is unfortunate that the actions of the BJP have posed a threat to peace and communal harmony. What the country needs at present is a healing touch.

There should be cooperation and harmony amongst all Indians. Only then will the country prosper and meet its potential.

A. Jacob Sahayam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)

Clarification

The story (*Fight back*, 4—10 November) contains certain discrepancies regarding the alleged consumer dispute pending before the Karnataka State Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission in Bangalore.

We would like to state that the complainant, R. Ramachandra, neither consulted his doctor, nor did any doctor certify that the chemical compound used in the PVC *chappal* was the cause of the white patches.

Upon receipt of his complaint in February 1987, it was Bata that arranged for a medical examination of Mr Ramachandra by a skin specialist in Bangalore, at Bata's cost.

Prima facie, the doctor diagnosed the complaint as 'vitiligo', commonly known as leucoderma, the cause of which is not normally PVC.

Mr Ramachandra was suitably advised in 1987 and was apparently satisfied. He has, however, chosen to file the complaint now for reasons best known to him.

Please note that since the complaint is *sub judice* before the Karnataka State Forum, we refrain from making any further comments.

Anita D. Gupta, senior executive, corporate affairs, Bata, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Calcutta survives

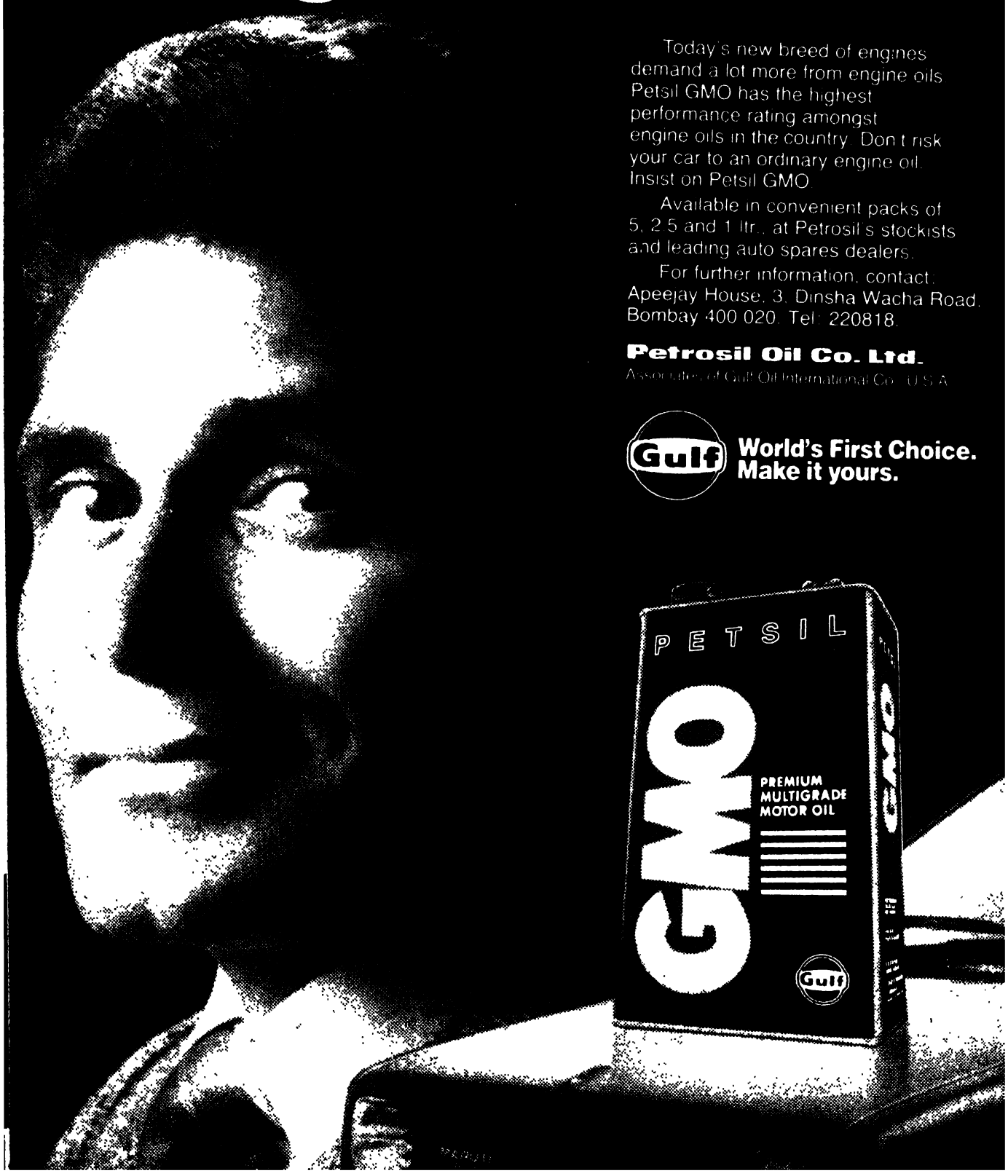
The book extract (*The boxwallah's tales, 14--20 October*) made for some engrossing reading. Calcutta is a city filled with sorrow. But in spite of this, there always exists a faint glimmer of hope. The Marxist chief minister celebrates the city's tercentenary by riding on a liveried tram, a typical symbol of colonialism. The Opposition lays siege to Writers', yet another symbol of Calcutta's colonial past.

Amidst the bustle, filth and squalor, Calcutta still survives. You can almost feel the anguish in the average Calcuttan and hear Dylan Thomas say," Time held me green and dying—though I sang in my chains like the sea."

Chiranjib Haldar, New Delhi

The cover transparencies of V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi which appeared on the covers of SUNDAY issue dated 4—10 November 1990 and 11—17 November 1990, respectively were by Gautam Patole

My car moves on petrol. My engine runs on GMO."



Today's new breed of engines demand a lot more from engine oils. Petsil GMO has the highest performance rating amongst engine oils in the country. Don't risk your car to an ordinary engine oil. Insist on Petsil GMO.

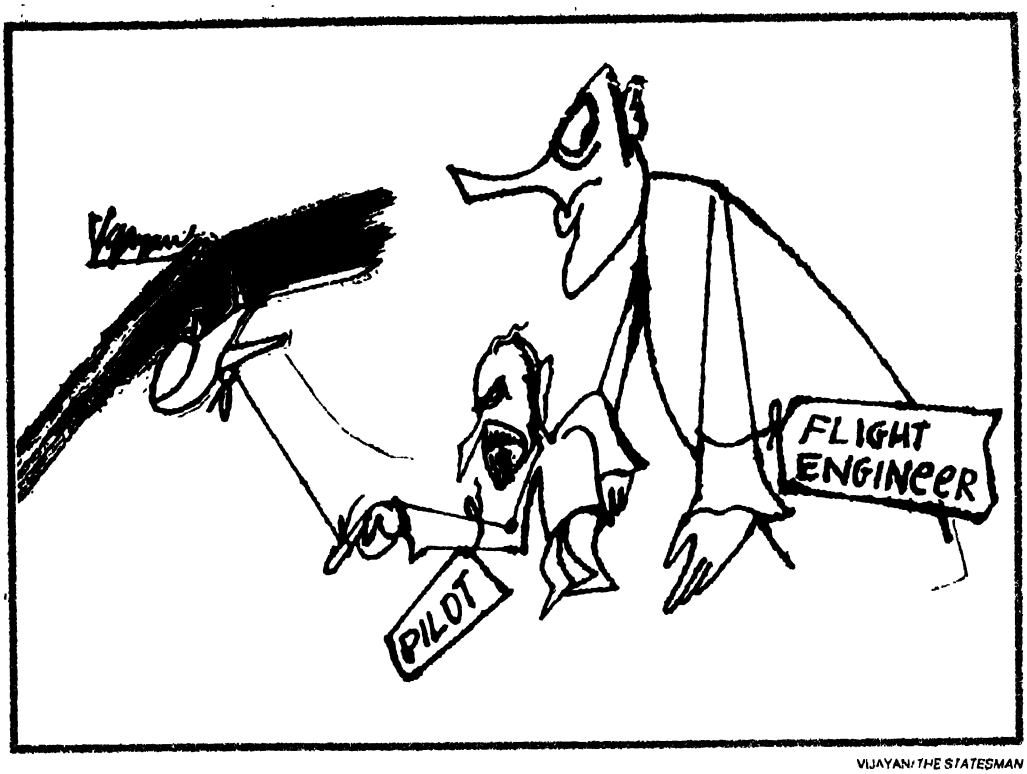
Available in convenient packs of 5, 2.5 and 1 ltr., at Petrosil's stockists and leading auto spares dealers.

For further information, contact: Apeejay House, 3, Dinsha Wacha Road, Bombay 400 020. Tel: 220818.

Petrosil Oil Co. Ltd.

Associates of Gulf Oil International Co. U.S.A.

Gulf **World's First Choice. Make it yours.**



VIJAYAN/*THE STATESMAN*



■ People say that 1979 is going to be repeated. The 1979-like situation was created by V.P. Singh and his colleagues. We are trying to salvage the situation.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Prime Minister*

■ Chandra Shekhar has spine.

DEVI LAL, *deputy prime minister*

■ We have to the make the people realise what they (the Chandra Shekhar faction of the Janata Dal) have done to bring the National Front government down. It is a matter of shame that even after 43 years we have not been able to understand the ethics of parliamentary democracy.

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister*

■ My understanding is that the Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, and his friends are trying to revive the Janata Party.

BIJU PATNAIK, *Orissa chief minister*

■ V.P. Singh was the star of the black farce which ended in suicide.

M.J. AKBAR, *Congress(I) spokesman*

■ The BJP wants to make India a Hindu *rashtra*, the Congress(I) wants to re-establish single party monopoly of power and we want to prevent both.

E.M.S. NAMBOODIRIPAD, *CPI(M) general secretary*

■ *Main V.P. Singh ko kabhi bhutpurva pradhan mantri nahi kahoonga* (I will never call V.P. Singh the former Prime Minister).

LALOO PRASAD YADAV, *Bihar chief minister*

■ All politicians basically think alike. Unless the issue (Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid) is kept out of the purview of politics, there cannot be any solution.

ASHOK SINGHAL, *VHP general secretary*

■ Whoever is the Prime Minister, whoever is ruling, we are supposed to obey orders.

DHIRUBHAI AMBANI, *chairman-cum-managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd.*

■ I am not against Muslims of India, but I am against Muslims in India.

BAL THACKERAY, *Shiv Sena supremo*

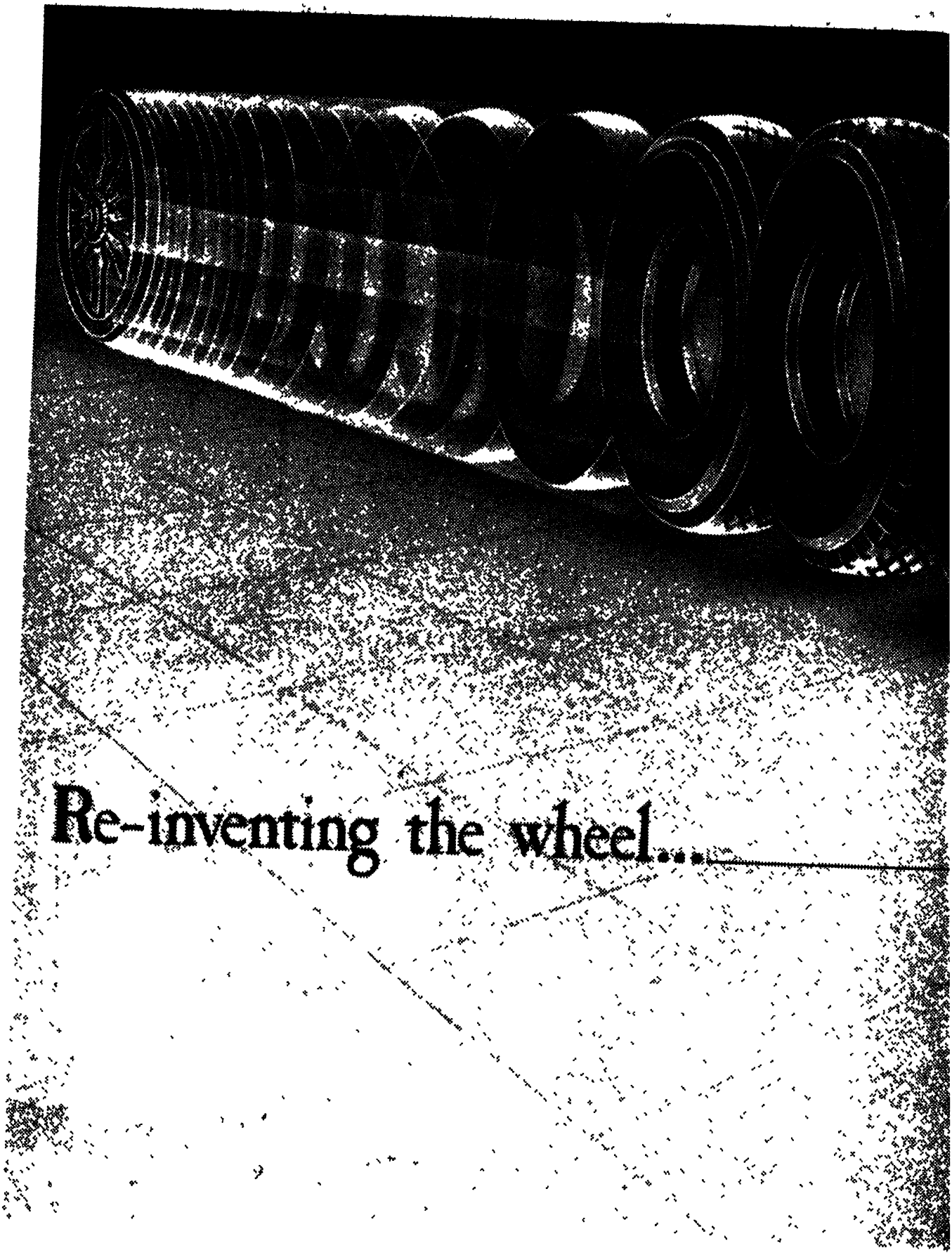
■ I have not really been bureaucratised.

KULDIP NAYYAR, *former Indian high commissioner to Britain.*

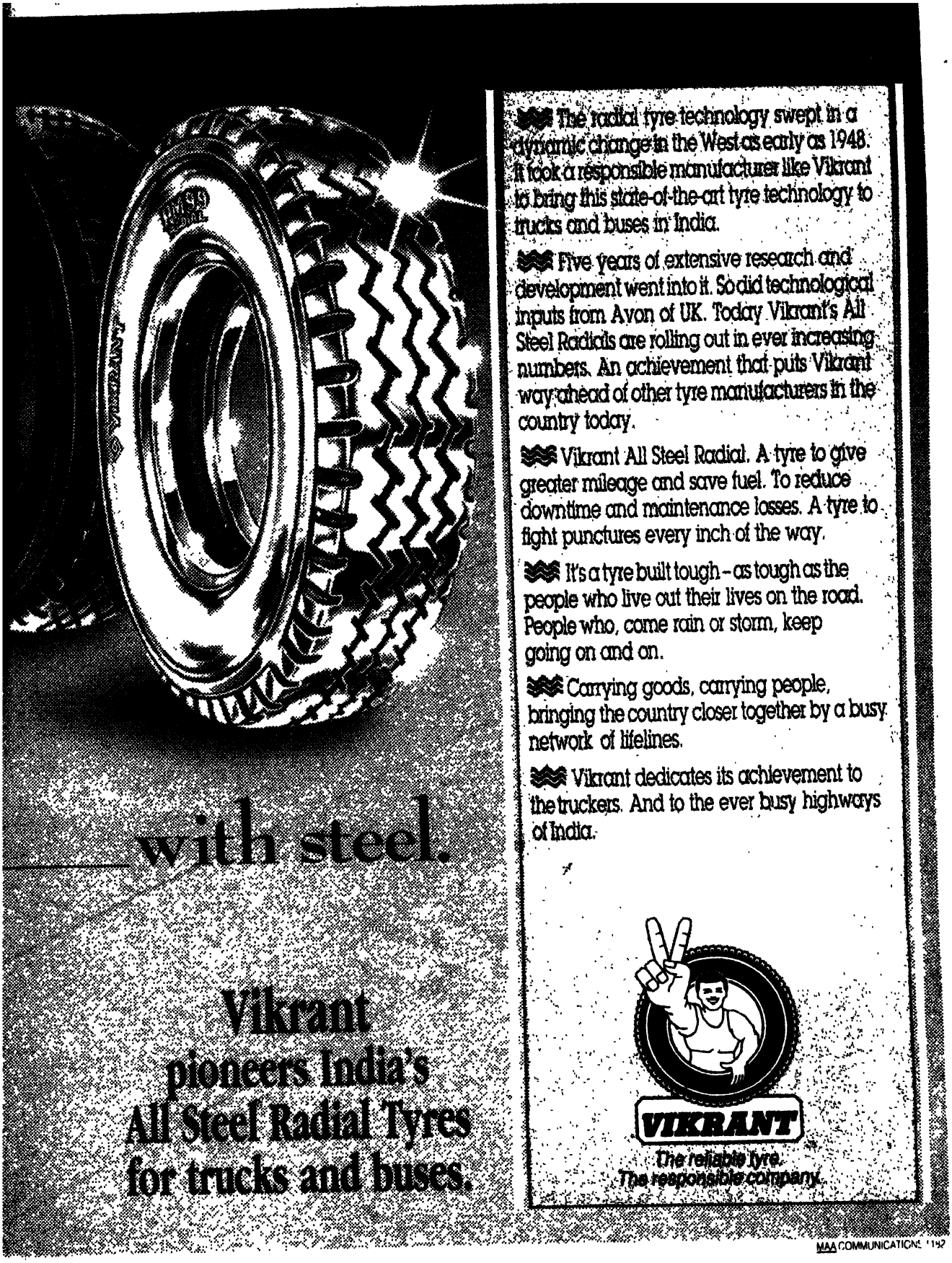
■ I believe in destiny. If I'm destined to again lead India then I'll get the job, whether I like it or not.

RAVI SHASTRI, *cricketer*





Re-inventing the wheel...



MAA COMMUNICATIONS '192

VINOD MEHTA

Small tail, big dog

Sense and nonsense about the Rajiv-Shekhar arrangement



One cannot be certain whether our recently-installed Prime Minister shares Henry Kissinger's conviction that power is the ultimate aphrodisiac (streets ahead of money and powdered rhinoceros horn), but presumably he would testify to its restorative qualities. Ever since he assumed office, Mr Chandra Shekhar is a changed man: confident, calm, relaxed, statesman-like. In short, he gives all the appearance of a chief executive who, at the very least, does not expect to be disturbed for four years.

A couple of days after he was sworn in, the PM took a day off work to seek the blessings of a former Prime Minister in Bombay who has had no say in national or Opposition politics for over a decade. Later, he visited his old haunt, Ritz Hotel, for tea and chit-chat with the staff before going on to Mani Bhavan for another sentimental journey. These can hardly be described as pressing engagements for the leader of a 58-member government struggling to retain control over his dwindling flock. However, such is Chandra Shekhar's sense of destiny that he does not seem greatly intimidated at the prospect of taking on a thankless and impossible job.

Doubtless, we are watching a 'performance' geared to raising party morale, but does it have any basis? Is the fulfilment of a life-long ambition an end in itself? Does Chandra Shekhar recognise that he is doomed from the very start and is he merely happy to enjoy whatever grace period the big white chief living in Janpath is prepared to grant him? Is being Prime Minister for 90 days better than not being Prime Minister at all?

Conversations with Janata Dal(S) MPs and Old Turk *bhakts* reveal that a game-plan for survival and consolidation does indeed exist, and it is this plan which is the source of the considerable optimism pervading the Chandra Shekhar camp these days. The first question, of course, is how much time has the new government got? Mr Gandhi is telling all and sundry with a straight face that he believes no fresh elections will be necessary before 1994. Alas, even by the current standards of double-speak poluting our polity, that is a clear lie. So, when does Rajiv do the dirty?

Estimates vary. Chandra Shekhar's men insist they have two years. That is the time Mr Gandhi needs to put the Congress house in order, have organisational elections, weed out a chief minister or two, gear up the party so that it is in some shape to fight a general election. For independent observers, this assessment is a make-believe. Whatever Rajiv Gandhi's blueprint for party reinvigoration, the pace of activity in the Congress will almost certainly be accelerated and there is no reason why Rajiv and his men should not be ready in six months to ditch the man they are so insistently pushing on to centre-stage currently. Assuming for the sake of argument that the new government is provided oxygen to last till late 1992, what is it going to do to stay out of mischief?

A great deal, it seems. Chandra Shekhar is convinced that presently he will demolish the Janata Dal and win over nearly all the 80-odd MPs still swearing allegiance to V.P. Singh. This process of weaning need not be dramatic, instead it will be slow and steady. Ajit Singh, naturally, is the crucial target. Happily, his loyalties are notoriously fickle and the expectation is that he should be in the Old Turk's pocket by early next year. Biju Patnaik may switch over earlier as will Laloo Prasad Yadav. The rest should stampede on the well-tested herd mentality principle.

Having gobbled up V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar will turn his attention to Rajiv Gandhi. Breaking the Congress, it is acknowledged, will be much tougher, but the Prime Minister's genius for intrigue and manipulation leaves even his own supporters in awe. "If Rajiv Gandhi thinks he can twist us around his little finger, he is



Does Chandra Shekhar recognise that he is doomed from the very start and is he merely happy to enjoy the grace period that Rajiv Gandhi is prepared to grant him? Is being PM for 90 days better than not being PM at all?

sadly mistaken. He is a *bachcha* compared to Chandra Shekharji," said one beaming stalwart. It seems the MP from Ballia has many old and reliable friends in the party, friends with whom he has already established lines of communication. And most of the signals emerging from the other side are positive. Sharad Pawar, Chenna Reddy, Narasimha Rao, N D. Tewari, Buta Singh, Veerendra Patil, K.C. Pant, Madhavsinh Solanki, Jagannath Mishra, Sitaram Kesri are among the friends mentioned. The received wisdom in the party, then, is that a realignment of centrist Congress and non-Congress forces under the banner of Chandra Shekhar is on the cards in the not too distant future.

Breaking up the Congress and the Janata Dal are not going to be Chandra Shekhar's sole preoccupations. Simultaneously, he will perform at least one miracle, thereby demonstrating to the nation that he has other talents besides organisation wrecking. The Prime Minister's followers are unable to identify which precise miracle is in store for us, but it will be one of the three-- Kashmir or Punjab or Ram Janmabhoomi (Assam does not count as a miracle). The feeling is that if he can get a settlement in any of the three crises, he will to a large extent have neutralised the hostility he evokes in the urban intelligentsia and middle class. Interestingly, Mandal is not mentioned since a formula which involves calculated postponement has already been cleared with the Congress. While paying vigorous lip-service to quotas for backwards, a delaying mechanism (besides the Supreme Court) will be introduced to which all parties, with the possible exception of the Janata Dal, will give approval.

In the aforementioned crises, careful and elaborate emphasis is laid on the fact that Chandra Shekhar, unlike his predecessor, begins with one priceless asset: excellent personal relations with almost all the players in the disputes. Farooq Abdullah is his chum, so is Prakash Singh Badal, and don't forget, one is reminded, the Prime Minister was the only political leader of any stature to condemn Operation Bluestar outright. Syed Shahabuddin is his old buddy, while L.K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee eat out of his hand. Witness his superhuman feat at the National Integration Council sub-committee meet in Delhi where he got Advani and Vajpayee to initial a resolution recommending acceptance of the judicial verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi/ Babri Masjid dispute.



In Chandra Shekhar's process of winning over the 80-odd Janata Dal MPs, Ajit Singh is the crucial target. His loyalties are notoriously fickle and the expectation is that he should be in the Old Turk's pocket by early next year. Biju Patnaik may switch over earlier as will Laloo Yadav. The rest should stampede on the herd mentality principle

Guess what was the first thing Chandra Shekhar did after being sworn in? He rushed off to the house of Vijayaraje Scindia where, by prior arrangement, Ashok Singhal was ready and waiting. It seems a heart-to-heart talk ensued after which Mrs Scindia expressed astonished delight at the new incumbent's eagerness to solve the problem without scoring electoral points. And consider this crafty initiative. The PM heard that Bhairon Singh Shekhawat's mother had died in Jaipur. He immediately offered L.K. Advani a plane lift and used the flight time to assure the BJP leader that no vendetta would be conducted against his party or the VHP. Such small gestures apparently are the stuff personal diplomacy is made of, and they make enormous difference in arriving solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Politics, essentially, is about the human touch, and Chandra Shekhar, we are assured, has it in plenty.

I apologise if I seem sceptical and mocking. Doubtless, Chandra Shekhar's relationships assiduously developed over the years are significant. His personal rapport with Farooq, Advani and Badal is probably genuine. The question, however, cannot be avoided: will it make any difference? Dr Abdullah is so marginalised in Jammu and Kashmir and so hated by the Muslim population in the state that any special relationship with him could actually become an impediment to a solution. The same, to a lesser degree, is true of Badal. Furtive visits to Mrs Scindia's residence notwithstanding, will the Prime Minister be able to persuade Messrs Singhal and Katiyar to drop the relocation demand? I think it is both naive and simplistic on the part of Chandra Shekhar and his followers to assume that problems such as Punjab and Kashmir are amenable to solutions based on individual goodwill.

Even more inexplicable is Chandra Shekhar's faith in the word of Rajiv Gandhi. If by any extraordinary confluence of events, the Prime Minister starts to function with some measure of authority, if he seems to be on the verge of pulling off a 'victory' in Kashmir or Ayodhya, Mr Gandhi will swiftly find an excuse to withdraw support. The last thing the Congress is going to allow is a Chandra Shekhar success in any area of governance. He is a stop-gap, lame-duck premier and that is exactly the way Rajiv wants him. Similarly, if the Janata Dal(S) indulges in any overt wooing of Congress MPs and the response seems favourable, the party president will be wholly justified in terminating any existing arrangement of support in the Lok Sabha. Never in the political history of the world has such a small tail tried to wag such a big dog.

In one of his more successful films, Clint Eastwood mutters in disgust: "Why do I have to carry the shit end of the stick?" It is a question Mr Chandra Shekhar could well ask himself. •

THE OPTIONS

What next for the Janata Dal(S)-Congress(I) relationship?



There is an unwritten rule of Indian politics that the day a new government takes office, its supporters lose the ability to think clearly. Thus, in 1984, when the young and inexperienced Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in, his admirers predicted a Golden Age of micro-processed progress and claimed that he would rule forever. Last year, when V.P. Singh got the job, logic dictated that a minority government formed by a faction-ridden party, supported by two entirely different entities was, at best, engaged in a holding operation. The Raja's men thought otherwise, spoke of a full five-year term and predicted that V.P. Singh's popularity would force Rajiv onto an Alitalia plane bound for Torino.

Much the same sort of thing is happening to Chandra Shekhar's supporters. To hear them talk is to get the impression that their leader is here to stay. Some predict a full term. Others, who are even more ambitious, proclaim that he will boot out Rajiv and take over the Congress party! And even those with relatively modest aspirations talk of nothing less than three years followed by a merger with the Congress(I).

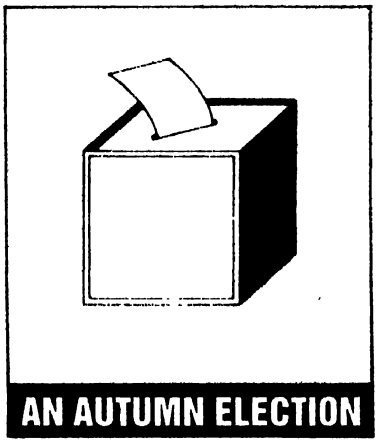
None of this makes much sense. Nevertheless, here's a guide to the scenarios envisaged by the fat cats of New Delhi.

TAKEOVER

Goodbye Rajiv! Hello Shekhar!

Late at night, after they've finished shouting, "*Desh ka neta kaisa ho, Chandra Shekhar jaisa ho*", this is the

THE SCENARIOS: WHAT COULD HAPPEN



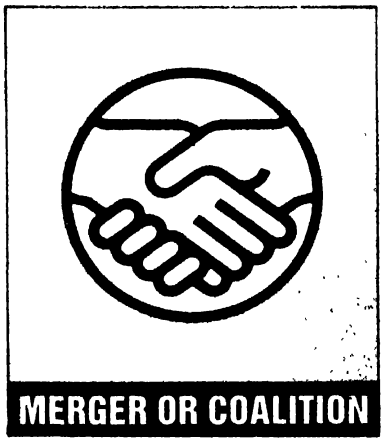
AN AUTUMN ELECTION

Still the most likely scenario. The Congress backs Shekhar till the autumn-winter of 1991 and then goes for an election by mutual consent with electoral adjustments.



FOUR MORE YEARS

The Congress backs Shekhar till the next election is due: the winter of 1994. This scenario is offered only by the most credulous Chandra Shekhar groupies.



MERGER OR COALITION

The Congress decides to join the government in a year's time. Either it will be part of a coalition with the Janata Dal or the two parties will merge.



JAGDISH YADAV

scenario that keeps the Prime Minister's supporters dreaming into their pillows. It is their best case situation.

Briefly put, it runs along the following lines. Shekhar will be a great success as Prime Minister, will solve the fuel crisis, get the economy back on the rails and settle the Ayodhya dispute. At that stage, the Congress party, which has tired of Rajiv Gandhi's capricious and immature leadership, will suddenly realise that the Prime Minister is a terrific leader, fling bricks through the windows at 10 Janpath and run to Race Course Road (or South Avenue Lane) begging to either join the Janata Dal(S) or to be allowed the honour of having Shekhar as its leader. Rajiv will retain a few loyalists of course (P. Chidambaram, Mani Shankar Aiyar and V. George perhaps), but the bulk of the party will opt for Shekhar.

The only reason this absurd scenario is worth taking seriously is because so many people appear to subscribe to it. And now, opponents of a Shekhar-Rajiv alliance *within* the Congress party are also muttering darkly that Rajiv has signed his own death warrant.

In fact, there is simply no evidence to suggest that Shekhar will be a terribly successful Prime Minister. Most of the problems that confront him admit of no easy solution and besides, he has neither the experience nor the broad-based support required to pull off a dramatic coup.

Secondly, have Congress MPs tired of Rajiv's leadership? If they had, then they would have broken ranks and joined V.P. Singh last December when Rajiv's popularity was at its lowest ebb and Bofors was still a live issue. Nobody disputes that Rajiv can be capricious. But equally, Congressmen are gluttons for punishment. Thirdly, is Shekhar a bigger vote-catcher than Rajiv? From all accounts, he lacks a mass following in the Rajiv league. And moreover, he is a liability in the south—the area from from where most Congress MPs were elected.

STAYING ON

Another four years together

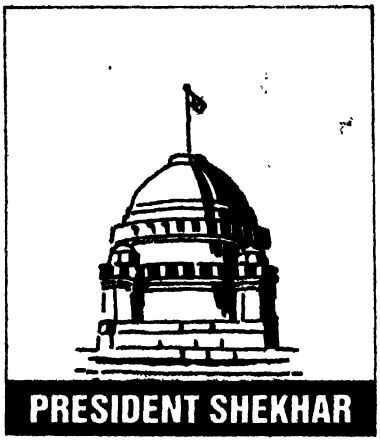
This is only slightly less ridiculous than the takeover scenario. Its key assumptions are one, that Rajiv is reconciled to not returning to power till the next general election is properly due (1994) and two, that Congress MPs don't want power either. So the present state of affairs will endure. Perhaps more Janata Dal members will join Chandra Shekhar's faction, bringing its strength closer to a hundred, but the Congress will be happy to support the government from outside.

And why would the Congress want to keep Shekhar in office? Well, because it could not command a majority on its own. (True.) And if an election were held, it might lose seats to the BJP. So as it can't seize power and does not want to face an election, it will keep this government going.



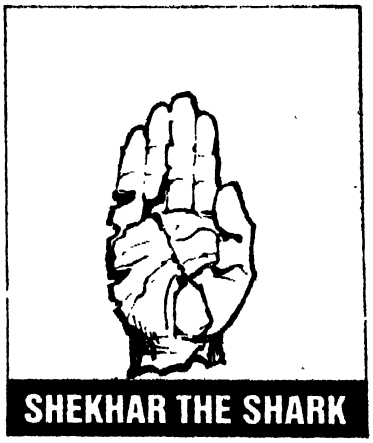
PARTING OF WAYS

The Shekhar-Congress match comes unstuck after a few months. Both sides call each other names and an election is called.



PRESIDENT SHEKHAR

Rajiv waits till 1992, when a presidential election is due, before taking over as Prime Minister. Shekhar becomes President and the Congress joins the government.



SHEKHAR THE SHARK

A scare scenario. Shekhar proves to be so shrewd that he breaks the Congress as he broke the Dal and does to Rajiv what he did to V.P. Singh.

ALOKE MITRA



Rajiv Gandhi: how long before he calls the next elections?

KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



L.K. Advani: waiting to make his move

The argument makes some sense over a six to eight month time-frame. But why on earth would Rajiv wait for four years before wanting an election? The BJP's popularity won't endure that long.

MERGER

Or a coalition will do

A slightly more credible scenario. This assumes that nobody in the Congress or the JD(S) wants elections. After all, they already have a majority together. So what would they gain by going to the people again?

At the same time, the present state of affairs in which the government is formed by a group of 60 MPs cannot possibly endure. So the JD(S) merges with the Congress and the two form the government together.

Or, if Chandra Shekhar is keen on preserving the identity of his Janata Dal, then the two parties enter into a coalition at the Centre and the Congress joins the government.

This scenario has a certain superficial plausibility, but there are too many practical problems:

- What would happen to Shekhar's Cabinet? If the Congress joins the government, then its more experienced members will have to take over the important ministries. Would Shekhar's existing ministers agree then to accept demotions? This seems improbable.
- At present, the JD(S) Parliamentary Party is a north Indian party, while the Congress Parliamentary Party is a south Indian party.

If the two merged, then the parliamentary party that would result would be hopelessly tilted. The Congress' north Indian leaders would be frozen out and their interests ignored.

- Who would be Prime Minister? Would Shekhar agree to step down and become Rajiv's deputy?

PRESIDENT SHEKHAR

A kick upstairs

Basically the same scenario as above, but with a new solution. The two parties wait till the summer of 1992 before entering into a merger/coalition. That is when President R. Venkataraman steps down. So, the Congress and the JD(S) put Chandra Shekhar forward as their candidate for the presidency.

As soon as Shekhar becomes President, Rajiv takes over as Prime Minister and the Congress enters the government.

This scenario solves the problem of what happens to Shekhar in the event of the merger, but does not get around the other difficulties.

GOODBYE FOREVER

A parting of ways

This scenario is one that both the JD(S) and the Congress insist will never come to pass, but over at V.P. Singh's version of the Janata Dal, it is regarded as a near certainty.

There are two scripts. The first casts Rajiv Gandhi as the villain who does to Shekhar what his mother did to Charan Singh. He waits a couple of months until he is sure that he has destroyed the Janata Dal—broken the central government, brought down the Bihar ministry and turned the Orissa and Gujarat chief ministers into his puppets.

Then, he pulls the plug on Shekhar and forces an election. At that stage, both Janata Dals will be in disarray and will not be able to organise themselves in time for the polls. Plus, there will be four-cornered fights in the Hindi belt (the two JDs, the BJP and the Congress), which will favour Rajiv

and assist in his return to power.

The second script casts Shekhar as the villain. In this version, he is a treacherous man who is incapable of carrying anyone along with him and lacks the ability to run the government. After he has led India from chaos to anarchy and alienated the Congress(I), Rajiv will give up on him. And an election will result.

Both scripts are too lurid. Rajiv can't pull the plug on Shekhar without a valid reason. If he does, he will lose support in the country. Secondly, neither man is quite the villain these scripts make out.

But it is entirely possible that Shekhar and the Congress will not get on. Or that he will make such a mess of things that the Congress will no longer wish to be associated with him.

An election will then follow.

AUTUMN ELECTION

The likely scenario

Why has the Congress agreed to support Shekhar? Only the very naive believe that this is because Rajiv admires the new Prime Minister's sagacity or regards him as the best man for the job.

The Congress had a one-point programme: get rid of V.P. Singh. Partly, this was prompted by personal feelings -his betrayal of Rajiv. Partly, it had to do with the national interest--the Congress genuinely felt that he was leading the country to disaster. And partly, it was because of *realpolitik*--it made sense to finish off India's shrewdest politician.

Once it was clear that V.P. Singh would go, Rajiv had two options: elections or a new regime.

Of the two, elections were the least attractive. The Congress organisation is not ready. Rajiv's popularity is returning, but is far from its 1985 peak. Any poll held now would focus on the twin issues of Mandal and the *masjid*—and the Congress is at a disadvantage on both.

But if there was to be a new Prime Minister, then why not Rajiv? Again, there were reasons. At his age, Gandhi can afford to wait. Moreover, he has gained some mileage by refusing to take office without a mandate. Also, he has no solutions to the problems currently facing India.

So, it made sense to put Shekhar in the chair.

But by the autumn, the situation will have changed. Shekhar has no choice but to take unpleasant decisions on Mandal, Babri Masjid and the economy. Whatever he does, he will offend somebody.

By November 1991, the Prime Minister will have taken the flak, both Mandal and the *masjid* will have receded, the Congress will be better organised and Rajiv's popularity will have grown further (assuming current trends continue).

At that stage, if Rajiv asks Shekhar to call an election and enters into seat adjustments with the JD(S), he will probably get an overall majority and be comfortable for the next five years.



JAGDISH YADAV

Chandra Shekhar with V.P. Singh: will he do to Rajiv what he did to VP?

Alternatively, he can wait till the spring of 1992 before getting Shekhar to go to the country. Once the Congress returns to power, Rajiv will be Prime Minister again and that summer, Shekhar can become President.

This is still the most likely scenario: a year or so in office, followed by elections. All that has to be worked out is the timing of the election. Logic suggests that Rajiv will wait till after the monsoons and the festive season. And if things are going well, till the beginning of the following year.

But he has no reason to wait much longer. •

Vir Sanghvi

V. GANGADHAR

Shekhar and the media

No, they are not going to love the new Prime Minister

Prime minister Chandra Shekhar can never be a media favourite the way Rajiv Gandhi or V.P. Singh was. But he is not the type to worry over this unduly. Most newspapers also gave us some titbits about his wife, Dijya Devi, who had so far been ignored by the media.

She seems to be the traditional Hindu wife, somewhat on the lines of the wife of our first President, Rajendra Prasad. Orthodox, timid and not much educated, she is described as religious, regular with her pujas. She does not even remember when she got married to Chandra Shekhar.

In this context, what surprised me was the vicious news item in the Bombay-based *The Independent*, by one of its Delhi correspondent, Rashme Sehgal. On a voyage of discovery, Ms Sehgal crows about "allegations about Chandra Shekhar being a womaniser and, his mistress is stated to be an upcoming film maker who has bagged a contract to make Doordarshan documentaries". As if this were not enough, the report goes on to mention that Chandra Shekhar's wife is a "simple village woman who has a hunchback. For many years she was forced to live in the ancestral home until she forced herself into the South Avenue bungalow and refused to budge".

Why do sick minds ignore certain basic decencies even in journalism? And this in a paper with a four-figure circulation despite all kinds of intellectual pretensions. Twisted minds are worse than hunchbacks!

Left behind

The left in India has always been a kind of joke, unable to adjust itself to the changing patterns in the world. All these days, I've been on the lookout for an intelligent analysis on the left support to the V.P. Singh's National Front.

Another Historic Mistake, an enlightened editorial which appeared in *The Telegraph* provides some interesting answers. In 1942, the Indian communists were not on the side of the nationalist forces. Soon after Independence, they mounted a violent campaign in Telengana, Andhra Pradesh. They ignored JP's famous declaration, "If RSS is fascist, I am a fascist."

In fact, the left's only consistency is its rigid anti-Congressism, right from the 1920s when it pledged to build an 'anti-imperialist front on the ruins of the Congress'. The editorial has a point that the 1989 Lok Sabha poll, exposed the hypocrisy even more. The communists' fight against the BJP was a sham; the real enemy was still the Congress.

This obstinate anti-Congressism has a point. It suits the left in Bengal and Kerala where the straight fight is between the communists and the Congress. There is another pertinent reason why the left would rather have a weak, vacillating government, like the one headed by V.P. Singh, at the Centre. Such a government, in its eagerness to remain in power, with the support of the left, would turn a blind eye to the happenings in the left-ruled states. Take West Bengal as an example during the tenure of the NF government. Not a murmur was heard in Delhi on the deteriorating law and order situation, at the distressing attacks on women, at the rigged elections to the Calcutta Corporation and the general air of violence during the frequent *bandhs*. As the state lurched from crisis to crisis, all that mattered to V.P. Singh was the support lent to him by Jyoti Basu from whichever part of the world he happened to be at the time of every fresh crisis.

A Congress government at the Centre would certainly react differently. Naturally, the left has thrown its lot with the Janata Dal, declaring V.P. Singh as the symbol of secularism, a man of principles and so on. It is a pity that the national media has not paid much attention to this intriguing alliance.

Cricket's cry-babies

The biggest cry-babies of recent times in sports are Martin Crowe's New Zealand cricketers, after their





A report in *The Independent* mentions that Chandra Shekhar's wife, Dijya Devi, is a "simple village woman who has a hunchback". Why do sick minds ignore basic decencies?

thrashing at the hands of Pakistan. And do you know why Pakistan won? Their players disfigured the balls all the time and the umpires would not intervene! Such an allegation was levelled when Pakistan did well in England in 1982 and was found to be baseless.

After all, Pakistan are the acknowledged number two team in the world and New Zealand was just a club side. And yet, eagerly some of the Indian journalists, who obviously cannot stomach Pakistan doing well, turn accusers! Sunder Rajan in *The Times of India*, through some divine insight, finds substance in the Kiwis's charge. He quotes Madan Lal and Kapil Dev who expressed puzzlement at the Pak pace bowlers' ability to swing the ball for long periods. Bizarre theories are put forward. Caps of soft drink bottles and strong fingers are supposed to have been used to disfigure the ball. Imagine gentleman-cricketer Mudassar Nazar (he is supposed to have strong fingers) pressing the ball out of shape!

Some of our cricketers and cricket writers do not take kindly to Pakistan's pre-eminence in the world of cricket. So whenever Pakistan wins it is always because of local umpires or now 'disfigured balls'.

It is only a 'disfigured' imagination which can question such achievements. And do we want Bal Thackerays on the sports pages?

Gush-gush, gloat-gloat

If this column has not commented on Mani Shankar Aiyar's *I Told You So (Sunday November 4-10)*, it's only because everytime I read this 'expose', I burst out laughing and am rendered incapable of work. I envy Mr Aiyar's clipping system or does he have a prodigious memory? *I Told You So*, is a devastating expose on the mysterious way our journalists work. There must have been quite a few red faces among the tribe after reading the piece.

Tavleen (Gush-Gush) Singh's retort in *Indian Express* is rather pathetic and is a poor cover-up on the total turnaround on the golden age of VP. That Mani Shankar Aiyar comes from Doon School and 'crows' in his latest column are irrelevant. He crows because there is so much to crow about. Calling people names like crooks and sycophants might help to let off some steam, but make no mistake, the 'weighty and gush-gush journalists' have a lot to explain. Is this how they have understood power politics despite their 'proximity' to power brokers and so-called 'enlightened judgement'?



As West Bengal lurched from crisis to crisis, all that mattered to **V.P. Singh** was the support lent to him by **Jyoti Basu.** It's a pity that the national media has not paid much attention to this intriguing alliance

Watch that caption

Caption writing is an art which the computers cannot teach journalists. Particularly for human-interest photographs. It's regrettable how careless our sub-editors are when writing captions for photographs. The photograph of a child with an empty plate in front of it carried the following caption in *The Independent*. "For this little child, it is a day like any other with its mandatory spadework for food, which means begging on the streets of south Bombay, oblivious to the celebrations of Children's Day all over the country to commemorate Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday." Gosh, what pomposity!



That **Mani Shankar Aiyar** comes from Doon School and 'crows' in his latest column are irrelevant. He crows because there is so much to crow about

Some captions have no meaning. *Indian Express* published a photograph showing Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar in the company of attractive young women. The caption? "Prime Minister's new friends. Daughter of Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar, Ms Supriya (fourth from right) and her friends, sharing a smile and a pose with Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar at 'Varsha' in the city on Monday evening."

And then there are captions which are plain wrong. *The Hindustan Times*' front-page photograph of Chandra Shekhar and L.K. Advani was captioned, "BJP President L.K. Advani called on Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar in New Delhi on Sunday." The accompanying news report, however, stated that the PM had called on L.K. Advani on that day •

Leaving London

It was a memorable stint for Kuldip Nayar at the India House

The main door of the Indian High Commission in London used to be tightly shut till six months back. Visitors had to convince suspicious securitymen that they were not carrying guns or ammunition and had no terrorist intentions. It took a journalist to open those doors and it will be one of the greatest legacies that Kuldip Nayar will leave behind him when he takes leave of the Indian mission.



RAJESH KUMAR

■ Nayar's 200 days as high commissioner to Britain saw not just a complete change in style at India House, it also brought the High Commission closer to the expatriate Indian community ■

Nayar's 200 days as high commissioner to Britain saw not just a complete change in style at India House, it also brought the High Commission closer to the expatriate Indian community. Small wonder then, that an Indian doctor in Harrow, who had never even met Kuldip Nayar, said she would be sorry to see him go. She had never felt the need to comment when other high commissioners had left.

"The one thing I will miss is the affection I have got here," Nayar told SUNDAY. "I have never felt so much warmth before." Nayar will return to India by the end of November and go straight back to his first love: journalism. "I will resume writing my columns and will also be working on a book based on my experiences here," he said.

The book is to be called *India House* and promises to be full of the most exciting details that never miss the Nayar eye. There is also to be a substantial section on the behind-the-scene negotiations that took place over the Gulf conflict.

So how did a confirmed anti-establishment journalist cope with being a representative of the government?

"Frankly, there were times when I wanted to say exactly what I felt, but then I stopped just short of it," said Nayar.

The Sabyasachi Mukharji case has been an eye-opener for Nayar. "I felt a public servant can be pilloried in Parliament without any basis. They can build up a campaign of falsehood against him and he can do nothing in his defence. And by the time the truth catches up, it is too late."

Nayar himself managed to do a few things that would shake the system at India House. His open door policy not only made him one of the most popular high commissioners in Britain, it also had its solid gains as well. The dramatic reduction in visa fees from £23 (short term) and £69 (multi-entry) to a flat rate of six pounds won him the hearts of a million non resident Indians who go back home every year either on business or to visit relatives. Passports were also made valid for ten years. The ominously long and thoroughly out-dated black-list of potential terrorists was immediately reduced by Nayar, and visas more freely given.

The high commissioner himself visited as many as 60 *gurdwaras* all over Britain and talked directly to Sikh leaders. "I found that apart from a fringe element which is militant and separatist, the majority of Sikhs are very attached to India and care for the integrity of the country. When I was visiting Leicester, the Sikh community raised £15,000 within hours for the relief of cyclone victims of Andhra Pradesh. I think it's a pointer to their feelings for India."

Apart from political achievements, Nayar will also make a singularly welcome contribution to the Indian archives because he plans to microfilm and transfer a large core of the records kept in the India House library here to India. The documents—which run into volumes about ten miles long—will be kept in the Teen Murti library.

Among his unfinished works will be the India Foundation which Nayar is launching in Britain, which will have members from both the Indian and British community. The foundation will have 11 trustees of which six will be elected. Membership rates being fixed at £50 a year, it will raise funds for the running of the India Cultural Centre at Mayfair, which should be opened by the year-end.

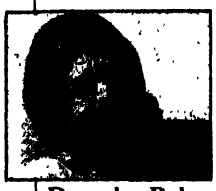
Nayar also plans to get 250 children from India every two months to live with Indian families in Britain and learn about British industry, banking and other sectors.

Hopefully, the projects will not disappear into dusty government files the moment Nayar leaves the mission. For the high commissioner himself, it's been a hectic 200 days, and he can have the satisfaction of knowing that he's managed to do the things he promised. About his short stint as India's envoy to Britain, he has no regrets: "If I compare what I would have done in these 200 days had I been in Delhi writing my column, and what I learnt here, I feel I'd still prefer this experience." ●

Shrabani Basu/London

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Hunting the guru



In a recently published biography of Rajiv Gandhi, the author writes that Rajiv was persuaded by N.D. Tiwari to seek the blessings of Deoraha Baba three days before the foundation-stone of the Hindu temple was to be laid in Ayodhya. We are not told what transpired at the meeting but, undoubtedly, Rajiv received the Baba's blessings by having his forehead touched by the big toe of the holy man perched on a tree. However, we do know that Rajiv made no move to forbid the foundation-stone laying ceremony. The author goes on to state that home minister Buta Singh had suggested that Rajiv himself start the process of building the temple, a suggestion that Rajiv very wisely turned down.

We know that apart from N.D Tiwari, Balram Jakhar and Buta Singh were also devotees of the tree-top Baba: their photographs showing them bowing reverently to have their heads touched by the Baba's foot were published in many papers. It is significant that despite the blessings all three men lost at the polls that followed and Rajiv Gandhi had to step down from his prime ministership.

This kind of public display of reverence for holy men is a post-Pandit Nehru phenomenon. As long as he was alive, even his daughter Indira Gandhi did not dare to go paying homage to *sadhus* or praying in temples. She occasionally called on Anandmayee Ma but always explained away her visits as something she did to keep up the friendship that had existed between her mother and Anandmayee. But no sooner she became Prime Minister, *sadhus, swamis, brahmacharis, tantrics*, astrologers and their likes began to visit her residence. *Havans* and other kind of religious rites began to be performed regularly. It was evident that she felt insecure and sought assurance from these men and performed whatever rites they prescribed. At the same time, she felt that it would reduce her image as a forward-looking woman and stoutly denied having had anything to do with such people or carrying out their prescriptions. I had hoped that Rajiv Gandhi would not succumb to pressure from his superstition-ridden advisers, and like his grandfather, have nothing to do with these archaic practices. They don't fit a man who promises to lead us into the 21st century.

It continues to amaze me how men and women, otherwise with high intelligence quotients (eg, Nani Palkhivala, a disciple of Sahi Baba)continue to indulge in *sadhu* worship and believing in astrology. However futile the blessings they receive and however wrong the predictions made prove to be, nothing seems to shake their faith in the irrational.

I have had long associations with holy men,some of whom became quite friendly with me. Amongst those whose affection I enjoyed were Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri (guru of Nargis Dutt) and Shri Dattabal of Sholapur, who spent a long evening with me drinking my Scotch. I had great respect for Acharya Rajneesh as a scholar and read whatever I can of his writings. I continue to enjoy the affection of Dadaji and make it a point to call on him whenever he is in Delhi. However, none of this has shaken my agnosticism. My chief interest in them is to find out what their disciples get from them that eludes me.



I had great respect for Acharya Rajneesh as a scholar and read whatever I can of his writings. However, none of this has shaken my agnosticism. My chief interest in people like Rajneesh is to find out what the disciples get from them that eludes me

I have come to the conclusion that gurus and godmen are meant for people who are unsure of themselves, troubled in mind and faced with problems which they are unable to solve by their own efforts. I put all this down in my compilation *Gurus, Godmen and Good People* (Orient Longman). In this book, I had followers of Sahi Baba, Rajneesh, Anandmayee Ma, the Nirankari and the Radha Soami Gurus. Mahesh Yogi, Neelkantha Tathgata, Dattabal, Balyogeshwar, Prabhupada and Muktananda write of what their gurus meant to them. I added a chapter on Mother Teresa I had written for the *New York Times*.

Why gurus flourish in India more than in any other country has been explained by Peter Brent in his classic study of the subject *Godmen of India* (Penguin). He writes: "In the west we are free to work for the approval of those we love and respect. Not so in India...for Indians of the middle class, there are only two directions they can go to prove that they can love, and be loved. One is towards homosexuality, the other towards the guru—the two not being mutually exclusive."

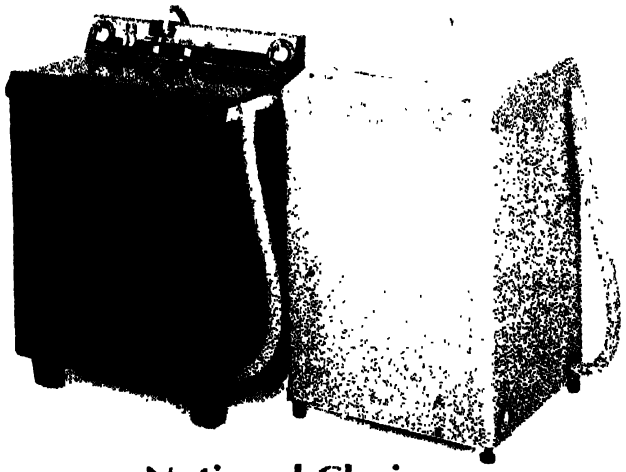
According to Brent, Indians cultivate intimate relations with gurus because there are traditional inhibitions against mingling of sexes and the tyranny of fathers. The young Indian male may not indulge in love "or even look at girls of his own class, but can form the most passionate friendship and express it with caresses with his guru". Furthermore, the guru-disciple relationship "is in some ways an ideal version of that which should exist between father and son but does not". The guru, though the father figure, is the rescuer from the real father's dominance. "He is the father who has been chosen; in this way, the disciple remains free in his bondage, bound in his freedom." ●

When it comes to choosing the best Washing Machine technology in Japan or India...





There's no difference!



National Choice

Videocon Washing Machines are manufactured in technical collaboration with Matsushita Industrial Electric Co. Japan, owners of the famous National brand name whose International reputation for quality and reliability spans over five continents.

This exciting collaboration with India's leading consumer electronics company, VIDEOCON, has resulted in products that have already become National favourites.

Twin Tub Washing Machine With Spin Drier V-NA-200T

Features . • Wash load capacity – 3 kg of dry clothes. • Tough sturdy motor with thermal fuse • Automatic shut off for 100% safety. • Reversible motor action for better cleaning. • Spin drier to ensure fast and even drying. • Special facility of using spin drier for very efficient rinsing. • Draining possible from left or right to suit your home. • Tough on dirt and very gentle with all types of clothes, will not tear off buttons etc • Very low power consumption. • Two year warranty • Well established, prompt after sales service. • Available in three colours

Micro-Computer Based Automatic Washing Machine V-NA-811

Features : • Wash load capacity : 4 kg. • Needs no manual attention after initial start. • Choice of wash programmes - strong, gentle, speedy, normal. • Tough on dirt, very gentle with clothes. • Can wash blankets, rugs, carpets etc. • Facility for using fabric softener. • Special bleach inlet. • Lint filter to collect loose ends. • 100% safe. • Two year warranty. • Well established, prompt after sales service. • Available in two colours.

VIDEOCON

Washing Machines

EXCEPTIONAL • SENSATIONAL • SO NATIONAL.

Manufactured in technical collaboration with Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Japan, owners of the brand name 'National'.

SJAS 90086/123

Rumbles of a tumble

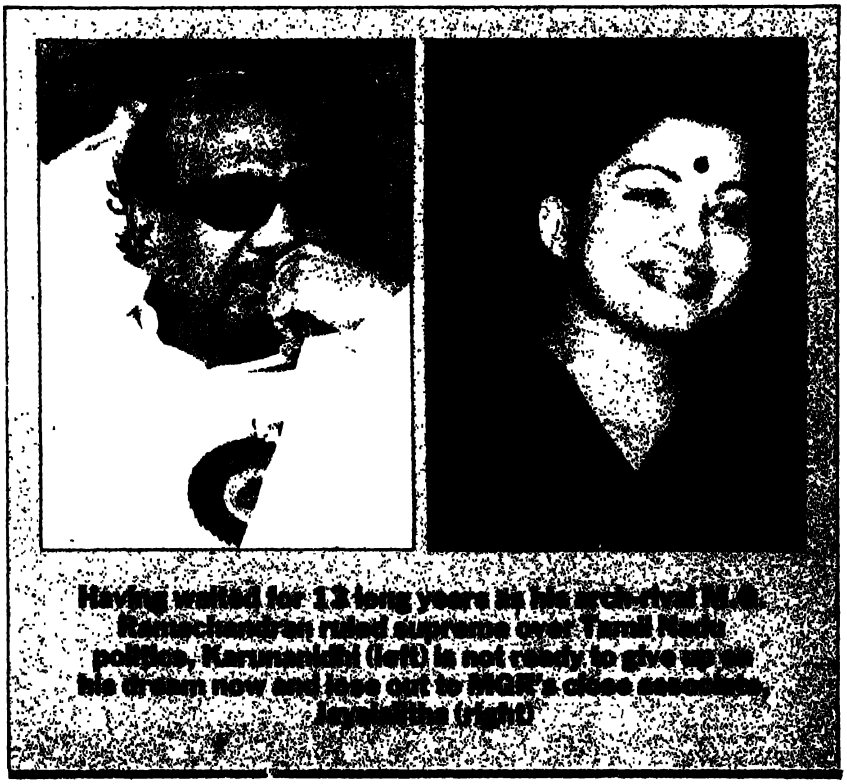
The changes at the Centre might spell trouble for Karunanidhi

It seems that the fall of V.P. Singh has sent panic waves through Karunanidhi. In the absence of the National Front regime's protective arm, the Tamil Nadu government might be on shaky grounds. And the thought of losing out to arch-rival Jayalalitha, much stronger now with the Congress(I)'s support, must be keeping the DMK chief minister awake at night.

As it is the DMK is quite unhappily placed at the moment with no member in the Lok Sabha. The only Rajya Sabha member it had, Karunanidhi's nephew, Murasoli Maran, also bowed out along with the defeated Raja. As the new Congress-backed government is sure to support the AIADMK, the DMK president is scared of being dismissed in spite of his whopping majority in the state Assembly. And the benevolent company of Congress president Rajiv Gandhi is very likely to benefit AIADMK chief Jayalalitha.

The DMK leader had gone the whole hog trying to project V.P. Singh as the saviour of the backward people. His enthusiasm intensified as the Mandal Commission gathered flak from the northern part of the country. Karunanidhi organised a massive DMK rally in Madras and used the occasion to felicitate V.P. Singh on the "bold" decision to implement the Mandal report. Within a week he followed this up with the National Integration Council meeting. Unfortunately for Karunanidhi, all this did nothing to secure his position on his state *gaddi*. "The fall of the V.P. Singh government is a great loss for the backward classes and other depressed people in the country," said a solemn Karunanidhi, quite visibly depressed himself.

But there are no good reasons for the DMK chief to suddenly lose ground and become so utterly vulnerable as he appears at the moment. His only concern is that the AIADMK-Congress alliance may create law and order problems and blow it out of proportion to catch the eye of the Centre. This might seriously harm the DMK's image and if there is a mid-term poll in the near future, the party might suffer a humiliating defeat. And having waited for 13 long years as his arch-rival M.G. Ramachandran ruled supreme over Tamil Nadu politics, Karunanidhi is not ready to give up on his dream now and lose out to MGR's close associate, Jayalalitha.



Having waited for 13 long years as his arch-rival M.G. Ramachandran ruled supreme over Tamil Nadu politics, Karunanidhi (left) is not ready to give up on his dream now and lose out to MGR's close associate, Jayalalitha (right)

There are already some embarrassing issues that his opponents bring up from time to time. One is his alleged support to the LTTE and his helping the guerrillas in their unlawful activities like gun-running from Tamil Nadu soil. This charge was brought up by Rajiv Gandhi in the confidence debate in the Lok Sabha on 7 November. A livid Karunanidhi immediately denied the charges and commented that Rajiv was defiling his grandfather's name by such falsehoods. "Also," added the DMK CM, "Ms Jayalalitha had only recently spoken in support of the LTTE, from a public platform shared by Rajiv Gandhi himself, in Madras."

And Jayalalitha herself is pinning her hopes on the new government, although her decision to support the Chandra Shekhar regime from the outside disappointed some of her senior followers. The most heart-broken were probably the 11 AIADMK members in the Lok Sabha, who probably hoped to get berths in the new Cabinet. There were rumours that the new ministry would have at least two AIADMK ministers. The late MGR had two AIADMK representatives in the short-lived Charan Singh ministry and it seemed only natural that his political heir, Jayalalitha, would do the same. Whether the Chandra Shekhar ministry would last as long as the Charan Singh one was, of course, a different issue.

With the stakes thus distributed, and the political scenario suggesting polls early next year, the rival political camps in Tamil Nadu are gearing up for a confrontation. And this time the 21-month-old DMK government might not emerge the winner. •

R.Bhagwan Singh/Madras

MAHESH JETHMALANI

The fall of the Raja

Why V.P. Singh had to go



Any dispassionate observer of the Indian political scene cannot but view the departure of the National Front government with mixed feelings. The mandate of the last election was undoutedly for a clean government but it was also a mandate for three anti-Congress political entities to solve the burning problems which a new government would inherit. In retrospect, Mr V.P. Singh fulfilled the first part of his mandate, inasmuch as, he undoubtedly provided a conspicuously clean administration. The best that can be said, however, for Mr. V.P. Singh's efforts to fulfil the second part of his mandate was that they were wellintentioned failures. The nation must surely lament the squandering of an opportunity proferred by it to one of the few politicians with unimpeachable credentials of personal integrity.

There is much to be said in favour of V.P. Singh's government. The single most welcome feature of his administration was the restoration of a tradition of respect for the institutional process of the nation.

While V.P. Singh can claim credit for providing a clean administration, he cannot escape blame for not affording an efficient one. The root causes of such inefficiency were undoubtedly a pre-electoral lack of self-confidence in taking on the powerful Congress system on his own, and a consequent reliance upon the organisation and resources of a number of faction leaders, at least some of whom nursed a burning ambition to occupy the Prime Minister's chair.

The logic and imperatives of a minority government supported by two diametrically opposed parties in Parliament was the direct cause of such inefficiency. The very nature of his government necessitated a consensual approach, "managing contradictions" to use his own words became the keynote of his government. The practical manifestations of such an inherently absurd approach towards government is there for all to see. On every vital issue, his government adopted at least two patently inconsistent policies. While the Raja waxed eloquent on a healing touch and elections in Punjab, he was compelled by the BJP and hardliners within his own party to wane in Parliament through constitutional amendments which repeatedly postponed elections in Punjab. In Kashmir, we had the incongruous picture of Jagmohan's iron-fist being offset by George Fernandes' velvet glove. And on Bofors and corporate crime, the Raja's real predelictions—revealed in his actions as finance minister in 1985—were diluted by both factional leaders within his party, as well as, some leaders of the supporting parties who sought to camouflage their insensitivity to corruption and crime by advocating a "no vendetta" approach. The resultant picture was a vacillating and inconsistent Prime Minister, incoherent government policies, and a conspicuous drift in politics generally.

The implementation of the Mandal Commission Report must necessarily be viewed as the definitive policy initiative of the Raja's regime. There is nothing sinister either in the recommendations of the report or in the timing of its implementation.

The arguments on the Raja's timing and haste in implementing Mandal are quite misleading. By August 1990, it had become quite clear to the Raja that the minority government he was heading could not survive. The BJP, along with the VHP, had declared its intention to construct a temple by 30 October even if it meant the demolition of a mosque. Unless one of the two sides resiled from their aims, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue admitted of no solution. Indeed, all the political parties which criticised the Raja for his failure to solve the issue, were themselves bereft of any solutions. In addition, the expulsion of Devi Lal from the Cabinet on the grounds of Meham, a forged letter and public statements that undermined



SUBHAJIT PAL

The root causes of the V.P. Singh administration's inefficiency were a pre-electoral lack of self-confidence in taking on the powerful Congress system on its own and the consequent reliance upon a number of faction leaders

collective Cabinet responsibility, had rendered the Jat leader an irreconcilable dissident who had already begun to make a common cause with that other perennial dissident Chandra Shekhar, in an attempt to split the party. In hind-sight, the fall of Raja's government was inevitable if not from its outset then at least from August 1990. Any new combination would necessarily have to depend on Congress support. If in August 1990, therefore, the Raja had indeed perceived that there could be no anti-Congress government after the inevitable fall by 30 October of his own government, then the implementation of the Mandal report on 13 August is unobjectionable. The Raja had made a commitment to the backward castes on the Mandal report in the Dal's manifesto, and he was entitled to implement it before his fall. The Mandal report was not the cause of the Raja's downfall. That downfall was inevitable in August 1990 and Mandal was merely its effect.

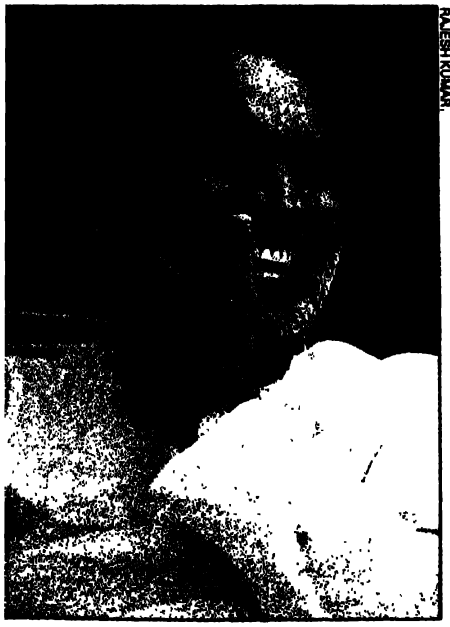
On merits, the report must be considered unimpeachable as no political party has dared to oppose it. Even those who have not read the report must assume, therefore, that the report enhanced social justice and ought to be implemented. The hostile criticism which the Raja has been subjected to from all his political opponents is thus the outcome of political malice, envy or frustration.

It would be unfair to the BJP to label them as wreckers of an incumbent government or to compare them with those responsible for the fall of Janata Party in 1979. The BJP obviously sensed the imminent split in the Janata Dal, perceived the Raja's consequent steps to create a political base which afforded him an electoral majority independent of support from any other factional leader, and rightly concluded that a mid-term poll was in the offing. It accordingly distanced itself from the government at the earliest opportunity. It would have done better service to both the nation and itself, however, if it had resigned from the government on the basis of a less divisive issue and at a time when vital investigations were finally concluded.

The compunctions of Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal are also crystal clear. Being mere faction leaders, they could never aspire to be Prime Minister on their own strength or in their own right. Their chances of becoming Prime Minister were always dependent on attaining supremacy of their faction over all other factions within a party structure. So long as the Raja presided over a party consisting of several factional leaders, their endeavours were thus concentrated on securing the support of a majority of factions within the party. Under the Raja's new dispensation, their is no room for factional leaders. Of all politicians, factional leaders are necessarily the greatest political opportunists. The foundation of their quest for power is opportunity. The political vacuum created by the fall of Raja's minority government afforded the last and only opportunity for factional leaders to come to power. Chandra Shekhar was hardly likely to spurn such an opportunity.

The circumstances surrounding the opportunity afforded to Chandra Shekhar, however, are hardly propitious. The dissident Janata Dal—Congress combine is conceived not only in political opportunism but political immorality. It has no ideological cohesion; indeed, there are glaring contradictions. It is contrary to the national mandate of 1989. The unifying principle of the dissident group that will constitute the government is to have one last bite of the power apple, but not all of them will get a bite of the apple, and several will not get the choicest bite. There are no values or principles so that the aphrodisiac of power can be enjoyed vicariously, and there is no administrative experience, so that, the power wielded by some can be appreciated by all. Chandra Shekhar comes to office with the unique distinction of never having held any ministerical post before. Among likely Cabinet candidates, there is only one person with any worthwhile Cabinet experience in the past in the form of Ashoke Sen who has had three undistinguished tenures as law minister. After him, the most experienced member is Devi Lal who has been the deputy prime minister and agriculture minister.

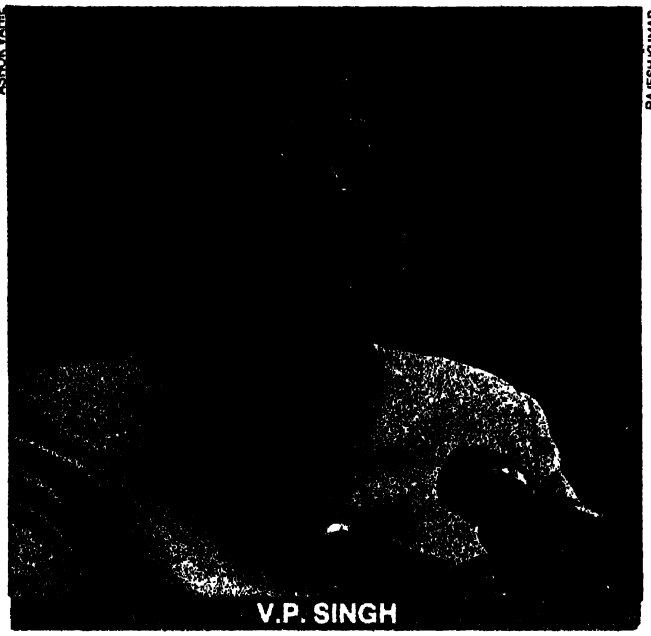
It does not require great political clairvoyance to predict a mid-term poll within the next three months. That election will effectively disclose the heart of this nation and decide its destiny for several years to come. The issue will undoubtedly be national unity and national integration. The nation will have to decide whether those goals are best achieved by Mr V.P. Singh's platform of social justice, the BJP's appeal to revive a glorious Hindu past, or the Congress's claim that it alone can provide stability because it has been around for a long time. ●


RAJESH KUMAR


RAJESH KUMAR

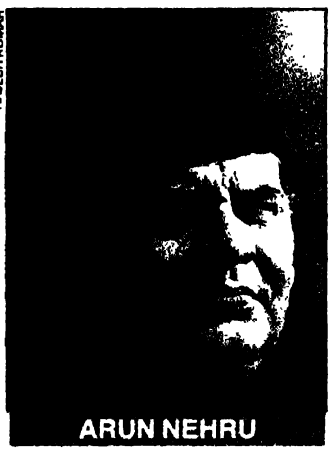
The expulsion of Devi Lal from the Cabinet had rendered the Jat leader an irreconcilable dissident who had already begun to make common cause with Chandra Shekhar to split the party

ASHOK VAHIE



V.P. SINGH

RAJESH KUMAR



ARUN NEHRU

He is keeping his cards close to his chest. There are rumours that he will join Rajiv Gandhi, but Nehru is not saying anything at the moment

SECRET EYE



ARIF MD.KHAN

Who should be held responsible for the downfall of the National Front government? "I would not like to put the blame on anybody," he says guardedly

Life without power

What do V.P. Singh's ministers feel about their leader now and what are their future plans?

The greater the expectations, the bigger the disappointment. When V.P. Singh stormed to power last December, he was hailed as the messiah of value-based politics, the Raja who could do no wrong. And, since the issues that V.P Singh and his Janata Dal colleagues had harped on all along the election campaign were the corruption and the inefficiency of the Rajiv raj, it was naturally expected that once in the saddle, they would put an end to all that was wrong with Indian politics. But during his 11-month rule, the Raja did nothing to live up to his image of an efficient and honest administrator. And though V.P. Singh did manage to keep himself out of major controversies, his ministers were not that lucky. Thus, if Veer Bahadur Singh sent his state aircraft back from Delhi to Lucknow to fetch his pyjamas during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, Maneka Gandhi was accused of misusing her ministry's plane to visit her son's school in Andhra Pradesh.

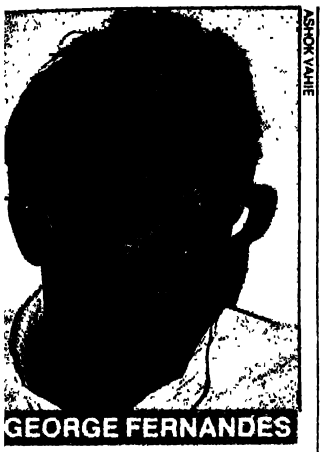
What kind of a legacy did the V.P. Singh regime leave behind? Were the Janata Dal ministers any different from their predecessors? Were their styles of functioning any better than Rajiv Gandhi's discredited lot? And, what do the ministers feel about their leader?

V.P. Singh's team can be broadly divided into two categories. One comprised young and junior ministers, such as Subodh Kant Sahay and Bhakta Charan Das, both of whom were close to Chandra Shekhar but were weaned away by the Raja with ministerial berths. In the second category were veteran Dal leaders like Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammad Khan, I.K. Gujral and George Fernandes, some of whom were unhappy with the way Singh was running the show, but never came out against him in public.

Understandably, it is the junior lot who first raised the banner of revolt against V.P. Singh. Bhakta Charan Das was the first of the Raja's team to defect to the Chandra Shekhar camp when it became amply clear that the Raja would have to go. But why did he desert his leader in his hour of crisis? Wasn't it sheer opportunism and a desire for power? Das explains: "We differed on issues. For instance, while I admit there was unanimity among the senior ministers on tackling the Ayodhya issue, many of us, the younger lot, felt that V.P. Singh had taken the wrong line with the BJP. Moreover, we felt that once the BJP had withdrawn support, V.P. Singh should have resigned immediately."

The senior hands in V.P. Singh's Cabinet, however, are not that forthright. Though many of them like Das were dead against the Raja, they have chosen not to speak out. Arun Nehru, for one, is keeping his cards close to his chest. Despite strong rumours that Nehru will join his cousin Rajiv Gandhi, the former commerce minister has done nothing to confirm such a belief. He also refuses to say anything about his future plans

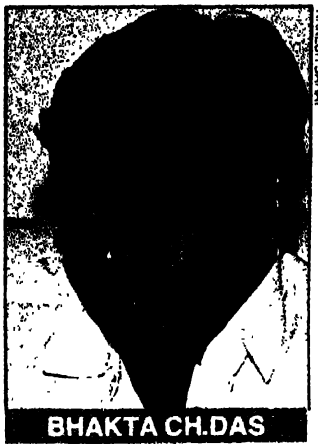
Arif Mohammad Khan, the former energy and civil aviation minister, too, is extremely guarded while commenting on the performance of V.P. Singh's government. "All I can say is that I did my job the best I could and if there were any shortcomings, they were entirely of my own making. I



ASHOK VAHIE

GEORGE FERNANDES

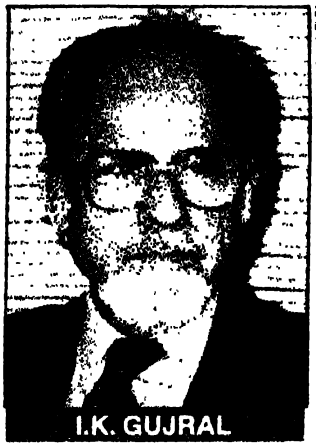
The previous government did a creditable job, he feels. "From my experiences in the 1977 Cabinet, I can say that there was more interaction during our tenure"



RAKESH SAHAI

BHAKTA CH.DAS

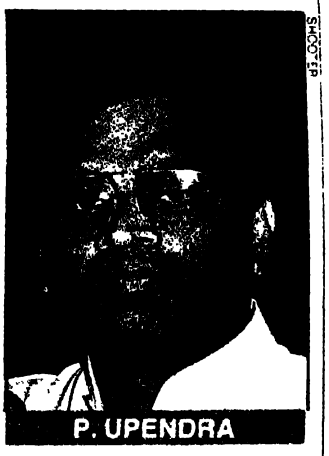
He was the first of the Raja's team to defect to the Shekhar camp. Sheer opportunism on his part? "We differed on issues," he explains



KALYAN CHAKRABORTY

I.K. GUJRAL

He feels that the Raja did an excellent job. "One of the important things V.P. Singh did was to restore the importance of the Cabinet"



SHOOTER

P. UPENDRA

One outstanding feature of the last government was its commitment to the manifesto, he claims. "The manifesto became the Bible of the government"

would not like to put the blame on anybody else," says Khan.

Arif Mohammad, nevertheless, feels that infighting within the Janata Dal seriously hampered the functioning of the government. 'There were periods of inaction," he agrees, but adds hastily, "however, I don't think that one week's absence of a minister turned things upside down." What about his future plans? "Now that we will be sitting in the Opposition, we will use the forum of Parliament to carry on the debate begun by V.P. Singh. It is not necessary to launch a political movement every time because the people can see for themselves who are playing games with them," he says.

There are others, however, who are in favour of reaching out to the people. They are all solidly behind V.P. Singh and feel that the Raja did an excellent job during his short tenure. Says I.K. Gujral, the polished foreign minister in the last Cabinet: "One of the important things V.P. Singh did was to restore the importance of the Cabinet. Under Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) used to run the country. This is achievement enough." Former railways minister George Fernandes chips in: "V.P. Singh was criticised for having a penchant for setting up committees. But it is through these committees that work could be done. There's no point in having ministers tackling all the problems."

P. Upendra, who often got into trouble while handling the information and broadcasting ministry, is also full of praise for the Raja. One outstanding feature, according to him, of the last government was its commitment to honour the election manifesto. "For the first time," says Upendra, "the manifesto became the Bible of the government. The manifesto was there in all Cabinet meetings and many of the promises made to the people—like granting autonomy to the electronic media and the uplift of the backward classes- were kept."

According to Upendra, many other promises made before the elections would have been honoured had the government lasted. According to him, as many as 50 Bills were pending in Parliament when V.P. Singh lost the confidence of the House "Our plan," says Upendra, "was to finish all legislative processes by December this year and start implementing our election promises from the second year onwards."

When Madhu Dandavate was sworn in as finance minister of the V.P. Singh Cabinet, he had a daunting task before him. The economy was in a shambles and midway through his term, the Gulf crisis struck a crippling blow. But despite the criticism that he plunged the country deeper into the red, Dandavate has no regrets. The revival of the National Development Council (NDC) as an institution, he thinks, was one of the most creditable achievements of the V.P. Singh regime. "The NDC is an important arm of the government but was ignored for decades. Its revival has led to the strengthening of Centre-state relations. And even the then Opposition leaders have admitted this," claims Dandavate.

Most of the Raja's camp followers feel that the National Front government's most important achievement was to restore the importance of the Cabinet. Explains George Fernandes, "From my experiences in the 1977 Cabinet, I can say that there was more interaction during our tenure Secretaries of the various departments were regularly called in for consultations." But the Raja's detractors feel otherwise: they claim that while V.P. Singh did consult many people, all major decisions were taken by him alone. They cite the instance of the unilateral and sudden implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations.

Will V.P. Singh be remembered as a failure? "Certainly not," says Fernandes, adding, "During the election campaign I had pointed out that even if we came to power, the government will have a difficult time because the country was facing problems on several fronts. V.P. Singh did his best in the short period that he was in power." Perhaps, but the Raja certainly cannot demand credit for revolutionising the Indian political system—something which he had promised to do in the summer of 1989. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

To the world ... your stride.



dinesh

Exclusives ▲ Suitings ▲ Co-ordinates ▲ Safaris

the choice of leading fashion houses, internationally.

Exclusive showrooms: **AHMEDABAD:** Apurva & Co. • **BARODA:** Shahco Traders • **SURAT:** Shri Dinesh Textile Traders • **AJMER:** Vardhman • **BEAWAR:** G. Navin Textiles • **JAIPUR:** Sheel Son • **JODHPUR:** Jhankar Sons.

(SUN/8)

everest/89/SDM/298

THE NEW TEAM

But will Chandra Shekhar's government be able to deliver the goods?



RAJESH KUMAR

It was a bad beginning for a Prime Minister who already had severe image problems. The first thing Chandra Shekhar did on assuming office was tell anyone who would listen that the country was passing through its worst crisis ever. Strangely, the Prime Minister did not follow the rhetoric with action. For 11 days after he was sworn in, the governance of India remained in a state of limbo. It took the veteran Janata Dal strongman that long to even constitute a Cabinet to cope with the problems he kept talking about.

On Wednesday, 21 November, just hours before the Prime Minister flew off to the Maldives to attend the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit, he finally unveiled his ministry. As nonentity followed nonentity on to the podium, the only question that remained was: why did it take 11 days to appoint *this* crowd?

To be fair, Shekhar had his problems.

First, the Janata Dal(S) comprised only 60-odd MPs, most of whom had little or no previous administrative experience—even the Prime Minister

himself had never held a ministerial post before. Most of the members were from the Hindi belt states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with some representation to Haryana (courtesy Devi Lal) Rajasthan and Gujarat. The south was conspicuous by its absence as was the Muslim community. If Shekhar chose from the scarce resources at his disposal, he was bound to end up with a less than balanced ministry.

Then there was the problem of the Tau. Devi Lal insisted that some of the major portfolios go to his supporters, with his son Ranjit Singh being accommodated in the Cabinet. Dhankhar, too, should get a prize post, maintained the Chaudhary, while he would be content with agriculture. Faced with these demands, Shekhar fell back on his old ally, Lal's eldest son Om Prakash Chautala, to get the deputy prime minister to scale down his demands.

Political gossip had it that the Congress(I) was meddling in the process of ministry formation as well, asking that people such as Maneka Gandhi and Sanjay Singh be kept out. Rajiv Gandhi was quick to scotch such rumours, but the talk persisted, with Shekhar hard put to defend his credibility as an independent head of government.

Even so, there were few surprises in the list he finally announced. Shekhar found berths for his devoted followers, accommodated many of those who had preferred him to V P. Singh and allocated portfolios to Devi Lal's no less devoted followers—though some like Jagdeep Dhankhar chose to stay away rather than accept the Prime Minister's terms.

The swearing-in ceremony—held in the Ashoka Hall this time—was marred by unruly scenes such as had occurred when Shekhar and his deputy were being administered the oath of office, compounding the government's image problems still further. While Devi Lal turned up despite the failure to accommodate all his followers, his supporters weren't quite so obliging. Chand Ram and Jagdeep Dhankhar stayed away to lodge their protest

The coterie

The men the new Prime Minister relies on

Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar may have widely varying styles of functioning, but there's one thing they have in common: reliance on a coterie of trusted advisers, most of whom are entirely dissimilar except in their overriding loyalty to their leader. Rajiv had M.L. Fotedar, R.K. Dhawan, Satish Sharma and Buta Singh; the Raja depended on Vinod Pande, Bhure Lal, Som Pal and Sita Devi; and now Shekhar relies on such supporters as Yashwant Sinha, Kamal Morarka, Harmohan Dhawan, C.V. Gautam and others. A quick look at Shekhar's inner circle:

YASHWANT SINHA



A former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Sinha was in the forefront of the anti-VP campaign launched by the Shekhar camp. His jobs ranged from persuading MPs to change sides to taking the Raja head-on in party meetings. Perhaps, the most experienced administrator the Dal(S) can boast of, Sinha enjoys the complete trust of the Prime Minister and can be safely expected to dabble in matters which don't directly concern his ministry.

KAMAL MORARKA



An associate of Chandra Shekhar's since 1967, Morarka is, perhaps, the Prime Minister's most trusted aide, though he has preferred to stay in the background over the last fortnight or so. But while the battle for the prime ministership was still on, the young Bombay industrialist was a regular at Shekhar's 3 South Avenue Lane residence, holding meetings with other members of the coterie to chalk out strategy. His biggest strength is his ability to shoot his mouth off and tell his leader the truths no one else will.

HARMOHAN DHAWAN



The general impression that Dhawan is a late entrant to the Shekhar camp is not really true. Even when he was only dabbling in Chandigarh politics, the MP was a devoted follower of the new Prime Minister. As general secretary of the Janata Dal, he repeatedly challenged the authority of V.P. Singh, even having heated exchanges with him during the course of a parliamentary party meeting. In the run-up to the change of government, Dhawan was one of the principal strategists of the Shekhar camp.

DIGVIJAY SINGH



Despite being closely related to the Raja, Singh has always been a camp follower of Chandra Shekhar's. Beginning as a student leader at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Digvijay, alias Dada, graduated to become a Rajya Sabha MP from Bihar. Though not in the same league as Yashwant Sinha and Kamal Morarka, Singh manages to pull his weight.

JAYANT MALHOUTRA



Former treasurer of the Janata Party, Malhoutra camped out at the Ashoka Hotel all through the Janata Dal crisis, hanging on until the Raja's government fell. His presence at South Avenue Lane went down ill with some members of Shekhar's coterie, but Malhoutra gamely hung around. Shekhar, apparently, owes him one because he helped him in his battle with

against the new dispensation.

While Chand Ram's name didn't occur in the list—he had already turned down the portfolio offered to him—a seat was kept reserved for Dhankhar, who failed to put in an appearance. The Chaudhary's principal side kick saw no reason why he should agree to become a minister of state when such people as Maneka Gandhi and Sanjay Singh were being given independent charges.

While speculation raged about Jagdeep Dhankhar's absence, pandemonium broke out outside Ashoka Hall. Ten minutes before nine am, after all the VIPs had entered, the securitymen shut the gates, refusing to allow newsmen in. The journalists who hadn't been informed that they should come an hour in advance were incensed When the guards refused to relent, some of the mediamen tried to force their way inside. They were lathicharged and, in the stampede that followed, many were injured while some lost their valuables.

Nor did the securitymen permit ministers to enter. Yashwant Sinha was stopped at the gates and realising what was going on, he refused to go in unless the press was allowed in too. After heated exchanges, Sinha managed to get the journos inside, but by that time, the oath-taking ceremony was already under way.

Some of the mediamen began shouting "Shame, shame" to protest their treatment at the hands of the security guards. V.C. Shukla, Subramaniam Swamy and a few other ministers took the oath of office and secrecy amidst loud slogan-shouting. The guards finally succeeded in evicting the newsmen, who immediately afterwards demanded a judicial enquiry into the incident.

More than an hour elapsed before all the ministers had taken their oaths of office and secrecy. The tedium was partially relieved when Subramaniam Swamy decided to speak in Hindi, manfully struggling with the highly-Sanskritised language he was required to enunciate. And when one minister forgot to wear his spectacles before the event, fumbling with them before the microphone, while President Venkataraman waited patiently.

Maneka Gandhi and Kamal Morarka were among the few who took the oath in English, which couldn't have gone down too well with UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, stationed on one of the first-row seats, fresh from his triumph in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

The line-up of ministers contained only one name from the Lal camp: Green Brigade chief Jai Prakash, appointed a lowly deputy minister. All the prize jobs went to Shekhar's own people, though Lal's lack of aggro seemed to suggest that he'd get his pound of flesh in the next ministerial expansion.

As was expected, the Prime Minister kept such key portfolios as defence, home, industry, information and broadcasting with him. But, to be fair, he had little choice in the matter, what with the paucity of talent and experience in his assorted followers. The only person who qualified for a major ministry was Yashwant Sinha, a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. And once he'd been taken care of, there was no one who could be allocated home or defence. Nevertheless, Shekhar did manage to dredge up 13 Cabinet ministers—excluding his deputy Devi Lal, who got agriculture and tourism—from among what many regarded as his rag-tag and bobtail outfit. None of them was a major player on the political scene, but unlike some of the state and deputy ministers, they weren't absolute nonentities either. For example:

V.C. Shukla: After functioning as an important leader of the Congress for nearly 30 years (he was information and broadcasting minister during the



NI—N RAI

CHAUTALA WITH SHEKHAR: he got the Tau to scale down his demands

R.K. Hegde. But true-blue coterie members don't regard him as one of their own.

SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY



Like Malhoutra, he makes himself out to be a regular. And his propensity to hang around with the Prime Minister, thrusting himself into every picture frame, has led to jokes about his being the Jagdeep Dhankhar of the Chandra Shekhar camp. But to be fair to Swamy, he did do a fair amout of leg-work for Shekhar, functioning as the Congress-Chandra Shekhar go-between.

On the non-political front, C.V. Gautam, private secretary to Chandra Shekhar for over 20 years, comes first. Virtually a member of the family, Gautam has always been used for sensitive political assignments and is likely to play a key role.

H.N. Sharma, additional private secretary, will get a slightly less important role in the new dispensation, while Gopi Manchanda, an old student leader and close associate of Shekhar's for the last ten years, may be appointed officer on special duty in the PMO. S.K. Goel, another old friend, who'd prepared Shekhar's statement on the industrial policy for him, could well continue to function as economic adviser.

Emergency) Shukla left the party along with V P Singh in 1987 But the Raja failed to accommodate him in his Cabinet and soon, Shukla switched allegiance to prime dissident, Shekhar He has now been awarded the external affairs ministry, but is, apparently, unhappy with the allocation.

Yashwant Sinha: He could have become a minister of state in the Raja's Cabinet but chose to turn down the offer Partly because of his loyalty to his leader, Chandra Shekhar, and partly because he thought it offensive to be clubbed with the likes of Maneka Gandhi The least he deserved was a Cabinet berth, said Sinha. He's achieved that now, having been appointed the finance minister. And with his proven administrative skill, he should be a success at the job.

Subramaniam Swamy: Remained on the fringes of national politics, keeping himself in the news with his campaigns against such people as R.K Hegde Over the last two years, the Janata Party leader developed a relationship with Rajiv Gandhi, which became useful once the Janata Dal dissidents found themselves in a position to form an alternative government. Ideally, Swamy would have liked to be either finance or external affairs minister. But, for fear of arousing disaffection in the ranks most Shekhar loyalists regard Swamy as an upstart—he was given the relatively low-profile commerce and law ministries.

Raj Mangal Pandey: Despite his earlier closeness to V P. Singh (he'd followed the Raja out of the Congress), Pandey joined the dissident camp after the Dal's policies on Mandal and the *mandir* had disillusioned him totally. He spearheaded the campaign against the Raja's government, using his considerable moral authority to wean people away from VP. Pandey has had previous administrative experience—he was a minister in the UP government —and could prove a competent human resource development minister.

Ashoke Sen: After a spell out in the cold, Ashoke Sen, that wily lawyer from West Bengal, makes a reappearance in the Cabinet. Not as law minister this time; he will take over at the steel and mines ministry. His inclusion had been almost certain once he took the lead in persuading the President to invite Shekhar to form the government

Rao Birendra Singh: In keeping

Who calls the shots?

Chandra Shekhar or Rajiv Gandhi?

If political gossip in Delhi was anything to go by, the Congress was calling the shots as far as the formation of the Chandra Shekhar government was concerned. Rajiv Gandhi, the story went, had made it clear that he would not tolerate the inclusion of Maneka Gandhi, A.K. Sen and Sanjay Singh in the ministry, and Shekhar had little choice but to obey his dictates.

The Congress president, however, was quick to dispel such rumours. Talking to newsmen at Delhi airport, while the Prime Minister hovered nervously in the background, he made it clear that he hadn't the slightest interest in the constitution of the council of ministers. As far as the Congress was concerned, it was Shekhar's baby.

But the impact of the performance was somewhat spoilt by a hushed ten-minute conversation the two leaders had at the airport, after which the PM was seen trying to persuade Rajiv to ride back with him. Gandhi refused, leading to much speculation about the nature



with his reputation as the Great Defector, Rao Birendra Singh crossed over to the Chandra Shekhar camp, after falling out with the Raja. A backward leader (Yadav) from Haryana, he will be the new food and civil supplies minister and, no doubt, function as Shekhar's answer to the Sharad Yadavs of the world, as far as caste politics go.

Janeshwar Mishra: Functioned as a minister of state in the Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and V.P. Singh governments. But has now been elevated to Cabinet rank, assuming charge of the railways ministry.

Hukum Deo Narayan Yadav: Despite his backward caste-based support, Yadav did not side with the Raja on the Mandal Report. His loyalty has now been rewarded with the grant of the textiles and food processing ministries.



VIJENDER TYAGI

MANEKA GANDHI AND SANJAY SINGH: both found berths in the ministry, despite strong rumours to the contrary

Manubhai Kotadia: The minister of state for water resources in the V.P. Singh government, Kotadia has been elevated to Cabinet rank, with the same portfolio.

Daulat Ram Saran: A former associate of Chaudhary Charan Singh's, Saran has joined the Union Cabinet for the first time and will function as the urban development minister.

Satya Prakash Malaviya: Formerly in the Ajit Singh camp, Malaviya has now been given charge of the petroleum ministry.

Kalyan Singh Kalvi: Best known for his support of the practice of *sati*, Kalvi, an MP from Rajasthan, will succeed Arif Mohammad Khan at the energy ministry.

Shakil-ur-Rehman: He first crossed over to the Shekhar camp, only to go scurrying back to Bommai. But finally plumped for the former and was promptly appointed health and family planning minister.

Despite strong rumours to the effect that Maneka Gandhi and Sanjay Singh would be kept out, in deference to Congress(I) sentiment, both were appointed ministers of state with independent charge of the environment and communications ministries, respectively. Harmohan Dhawan, devoted camp-follower of Chandra Shekhar, got the same deal, with the civil aviation portfolio. Subodh Kant Sahay, minister of state for home and information and broadcasting, didn't get independent charge. But with the Prime Minister holding charge of these departments, he is bound to have a relatively free run.

Far more significant, however, was the appointment of Kamal Morarka as minister of state attached to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Morarka, a long-time associate of Chandra Shekhar's, was apparently loath to accept a ministerial post, but relented at the last moment. His job, involving as it does close proximity to the Prime Minister, is bound to be an influential one, most of his predecessors rapidly developed into centres of extra-constitutional authority. While Morarka may well stop short of that, he will be one of the persons to watch.

The chief ministers who had supported Shekhar's bid for the prime ministership were repaid with berths for their 'men'. Janeshwar Mishra, Sarwar Hussain and Sanjay Singh were inducted for Mulayam Singh Yadav's benefit. (According to Singh, it was Yadav who got him appointed to the Rajya Sabha, not the Raja.) Manubhai Kotadia, Shantilal Patel, Jayantilal Shah and Hasav Raj Patel got in because of Gujarat CM Chimanbhai Patel, while Bhagey Goverdhan was among Orissa chief minister Biju Patnaik's supporters to join the ministry.

In the end, it was Chaudhary Devi Lal who was the worst loser. The only Haryana heavyweight who got in was Jai Prakash, and he owes allegiance to Om Prakash Chautala, rather than to the Tau. Both Ranjit Singh and Chand Ram were left out, while Jagdeep Dhankhar was fobbed off with a minister of state's post—which he refused. But the fact that a number of ministries—industry, home, information and broadcasting—lay vacant,

of the hurried confabulations. The general consensus seemed to be that they revolved around Cabinet formation.

This time, at least, the gossip was unfounded. The Congress, keen to distance itself from the Janata Dal(S) government now that the vote of confidence was over, had no intentions of getting embroiled in the thankless job of allocating portfolios. And Rajiv told Shekhar quite categorically that he could appoint anyone he desired.

But where did these rumours start? One version had it that the Janata Dal(S) itself put out such stories in the hope that if any disaffection resulted from the ministry formation, the blame could be shifted to Gandhi and the Congress. But Rajiv saw through the ploy, so nothing came of it.

According to some, however, the rumours originated with the Janata Dal (Bommai), which wanted to discredit the present government by insinuating that Rajiv Gandhi was actually running the entire show by remote control. If that was true, countered Shekhar's supporters, then the task of ministry formation wouldn't have taken so long. The confusion and utter lack of coordination betrayed during the exercise proved that no fiat had been issued by the Congress president.

And that, for the time being at least, was accepted as the most credible version.

held out hope for the Chaudhary's camp.

The week before the swearing-in took place, action centred around Chandra Shekhar's Bhondsi farmhouse. The Prime Minister would drive off every morning, accompanied by such close associates as Yashwant Sinha and Harmohan Dhawan, to draw up a comprehensive list of prospective ministers. Such significant leaders as Devi Lal, Om Prakash Chautala, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel would be called for consultations. But to little avail; despite the best efforts of the PM, a compromise seemed near-impossible to arrive at.

While Shekhar procrastinated, the press went quite wild trying to guess the *real* cause of the delay. And the Prime Minister didn't improve matters by making statements like, "We can't have the swearing-in on Saturday. It is *amavasya*."

For the record, Shekhar maintained that the delay was because of the confidence vote on Mulayam Singh Yadav's government. Until that matter was decided, said the Prime Minister, he could not announce his ministry. There was some truth to this. Such ministerial aspirants as Janeshwar Mishra, S.P. Malaviya and Sanjay Singh were camping in Lucknow to ensure the victory of the UP chief minister, and the list wouldn't be complete without them.

But that wasn't the complete story. For, what had tied Shekhar's hands were the demands of his party leaders. Every one of them knew just what he wanted and was not willing to settle for less. Devi Lal insisted that industry, commerce and petroleum go to his camp-followers. Raj Mangal Pandey desired either industry or commerce; while Subramaniam Swamy had set his heart on finance. V.C. Shukla demanded energy, Janeshwar Mishra asked for petroleum and only steel and mines could satisfy Rao Birendra Singh. To complicate matters further, both Sanjay Singh and Jagdeep Dhankhar wanted civil aviation, though the latter was willing to settle for the high-profile information and

Behind the delay

Why it took Shekhar all of 11 days to decide on his team

The Janata Dal(S) had its excuse ready. The Prime Minister couldn't announce the ministry until Mulayam Singh Yadav had won his vote of confidence, for until then, all MPs from Uttar Pradesh would be preoccupied.

But, unfortunately for Chandra Shekhar, nobody was buying that. It was patently obvious that the initial delay, at least, had been caused by the Dal(S)'s disinclination to allocate portfolios before the House convened on 16 November. Shekhar hoped that more MPs would ditch Bommai and Co. and cross over to him. He would, thus, have far more to choose from when it came to deciding who got what. And, with luck, his ministry wouldn't look quite so lopsided or light-weight.

With this plan in mind, Shekhar even approached such leaders as Farooq Abdullah (National Conference), Prakash Singh Badal (Akali Dal) and Syed Shahabuddin. But none of them evinced the slightest interest, and the Prime Minister had to give up on that one.

At this point, Devi Lal entered



RAJESH KUMAR

broadcasting ministry.

While there wasn't any truth to the rumour that Maneka, Sanjay Singh, V.C. Shukla and Ashoke Sen would be kept out by the Congress, the opposition to Subodh Kant Sahay was only too real. Associates of Shekhar argued that Sahay should be kept out because he'd deserted his leader for the Raja less than a year ago. But the Prime Minister, with few experienced hands on deck, ignored all such talk and appointed Sahay nonetheless, while former IPS officer Lalit Vijay Singh was made minister of state for defence in view of his administrative background.

Despite the initial dilly-dallying, in the end it was Shekhar who had the last word on ministry allocation. And despite the obvious unhappiness of some of those who didn't get the portfolios of their choice, there was no large-scale revolt in the ranks.

The suspense lasted till late into the night of 20 November. Until 8 pm, the ministerial aspirants were frantically ringing up one another for news, in the absence of any intimation from the PMO. It was only around 9 pm that C.V. Gautam, Chandra Shekhar's private secretary, started calling up those on the list. By midnight, special passes for the swearing-in ceremony for the ministers-to-be and their guests were readied and issued by Rashtrapati Bhavan. The only minister to get prior information was V.C. Shukla, and that because he was to be appointed external affairs minister and had to accompany the Prime Minister to Male for the SAARC summit.

While most of the prospective members of the council were celebrating, an entirely different drama was being staged at the Prime Minister's house. The industry ministry was to go to one of Devi Lal's men, and the Tau had recommended Chand Ram's name. Om Prakash Chautala, however, opposed this move and the proposal was hastily junked. A compromise was worked out, according to which Chand Ram would get another—though less important—portfolio Ram turned down the offer. Another Tau loyalist, Jagdeep Dhankhar, played hookey at the swearing-in, though his equation with Lal means he will remain an important member of the new team, if only by extension.

As Devi Lal's principal liaison man, Dhankhar will continue to be the Chaudhary's conduit to both the press and the Congress. While Dhankhar's affinity for journalists—especially photographers—is well known, he also has long-standing connections with the Congress, his family having been supporters of the party for decades. Even though the ubiquitous MP hasn't found fit to accept a berth in the ministry (what was offered to him wasn't good enough), he will function as Devi Lal's eyes and ears in the government. He may not be a part of Chandra Shekhar's team, but he remains the man to watch.

But after Ram was out, another Devi Lal follower had to be accommodated. Chautala suggested the name of Jai Prakash, Green Brigade chief and one of his loyalists. Around midnight, Jai Prakash was summoned from Chandigarh so that he could be in Delhi during the oath-taking ceremony, scheduled for the morning of 21 November, the Prime Minister having to fly off to Maldives that very day.

In fact, Shekhar drove straight to the airport from Rashtrapati Bhavan. The newly-appointed ministers were hustled out of Ashoka Hall in record time so that they could see off the PM on his first official tour abroad. Shekhar himself was in a foul mood, refusing to talk to newsmen because of their slogan-shouting earlier in the day.

It wasn't the best of beginnings. But, no doubt, the Prime Minister comforted himself with the thought that from now on things could only improve. •

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi



DEVI LAL: will he get his pound of flesh in the next expansion?

the fray to complicate matters further. The Tau insisted that some of the key portfolios, such as finance, commerce, industry and petroleum, go to his men and at least 50 per cent of the ministries be placed under his followers. Shekhar, with some help from Om Prakash Chautala, was able to convince him not to persist with this demand.

But not before precious days had been lost.

The membership of the Janata Dal(S) posed its own problems. Most of the party's MPs were from the Hindi belt, with little or no administrative experience. The one person who did qualify for a major berth was Yashwant Sinha. But if he got finance, who would get home, and vice versa?

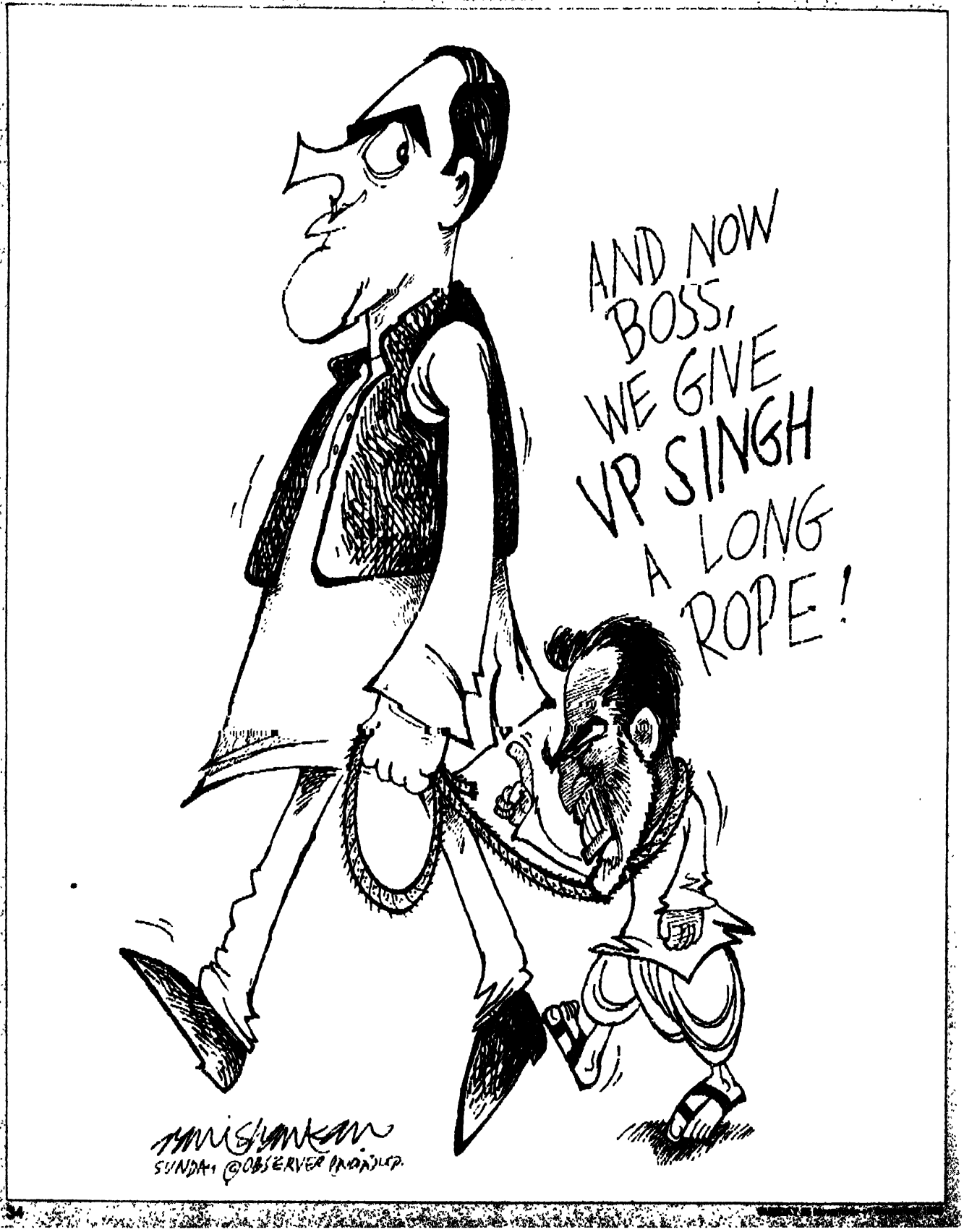
While such conundrums were being worked out, Shekhar also had to deal with the issue of Muslim representation in the ministry. Of all the nine Muslim Dal MPs, none agreed to cross over at first. Finally, Shakil-ur-Rehman and Sarwar Hussain joined the Dal(S) and were rewarded with ministries.

Giving adequate representation to the south wasn't easy either. Names like Babul Reddy, B.V. Raju, H.D. Deve Gowda and others were being bandied about, but the only sure-shot entrant was the Janata Party maverick Dr Subramaniam Swamy.

In the end, it took Shekhar all of 11 days to decide on his team. And not a terribly inspiring team, at that.

BODYLINE

RAVI SHANKAR



Mulayam survives

But how long will the Congress(I) let the Uttar Pradesh chief minister rule?

First it was Gujarat. Then came the question of propping up the Chandra Shekhar regime. On 19 November, Rajiv Gandhi pulled yet another Janata Dal (S) government out of the oxygen tent. Mulayam Singh's 11-month-old set-up in Uttar Pradesh, which was gasping for breath following the UP chief minister's defection to the Chandra Shekhar camp and the rebellion within the Janata Dal Legislature Party. On that day, Mulayam Singh won the confidence motion moved by him with a comfortable margin of 224 to 146, thanks to the support extended to his regime by the 93 Congress(I) MLAs (Dharam Pal Singh, the party legislator from Bahraich, defied the whip and voted against the confidence motion). The dissident Dal faction led by the former Union industry minister Ajit Singh could muster the support of only 80 legislators, while the communists abstained from voting.

The one-day special session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly witnessed unruly scenes on 19 November. Twice, the Speaker had to intervene to keep rival legislators of the Janata Dal from clashing. While the leader of the Opposition in the House, veteran Congress(I) politician N.D. Tiwari utilised the occasion to come down heavily on the Mulayam regime and warned that the Congress(I) would closely monitor the performance of the Dal(S) government, chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav turned the session into a round of V.P. Singh-bashing. The UP chief minister blamed the former Prime Minister for making a deal with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to unsettle his government. Mulayam even accused the Raja of pandering to communal sentiments. Undoubtedly a transformed Mulayam Singh, very different from the days when he was all praises for V.P. Singh.

Mulayam first got into problems with the Janata Dal high command soon after the December 1990 Assembly polls in which the party won 210 seats out of the 425 in the Uttar Pradesh House and staked its claim to form the government But the choice of the Janata Dal Legislature Party (JDLP) leader proved to be a contentious issue. While most observers in UP felt that Mulayam Singh should have been the unanimous choice, senior Dal leaders like Arif Mohammad Khan and Arun Nehru thought otherwise. At one point, Arif Mohammad Khan even threatened to contest the elections himself if no one dared to oppose Mulayam Singh Yadav. Nothing of the sort happened as the group successfully persuaded Ajit Singh, who has a sizeable following in western Uttar Pradesh, to have a go at the chief ministership of the country's most important state. What was V.P. Singh's role during this crisis? Apparently, the Raja wanted to remain neutral and thus, asked half of his supporters in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly to vote in favour of Ajit Singh and the other half to support Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The leadership tussle was a closely



Mulayam Singh Yadav may have won the confidence of the House, but it's going to be difficult for him to stick to power

fought affair. But Mulayam Singh pipped Ajit Singh to the post and became the chief minister. And, Ajit Singh was promptly made Union industry minister to keep him away from UP politics and Mulayam Singh.

Mulayam started off well and his stand on secularism was appreciated even by his critics. But then, his desire to consolidate his position in the state landed him in trouble. Mulayam's advisers reasoned that the Mandal report had already made the chief minister's position unassailable among the backwards of the state. And if he could win over the minorities of the state, no one in future could defeat him at the hustings. The chief minister agreed and thus began Mulayam's efforts to woo the Muslims. In the name of secularism, of course.



Mulayam Singh Yadav utilised the special session of the Assembly to hit out against his one-time mentor, **V.P. Singh.** He obviously wanted to justify his loyalty to **Chandra Shekhar**

Such a policy of pandering to the minority sentiment brought the Uttar Pradesh chief minister in confrontation with V.P. Singh. Realising perhaps that Mulayam Singh Yadav was emerging as the new saviour of the Muslims, the former Prime Minister too went on the offensive: he went ahead and announced a number of measures to appease the Muslims and began cultivating the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid to counter the UP CM's growing influence among the minorities.

It was around this time that Mulayam Singh switched loyalties and settled for Chandra Sekhar. He even called Shekhar "a saint", much to the displeasure of V.P. Singh. Mulayam also did everything possible to make things difficult for Singh in Delhi. Since his government was in no way dependent on the BJP for survival, he went ahead and started provoking the party: at every public meeting, the UP chief minister abused BJP leaders and even arrested some of them. Mulayam's aim was to force the BJP to withdraw support to the National Front government at the Centre. And as it turned out later, things worked out wonderfully well for Mulayam Singh Yadav. The V.P. Singh regime collapsed and the Janata Dal split down the middle.

Not that V.P. Singh was unaware of the activities of the Uttar Pradesh chief minister. But he just couldn't afford to annoy Mulayam Singh Yadav. Thus, even after the fall of the government V.P. Singh tried hard to keep the UP chief minister in good humour and ignored demands from several senior Dal leaders to expel him from the party. For, Mulayam now was the key figure in Janata Dal politics. With as many as 14 MPs under his control, Mulayam Singh Yadav's support was crucial for both V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar. And, it was largely because of Mulayam's backing that Chandra Shekhar could effect a formal split in the Janata Dal and become the Prime Minister.

But Mulayam Singh's support to Chandra Shekhar was not unconditional. He asked the Prime Minister to persuade the Congress(I) to back his government in Uttar Pradesh, knowing full well that Ajit Singh's followers in the state were capable of toppling him. But even at that point of time, V.P. Singh hesitated to expel Mulayam from the party, largely, because of pressures from prominent Muslim leaders. But the Raja finally took the extreme step when Arif Mohammad Khan threatened to resign from the party if Mulayam was not thrown out.

Mulayam too struck back: he promptly formed the Janata Dal (S) in the state and expelled 37 MLAs from the party. He even got the Speaker to declare them "unattached".

But the party on which Mulayam banked for survival, kept him guessing till the last moment. The Congress(I) in Uttar Pradesh virtually revolted against the idea of supporting the Janata Dal (S) regime in the state. A delegation of Congress MLAs from UP even met party president Rajiv Gandhi and explained to him the disastrous consequences of the move. But Rajiv had his compulsions as well. A high-powered Congress(I) team, including leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and Sitaram Kesri, was sent to Lucknow to persuade party MLAs to back Mulayam. But Azad and Kesri had a tough time and at one point Balram Singh Yadav even threatened that his group of 50 MLAs would abstain from voting on the day Mulayam moves the confidence motion in the Assembly.

A visibly worried Congress high command held hectic parleys even as the hour of reckoning for Mulayam drew nearer. Finally, the issue was thrashed out at a meeting held at the residence of P.V. Narasimha Rao, where prominent heavyweights from UP like N.D. Tiwari, Rajendra Kumari Bajpai and others were present. It was decided that under the prevailing political climate in the country, it would only serve the Congress interests to keep the Mulayam regime alive in Uttar Pradesh. But the support, clarified the Congress high command, would be conditional. The party would perform the role of an Opposition, and continue to criticise the government on issues. Moreover, the Congress would also demand judicial enquiries into the communal clashes in Ayodhya and Bijnor.

A strange arrangement to say the least. And, a temporary one too. With leaders like N.D. Tiwari waiting in the wings, Mulayam will not find the going easy. •

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi and Lucknow

Biased ruling?

Speaker Rabi Ray is criticised for his role during the Janata Dal split

As far as the media—official and otherwise—were concerned, the Janata Dal officially split on 5 November, with the dissidents holding their parallel meet on the lawns of Devi Lal's Willingdon Crescent residence. Only the Lok Sabha Speaker, Rabi Ray, seemed to believe otherwise. For, that very night Ray sent a notice to 30 MPs, belonging to the newly-formed Janata Dal(S), declaring them "unattached" on the grounds that they had been expelled by the president of the parent party, S.R. Bommai.

With this notice, Ray had effectively reduced the strength of the dissident group below 47, the magic number required for a legitimate split, according to the provisions of the Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act.

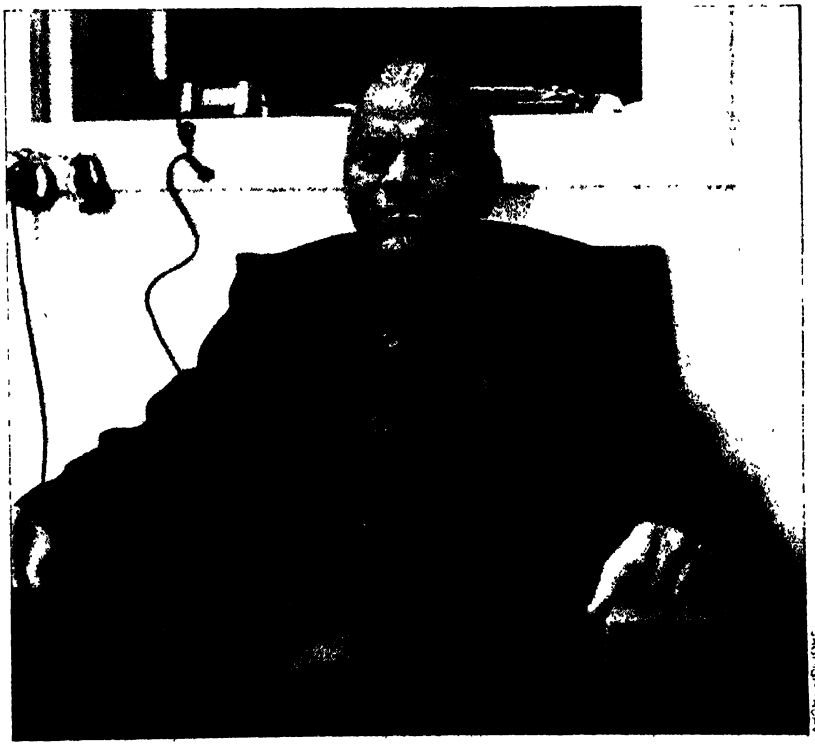
The controversy soon snowballed. The Janata Dal defended Ray's action, while the rebel camp maintained that he had sold out to the government. Both sides had their arguments ready. The Bommai faction insisted that the rebels had neglected to inform the Speaker of the split, and so Ray was well within his rights to accept the expulsion at face value. But Chandra Shekhar's followers maintained that Ray had merely got involved in political gimmickry on behalf of the Raja, for he could hardly be unaware that the split preceeded the expulsion

Said Jaipal Reddy: "The rebels only informed the Speaker about the split on the 6th. But the expulsions were carried out on the 5th. It was not for the Speaker to argue with the party leader's decision." The former parliamentary affairs minister, P. Upendra, defended the expulsion of only 30 members on the grounds that nobody knew at that point who had joined the splinter group's meeting. "We expelled those who had been leading anti-party activities for some months now. The rest were given the benefit of the doubt."

Members of the Janata Dal(S) had their answers ready. Said Kamal Morarka: "Is this a 100 metres race that the person who gets into the Speaker's office first wins? If everything depends upon who has the fastest system of communications at his disposal, then the person who has a Mercedes car and a FAX machine will never be on the wrong side of the law."

And even if the party authorities wished to expel certain members as a disciplinary measure, they were bound to follow certain procedures according to the Dal constitution. "The members," said Morarka, "should have been served with a show-cause notice, their case referred to the party disciplinary committee so that they could respond to the allegations levelled against them. If even after that they had been found guilty, they could be expelled. But what Bommai did was completely arbitrary and unreasonable."

The former secretary-general of the Lok Sabha, Subhash C. Kashyap, went further: "The split, without a doubt, came first. So how could Mr Bommai expel some people who didn't belong to his party in the first place. That's like Rajiv Gandhi expelling certain members of the Bharatiya Janata Party."



AJAY VERMA

The entire episode left the Speaker's office besmirched, with Rabi Ray's impartiality being questioned by political leaders, the media and ordinary citizens

The Indian Constitution does not confer Ray the right to either recognise a split in a political party or even declare a group of MPs "unattached". The Tenth Schedule, which applies to all such situations, has it that the presiding officer of the Lok



Chandra Shekhar with his camp followers: upset with the Speaker's ruling

Sabha only comes into the picture when a petition is presented to him by a party asking for the disqualification of a member or more on the grounds that he has disobeyed the party whip.

The Speaker is then obliged to enquire into the matter and ascertain why the member has disobeyed the party directive. If the member claims that the parent party has split and he now owes allegiance to the new group, the Speaker has to conduct investigations and find out the actual strength of the group. If it comprises one-third of the membership of the original party, he recognises the group as a separate party. If not, the members against whom the complaint has been made risk disqualification under the Anti-Defection Act.

Says Subhash Kashyap: "Expulsion does not concern the Speaker. It is purely a party affair and is not mentioned in the Constitution."

Constitutional expert Dr L.M. Singhvi concedes that going by the Tenth Schedule alone the Speaker does not have any *locus standi* in recognising a split unless a petition is made to him. "According to certain subordinate legislation, however," he says, "he has to be informed of a split in a political party. But even in that event there is a 30-day time limit, within which the news must be intimated to the Speaker."

The upshot being that the Janata Dal(S) was perfectly within its rights to wait until the day after to inform the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha about the formation of the new party.

The Constitution or the rules of the Lok Sabha do not provide for any such thing as an "unattached" member. The term is only used to distinguish such MPs who have been elected on the ticket of a certain political party—and are therefore distinct from Independents—and now, for some reason



The Janata Dal officially split when the dissidents boycotted the Dal parliamentary party meet convened by V.P. Singh and instead chose to hold their own at Devi Lal's residence on 5 November

have left the party and have to be seated in a separate block. Thus, when V.P. Singh, Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan were expelled by the Congress, they were declared "unattached" and seated elsewhere.

"But this is done only for the sake of convenience," says Kashyap, "and has no significance as far as the Anti-Defection Act is concerned. There is a big difference between doing something to facilitate the working of the House and mischievously declaring a large group 'unattached' so that they can't split the party."

Former Speaker Balram Jhakar, who has also declared a fair number of people unattached, agrees that Ray's action was a trifle suspect. "This was done," he said, "only to hang a Damocles' sword over the rest. I would have conducted thorough enquiries before taking action of any sort. The notice of the Speaker only resulted in a war of nerves."

Ray salvaged his reputation somewhat, by agreeing to review his decision and then giving the dissidents a period of three weeks to reply to the show-cause notice *vis-a-vis* their disobeying of the party whip. But by then, everyone was seeing political motivations in his every action. Initially Ray's critics argued he has given the rebels a one-week notice period hoping to disqualify them on the 17th, before the special session of Parliament took place on the original date of 20 November. The Janata Dal(S), however, saw through this plan, and preponed the session to 16 November. Ray, therefore, decided to play magnanimous, because the disqualification would have no impact after the motion of confidence in the minority Shekhar government had been passed.

Legalities aside, the entire episode left the Speaker's office besmirched, with his impartiality being questioned by political leaders, the media and ordinary citizens. Says Dr L.M. Singhvi: "What is at stake in the present controversy is the neutrality of the Lok Sabha secretariat, and indeed even the neutrality of the august office of the Speaker. It is necessary that the Speaker's neutrality is beyond reproach, and that this controversy is resolved within the precincts of the Parliament rather than in court-room battles."

But whatever the venue, the resolution will take time. And, perhaps, involve suitable modification of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. ●

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Boys will be boys

It's not Prafulla Mahanta's fault that Assam is in such a turmoil—or is it?



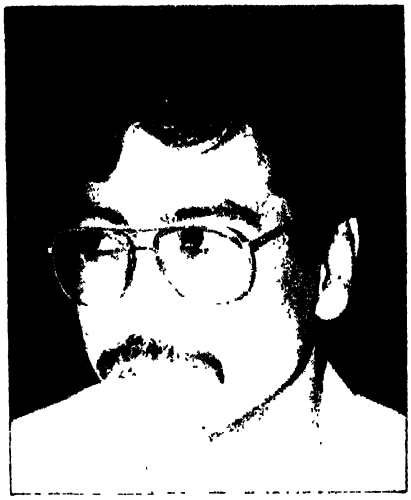
Perplexed readers of my column last week have enquired how it is that I forgot to bid my tearful farewell to our erstwhile minister for law (and steel)—for if the law is an ass, surely the steel must be true—Shri Dinesh Goswami, the sole Representative of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in what used to be called the National Front government (till it proved itself to be a purely Notional Front).

The fact is that I didn't forget. But would a mere paragraph do justice to one who was minister too of justice? Would not an entire column be required to pay true homage to a party which was given the steel portfolio presumably because of its long experience in consigning Assam—and, indeed, the country -to the blast furnace?

And so this column turns its attention once again to the north-eastern reaches of the country, where the once-lovely state of Assam lumbers to the end of five years of the tender ministrations of Dinesh Goswami's betters and superiors, chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and the most enterprising band of ministers he has gathered about him (—and, with that, you may take your leave, Goswamiji, thank you very much, we won't be needing you any more. *Jai ai Ahom*, as we say!).



Says **Prafulla Mahanta**: "I am not happy with Brighu Phukan's functioning as home minister. He has not been able to do justice to the department"



Says **Brighu Phukan**. "Mahanta is not sincere about implementing the Accord on the basis of which we were elected"

The AGP council of ministers is certainly the most colourful the country has ever seen. Perched at its apex are a chief minister and a home minister who hate each other with a venom they usually reserve for non-upper caste, non-Hindu, non-tribal, non-Assamese speaking settlers in the Brahmaputra Valley, i.e. themselves and their immediate kith and kin. The chief minister has told *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (11/2/90): "I am not happy with Brighu Phukan's functioning as home minister. He has not been able to do justice to the department." While the home minister, in the same issue of the same magazine, bluntly says: "Mahanta is not sincere about implementing the Accord on the basis of which we were elected to power."

This quarrelsome Odd Couple—hitched together till the electorate (or the Rashtrapatiji—whichever is earlier) shall bundle them out together—has presided over a Cabinet in which a lady minister has been molested (at a Cabinet meeting, no less—and by a Cabinet colleague at that!); where a minister vomited on the conference table with a meeting in progress (not in disgust at the Mahanta-Phukan quarrel, but entirely because of a touch too much of the liquid which the poet Keats described as the "blushful Hippocrene"); where yet another minister has physically assaulted an Opposition MLA on the floor of the House; where still another minister has belaboured a foreign tourist who had the gall to occupy a room—reserved in the name of the tourist—in the Manas Sanctuary, to which the minister had taken a passing fancy: where the home minister (no less!) had an Indian Airlines passenger beaten to a pulp in the aircraft itself because the passenger had the temerity to not surrender his duly allotted seat to a minion of the man who, by the people's will, represents the awful Majesty of the Law in Assam; and where the list of financial scandals extends from the felling of trees for railway sleepers (accused: minister of forests, who also happens to be the chief minister!) by way of the potato seeds scandal and the Mathala Tea Estate scandal and the zoo meat supply scandal and the Statfed rice supply scandal etc., etc., etc., to the cooperative scandal inviting strictures from the Guwahati High Court (accused: minister of cooperation, who also happens to be—surprise! surprise!—the chief minister!). No wonder the greatest living writer of the Assamese language, Homen Borgohain, has this to say about the AGP "boys" in reply to a questionnaire given him (and others) by Assam's shiny new English-

language newspaper, *The North East Times:*

> "They (the AGP) have introduced a different political culture, if you can call it a culture, which is totally devoid of refinement and respect for moral values...I do not mean to say that all politicians before them were saints and only the AGP politicians are a bunch of rogues. But they frighten me by their arrogance, intolerance, bad manners and disrespect for our age-old values."

And yet it was not so long ago that much of our national press (by which I mean, of course, the provincial press of the smallest Union Territory of our land—the blessed capital city of Delhi) went bananas over the brave "boys" of the All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Asom Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP), whose greatest virtue was that they tickled the palate of our intelligentsia by pitting themselves against Indira Gandhi long after the tired old men of the Janata Party had slaughtered each other to a collective genocide in the battlefield of democracy.

Significantly, the rise of the Assam agitation in the summer of 1979 coincided with the disintegration of the first Janata experiment. With delicious irony (for "history," as I keep citing T.S. Eliot, has indeed "many cunning passages"), the collapse of the AGP is being hastened by the disintegration of the second Janata experiment. From hotch-potch to hotch-potch, it has taken 11 long blood-stained years for the vicious narrow-mindedness and violence-riddled chauvinism of the AGP to work itself out to this denouement.

And if you consider that too harsh a judgment on the "boys", please reflect for a moment on what home minister Phukan has to say in justification of his failure to take stern action against ULFA: "After all, these ULFA boys are from amongst us"! (*Illustrated Weekly*, 11/2/90). Who is the *shikari*, then—and who the prey?

The story goes back to 1826, the year the East India Company seized much of present-day Assam and its surrounding hill tracts from the Burmese under the Treaty of Yandaboo. It was a thinly-populated, indeed, a virtually unpopulated valley, richer far in natural resources than its carefree indigenous people cared—or, perhaps, even wished—to know. Came tea. Came oil. Came the laying of railway lines. Each new industry needed labour. And the labour was brought in from elsewhere. The boom in the economy led to a boom in population. And the population had to be fed. For which practitioners in paddy cultivation were needed. In they came from Mymensingh and virtually every other district of what today is Bangladesh but was then very much India. For close on 150 years, the economic development of Assam has been fuelled by labour and enterprise imported from outside the state. But over that same period of a century and a half, Assam has been home to generation upon generation of so-called "outsiders" who have known no home, no land, no hearth other than the gentle soil of Assam itself. Some have indeed grown rich. Most have remained desperately poor. The wretchedness of poverty is the common inheritance of all of Assam's people, whatever the provenance of their forefathers. The richness of the land is equally the inheritance of all of Assam's people, whatever the provenance of their forefathers. The central issue in Assam is: should the state be the priviledged preserve of the Ahoms alone—or does it belong to all the legitimate citizens of India who live there, whatever the language they speak, whatever the religion they follow, whatever the rites and rituals they own? Or, as *India Today* (15/4/83) put it, with that delightful penchant for mixing metaphors which is the hallmark of the magazine's personal revenge on the mother-tongue of our former colonial masters:

> "(The task is to) darn the torn socio-cultural fabric of the polyglot state."



In the only continuous sheaf of ten pages where *India Today* has never mixed a metaphor, **Arun Shourie** gave a blow-by-blow account of the telexes before the Nellie massacre. *India Today* failed to mention that Shourie had played Socrates to the murderous thugs of the AASU/AGSP

The AASU/AGSP agitation (which fathered the AGP as a political party) deliberately confused the "outsider" with the "foreigner". Fantastic figures were bruited about—five million, at one stage; six million, at another; even seven million, in its more fanciful flights—of the number of "foreigners" to be found illegitimately lurking in the valley. Former chief election commissioner R.K. Trivedi hit the nail on the head when he told *India Today* (15/3/83): "The agitators do not merely want an enumeration of the foreigners—they want a redefinition of the term 'citizen'."

It was through deliberately fostered confusion between "outsiders" and "foreigners" that the AASU/AGSP agitators gave the entirely justified concern over the preservation of the Assamese language an ugly, bull-headed, violent visage. For six years—from 1979 till the Assam Accord of 15 August, 1985—Assam was held to ransom. In the guise of ridding Assam of "foreigners", hatred was stoked against every ethnic, linguistic and religious minority in the state. The Bodos banded themselves and other anti-AASU tribal groups into the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA). The Bengalis of the Barak valley were virtually compelled to declare UDI. The Marwaris simply paid up. The Muslims huddled in fear of their lives. (There is nothing the ULFA does today that they didn't learn from the AASU/AGSP. They are, indeed, as Phukan has so perceptively put it, "from amongst us"!)

In these circumstances, the Indira Gandhi government decided in 1983 to let the people of Assam determine whom they wanted to have run their state for them—the wild-eyed agitators, the discredited Janata Party or the Congress-on-the-comeback-trail. Preferring, as ever, the anarchy of agitation to the discipline of democracy (in the usual spirit of anything goes that gives grist to the editorial mill), the press and the intelligentsia worked

themselves into paroxysms of indignation over Indiraji's decision to call an election that was, in any case, due. Foul, cried the pressgentsia, no elections because

(i) the Congress will win (*tauba! tauba!*), and

(ii) the Constitution does not provide for "elections" but for "free and fair elections".

Conveniently overlooking the fact that elections would not be "free and fair" only because the agitators opposing the elections would ensure they would not be "free and fair", the pressgentsia denounced the democrats and hailed the anarchists. And then went on to darkly prophesy that if Indiraji persisted with elections there would be unmatched violence. (In a curious reversal of conventional morality, the pressgentsia had nothing but condemnation for the advocates of peaceful, non-violent elections—and nothing but praise for the advocates of bloody reprisals against innocent Bodos, Muslims and any other ethnic minority seeking justice at the polls!)

If, of course, there is a Muslim to bash up, can Arun Shourie be far behind? So he gave *India Today* (15/5/83)—in the only continuous sheaf of ten pages where *India Today* has never mixed a metaphor—a blow-by-blow account of every wireless and telex message exchanged between the law-and-order authorities in the fateful weeks that led in February 1983 to the massacre of 1,383 innocent women and children (and some men) in ten villages in and around Nellie (in future chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's home district of Nowgong) by Lalung tribals armed with *daos* (machetes) incited, organised and armed by AASU activists to disrupt the electoral process even if it meant butchering over a thousand poor innocents. Gushingly describing the writer as "Magsaysay-award winning journalist and author ARUN SHOURIE" (capitals theirs, not mine!), *India Today* failed to mention that Shourie had played Socrates to the murderous thugs of the AASU/AGSP and was entirely at one with them in thought and deed. Instead, nurturing their scoop as lovingly as they had the grisly photographs of what the AASU/AGSP and its supporters (and, *ergo*, Shourie) had done to these hundreds of poor, murdered innocents, *India Today* gave full play to Shourie's fulminations against the intelligence agencies for "conjuring up the RSS"—but did not draw their readers' attention to Shourie's abject—but entirely motivated and partisan—failure to regard as germane to the issue anything of what *India Today* itself (why go elsewhere?) had to say about the *goondas* who were behind the killings at Nellie and Gohpur (and who, from 1985 to 1990, were to assume the reins of government in Assam). A sampling (as *India Today* might itself say):

- "The leaders of the agitation must recognise that they cannot escape the blame for the frenzied spilling of blood." (Editorial, *India Today*, 15/3/83)
- At Gohpur, "Bodo tribals, supporters of pro-poll PTCA, were enraged because of intimidation from the Assamese". (Dubashi and Sen, *India Today*, 15/3/83).



Home minister Phukan has this to say in justification of his failure to take stern action against the **ULFA:** "After all, these ULFA boys are from amongst us!" Who then is the *shikari* and who the prey?

- "Pro-election Muslims (said the agitators) must be socially ostracised and anybody trading with them would be fined Rs. 500." (ibid)
- In the weeks leading to the massacre "people from 'other places' (clearly AASU/AGSP activists) were seen coming to Assamese (i.e. non-Muslim) villages—Mukuria, Palaguri, Silbhata—*and holding closed-door meetings with AASU leaders*". (ibid, my italics, my parentheses)
- "The refugees display a despairing resolve not to leave the region. Says Rajab Ali, who lost his mother and brother: "Where can we go?" (ibid)
- There is a growing lobby in the AASU that makes a fine distinction between 'refugees' meaning Hindus who ought by right to be allowed to stay on in 'Hindustan' and 'infiltrators' who are, by implication, Muslims" (*India Today*, 31/3/83)
- "The most dangerous aspect of the Assam situation is what seems to be a deliberate attempt to keep the population split along communal lines...both the BJP and the Jamaat-e-Islami have been engaged in actions that can only threaten Hindu-Muslim unity." (*India Today*, 30/4/83: so much for the knickerwallah's fulminations against the Intelligence Agencies "conjuring up the RSS"!)

And after the 1983 elections were over, the violence did not stop. It continued, showing that it was not elections and violence that were interconnected, but the AASU/AGSP and violence that were inseparable. Indeed, *India Today* (30/4/83), in a triumphant mixed metaphor, pronounced:

> "Like a cancer, the violence continues to spread, taking lives and burning down villages" (*sic*!)

In the week that this article is to be published, the new Prime Minister will have to decide whether "free and fair elections" are possible under the benign dispensation of the Mahanta Mafia—or whether a spell of President's Rule is the only salve available to the state. Since our new Prime Minister is both a socialist and a conjuror with words, let me leave him reflecting on the condition of Assam under the AGP in the inimitable verses of the immortal Faiz:

Jab kabhi bikta hai bazaar mein
mazdoor ka ghosht,
Shahraon pe gharibon ka lahu
bahta hai.
Aag si sine mein rah-rahke ubalti
hai, na pooch!
Apne dil par mujhe qabu hi nahi
rahta hai!

When the flesh of poor workmen is
sold in the marketplace,
And the streets run red with the
blood of the destitute,
A nameless rage bursts into flame
within my breast
And I am left with no control of my
being!●

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.

Reddy for the attack

A notoriously noisy nonentity

The name is more familiar than the face. For four years now, Jaipal Reddy has been heard rather than seen. Most people still don't know what he looks like or even who he is. But every newspaper reader has been entertained by his witticisms and insults which feature on the front pages with unfailing regularity.

Jaipal Reddy belongs to a long and glorious tradition of Indian politics: the rootless windbag. His predecessors are men as diverse as K.K. Tewari and Subramaniam Swamy and like them, he will never count for much on the basis of his following, but will always attract journalistic attention because of the tenor of his utterances.

The difference, perhaps, is that while other windbags get somewhere eventually (Tewari was a minister of state during the Rajiv raj while Swamy is a Big Cheese now), Reddy remains a noisy nonentity. The last time he made a bid for some authority (as president of the Janata Dal), he got nowhere and even V.P. Singh, who had originally urged him to stand, withdrew his support.

Reddy belongs to a long and glorious tradition of Indian politics: the rootless windbag. His predecessors are men as diverse as K.K. Tewari and Subramaniam Swamy

No matter. Despite such reverses, Reddy remains a good-natured, publicity-loving sort, willing to say anything that is necessary to keep his name in the headlines.

Take his recent statements.

Why did the V.P. Singh government fall?

Because the BJP withdrew support, surely?

No way. That's not the way Reddy tells it.

His version: it fell because the names of the Bofors beneficiaries were about to be revealed and Rajiv Gandhi wanted V.P. Singh out of office. (So, was L.K. Advani acting at Rajiv's behest? Don't ask. Few of Reddy's statements bear that kind of examination.)

Or how about this one, a few days before Chandra Shekhar took over? "Chandra Shekhar can become Prime Minister only in his dreams." But surely, Shekhar was on the verge of getting the job...Never mind. For Reddy, it is unimportant that what he says make sense. It must just *sound* dramatic enough to be quoted.

If all this suggests a bitter, twisted K.K. Tewari sort, perish the thought. Up close, Jaipal Reddy has a talent to amuse just as much as he has one to abuse. Why does he take up so many columns of newsprint then with bombastic utterances that have only a tenuous connection with reality?

His answer: he does it to defend his leader, V.P. Singh. "VP is a loner," he explains, "he doesn't cultivate friends easily. Somebody had to speak on his behalf."

But could anybody defend the shenanigans that passed for governance in the Raja's day?

Reddy has another answer ready: "The government was earthshaking and characterised by dynamic instability."

And then Reddy is off, words flowing forth in a torrent of speech, the thoughts tumbling out as fast as his brain can translate them into English from his native Telugu.

On Chandra Shekhar: "He led the party for 11 damn years. He is just a tenuous manipulator. But I am no more the romantic idealist who was a blind follower of his."

On V.P. Singh: "A gentleman who has proved to be a man! At the very height of the self-immolation spree, he stated that what had been given could not be taken away."

On the Janata Dal split: "It is an act of multiple betrayal of the people's chastity."

And so on. It does not always make sense. But you watch. It'll find its way into *Sight and Sound*. Into *Voices*. And into every quotes-of-the-week column.

And as long as they spell the name right, why should Reddy mind?

FOR ALL this, Jaipal Reddy does have a political background. He was a Congressman who opposed the Emergency and found himself expelled from the party. He then became a founding member of Janata and stood by the party through thick and thin, eventually ending up in the Janata Dal after the last round of mergers.

His problem is that while he has enough support to ensure some prominence in Andhra Pradesh politics (he spent four terms as an MLA from Kalvakurti), he is a nonentity at the national level. He lost the Lok Sabha poll from Mahboob Nagar and has scurried back to Delhi only on the basis of N.T. Rama Rao's goodwill.

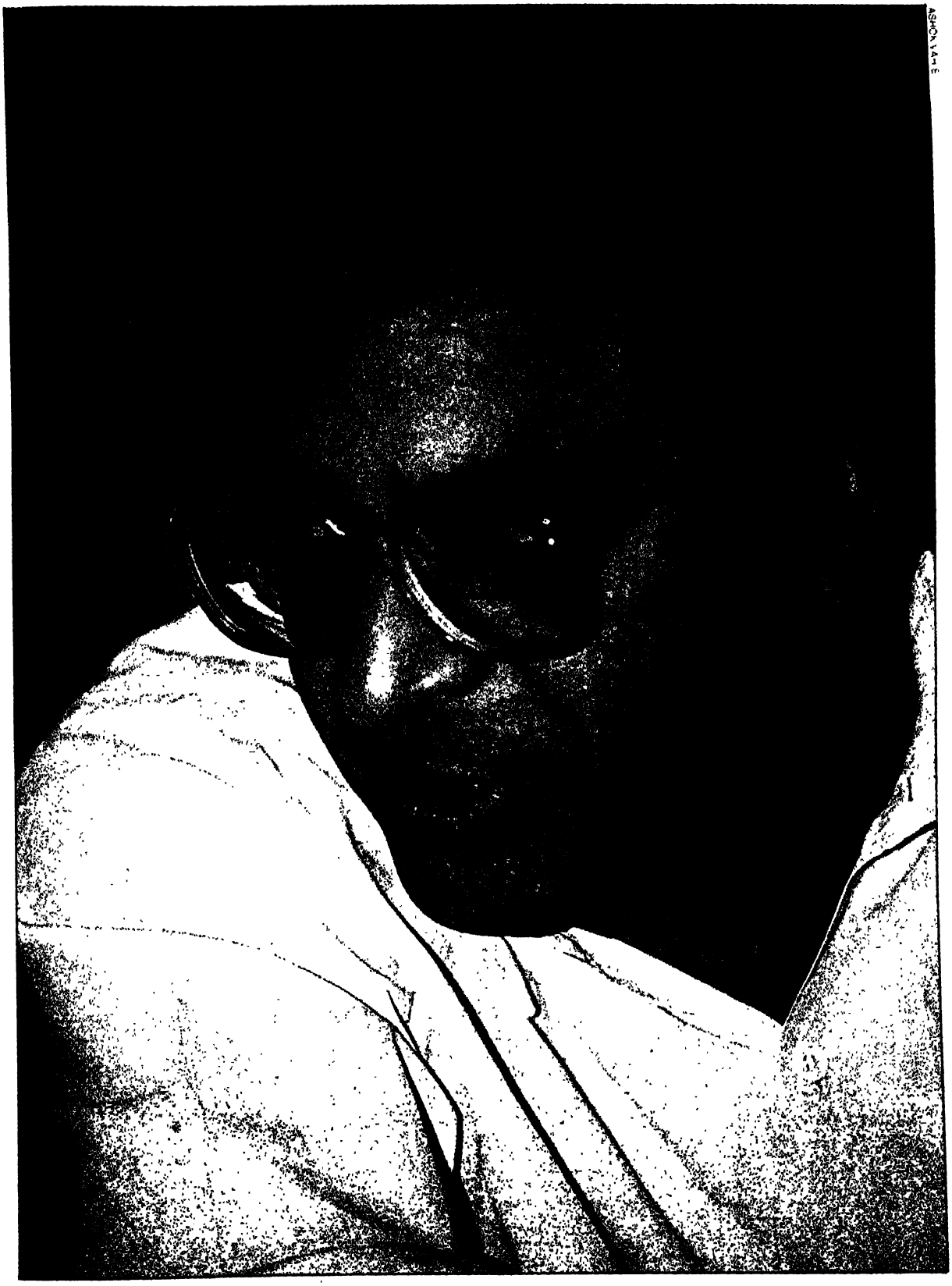
This is ironic because NTR's dislike of Reddy is well known and the former Andhra chief minister agreed to give him one of the two Rajya Sabha seats the National Front could win from Andhra this year only after V.P. Singh used all his powers of persuasion.

So is Reddy's loud support for the Raja a case of quid pro quo? Is this why he abuses Chandra Shekhar, his former Janata comrade, now?

Reddy denies the allegations. He backs VP, he says, because he believes in him.

And why does he spend so much time abusing his rivals?

Well, look at it this way: would any of us have heard of him otherwise? ●



YES, IT IS THE RAJA!

Despite the change of government, Upendra's poodle continues to be faithful to him. Or why would Doordarshan cover the former Prime Minister V.P. Singh's encounters with the masses on the lawns of his 1 Teen Murti residence, and telecast them during the national news?

Perhaps, there was a case for showing the deposed PM on TV, if only to prove that Mandi



V.P. Singh: Upendra does the trick yet again

House has nothing against losers. But what surprised viewers was that the Raja came on to criticise the newly-sworn in Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, if only obliquely. The new government had come to power only because of the efforts of capitalists, VP suggested, while Ram Vilas Paswan tried to squeeze himself into the frame.

There may be more to Upendra's PR skills than the press can understand, after all.

TRADE GAMES

[redacted] Yes, he's always been one to spring surprises. But even by the Tau's standards, his behaviour at the Tenth International Trade Fair was bizarre, to say the least.

The deputy prime minister was not among the special invitees; after Chandra Shekhar had declined to attend, the PM's principal secretary B.G.Deshmukh had been roped in as the chief guest.

But Deshmukh was only halfway-through his address, when the impressive bulk of Devi Lal walked in. Amid general consternation, the chairman of the Trade Fair authority, Moosa Raza rushed towards the door to greet the unexpected guest, a seat was hurriedly vacated for him on the dais and the Chaudhary settled in to listen to Deshmukh.

To the principal secretary's credit, he

ASHOK VAHIE



Devi Lal: surprise visit, and a mystifying speech

DANCE, LITTLE LADY, DANCE

Delhi audiences were treated to a rare glimpse of Meenakshi Seshadri, the classical dancer, on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Indian Cultural Society. But the actress disappointed with a rather dismal display of Odissi, belieing the fact that she'd been trained by the legendary Guru, Kelucharan Mahapatra.

But Seshadri's bombast survived the new avatar. Said the actress: "Now that I am restarting my romance with dance, I want to prove that I can be a master of all forms, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi and Odissi."

Also on the anvil are plans to set up an institute that would teach all forms of dance and make a tele-serial, *Asthanaika*, which "epitomises Indian womanhood, portraying her in all the roles of wife and beloved".

Films will continue alongside. For, as Seshadri confesses: "I am where I am because of them."

Meenakshi Seshadri: a new love affair



GAUTAM PATOLE

gamely continued speaking, and concluded by asking Lal to say a few words.

What followed was vintage Tau. A sample: "Trade *mein hum bahut peechche hain. Yeh to hona hi tha. Abhi haal ki* Asian Games *ko hi dekh lo.* China *ne subko hara diya.* (We are lagging behind in trade. That was bound to happen. Look what happened at the Asian Games. China beat everyone.)"

No, we don't get that either.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

You can take the captaincy away from Imran Khan—though only when he's willing to give it up—but you can't take Imran Khan away from the captaincy.

And now that the "second-rate" New Zealand team is back after a thorough drubbing at the hands of the Pakistani Test team, Imran has decided to reclaim his seat. He will take over as skipper on the West Indies tour, with Javed Miandad obligingly stepping down to "concentrate" on his batting.

Until Imran loses interest in the job, yet again, no doubt.

Imran Khan: taking over from Javed Miandad

DURGAPRASAD



FOR OLD TIMES SAKE

He'd been a regular for more than a decade. Nonetheless, the staff at the Ritz, a three-star Bombay hotel, were thrown into a tizzy when Chandra Shekhar dropped in for a bit during his visit to the city. For, now their honoured guest was also the Prime Minister of India.

Not that it made any difference to Shekhar's demeanour. While his security staff ran circles around him, the PM decided to use his regular room number 307, which had been kept ready on the off chance to freshen up and have a cup of tea.

After that, it was time for a courtesy meeting with the management of the hotel, which found that the prime ministership had not changed Shekhar in the least.

Said the secretary to the hotel's manager: "I have never known a man who is as polite as Chandra Shekhar. He loves Indian food and contrary to what people say I have never known him to order alcohol at the hotel. But now that he is Prime Minister, I don't think he will stay here."

Well, he can take comfort from the fact that, if expert political opinion is anything to go by, Shekhar won't be Prime Minister for long.



Chandra Shekhar at the hotel: nostalgia trip

WANTED: AN APOLOGY

[redacted] After a month long silence on her husband's suicide, Rekha has finally decided to take her critics head-on. And she's started with film glossy *Cine Blitz*, which carried a cover story on the *Macabre Truth Behind Mukesh Aggarwal's Suicide.*

In a notice issued by her lawyer Anand Grover, the actress has asked the magazine for an unconditional apology and damages worth Rs 1 crore for her, and Rs 50 lakhs for her secretary Farzana, with interest thereon at the rate of 21 per cent from 31 October, 1990.

Calling the article, "completely false and grossly *per se* defamatory" of Rekha and Farzana, Grover contended that the least *Cine Blitz* could have done was "wait for my clients to come back to India and verify the facts from them personally".

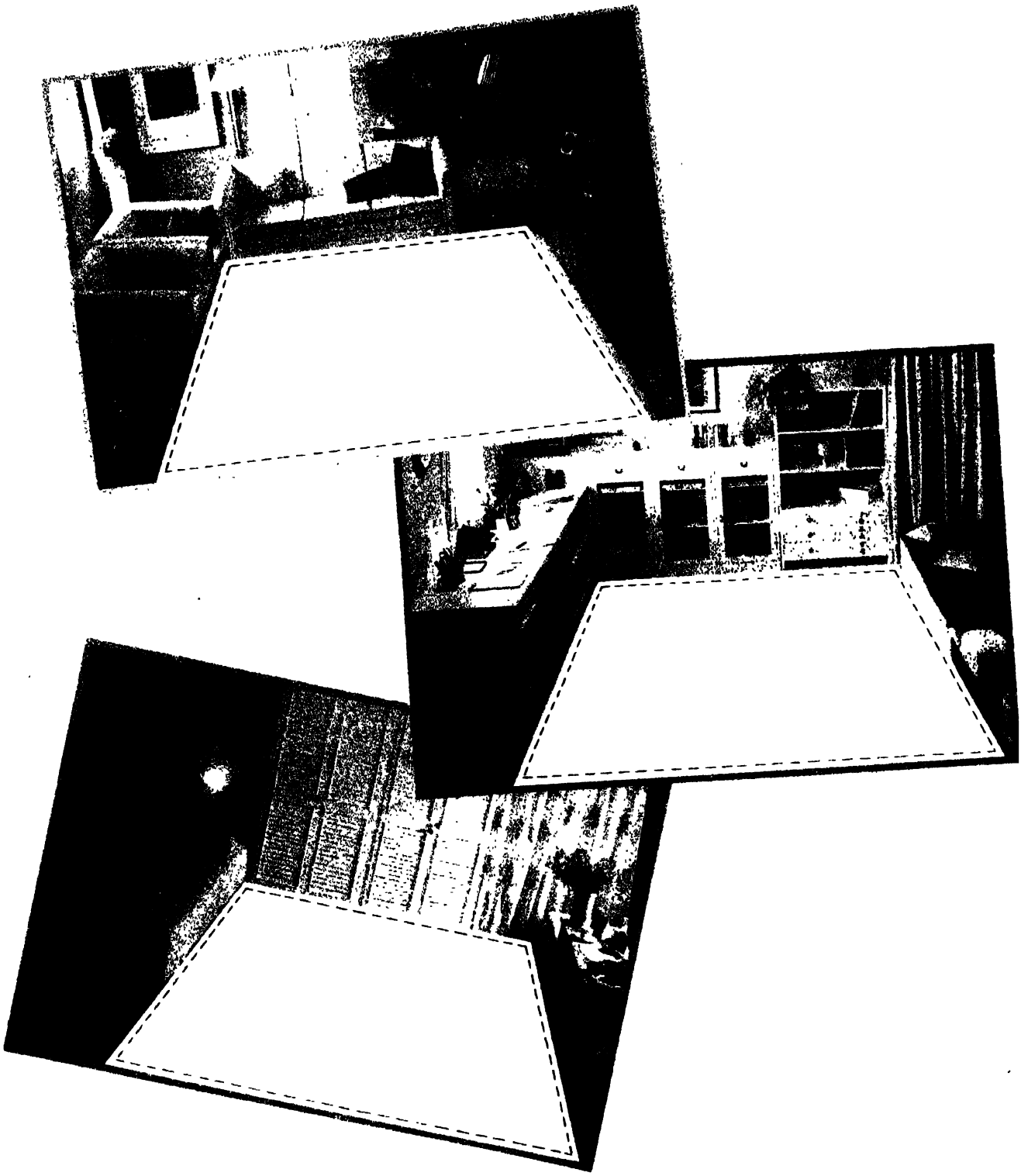
If the magazine refused to apologise and pay up, Rekha and Farzana would take "appropriate action".

There promise to be interesting times ahead.●



Rekha: much maligned

TODAY, GIVE EACH OF THESE ROOMS A MATCHING MARBLE FLOOR.

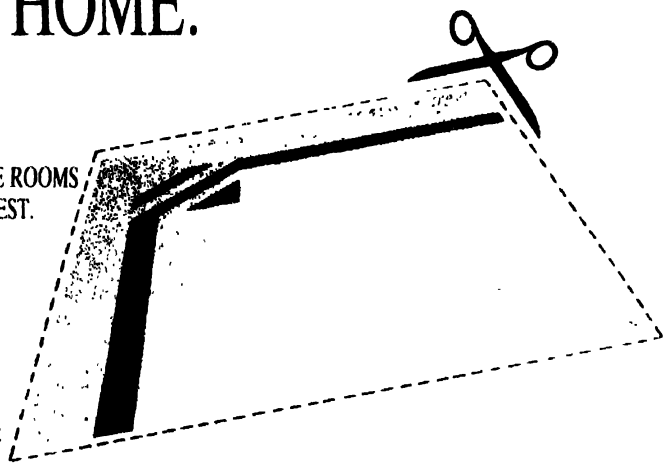


Armstrong World Industries permit INARCO Ltd the use of the brand name Armstrong, under licence

INARCO Offices **Bombay**: 12 A, Advent, Gen Bhosale Marg, Bombay 400 021. Ph. 2022621, 2022213
★ **Delhi**: Ph 3712047 3712253 3324418 ★ **Calcutta**: Ph. 444990, 432768 ★ **Madras**: Ph 475191, 476596, 479186

[redacted]Y TOMORROW, DO THE SAME IN YOUR HOME.

CUT OUT THESE THREE FLOORS, MATCH THEM TO THE ROOMS ON THE LEFT, AND STICK THEM WHERE THEY LOOK BEST.



Yes, laying down a marble floor in your home is as simple as sticking on the floors in this ad!

Thanks to Carara.

It's so simple! All you have to do is get Carara laid over your existing floor.

In shades that match your walls and furnishings.

It'll take just a few hours. No mess, no inconvenience.

[redacted] Carara is made of blended marble, a unique floor covering material.

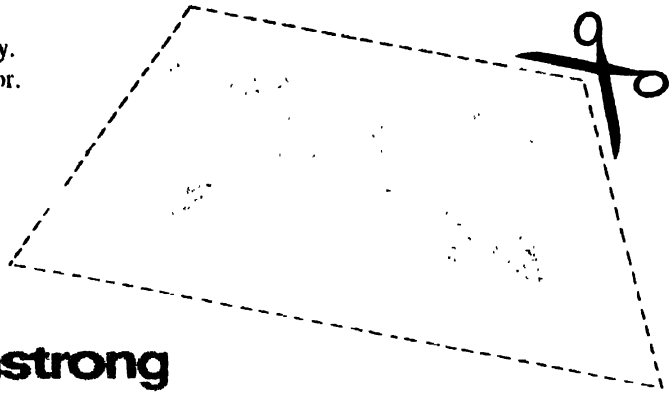
80% of each Carara tile is made up of fine granulated marble, held together with imported binders.

[redacted] You get two exquisite designs and a range of original shades to choose from. And the smooth toughness of marble: Carara is scratch-resistant.

[redacted] Carara is made with the technical expertise of Armstrong, the American floorings giant. So it lasts years and years.

What's more, giving a room a Carara floor costs you less than giving it a new coat of paint!

Hurry, call any of our offices today. And stick on a brand new marble floor.



Armstrong

CARARA

BLENDED MARBLE TILES

Instant floor decor

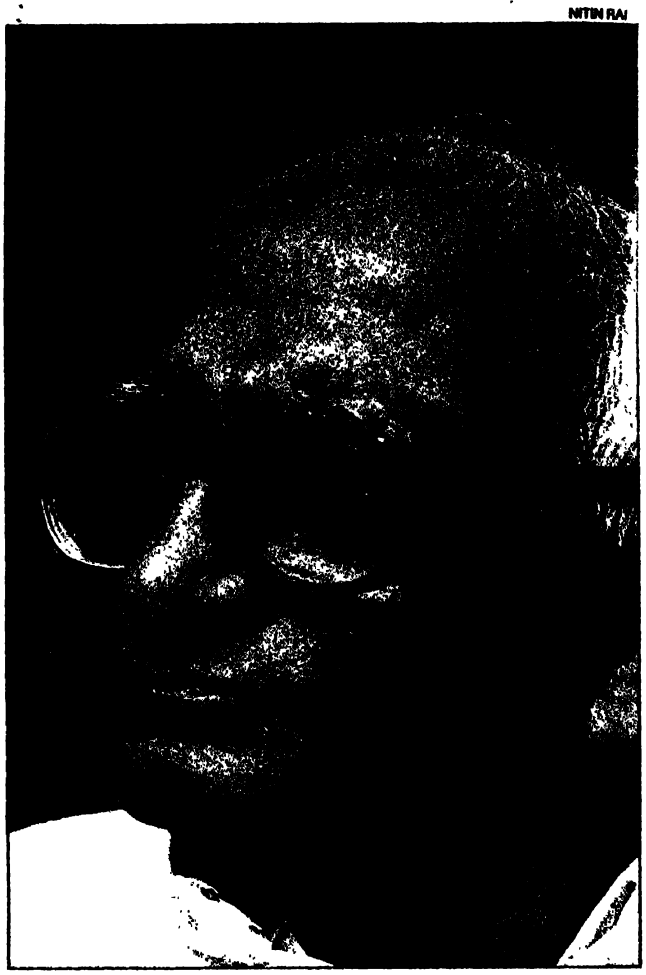
HTA 2906

INTERVIEW

"We are leaving a difficult legacy"

Former finance minister Madhu Dandavate on what went wrong with the economy, policies, and more

NITIN RAI



By any reckoning, the 'professor' had a difficult task: reduce a scary deficit, debt, and inflation. For a while, it looked as if the recently deposed National Front government's respected money man would actually pull it off. Then came self-proclaimed socialist bandwagoners such as Chandra Shekhar. The Raja backtracked on all his policy promises—no liberalisation, no economic future, nothing at all. And then, came Saddam Hussein with his conquest of Kuwait, creating a scenario that looks frighteningly like 1973. Finally, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were breathing down India's neck.

Dandavate washed up. He got defensive about deficit and raised taxes and levies, for which numerous citizens are unlikely to forgive him. Because, things have never been so expensive, and the term 'purchasing power' has been reduced to a joke. Less than a week after he lost office, and three days after Chandra Shekhar took over as Prime Minister on 9 November, Dandavate spoke to SUNDAY*'s* **Ritu Sarin** *in New Delhi. What comes out is that the professor still thinks and talks like a finance minister. Excerpts from the interview:*

SUNDAY: When the Janata Dal came to power last year you said the government had inherited empty coffers. Are you leaving behind emptier coffers?

Madhu Dandavate: I had said publicly at that time that when the Prime Minister says we have inherited empty coffers it is a figurative way of describing the state of economy of the country. It does not mean that the coffers are physically empty.

The leader of the Opposition, Rajiv Gandhi, had then asked during a Parliament debate that while the Prime Minister is saying the coffers are empty, the finance minister has contradicted that. I quietly got up and pointed out to Rajiv Gandhi that my comment is that my Prime Minister's statement is an understatement, because I can even understand empty coffers but what we see is even worse than that.

The economic situation when we took charge, and at the point of our leaving must be viewed against the background of certain internal and external factors. I had said during my (1990 Union) budget speech that when we took over, the estimate of deficit was to the order of Rs 18,920 crores. At that time, the external debt was about Rs 82,000 crores. Then, for the entire year the total amount that we would have been required to pay for internal and external borrowing was Rs 17,000 crores. The rate of inflation was 8 per cent and foodstocks in the country had dwindled down from 20 million tonnes to about 10 million tonnes. The foreign exchange reserve position was such that it was adequate only to have imports for three weeks. It is against this background that I had started managing the economy.

Q: These were your liabilities. What sort of legacy are you leaving behind

for your successor?
A: These were the actual, visible indicators of the economy when we took over power. I was not talking about projected deficits or debts, but the figures already arrived at.

Then, I started projecfing certain targets, deficits, tax collections and all that. In fact, I was congratulated that I was able to project a deficit of the order of Rs 7,206 crores by the end 1990-91. Then the Doubting Thomases had raised the question as to what guarantee was there that I would be able to restrain the deficit? To that my reply was that I was also introducing a monitoring system for the budget and I assured (them) that every four months I will appear before Parliament and report through a written statement about the performance of my efforts. And I am very happy to say that when I presented the first statement to Parliament even those who were ideologically opposed to me at least congratulated me modestly.

Q: Are you saying the Gulf crisis upset all your calculations?
A: Grave constraints developed because of it. For instance, before 1 September we find that the price of oil imported from the Arab countries was about US $14-16 per barrel. And the maximum it went up was (of course it fluctuates) to the order of US $40.

Please realise that when the price of imported crude oil increases even by one dollar the additional burden thrown on our coffers is Rs 400 crores. Based on the fluctuations we had calculated the additional burden for 12 months. It was to the order of US $2.8 billion (Rs 5,040 crores at current exchange rates)! And if by chance the average is upgraded from US $25 to US $35 per barrel, the additional impact would be to the order of US $3.9 to 4 billion!

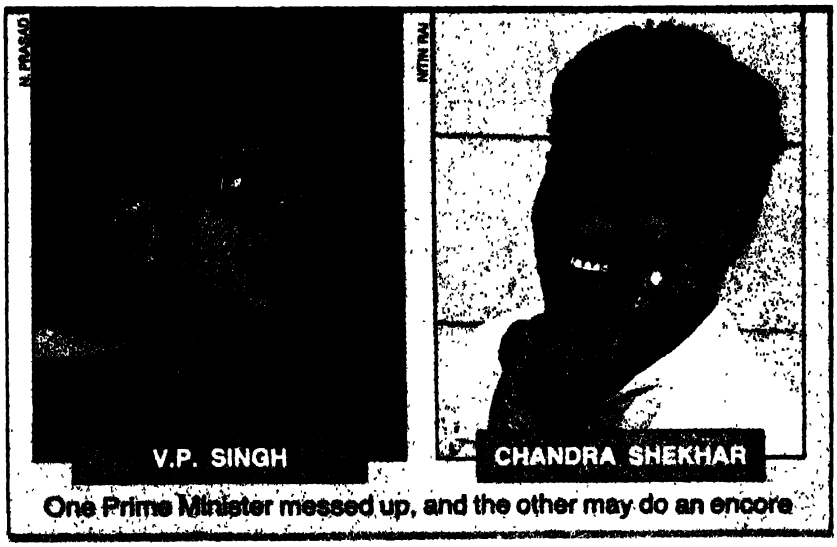
Secondly, as a result of the crisis we lost remittances from Kuwait and Iraq to the order of US $200 million(Rs 360 crores). And because of the crisis also the value of exports we lost out to these two countries was US $100 million.

Q: How seriously was the balance of payments (BOP) situation affected?
A: As far as the first four months (of the fiscal year 1990) are concerned, compared to the first four months last year, the BOP situation had marginally improved. Now if you see Moody's (a New York-based agency which, among other things, assesses the credit status of countries) report, it states that India's BOP situation is as it is because of the Gulf crisis, the instability created in the country because of recent agitations, and dislocations in production. They (Moody's) mention the Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi agitations. They say that this resulted in a loss of tourism (revenue) and the credit status of the country had gone down by two grades.

I must admit it was because of all this that we started losing our foreign exchange reserves to the extent of Rs 500-600 crores every month. So, our BOP has also gone up by about Rs 1,000 crores and would stand today at about Rs 3,800 crores.

Therefore, the recent steps I took to check this outflow—everyone agreed they were inescapable. When I find that the imported crude prices have risen by 100 per cent, then naturally, unless I have the resource mobilisation we would not have the money for import. Availability of oil came later. The steps were the following: number one, I put a 25 per cent surcharge on petroleum products and at the same time on corporate taxation I had to put an additional surcharge of 7 per cent. Through that we tried to mop up something. Not that it was adequate but it was an indicator of our direction. I must tell you frankly that when faced with such a crisis we try to have commercial borrowings from foreign countries and bilateral assistance which may not just be in the form of loans. And therefore, also, the legacy which I would have left in the normal process would have been improved deficits, improved foodgrains stocks, better foreign exchange reserves. But as a result of this oil crisis, I am afraid we are leaving a legacy of a very difficult BOP position and that is the root of many problems.

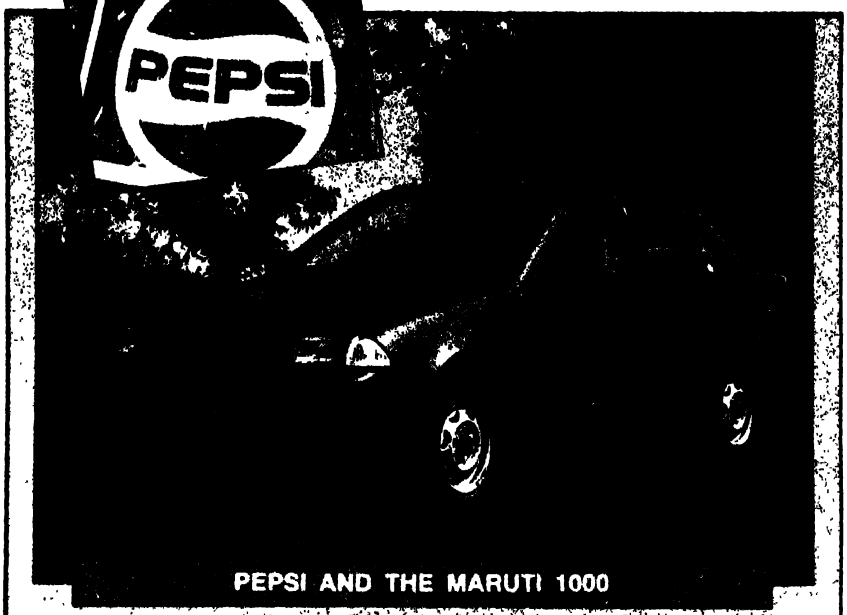
Q: Is this the only reason why India has suddenly become so unpopular with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)?
A: That is part of the problem. The legacy of the oil crisis would have been extremely sad had it not been for certain concrete—though unpopular—steps we had taken. As a result, there is a pruning down of the burden we would have put on the government. We want to see that whatever government is in power, it does not face the foreign exchange difficulties to the extent they are created.



One Prime Minister messed up, and the other may do an encore

We have tried to enter into certain contracts for exports with other countries. We have made a contract with Japan for more than Rs 1,000 crores for iron ore. There are other contracts for surplus agricultural commodities and, if everything goes well, it will be a contract of the order of Rs 2,000 crores.

Also, there is an extended structural facility from the IMF and we can get some money through that. But for that there is a very severe condition imposed by the IMF. And one of the reasons why the IMF has become unpopular with us, and we with them, is because they tried to impose a very severe conditionality upon us. India resented, this and they (the IMF) are angry because we did not accept this conditionality. That is how the relationship has become strained.



PEPSI AND THE MARUTI 1000

Consumerism will not be affected with the new government

Q: Will the change in government affect IMF negotiations?
A: I have even tried to sort out the conditionality clause with the IMF. My strategy was: for all times let India try to manage the resource mobilisation in such a manner that no creditor who gives us assistance will say you are only taking money from us and not raising it internally. Organisations like the IMF and the World Bank often feel that India solely relies on credit facilities and does nothing else.

Even when the oil crisis was not there I had a levy on petroleum products. This time I again tried to impose it. We have augmented exports and cut down consumption. There has been a 50 per cent reducton in the rate of increase of consumption of petroleum products as compared to last year.

This time too I added gulf surcharge and corporate taxation. Having done all this I don't think it will be very difficult for even a new government to get assistance for IMF loans if they go on arguing with them properly. My attitude with the IMF has been that whatever be the grudges against a particular loan or assistance when such a super crisis has taken place... And let me tell you that if the price of a barrel of crude is US $38-40; if war breaks out it may even go up to US $100 and I shudder to think about what will happen.

Q: What is the rate of inflation in India today? While it is officially put at nine per cent, many economists feel it has touched 12-13 per cent. Is this true?
A: No, no. As yet double figures have not been reached and inflation is still nine per cent. You see, even our money supply rate was checked and inflation was not as high as it was expected to be. Only, the foreign exchange position deteriorated and I must admit it has been worrisome.

Q: But for instance, the price of tea has gone up by over 60 per cent in one year and the price of sugar is up by 50 per cent. What else is this if not runaway inflation?



AJIT SINGH

His industrial policy may come in for attack

A: It is like this: some commodities have been restrained and some commodities have been very bad. Now tea and cement have been restrained but edible oil has been bad. But these are not linked up with the macro-economic picture.

Q: What will the effect of a Gulf war be on the Indian economy?
A: The way the Iraqi leaders are behaving, one will not be surprised if war breaks out soon and everything depends on what happens there. The economic plight of the UK and America are before you. It (the international situation) has already deteriorated.

Q: In such an event, will the Chandra Shekhar government have to resort to a further hike in petrol prices?
A: I don't think they will go up very much.

Q: Do you admit that measures like keeping petrol pumps closed on Sundays and the like were ill-conceived?
A: Therefore we removed them after some time. What we did was that after we put these additional measures, we removed them. At the time they were introduced they were absolutely necessary.

Q: In the past few months a sharp decline in the rate of tax collection has been noticed. The amount of direct taxes due to the government is now over Rs. 6,000 crores. This is becoming a serious problem, isn't it?
A: That is exactly what the Moody's report has said. In many large sectors of the country there have been disturbances for 15-20 days in a month. There have been communal disturbances, curfews. As a result, production had suffered, exports had suffered and tourism had suffered. Naturally then, our tax collections also suffered.

As far as the direct taxes and income tax are concerned, they are not like the customs duty and excise duty. There are certain assessment dates by which you can pay up. But it (tax collection) has gone down. Generally, all the revenue has gone down.

Q: That is precisely the point. How do you rationalise this when we have had the best crop in years and industrial production is up?
A: Let me tell you that despite the customs, excise (shortfalls), compared to last year's figures we have been able to maintain the rate. But the targets

which we had projected have not been met. For instance, if you restrain imports in order to check the deficit, then due to the difficult international situation too, the exports are reduced. The excise duty and customs duty collection will naturally suffer more. And though due to hike in petrol prices, (industrial) production has not yet suffered much, all these other factors have had an amalgamated effect.

Q: What do you think the Chandra Shekhar government will do with the National Front's much-touted new industrial policy proposals? Will they be canned?

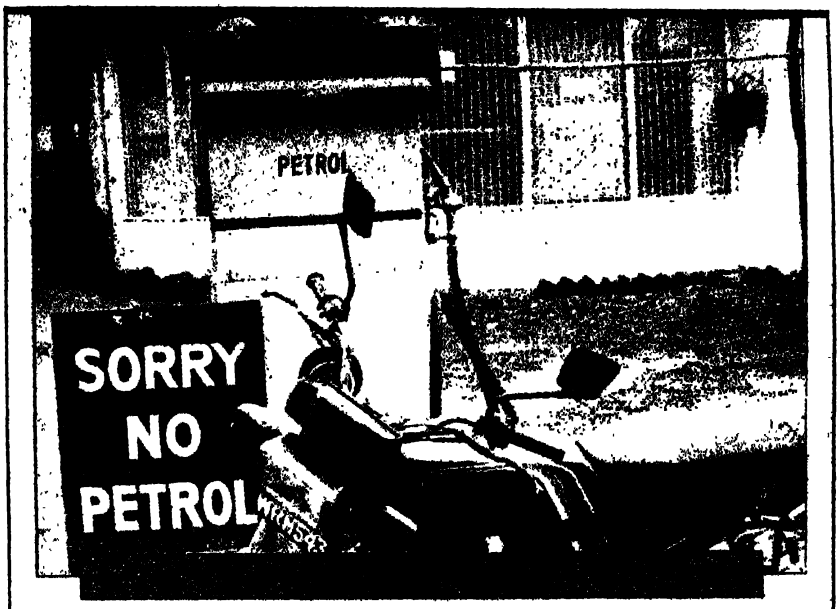
A: You will find that there will be hardly any difference in the industrial policy even with the new government coming in. It was imaginary for anyone to think that after we came in, automatic licencing would go on indiscriminately for foreign companies. We had made it very clear in para 24 of the industrial policy statement that it is automatic only in the case of those items which are manufactured on the select list. There is a positive list and a negative list. And this will eventually become an incentive for production. After all, what have we done?

Let me tell you that the so-called radicals who raised doubts and said that we are selling the country to the multinationals, forgot that so far as assistance coming from the developed countries to the developing countries is concerned, it is only 0.5 per cent of their GDP (Gross Domestic Product). That is all. And out of that a small fraction comes to India. And when eastern Europe gets opened up, that amount will be further decreased. So, there is no question whatsoever about you being swarmed by foreign capital.

Some people have created the impression that the whole world is in a queue and we are saying 'come on, come on', we are importing foreign capital. It is actually nothing like that.

Q: When your government took over, the impression created was that the entire thrust of the economy would be pro-rural and definitely anti-multinational or anti-consumerist. How have projects such as Pepsi and Maruti 1000 come through?

A: We have said this in debates in Parliament and I will say it again: that on merits we have been against Pepsi Cola but since a (previous) government had already entered into an agreement it is a different thing. Government is a continuous process and we have to agree to what has been previously committed. Otherwise also, the whole of Punjab would have been angry.



Threat of a Gulf war and rising oil prices could shatter the economy

Coming back to the industrial policy. The whole question of the industrial policy should be discussed in three sectors. In the largest sector of industry there is no question of foreign investment and it is self-reliant. Even today, in the scheme of things, the major sector in India will be a middle sector in which we will allow foreign investment only in the case of those items which are contained in the positive list. And so, it is restricted and automatic at the same time.



"Some people have created the impression that the whole world is in a queue and we're saying 'come on, come on'... it is actually nothing like that"

So where will we have foreign investment? One, where there is a critical technology gap. Number two, where we need a great degree of modernisation. And number three, where we are required to do it for the augmentation of exports. Here again, the equity ratio will be 60:40, 60 in favour of the Indian collaborator.

Now we come to the third sector, which is the small, export-oriented sector. Here we will not have any inhibitions about 60:40 equity ratio. And I had spoken to many foreigners, all of whom talked about procedural delays. They said they did not even mind a 60:40 equity ratio, but even with that, the procedures are so cumbersome that (they) took months in getting the licences.

Now, according to the new industrial policy, once you are on that particular positive list, you automatically get the licence. We have not kept any restrictions for export-oriented industry from where we want to get foreign exchange.

Q: Do you think this process of 'liberalisation' will continue? Or will it be shelved?

A: On the very second day (after he took over as Prime Minister) I heard Chandra Shekhar's comments on television. His wording was that the new government would continue the present liberalisation policies. So, when you see the grim picture of the Indian

economy, then you have to face the reality.

Q: Often, rumours had surfaced about a rift between you and the former industries minister Ajit Singh. What were these disagreements about?
A: There were no disagreements. But I must tell you that even among members of the Cabinet, while their basic thrust can be identical, each one has his own emphasis.

Q: Ajit Singh had, in the recent past, issued a large number of licences to private sugar manufacturers in UP. Were you in favour of this move?
A: This is also a question of emphasis... All the decisions taken by the Cabinet were unanimous.

Q: It is being said that these same sugar barons from UP participated in the moneybag operations in favour of the Janata Dal, while industrialists such as Dhirubhai Ambani and K.K. Birla supported the Chandra Shekhar faction. Do you agree?
A: I am not saying that about any individuals, but for the first time we find that the big businessmen were very active in Delhi. It is a very sad day for India whether one takes the moneybag or not. But it is fact that the moneybags were offered. Many people not taking them is a good thing but that the businessmen had the courage to offer large sums of money is a very sad thing for the country. However, I must say that I think there is a inner vitality in the political life of our country. That under the deadweight of the moneybags still I feel the political structure will not crumble.

Q: Were you happy with the work of the senior bureaucrats who worked with you? Like finance secretary Bimal Jalan and Montek Singh Ahluwalia?
A: Let me tell you, if the minister does not function effectively and does not apply his mind to the policy issues then the bureaucrats rule the roost. And very often, the tendency of a minister is to take credit for all the good things and try to throw the blame on the bureaucrats. When they (the bureaucrats) gave me the sendoff the other day, I said—even while in Opposition—that 'heads I win and tails you lose' should never be the attitude of the ministers towards the bureaucrats. Therefore, I did not rely upon the bureaucrats as you must have seen during the question hour of the finance ministry in Parliament—I was as comfortable with any question



"I did not rely on the bureaucrats... my homework for 20 years was more useful to me than some of the background material they used to supply me with"

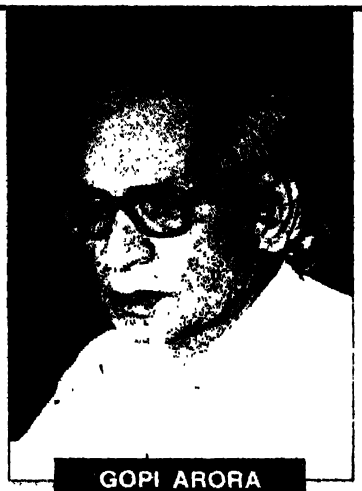
because I did not helplessly rely only on the material given to me by them. As an Opposition member for the last 15-20 years, I was taking a keen interest in all subjects of my interest and all the homework that I did for 20 years was more useful to me than some of the background material the bureaucrats used to supply me with. So, if the minister has an initiative, a thrust and a sense of direction, I think bureaucrats have to toe the line.

Q: There are rumours that Gopi Arora will be returning from his IMF posting to become finance secretary again. Will that be a good idea?
A: I don't know. I do not comment on transfers and such matters.

Q: You have said that those who had come to the ministry with clean hands are leaving with clean hands. Did the scandal involving the refund of excise due to industry sully your term in the finance ministry?
A: It has already been settled and cleared. I had intervened and stopped that refund and said that if necessary, amendments can be made. It is like this : even according to the courts, whatever order has appeared, they say if there is an unjust enrichment in the sense that some manufacturers and exporters have paid excess to the government and at the same time they have recovered that by throwing the burden on the consumers and under that circumstance they are given the refund, that means they have got double money. That is an unjust enrichment.

It is the court which says there is a relevance of unjust enrichment and the Bombay High Court has also said that whether there is an unjust enrichment or not, we are not giving the judgment and the writ courts must be utilised to decide that. So far, there was no provision of creating a fund so I said that stop the refund for the present, and let us have the feasibility of a legal modification by which amendment we can create some consumer (welfare) fund, in which that amount can be put. The money cannot go to the government. It cannot even go to the industrialists.

Q: Many political observers feel that fresh elections could be held as early as spring next year. Do you think economic issues, such as inflation, will replace corruption as a major platform?
A: I am afraid social justice and secularism will be the most important election issue. Just as Ram Janmabhoomi upset everything else—I imposed Rs 2,700 crores of burden because of the Gulf crisis, but I could go scot free because the whole country was engulfed in the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. That has brought to the focus the question of secularism, and as a result of the Mandal Commission, the social justice issue has also come to the forefront. And I think they will dominate the election. Inflation and the state of the economy will be diluted and modulated by these issues. Also there is great resentment about the manipulative politics which we have just seen and this will be a issue. As far as the present Chandra Shekhar government is concerned, I feel the landlords are the Congress(I) and the tenants actually form the government. ●



GOPI ARORA

Back as finance secretary?

BEVERAGES

The hiss of the Cobra

A 'real' Indian beer makes waves in the UK

It's a bit like shipping coal to Newcastle. Mysore Breweries Ltd (MBL) is exporting loads of lager beer to the UK, a country already flooded with the stuff. After a test launch in April this year, the Bangalore-based company launched its Cobra brand of beer in early November, starting out in one of London's more successful Indian eateries, The Bombay Brasserie. Cobra is billed as the only 'really' Indian beer, brewed and bottled in India.

The net is spreading. Just back from the UK, MBL managing director K.P. Balasubramaniam is upbeat. "On an average," he says, "we are sending four containers (72,000 bottles) a month. For the forthcoming Christmas season, we are likely to send more." At home, MBL makes the Pals and Knock Out beer brands.

Whisky and brandy drinking is on the decline in the UK, thanks to stringent driving laws and anti-alcohol campaigns. And lager beer is the drink for the trendy young Briton, considered by market analysts to be the heaviest spender on alcohol. The 340 or so brands of lager available in the UK are doing booming business, but MBL—a Rs 20 crore company with interests in food and beverages, distilleries and sea-food exports -plans to cash in on a special market.

"Ethnicity is in," says Balasubramaniam, who has lived in the UK as a London School of Economics student. "Thai restaurants serve Thai beer, Singapore restaurants serve Singapore beer, as do the Mexicans. Every ethnic restaurant serves ethnic beer, and we thought why shouldn't the Indian restaurants serve authentic Indian beer?" Hence, Cobra. Balasubramaniam says the beer is ideal with curry meals. "It bites," he says. "But doesn't sting."

The Cobra may not sting diners, but it will have to save some of its venom for the competition. In the imported beer segment, Heineken, an internationally-known Dutch brand, and Budweiser, a lighter beer from the US, dominate the market. "That's why," says Balasubramaniam, "we are targeting it (Cobra) to the Indians and Britishers visiting Indian restaurants, and Indians visiting Indian clubs." The potential market is vast: there are anything between 6,000-7,000 Indian restaurants in the UK. And numerous smaller operations that are not listed.

Cobra hopes to last out in a market that has seen other Indian brands, Elephant and Tiger, to name a few, that have been unsuccessful in the UK market. The most successful has been the Kingfisher brand, manufactured and exported by Bangalore-based United Breweries Ltd (UBL), a division of Vijay Mallya's UB Group. But Kingfisher has moved out of the 'really real' Indian beer slot. "As demand for (the) beer increased, we felt it was more viable to have the beer brewed in Britain," says S.J. Kaul, director and senior vice-president with UBL. "Also, the life of the beer is short. From the day you bottle it, it starts deteriorating, so it was only practical we shift the unit to Britain."



"Ethnicity is in," says MBL's Balasubramaniam, "Thai restaurants serve Thai beer, Singapore restaurants serve Singapore beer, so why shouldn't Indian restaurants?"

"Kingfisher is no different from other beers available in Britain," says MBL's Balasubramaniam. "It's an Indian beer made in Britain." That is why Cobra is unique, he says. Also, Cobra sells in 650 ml bottles, the way it mainly sells in India, unlike the 325 ml variety that is common in the UK. The brand also claims a higher alcohol content—at five per cent, more than British beers, and even Kingfisher's UK incarnation - just the way it is at home.

MBL is not too worried about the Cobra's shelf-life, and claims that the beer will last anything between nine months to a year. And it appears that MBL's associates in the UK believe it too. A&K International, a Fulham-based company which is mainly in the fashion business, is the importer. And Newcastle-based Brent Walker Breweries, a major trade outfit, will distribute Cobra in the UK.

Balasubramaniam hopes that after a successful stint in the UK, MBL will be able to make inroads into the US market. (UB already has a brand there, the Taj Mahal.) Also on the cards is the export of a dark Indian rum—contrary to changing Western drinking habits that increasingly prefer clear spirits—called Captain's Table. For the moment, however, MBL is banking on the Cobra, and its marketing hiss. ●

Ratna Rao Shekar/Bangalore



ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Chaos compounded

Calcutta taxis queuing up for diesel: a nightmare

West Bengal shows India the way to the Stone Age

Everyday life has come to a standstill—almost -as parts of the country reels from the breakdown of essential services. There is an acute shortage of diesel, petrol and cooking gas. The telecommunications system is all but defunct, thanks to the indefinite, nationwide strike by telecom workers. And braving the tricky exercise of living life as usual, the befuddled Indian citizen looks up to see a new face ruling the country. In short: chaos. And here, West Bengal leads the way.

Take the telecom strike, for example. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam workers in Bombay and New Delhi received ad-hoc payment of Rs 100 a month from 1 September. And telecom workers all over the country raised a stink about it—alleging discrimination and demanding similar treatment. Talks fall through, and the class III and IV employees went on an indefinite strike from 3 November. And paralysed long-distance communication by trunk-call, telex, facsimile, and satellite communication links. Most telephones here are dead anyway, and citizens regularly bring out funeral processions mourning the state's telephone system. The strike worsened the situation. Till recently, the STD system worked in telephones lucky enough to be alive, but in the last few days, that too has stopped. And with organisations such as the All India Telephone Operators and Supervisers Association and the Maharashtra Telephone Nigam Ltd supporting the agitation, the communication gap can only grow.

Communication by road, too, is in disarray. Ever since the Gulf crisis, oil supplies to the states have been cut down. But shortage of petrol has not caused such a panic as diesel shortages. Fearing that the diesel crisis would play havoc with the irrigation system and therefore, the *rabi* crop, the Centre has promised to meet the demands of the agricultural sector which mostly used diesel to operate pump sets. But road transport was left out.

West Bengal, expectedly, was hit the hardest. The perennial shortage of electricity in the state necessitates extensive use of generators, which feed mostly on diesel. To add to the misery, tankers of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), which supplies the major share, allegedly strayed from their destinations, to instead supply industries which offered better deals. "The IOC is not cooperating at all," fumes West Bengal transport minister Shyamal Chakraborty. "Not only the IOC," adds Kalyan Bhadra, president of the All India Petrol Dealers Association, "but Hindustan Petroleum too. We have no alternative but to have police escorts," to ensure diesel reaches petrol stations. And though the Centre cut only 10 per cent of supplies, since this is based on last year's demands, the growth in the number of users is unaccounted for—in effect increasing the cuts to 19 per cent.

More trouble. The electricity deficiency of 250-450 MW a day is the norm in West Bengal. Multi-storied buildings have become nightmares with no power to even work the lifts, and no diesel to work the generators. "We are giving priority to multi-storied buildings and nursing homes," says Bhadra. "Obviously, we have to ration the supplies."

Everyday, mile-long queues of taxis, private buses and trucks lead to petrol pumps all over the state which run out of supplies with incredible speed. The inevitable fall-out of a dislocated transportation system: skyrocketting prices.

The oil crunch has also affected the availability of cooking gas. And corrupt practices by distributors, plus a gas tanker strike, has practically left kitchens in the state with no LPG (liquified petroleum gas). And the backlog of about 10 per cent in LPG cylinder orders has backed up still further, to about 25 per cent.

Since kerosene is also in short supply, life is especially tough. Necessity being the mother of invention, Calcuttans have devised a crude way of getting kitchen fuel: by adding 100g of common salt to a litre of diesel, roadside scientists are now preparing kerosene. But diesel being in short supply too, this innovation might not help a great deal.

The stone age beckons—recession is an understatement. And even here, West Bengal could show India the way. ●

Antara Dev Sen/Calcutta

■ Doctor in clover

Is Dr Subramaniam Swamy attached to the Prime Minister by his navel? This may seem like a silly question (and no doubt, Dr Swamy will now go off into a sulk and accuse SUNDAY of 'irresponsible journalism', if precedents are anything to go by). But we ask because the good doctor has managed the incredible feat of turning up wherever Chandra Shekhar goes: Jaipur, Bombay, Delhi's riot-hit areas, Rajghat, etc.

Does this mean that Shekhar's economic philosophy is the same as Swamy's abolish-income-tax-and-free-the-economy credo? Not quite. Shekhar's views owe more



Subramaniam Swamy: natal attraction?

to Ram Manohar Lohia and D.R. Goyal than they do to Adam Smith and Subramaniam Swamy.

So, regardless of what job Swamy gets in the new dispensation, free-marketeers can spend more sleepless nights: the PM still believes in 1950s socialism. What accounts for Swamy's proximity to Shekhar then? Not much more than a mutuality of political interest. They certainly don't share the same views.

STOCK QUOTE

"At least one appointment was decided the day Chandra Shekhar was sworn in: Mukesh Ambani will be chief economic adviser."

A member of the Indian Express *lobby.*

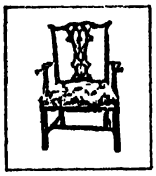
■ Timely profits

At a time when the industrial policy is up for grabs to the highest bidder, half-yearly results from India's top 100 companies come as a revitaliser. Collective operating profit for the six-month period ending 30 September is at Rs 1,613 crores, up 31.5 per cent from the corresponding period last year. Collective net profit for the same period is at Rs 555 crores, up from Rs 395 crores last year. This should surely help out, with more money to absorb shocks. Expenses are bound to mount with rising oil prices - so will production and transportation costs.

The next six months, leading up to year-closing on 31 March 1991 are crucial. It is now that the real effects of the Gulf crisis will hit the industry, bottom lines will flatten out, and profit margins are likely to get still lower (for the end-September 1990 period, the collective profit margin is up a mere one per cent to two per cent from last year, when net profit and operating profit are compared to sales). Margin is going to be *the* 1991 nightmare for companies. And that is going to lead to cut-throat competition government policy or not. Thank the stars for profit now, if not profitability.

SPECULATION OF THE WEEK

Reshuffling in New Delhi



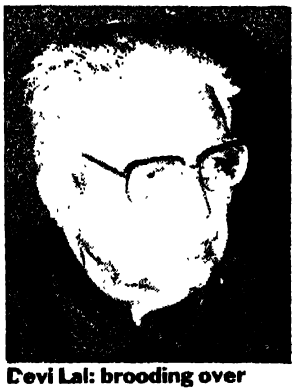
V.P. Singh stuck with Rajiv's economic team (plus S. Gurumurthy) thus ensuring a degree of certainty. But will Chandra Shekhar shuffle the bureaucrats and advisers around? Those who are definitely out include the afore-mentioned S. Gurumurthy (and things don't look too good for him at the *Indian Express*, either) and the unfortunate Montek Singh Ahluwalia (see last week's Delhi Diary).

Deepak Nayar's fate is less certain. The chief economic adviser's views are similar to Shekhar's, but the PM is suspicious of his attachment to V.P. Singh. Ditto for finance secretary Bimal Jalan who, as a Stalinist, has something in common with the latest Brezhnevite to occupy the PM's chair. Delhi gossip has it that Gopi Arora may be back from Washington, perhaps as finance secretary. But this is certain to be opposed by the Congress(I) which regards Arora as a traitor.

Certain to be replaced is the chairman of the Board of Direct Taxes (Nariman Point is allergic to him). And there is speculation that R.N. Malhotra's replacement at the Reserve Bank of India will be our old friend the finance manager himself: S. Venkitaramanan.

■ The Sirsa syndrome

That's one the Indian stock markets could do without. Ever since the Raja's regime took off to the political wilderness, the share bazaar has been going around in circles. Because, they have Devi Lal and his brood to contend with. In the week beginning 12 November, rumours suddenly began to fly: the resurrected deputy Prime Minister is throwing his weight around, and wants his son Om Prakash Chautala to become finance minister. In a week in which markets should



Devi Lal: brooding over

have spiralled upwards, buoyed by Reliance Industries Ltd, Larsen & Toubro and fancy half-yearly results from the corporate world, they *dipped*, at least in Bombay, which controls more than 60 per cent of the country's trading. Before they could move up, came another shocker: Lal wants younger son Ranjit Singh to be industry minister. Dip. Fortunately, nothing quite that disastrous may happen. While reining in Devi Lal is like a matador asking a bull out to tea, Chandra Shekhar may stand his ground when it comes to Lal's ilk. ●

CASTE AWAY?

How to have the Mandal cake and eat V.P. Singh up too



RAJESH KUMAR





Which of the three brought V.P. Singh down—Chandra Shekhar, Lal Krishna Advani or Bindeswari Prasad Mandal?

On the face of it, this appears a ridiculous question. We know it was Shekhar and his band of opportunistic dissidents who split the Janata Dal in half, just as we know it was L.K. Advani's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which sealed the V.P. Singh government's fate by withdrawing support. So, where does B.P. Mandal now many years dead—come into this?

The answer—though it is hardly ever recognised—is at the beginning.

Advani's *rath yatra*, after all, was a direct reaction to V.P. Singh's announcement (on 7 August) that the Mandal Commission's recommendations would be implemented. As hordes of commentators have pointed out, Advani felt the Mandal Report threatened to divide the BJP's Hindu vote-bank. The BJP president, of course, has denied time and again that there was any such "linkage", but his protests against the 'No Mandal, no *rath*' thesis have been completely unconvincing. There was no talk of the *yatra* before Mandal and, moreover, nobody—not even someone smitten with an overpowering wanderlust—decides to set off on a 10,000 km journey spanning 35 days on the spur of the moment and with under a month for preparation. Especially not a politician as shrewd and calculating as Advani.

The consequences of the *yatra*, of course, are all too familiar—the halting of the *rath* and the arrest of Advani, the withdrawal of support by the BJP and, finally, the vote of no-confidence against the V.P. Singh regime. The former Prime Minister has claimed that he sacrificed his government on the altar of secularism, but the truth is that he lost his political head to the sword of Mandal.

Ever since 7 August—the day he made the announcement—V.P. Singh's days were numbered. It may have been Advani who finally toppled him, but even otherwise, the hatred and violence that the Mandal Report inspired would have done the Raja in. By acting on Mandal's recommendations, V.P. Singh—in one stroke—created a powerful array of forces ferociously opposed to him.

By acting on the Mandal Report, V.P. Singh—in one stroke—created a powerful array of forces ferociously opposed to him



SHOOTER

If this appears so odd, it is because almost nobody claimed to be fundamentally opposed to the Mandal Report. Not the Congress Opposition, which initially welcomed and supported V.P. Singh's move. Not the BJP, which won its 80-odd seats in the last Lok Sabha election on a manifesto that promised to implement the Mandal Report. And certainly not the Janata Dal dissidents, who intensified their plotting and scheming following the Mandal announcement. Even the press—which launched an ugly and hysterical campaign against V.P. Singh—rarely, if ever, said it opposed reservations on principle.

Everybody, it seemed, was happy to have the Mandal cake and eat V.P. Singh up too.

Consider first the hypocrisy and doublespeak of the political parties that opposed V.P. Singh over Mandal. The Congress—which gave Mandal two extensions and (in his



RAJESH KUMAR



RAJESH KUMAR



RAJESH KUMAR



NITIN RAI



RAJESH KUMAR

Within days, the anti-reservation stir spread like wildfire through much of the urban areas in the cow belt. The Congress and the BJP accepted Mandal, but covertly supported the agitation

own words) "full support" when it was the ruling party in 1980—was initially caught off guard. "You will have our unqualified support in the implementation of the report," said P. Shiv Shankar in the Rajya Sabha on the day V.P. Singh made the announcement. The leader of the Opposition in the Upper House also went so far as to suggest that reservations be extended to educational institutions and minorities!

Within days, however, the anti-reservation agitation had spread like wildfire through much of the urban areas in the cow belt. And the Congress, which had seemed to all but applaud V.P. Singh for his attempt to uplift the backwards, began to maintain a deafening silence on the Mandal issue. At the same time, the party did everything it could to lend its support to the snowballing protests in university campuses.

In the capital, Congress(I) students floated the Equality Front—which, among other things, held demonstrations and called a *bandh* against the implementation of the Mandal Report. The party, however, didn't have the courage to confirm that it had anything to do with it: the Front became a cover for surreptitious anti-reservation activity. Significantly, it did not deny this either.

It was only at the end of August that the Congress evolved an official or formal 'stance' on the Mandal affair. After a protracted meeting of the central working committee, the party equivocated once again. While it did not—as its role at the forefront of the agitation would lead one to expect—reject the Mandal Report outright, the Congress claimed that it was against the concept of reservations based on caste. Rather, the 'Rajiv formula', as it has come to be known, sought to enhance Mandal's recommendations by the "introduction of economic criteria". Among the suggestions: public school students, tax-payers, the landed, etc. be excluded from the ambit of reservations.

These were by no means bad or irrational suggestions. But why was the Congress advancing them? To improve on Mandal, as it self-righteously claimed? Or to distance itself from the report without going so far as to risk rejecting it? Soon enough, the truth was out.

Understandably, Rajiv was asked the obvious question. If he was serious about his 'formula', then would he be prepared to introduce it in a Congress-ruled state such as Andhra Pradesh, which has a reservation system for the backward castes? And, moreover, if he really believed that caste-based reservations divided the country, was he willing to ask chief minister Chenna Reddy to scrap them? The Congress president had no good answers. During a speech in the Lok Sabha, Rajiv was forced to admit that the criteria laid down by his party for job reservations in Andhra and elsewhere were faulty. His defence, however, was pathetic: "Blame for what happened cannot be laid at my door. I was not in

SUBHA IIT PAL



Advani's *rath yatra* was a direct reaction to V.P. Singh's announcement that the Mandal Commission's recommendations would be implemented. There was no talk of the *yatra* before Mandal

politics then."

After the Congress chief ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh protested against the position adopted by the Congress (apparently, the talk of economic criteria threatened their own caste-based vote-banks), less and less was heard about the Rajiv formula. Till today, the party's position on Mandal remains unclear. Rather, it is unclear whether the party has a position on it at all.

The BJP's attitude was no less confused. Like the Congress, it did not reject the recommendations and argued that economic criteria must be taken into consideration. And like the Congress again, it used its student organisations to pressure V.P. Singh to back off. Its main grouse was that it wasn't consulted on the implementation decision, despite being an ally of the National Front government. "How could V.P. Singh assume he had our support on this issue?" BJP leaders kept asking.

Both parties ridiculed the motives behind V.P. Singh's sudden decision to act on the report. Here their arguments were more than plausible. There is little doubt that the timing of V.P. Singh's announcement had less to do with the plight of the backwards and more to do with countering the 9 August rally organised by Devi Lal, who had just been ousted as deputy prime minister. The Raja may also have believed that his decision would divide Devi Lal's vote-bank as the Jat leader enjoys a sizeable backward caste following.

ASHOK VAHIE



Till today, the Congress' position on Mandal remains unclear. Rather, it is unclear whether the party has a position on it at all

But even if V.P. Singh took a politically motivated decision with an eye on the electorate, could the Congress really afford to accuse him as it did of "betraying a degree of cynical opportunism, intellectual dishonesty and political malfeasance never before seen in the history of independent India"?

The problem with resorting to arguments which question the motives of others is that your own must be above suspicion. And, clearly, both the Congress and the BJP fail on this count. What motive could the Congress have had for seeing "considerable merit in the Mandal Commission Report" and at the same time unleashing its goons to destroy government property in the capital and elsewhere? Or, for that matter, was Advani's post-Mandal decision to embark on the *rath yatra* free from electoral caste calculations? And if both parties resorted to doing what they did for fear of losing the backward class vote, didn't this betray an even greater degree of "cynical opportunism, intellectual dishonesty and political malfeasance"?

Clearly, there were only two honest approaches that the Congress and the BJP could have adopted. Either reject the Mandal Report and then openly support the agitation. Or accept it and then persuade the government to introduce the necessary modifications.

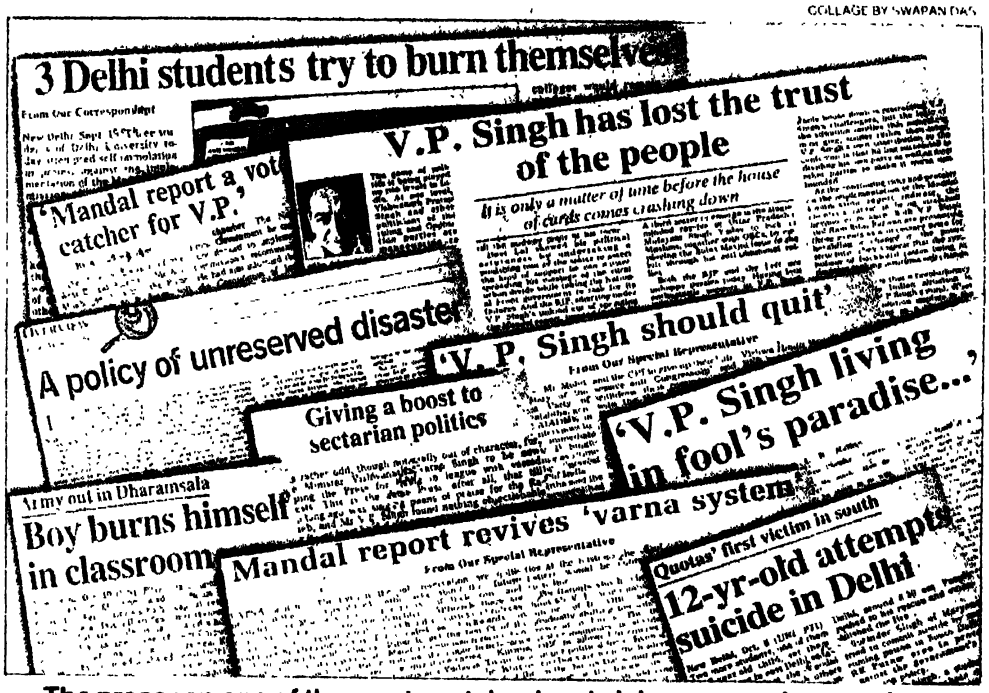
What the two parties chose to do, however, was to accept Mandal and then covertly support—even lead—the agitation. The cost of this needs no reminding: scores of people dead, crores of government property destroyed and an atmosphere of rancour and hatred.

Given the extent of the violence and trauma that gripped much of north India between August and September, the press may have been expected to exercise a measure of objectivity and restraint. But, on the contrary, it ran one of the most sustained and vicious campaigns against V.P. Singh and the pro-

reservationists.

It was a drive which saw publications sympathetic to the government do U-turns, pitched men as incongruous as Mani Shankar Aiyar and Arun Shourie on the same side of the fence and made virtually every major newspaper read pretty much like the *National Herald*. Never before had the media displayed such united hostility—whether on Bofors ("Yes, but we don't have a Swiss account number with Rajiv's name on it"), the Emergency ("But didn't the trains run on time?") or the Defamation Bill ("Well, it was scrapped, wasn't it?")

COLLAGE BY SWAPAN DAS



The press ran one of the most sustained and vicious campaigns against V.P. Singh and the Mandal Report and played up the spate of shocking self-immolations

How the decision on Mandal—which essentially consisted of extending reservations to the backward classes and involved but a few thousand jobs a year—could have aroused such unaccommodating hatred in the media is astounding. Did it really pose any (or as much of a) threat to India's unity as the press kept claiming? Could a policy aimed at providing employment to a deprived and underrepresented 52 per cent of the population really mean, as Girilal Jain put it, "the Lebanonisation of India"?

Having arrogated to itself the role of defending a united and casteless India, the press went on to invent its own definitions. A 'casteist' was any pro-reservationist—particularly, a Janata Dal backward class leader such as Ram Vilas Paswan. 'Anti-reservationists', on the other hand, were never 'casteist' but people who stood for equality of opportunity and India's unity. (Never mind that the overwhelming majority of anti-reservationists who took to the streets were forwards threatened by the loss of caste privileges.) And a 'martyr' was any one of those misguided youths who—perhaps carried away by the hysteria whipped up by the political parties and the press—chose tragically to put a torch to himself.

While the press played up the spate of shocking self-immolations (whether restraint and disapproval would have served to check them is a question worth examining), it barely bothered itself with the ugly and casteist side of the anti-reservation stir. How many newspapers came down on the students in the capital who demonstrated by sweeping the streets and posing as vegetable vendors? The suggestion: that these were occupations unworthy of upper castes. Who criticised the women students who carried placards saying: "We don't want unemployed husbands"? The implication: backward caste husbands with jobs are not fit for marrying. And what about all those inflammatory and casteist slogans that were raised right through the agitation (see SUNDAY, *The Voices of Mandal*, issue dated 28 October—3 November 1990)?



V.P. Singh probably believed that his decision would divide Devi Lal's vote-bank as the Jat leader enjoys a sizeable backward caste following

Neither did the press do much to focus on the unlawfulness and violence that attended the anti-reservation stir. And when it did, there was usually some excuse or the other advanced for it. Who recalls the attempted hijack of a Vayudoot plane at Shimla ("Boys will be boys")? How much column space was devoted to condemning the bid to set fire to Dal MP Satya Prakash Malaviya's residence near Allahabad ("Well, passions are bound to get inflamed in this kind of situation")? And what about peasant leader Mahendra Singh Tikait's call to burn the sons of (government) MPs and MLAs as a form of protest ("Shocking and awful, but wasn't it V.P. Singh himself who invited this kind of madness?")?

In contrast, there were reams of newsprint expended on the pro-

ANNOUNCING THE FIRST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DRUG ABUSE.

The most renowned names in the field of drug abuse prevention the world over, are preparing for Combat the conference on drug abuse to be held in the first week of March, 1991.

Among other things, they intend to form a pressure group which would motivate national governments to contain illegal drug trafficking.

They will also develop a strategy to accelerate prevention and rehabilitation programmes. And review the latest developments on this front.

You are welcome to join forces with them, if you share their fighting spirit.

Registration forms for the conference are available with Nivedita Sen at Indian Chamber of Commerce, 7th Floor, 4, India Exchange Place, Calcutta.

Send your forms along with the registration fee of Rs 750 (for Calcutta delegates)/Rs 1000 (for outstation delegates), to the Secretary, Organising Committee, SAPC Secretariat, Indian Chamber of Commerce, 4, India Exchange Place, Calcutta 700 001, so as to reach us by 15 December 1990.

Wouldn't you prefer to be part of the action, rather than hear about it from someone else?

SUBSTANCE • ABUSE • PREVENTION • CELL
CITIZEN ACTION FORUM
INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

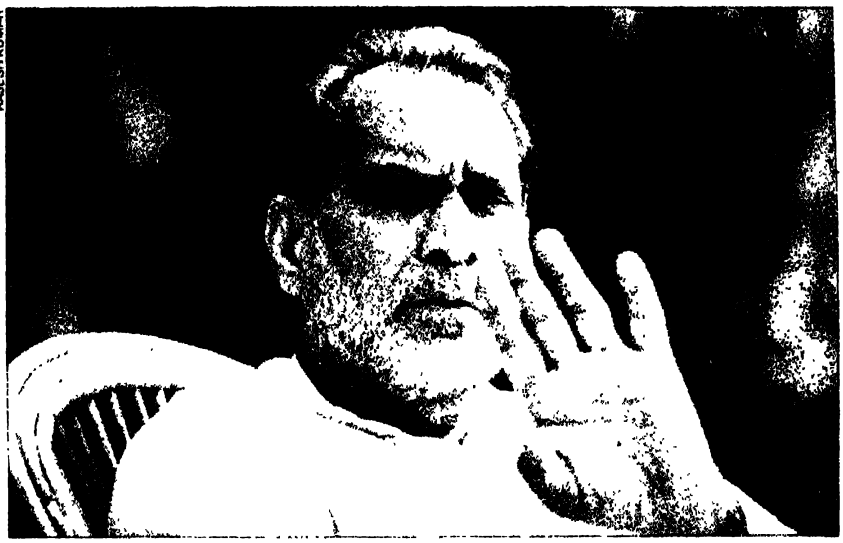
PRINCIPAL SPONSOR — ***TATA STEEL***

reservation agitation—which, undoubtedly, did more than its bit to contribute to the overall violence. Ram Vilas Paswan's call to the backwards to fight on the streets (he later denied saying this), for instance, was the subject of innumerable (justifiably) angry editorials.

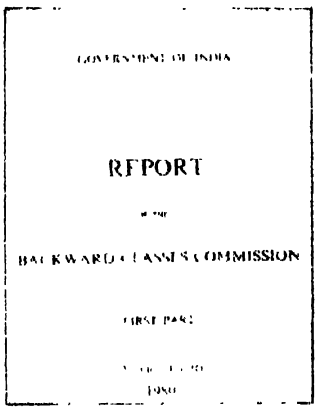
The naked bias and the hysteria which attended the reporting on Mandal contrasted starkly with the 'objectivity' and 'restraint' with which the media dealt with Advani's *rath yatra*. If the division of this country was what the press was so worried about, then surely it was the latter that should have occupied most of its attention. Yet, there was none of that savage hatred and pious high-mindedness with which the newspapers dealt with Mandal. Never mind the blatantly inflammatory slogans, the riots that preceded and followed in its wake and the dubious objective of the exercise.

The media's obsession with Mandal was all the more curious given that during the time, the country was rocked by communal violence in places as far-flung as Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat. A recent and interesting study published in *People's Democracy*—the CPI(M)'s weekly organ—reveals the contrast between the media's interest in the two issues. Between 30 September and 4 October—during which communal disturbances accounted for 70 lives—three mainstream English newspapers *(Indian Express, The Hindu* and *The Times of India)* devoted a bare 47 column centimetres on their front pages to the riots. The anti-reservation stir, however, received as much as 333 column centimetres. The figures for the reports off front page and editorials are even more divergent.

The kind of postures the media adopted on Mandal may have been acceptable if the recommendations threatened to change the face of employment in India. But how many newspapers and magazines really cared to study the number of jobs that came within the ambit of reservations? Statistics have it that an average of a little less than two lakh jobs are generated by the public sector every year. They also reveal that out of these, the central sector accounts for something like 40,000. (This is the crucial statistic as the previous government left the decision to implement the Mandal Report to the states.) An additional 27 per cent reservation then would have meant a little over a mere 10,000 jobs.


RAJESH KUMAR


JAGDISH YADAV


GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

REPORT

OF THE

BACKWARD CLASSES COMMISSION

FIRST PART

1980

Which of the three brought V.P. Singh down—Chandra Shekhar, L.K. Advani or Bindeswari Prasad Mandal?

If this strikes someone as an unacceptably large number, it is instructive to ask once again what the anti-reservation stir was all about. Was it about the class three and class four jobs that account for the majority of those in the central sector? Was the agitation about jobs for sweepers, peons, manual workers and lower division clerks? Did the students of the medical colleges, the IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology) and posh colleges such as St Stephen's and Hindu take to the streets for fear of losing out on such employment? And would there have been an agitation at all if reservations were limited to class three and class four posts only?

Or was the anti-reservation stir about the class one and class two jobs? About officer-level jobs in industry, the civil service and elsewhere? About jobs which altogether amount to a few hundred every year?

As hundreds of commentators pointed out, there may have been many things wrong with the Mandal Report. The methodology used was far from perfect, the recommendations would have benefited the better off among the backward classes the most and, as we all know, reservation by itself cannot help the socially and educationally deprived.

But these are points of view that call for discussion and not the madness which gripped the nation for most of three months. They did not justify the deceit and duplicity of the parties opposed to Mandal—just as they did not warrant the nastiness and savagery of the press. Most of all, they did not merit the demand for V.P. Singh's head. •

Mukund Padmanabhan/New Delhi

Running riot

Communal clashes break out in Old Delhi

The tension began with Advani's *rath yatra*. As the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president's Ram rath made its way down the narrow lanes and by-lanes of the walled city of Delhi, feelings on both sides of the communal fence ran high. The strict vigil maintained by the administration, however, prevented the outbreak of any violence.

But that situation, obviously, was too good to last. For, only a month later on 14 November, communal riots were raging in the Sadar Bazar area of old Delhi, with looting, arson and loss of lives.

The immediate provocation was a procession taken out jointly by a number of minority organisations. All three were relatively unknown outfits, the Sikh Muslim Dalit Panth, the All India Minority Front and the All India Muslim Unity Front. The organisers, apparently, assured the police and the administration that their's would be a peaceful procession, with no raising of slogans. Permission was granted to this silent procession to go around the walled city, though police officials later claimed that there had been no official go-ahead.

The procession began from Sisganj Gurdwara, Chandni Chowk at 10 am. The participants were mostly youths from the trans-Yamuna area, according to police sources, and were armed with spears, daggers, lathis and other lethal weapons. The processionists reached Idgah, Sadar Bazar, at 2.30 pm.

That's when the trouble began. For, some of the prominent leaders, including Jasbir Singh Rode of the Akali Dal (Mann) and Sukhvinder Singh Khalsa of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) made provocative speeches at the venue, instigating the 15,000-odd people assembled. Some of the young people were sufficiently roused to rush off to the adjoining Dhobi Katra to pelt stones at members of the other community. Swift retaliation followed and soon a full-fledged battle was in progress on the street.

Despite the prior notice of the procession and the likelihood of violence breaking out, police presence was at a minimum. So, while the communities clashed, the small group of policemen on duty stood around waiting for reinforcements. That took another 10 minutes or so. Meanwhile, the elders of both communities were trying to calm passions without much success.

The police finally swung into action, using tear-gas shells and firing 22 rounds at the mob. Shopkeepers quickly downed shutters, while the smoke rising from burning vehicles gave an ominous look to the entire scene. Around 14 vehicles were set on fire and so was the fodder at the Idgah slaughter house. Till late into the night firemen were trying to extinguish the blaze at a motor mechanic's shop and a medical dispensary across the road.

By the evening, however, the situation was under control, with the death count standing at five. The additional commissioner of police (northern range), S.K. Kain, maintained that none of the dead or injured (around 20 at the first count) has sustained bullet injuries. All of them had been wounded by sharp-edged weapons.



Communal feelings were already running high in the capital after the burning of a holy book in east of Kailash in south Delhi, and the Sadar riots made matters worse. The fall-out was experienced all over the city



RAJESH KUMAR

Hospital sources, however, disputed this version.

Curfew was imposed in the area for an indefinite period and cases registered against those who had made provocative speeches, for the police held that the violence had been preplanned.

Communal feelings were already running high in the capital after the burning of a holy book in east of Kailash in south Delhi, and the Sadar riots only made matters worse. The fall-out was experienced all over the city, with buses being burnt in east Delhi, with Trilokpuri becoming especially tense.

The police, however, concentrated its attention on the Sadar area, with police commissioner Vijay Karan visiting the area. The Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi, Arjan Singh, also went around the affected area, announcing the grant of Rs 1 lakh to the next of kin of those killed and Rs 10,000 to those seriously injured. Compensation would also be paid to those whose property had been damaged.

The next day, 15 November, it was



RAJESH KUMAR



Two days after the riots, the Shahi Imam visited the troubled areas (far left) and condemned the organisers of the march. A day before, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar also toured the riot-hit places (left and above)

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's turn to conduct a tour of the affected areas. He gave the slip to those assembled to greet him, including H.K.L. Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler, entering the police station by the back door, to remain closeted with Vijay Karan and Arjan Singh.

Finally, Shekhar's convoy wound its way down the roads of Sadar. Some residents wandering around were asked by the PM how they'd been affected in the riots. The heart-rending stories that followed left Shekhar visibly upset. The Prime Minister gave a clean chit to the administration and the police before leaving, and announced a grant of Rs 5 lakhs from the PM's Relief Fund to those who'd suffered in the violence. Asked whether a political conspiracy had caused the riots, Shekhar replied: "I don't want to politicise the issue. All I can say is that every death saddens me."

Earlier in the day, despite the curfew and heavy police presence, violence had broken out again in the Qasabpura, Sarai Khalil Khan and Nawab Road areas, with members of both communities getting on roof-tops to pelt stones on each other and the police. The security forces retrieved the situation by firing tear-gas shells and plastic bullets. According to Vijay Karan, 250 miscreants were arrested, including those who had violated the curfew, and Nooruddin, the main organiser of the 14 November rally

Karan further disclosed that he'd asked for 15 additional companies from the central government. The entire area would be divided into four sectors, each headed by one assistant commissioner of police.

While Karan chalked out these elaborate arrangements, fighting broke out again that same night, at Atma Ram Katra behind the Anaj Mandi of Filmistan. The fighting lasted from 10.30-11.30 pm, and the task of the police was made more difficult by the fact that someone cut the electricity supply line, plunging the entire area into darkness. Around midnight, the Border Security Force (BSF) was roped into the task of instilling confidence in the local populace, and it staged a flag march in the riot-affected localities.

On the 16th, the Shahi Imam, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, got in on the act, condemning the organisers of the march at his Friday sermon at the Jama Masjid, and distancing himself from the endeavour. "*Kuch sirphire Mussalmanon ne ye shararat ki aur doosri quam ke logon ke khilaf nare lagane ki ijazat di* (some foolish and mischievous Muslims raised slogans against the other community)," said Bukhari, adding that he was willing to apologise on behalf of his errant brothers.

But it was Advani's *rath yatra* which started it all, said the Imam. "*Jo dukano mein aag lagaye gayi hai, woh bhujayi ja sakte hai. Par jo aag Mussalmanon ke dilon mein lagi hai, woh bhujayi nahi ja sakti.* (the fire that has gutted shops can be destroyed but the fire in the hearts of the Muslims cannot be extinguished)." Bukhari also visited the riot-affected areas to get a first-hand account of the suffering of the victims.

By then, law and order appeared to have been restored to the area. But beneath the veneer of normalcy, communal passions still raged. And it would be a while before they were quelled.●

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

An Indian obsession

Hilary Spurling's account of the life and works of Paul Scott

When Granada television serialised *The Raj Quartet* in 1983, it was the beginning of a wave of Raj nostalgia, more fashionable than that set off by *Kim* and *North West Frontier*. But few watching *The Jewel In The Crown*, both in Britain and India, know that its author died virtually penniless, consumed by cancer, cirrohsis of the liver and an overriding passion for India. Fame and a Booker Prize came too late for Paul Scott: he had already paid the greatest price any novelist can pay.

Hilary Spurling writes about the struggle and heartbreak that went into *The Raj Quartet* in her sensitive biography of the author released last month. The book is at once an exploration of the life of a man who lived and died alienated from most of his own people, and a gentle rebuke to London's snobbish literati, who never gave Scott his due.

Spurling is never obstrusive, and her moving account of the man who spent more than ten years of his life living with an Indian obsession is a must read for all those who enjoyed the story of Ronald Merrick and Hari Kumar.

Scott's first encounter with India began when he joined the army and was posted to the country in 1943. The man who had wanted to be a poet had by now married a nurse--Penny Avery— and was struggling with his own bisexuality. Scott returned from India, with what he felt was enough matter for a novel. Working for some time as a literary agent, he helped to launch novelists like Muriel Spark and John Braine. His own early novels—*Johnnie Sahib* (1952) and *The Alien Sky* (1953)—got a lukewarm reception.

In 1959 he left the agency and went freelance. It was an entirely directionless Scott who left for India in 1963, searching for the novel that he knew was inside him. He reached Bombay without itinerary or hotel bookings and was given a room by a wealthy Bombay landlady, Dorothy Ganapathy.

Ganapathy became a life-long friend and it was to her that he dedicated *The Jewel In The Crown*. She later provided the role model for Lily Chatterjee in *Jewel* who takes in the stranger. It was from Dorothy Ganapathy's flat in Queen's Road, that Scott could see the sprawling Oval and the Bombay High Court. This was the same scene that Guy Perron would see in *Jewel*.

When Scott left Bombay, Ganapathy gave him a silver Ganesh. Later in England, Scott would place the image on his study table and repeat Dorothy's prayer *om prakash om* to it whenever he had a writer's block.

From Bombay, Scott flew to Madras and then on to the village of Timmapuram, to meet his old havildar, Narayan Dass. The Timmapuram experience remained unforgettable for Scott. He hated the feeling of being an object of curiosity; he couldn't come to terms with having to join Dass and several other villagers with a pot of water in the field every morning, and later developed an amoebic infection. It brought out the worst of the sahib in him and he left Timmapuram, ill and humiliated. This would later be the feeling that Hari Kumar suffered on his initial contact with India.

Scott's next destination was Calcutta. His host there was Neil Ghosh, an Anglicised Bengali, who had never adjusted to post-imperial India. Hari Kumar was instantly born. Ghosh had been educated in a public school in England and returned to India at 19. He had encountered the alienation of his fellow Indians as well as the patronising attitude of the British who excluded him from their "Whites-only" clubs. He had an Australian girl-friend and was popularly known as the "Black Englishman"

Scott later confessed that it was on one drunken night, spent talking with Ghosh, that he felt the book had come within his grasp. Hence Harry Coomer, the anglicised name that Hari Kumar sports (Neil was actually an Anglicised version of Neel Baron Ghosh). Everything in Hari Kumar—from his clipped accent, to his abundant charm—was borrowed from Ghosh. Even the girl-friend Ghosh left behind in England--Daphne—gave her name to Kumar's girl-friend in *Jewel*—Daphne Manners.



Scene from *The Jewel In The Crown*: evoking Raj nostalgia

It was in Calcutta again that Scott made another friend who became a constant support and comfort to him: the singer, Dipali Nag, and her husband Dulal Nag Chowdhury. In their spacious house in Behala with its sprawling gardens, Scott recovered from his Timmapuram shock and found another character for his novel. The house of the Macgregors' with its beautiful gardens would be none other than the Nags'.

Scott left India in April 1964. Ten years later the final book in *The Quartets* was completed. These years happened to be the darkest in Scott's life and it is here that Spurling's account is brilliant. Surviving on publisher's advances and retreating into his shell, Scott spent lonely hours in a cold house, desperately trying to complete a series that had become an obsession with him.

Division Of The Spoils—the last book in *The Quartet*, was published in 1975. The series got good reviews from Philip Knightley in *The Times*





Surviving on publisher's advances and retreating into his shell, Scott spent lonely hours desperately trying to complete a series that had become an obsession with him: *The Raj Quartet*

and in the *Times Literary Supplement* and *Spectator*. The returns from it were however preciously low. Scott's drinking increased and he started working on another novel *Staying On*.

In 1976, his wife—Penny—who had steadily supported him so far, left him and took refuge in a home for battered wives. A broken Scott left for USA to lecture in Tulsa.

Staying On won the Booker Prize in 1977 but by then Scott was too ill to collect it. His daughter Carol stood in for him instead. Scott returned to Britain and it was discovered he had cancer. Penny came back to nurse him just as if she had never left. The Scott family spent their last few days together. In 1978, three weeks short of his 58th birthday, Scott died in the Middlesex Hospital. The next year Anglia Television filmed *Staying On*. And five years later *Jewel In The Crown* was serialised and established Scott's fame.

Neil Ghosh died a year after Scott, and Dorothy Ganapathy—who helped Spurling write the biography—died suddenly on 3 October, three weeks before the publication of the book. She was 90. She had also given Spurling a Ganesh carved out of amethyst and like her subject, Spurling completed her book under the gaze of the Elephant God.

Spurling on Scott is an excellent biography, sympathetic and understanding in its study and defence of the life of a neglected novelist. That Dorothy Ganapathy should die without reading it seems another of the tragic ironies that appear to have haunted the life of the novelist. •

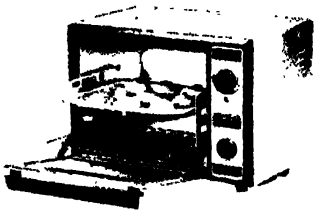
Shrabani Basu/London

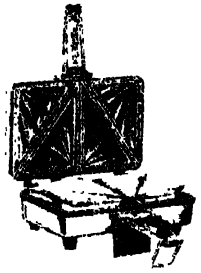
Paul Scott: A Life by Hilary Spurling. Published by Hutchinson. Price Rs 380

The name is the only guarantee you will ever need.

Racold

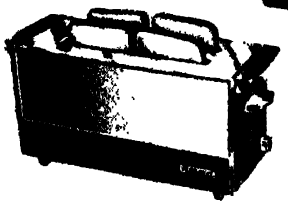
You are sure of quality, if it is Racold. Innovative in design, tested quality inputs, high performance efficiency. These factors make Racold distinctively safe and superior.







FEATHER-WEIGHT AUTOMATIC IRON
For effortless smooth ironing. Fitted with thermostat. Weight 800 Gms. 750W, 230V, AC ISI Marked



4-SLICE SEMI-AUTO TOASTER
Designed to give 4 crisp brown toasts at a time. When toasts are ready, just press the knob. The toasts pop up and the current cuts off.
1100W, 230 V AC

MINI OVEN-TOASTER CUM-GRILLER
Sliding tray and grill. Drop-down front door. 2 sheathed tubular heating elements 600W each, thermostat for uniform heat 50°C to 300°C.

SNACK 'N' SANDWICH TOASTER
Sleek and handy. Designed to give 4 sealed golden brown sandwiches. Non-sticky scallops. Pilot lamp and thermostat.
600W, 230V, AC, 50Hz

RACOLD APPLIANCES LIMITED
Head Office Bombay-Pune Road, Pimpri, Pune 411 018
Bombay 17, Ist Pasta Lane, Colaba, Bombay 400 005
New Delhi "Vandhna", 11, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi 110 001

ZA 1542

Fantasies and fables

But, Manoj Das' new book also provides food for thought

Urban Indians are normally multilingual but true literary bilingualism, which enables a creative author to write equally adeptly in two languages, is rare. Manoj Das is one such writer. Acknowledged as an Oriya fictionist (his short stories won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1972), he is better known nationally as the ex-editor of *The Heritage*, the sophisticated monthly that ceased publication last year. He has also authored several anthologies of English short stories and a novel, in addition to his prolific output in Oriya.

His latest offering is another collection of stories—his second for the New World Literature Series recently begun by Delhi's BR Publishing—*Bulldozers And Fables And Fantasies For Adults*. The dozen tales here consist of two longish works (Das calls the title story a novella), four fables (in the strict sense, that is, tales in which animals speak and behave like men) and six fantasies (fiction with strange or unfamiliar settings and grotesque or out-of-the-ordinary people). For instance, kings and princesses populate many of them, both the fables and the fantasies—a distancing method that allows Das to poke gentle fun at human foibles.

Das' style is primarily satiric, but not of the vitriolic variety. He exposes the ridiculous side of his characters with a comic flavour that betrays affection rather than the misanthropy that satirists sometimes cultivate. Frequently, therefore, one finds a note of sorrow creeping in, about what might have been, or an evanescent air of romance, particularly in the two longer works. And every once in a while one comes across vivid poetic imagery, such as, "Viewed from far the (hill) town looked like a nest. And there were giant clouds above it... like birds about to settle down in it."

Bulldozers deserves its prominent place in the volume, for it touchingly describes how the aspirations of Ravi, a small-town librarian, come to nought despite his earnest work. Almost in the manner of R.K. Narayan, the mood turns sad although the narrative proceeds through humour. A few of Das' jokes at the expense of Indian English are illustrative. A telegram: "Hearty congratulations for your heroic entry into the IAS (Stop) We pray almighty God to shower choicest blessings on your head and give your muscles strength to whitewash the face of the motherland and prove that this is as good as ICS of British days of which my own heavengone maternal uncle was a member."

A chief minister's speech: "You will be wonderful to hear that I have not read very much English, but only sufficient for the enough. It is by my will power that I speak it. I do mistakes and sins in English but all ladies and gentlemen do mistakes and sins! A month ago I was accorded a very very grand congratulation by good men and good good women... On the leaflets they printed T for C. I became Thief Minister...there was the mistake in my car today which lated me... When I was arrested accused of seduction, my family thought I will be massacred. Seduction was historic crime." There is also a famous poet who composes couplets like "Beware of me, get off the rail,/I come! I come!! the Frontier Mail!" and a managing trustee who orders Ravi to buy the much-quoted book titled *Ibid* for his library.

The other long story, *Sharma And The Wonderful Lump* (which seems to be an English version of Das's *Abu Purushga* in Oriya), relates with delectable irony how an Indian's massive cranial tumour makes him a celebrity in the US as owner of the largest ever recorded human growth, providing Das plenty of opportunities to take potshots at American commercialism. For example, Sharma is given a lot of money to pose for a photo with a topless model leaning over his tumour. But Das is not unfairly unpatriotic: American journalists tell Sharma that India would win hands down if the Olympics included talking, a "tradition so assiduously built up by the leading Indians of our time". And Sharma resents the fact that India never recognised his uniqueness, causing another case of brain drain to the States!

Three of the fables in the book give new interpretations to the *Panchatantra* tales. *The Tiger And The Traveller* reveals man's insatiable attraction to material wealth. *The Turtle From The Sky* tells of the pitfalls of exaggeration, and *The Stupid Servant* (about the monkey who kills his master) warns against heeding the advice of bad gurus. In an Orwellian mode, *Story Of A Strange Last Journey* analyses human politics reflected through animal society. It is chastening to find how many (six) of Das' fables and fantasies end in death—despite their apparent enjoyableness, he is actually preoccupied with rather serious concerns.

The fantasies come in thematic pairs. *He Who Rode The Tiger* and *Man Who Lifted The Mountain* deal graphically with the consequences of vanity and ambitiousness, how irrationality leads to extreme end results. *Old Folks Of The Northern Valley* and *A Tale Of The Northern Valley* depict remote hamlets whose maliceless people spin tall tales and love benign rumours; for Das, they represent the culture of innocence that bourgeois man has lost The book is lightly digested, no doubt, but offers enough food for thought.●

Ananda Lal

Bulldozers And Fables And Fantasies For Adults by Manoj Das. Published by B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi. Price. Rs 120

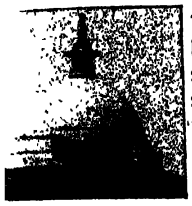


Das' style is primarily satiric, but not of the vitriolic variety. He exposes the ridiculous side of his characters with a comic flavour that betrays affection

INDER MALHOTRA

Future tense

Islamabad and Washington are not on the best of terms



Though it is hard to believe, something strange but serious seems to be happening in US-Pakistan relations. In both Islamabad and New Delhi the dominant view still is that the downturn in America's traditionally close relationship with its "most allied ally" is temporary. The general expectation is that soon enough George Bush would issue Pakistan the certificate of "nuclear innocence" and the flow of US military and economic aid, suspended in the first week of October, would begin afresh. Both sides can live happily thereafter.

Frankly, this has so far been my assessment, too. But second thoughts are in order and there is a chance that a fairly acrimonious estrangement between Washington and Islamabad could be round the corner

Of the available evidence to support this conclusion, two items are of particular significance. First, after the initial SOS for 5,000 Pakistani troops needed in Saudi Arabia, the United States has shown not the slightest interest in any Pakistani participation in, or contribution to, the regional security arrangements the Americans are trying to rig up for the Gulf after the problem of Iraqi occupation of Kuwait is sorted out one way or the other.

Observers here had taken it for granted that Pakistan would be an important part of the US-sponsored dispensation in the Gulf and would be principally responsible for the *chowkidari* duty in the area after the bulk of the American forces were withdrawn. But that has not turned out to be the case. American preference seems to be for troops from Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Turkey and so on.

Similarly, when the Americans started reading out the riot act to Pakistan on the vexed issue of the latter's relentless quest for nuclear capability, the general belief was that this was a repetition of the charade enacted every year before the certification by the US President that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device nor was manufacturing one. To the extent the American protests about Pakistani nuclear activities seemed sharper than in previous years, this was attributed to uncertainty about Pakistani elections and especially over the possibility of Benazir Bhutto being debarred from them.

However, even after the elections have been held and have been accepted by the US to have been free and fair, the US remains very critical of Pakistan's nuclear policy and programme. The coveted certificate is still out of Pakistani reach.



The general expectation is that soon enough George Bush would issue Pakistan the certificate of "nuclear innocence" and the flow of US military and economic aid would begin afresh

The key question therefore is: why is the US, having turned a blind eye to Pakistan's feverish efforts to build the nuclear bomb, so stern at this late stage? Unfortunately, American sources are not coming forth with a clear answer. But they are saying enough to hint that during the last 12 months Pakistan has done something which has offended them immensely. Since the red line limiting the enrichment of uranium had been transgressed even during Zia-ul Haq's time, evidently something else has got the Americans' goat.

No wonder then that usually reliable American sources claim that American military supplies and aid to Pakistan can be resumed, only if Pakistan gives assurances about its nuclear policies and programmes which can be verified on the ground and are no longer in the realm of the intangible. Once again, these sources are reticent about details But it seems that America wants Pakistan to shut down its reprocessing facility and to let US experts monitor the extent of uranium enrichment.

On both counts, the Pakistani answer is an emphatic no. Indeed, both President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the new Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, have spoken about the Americans in stridently defiant tones. They have said that they would welcome close relations with and aid from the US only if America refrained from "interfering" in Pakistan's internal policies or trying to circumscribe its sovereignty. Ishaq Khan has said that for the sake of aid Pakistan would not "compromise its dignity". Nawaz Sharif has ostentatiously announced an acceleration of Pakistan's nuclear programme. ●

Air



Manscapes *by* Park Avenue

The Trouser. To breeze through the rhythms

of life. And remain unruffled by the bustle

of existence. To be seldom heard. Yet always noticed.

Park Avenue

Style. It never goes out of fashion.

LINTAS PA 142 2416

Boil that egg

There is fear about salmonella infection

For years now, the conventional wisdom had it consuming eggs and chicken made for good health. But salmonellosis turned that on its head. Reports from such states as Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and the Union Territory of Delhi indicated that the disease, popularly known as fowl typhoid, was raging in epidemic proportions among the poultry stock. And anyone who ate eggs or broiler chicken risked acute dysentery which would eventually effect bowel movement. Not too many people understood the medical aspect, but the impression gained ground that eating eggs could be a dangerous thing, threatening both the Rs 2,000 crore per annum egg market and the Rs 1,000 crore per annum broiler market.



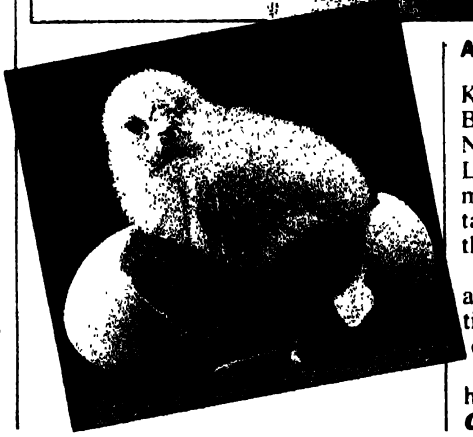
According to Dr D.B. Survashe, of Venkateshwara Hatcheries Private Limited (which controls 70 per cent of the layer and 50 per cent of the broiler market) this was a false scare. Said the doctor, an expert in microbiology, virology and immunology: "What affects chicken is salmonellosis galloreum and salmonellosis pullorieum And numerous tests have shown that it is not transferable to human beings. While our concern doesn't have infected chickens, I cannot make a categorical statement that salmonella doesn't exist in India. If it does, all the infected birds must be destroyed."

But circumstantial evidence, says Dr A.K. Khanna, a general physician, seems to indicate that infected eggs do harm a person. "If the strain is treated with heat, it dies," he says, "but what happens to those people who eat their eggs raw or half-boiled?" According to Dr Khanna, he has several patients who suffered from dysentery and gastroenteritis. All of them had their eggs raw or half-cooked. Once they stopped eating them, their problems disappeared. "You can draw your own conclusion," says the doctor.

While the salmonella problem occurs world-wide, the last time such an epidemic raged in India was during the 1970s. Obviously, all the infected birds were not destroyed and the strain was transferred down to the present generation of infected birds. At present, a powder called Furazolidon is being fed to the birds along with their feed. But this only prevents the disease from setting in. It does not cure those already infected. And the poor hygienic conditions prevailing in some poultry farms, with such carriers as rodents and cockroaches abounding, contributes to the spread of the infection.

Testing poultry for salmonella is simple. All that is needed is one drop of blood, one drop of antigen and the mixture produces a reaction which can confirm or deny the existence of the strain. A seminar held on the subject at the Pusa Institute, New Delhi, came to the conclusion that the disease had assumed epidemic proportions in the northern parts of the country. Such scientists as Dr R.K. Kaushik, senior disease investigation officer at the Krishi Gyan Kendra, Gurgaon and Dr B.R. Gupta, principal scientist of the National Salmonella Reference Laboratory went along with this. But most of the participants also maintained that salmonella does not pose a threat to human health.





A poultry farm: how hygienic is it?

Nevertheless, the government has asked the bureaucracy to get into action, identify the infected stock and exterminate it.

Until then, you're best advised to have that egg hard-boiled. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay



BARNEY JAMES

Scene from *Mississippi Masala:* wacky and poignant

Mississippi Masala

Mira Nair's bold new film looks into racial discrimination

Greenwood, Mississippi. A brooding, ugly town in the deep south of the United States, mired in a history of slavery, cotton wealth and White supremacy.

But the unusual electricity in Greenwood and its outskirts these days comes from the motley film crew and actors of *Mississippi Masala,* Mira Nair's brave, provocative and entertaining big-screen movie, which is being shot here, and in Uganda. A story of a relationship between an Indian immigrant woman and a local Black man that captures the politics and prejudice of race, Nair's movie takes a rare look at the contemporary American south.

On the day's set, an endless expanse of still water and drowned cypress trees outside Greenwood, Nair directs her way through a melee of actors crew, equipment, pet mascots, and surprised spectators.

On schedule: a love scene, one of many. Nair, short hair bunched under a baseball cap, dressed in a loose batik shirt, knee-length white pants, and with her trademark purple Gandhi darkglasses tucked into her shirt, briefs a slim Black man and a striking brown-skinned woman. Nair is surrounded by a jostling crowd of cameramen, still photographers, sound men, and the film's assistant director. "Lock it up," says Nair. "Quiet please." Silence settles. Dogs are prevented from barking. Visitors shepherded out of camera view. "Roll sound. Speed. Mark it. Action."

The actress, her huge doe eyes turned up to the handsome Black man, begins to walk down the grassy bank near the waterside with him. "Do people kiss in India?" the man asks.

"What?"

The kiss and clinch that follow need numerous repeats to satisfy Nair. The final take is palpably first-rate, ending in a long kiss that leaves both actors and viewers shaken. There is dead silence, and then, Nair calls out: "Cut! Print the take."

Mississippi Masala hopes to both entertain and provoke. There is an underlying wickedness to the film, part humour and part eye for reality that delivers on the *masala* pungency of the title. Indians, whether in India or abroad, could be jolted by an Indian woman character at ease with her sexuality. And Americans, defensive and oddly ill-informed about southern US, are likely to feel as uncomfortable, though for different reasons.

Much like Nair's award-winning film *Salaam Bombay!, Mississippi Masala* treads the fine line between acute social commentary and popular cinematic form. Nair's maturing ability to combine these demands is evident in *Masala.* "It's a very compassionate film," Nair says thoughtfully. "It doesn't seek to poke fun at anybody. It's as truthful a way as we (Nair and scriptwriter Sooni Taraporevala, who also wrote the script for *Salaam Bombay!)* know to reveal the nature of human love...when it's very clear what the Indian community feels about the Black community, and for the

lack community to voice their tensions. It's a great responsibility."

The film deals with the legacies of Black-Brown-White racial hatred on a first cyclical level, and retains the agony of discrimination. The movie opens on a dark night in Idi Amin's Uganda. These are the two months in 1972 in which Amin exiled 70,000 of Uganda's 74,000 Asians. Nair has Amin on television saying: "Asians came to Uganda to build the railway. The railway is finished. They must leave now... I must liberate Uganda from foreign domination. The Asians are sabotaging the economy." A few scenes later there is a drunken revel in a Kampala bar as Indian men prepare to leave Uganda. There, Jay, (played by Roshan Seth), the father of the Indian girl shown later in Mississippi, punch-drunk and philosophical, says what most Asians in Uganda would rather have left unsaid: "We created the madman, we buggers in Uganda. Most people are born with five senses. We're left with only one—the sense of property."

In Mississippi, almost two decades later, there is another history of racism to live through. This is the land where Blacks live on the wrong side of the railway tracks, still call White children "sir" "ma'am," and they stay away from White neighbourhoods and bars. Black men were lynched by White supremacist groups here as recently as the 1980s. "This is where the lid was on the tightest," says Mark Marquadart, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi. "People say why can't Blacks get their act together, they've been free since 1863? But the reality is that 25 years ago Black people in Greenwood who went to register themselves for voting had Alsatian dogs sicced on them."

But unlike Amin's Uganda, Blacks here are even lower in rank by colour than the Indian immigrants with their dirty motels and liquor stores. "Carpet cleaning *kallu*," says one Indian of the young Black man in love with Jay's daughter. At a drunken party, Indian friends kid Jay about his being an activist lawyer in Uganda. "Our Jaybhai! The King of Kampala! In Uganda he was champion of the blecks. Then the same blecks—they kicked him out! Right Jaybhai?," says one.

Nair captures the essence of Indian life in strange lands with a deftness born of her first harsh documentaries on immigrants and rootlessness, *So Far From India* in 1984 and *India Cabaret* in 1985. Enmeshed with the pujas and the *yaar* camaraderie is the weakening of closely-knit Indian families and the unpleasantness of surviving abroad. Much of the movie is shot around a seedy motel owned by Gujarati immigrants where Mina, the young Indian woman, cleans bathrooms. It is a place of prostitution, pettiness, and prejudice. After Mina is caught having sex with her Black lover, one Indian woman in the motel tells another: "You know what she told her mother? 'I love him that's not a crime!' Can you imagine dumping Harry Patel for a bleck?!"

If such bleakness can be fashioned into a love story *and* comedy, it owes much to Nair's ability to see the glimmerings of life in dark places. There is an undercurrent of vibrancy to the film that ranges from Jay's undefeated humanism to the devil-may-care persona of Mina, who, escaping from Greenwood with her Black lover in the film's last scene, stops to urinate in an open field, waving shamelessly to amused truck-drivers. It is a happy ending—with a *masala* twist.

Indian viewers who can cope with Nair's iconoclastic vision will enjoy a movie that is unusually strong in its portrayal of complex race relations and the lives of Indian immigrants. They can also look forward to seeing Sharmila Tagore on the screen again, in what promises to be a unusually nuanced performance by the great screen star. Tagore plays Kinnu—Jay's wife and Mina's mother—in a role shorn of glamour. Nair, who admired Tagore's performance in Satyajit Ray's *Devi*, says of Tagore: "I could see how malleable she is in a way, but when you speak to her as a woman she's someone who has made a lot of choices that have required a lot of strength. In a way, I really cast her for those guts."

A sharp contrast to La Tagore is Sarita Chowdhury, half-Bangladeshi, half-British, who plays Mina. An extraordinarily intelligent actress, and a former journalist and film student, Chowdhury's strong-boned looks are not the stuff of Indian male fantasies nor is the independent character she portrays likely to sit easy with Indian audiences.

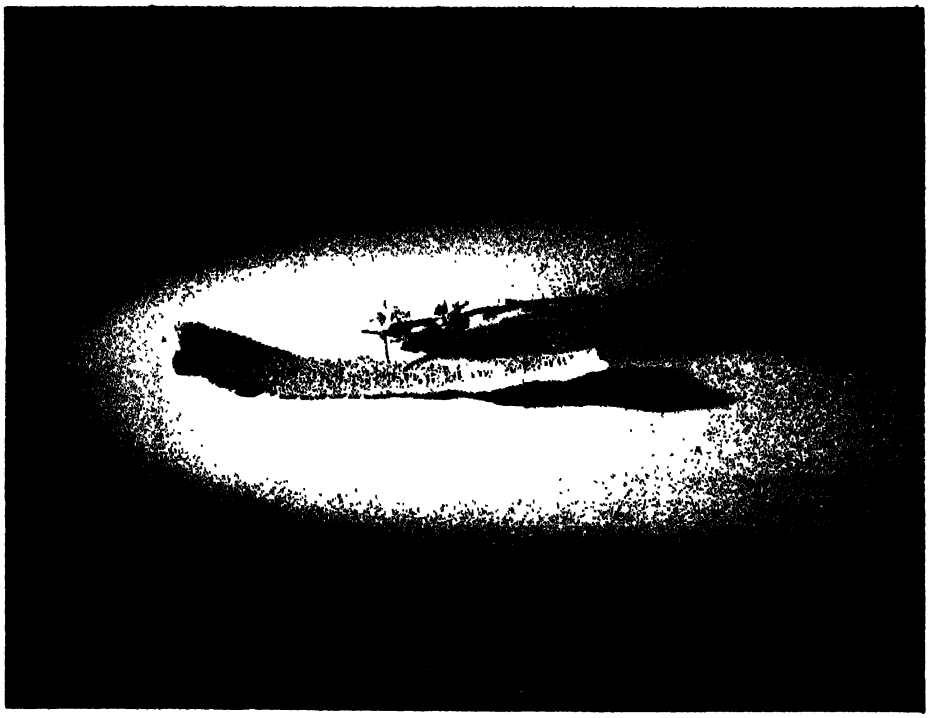
Nair's directorial fame has attracted a first-rate American cast. Denzel Washington, the country's leading Black actor, plays the clear-eyed man who earns the ire of Blacks, Indians and Whites in Greenwood by falling for a Brown outsider. Washington, who stars in a Broadway production of Shakespeare's *Richard III* this season has played lead roles in both big-budget Hollywood productions and independent films. Washington won an Oscar for best supporting actor last year in *Glory*.

Mississippi Masala will be released in Cannes next May. Nair is currently finishing filming in Uganda, where, she says, the colourful street-life rivals that of the back-alleys she discovered in *Salaam Bombay*. It's a long haul from Bombay to Uganda to Mississippi, but *Mississippi Masala*, wacky, poignant, rich in experience, is worth the journey. •



The making of *Masala*: Mira Nair on location

Siddharth Dube/Mississippi and New York



Where darkness makes the day. The Braille inscription sheds light on a very sensitive area The inside of the world's sixth largest photo film plant, and India's only one Hindustan Photo Films.

Here, the most sensitive operations are done in absolute darkness. Because photo-sensitized products like films and X-rays can only be exposed once.

And this darkness has now become a friend, helping several visually handicapped persons — providing them employment at HPF.

This policy has won HPF laurels and acclaim as an outstanding employer of the handicapped.

For HPF's it's an honour For the blind, it's a rainbow they can now feel, for darkness now makes their day.



INDU

HINDUSTAN PHOTO FILMS

PHOTO
CINE
X-RAY
GRAPHIC ARTS
INDUSTRIAL X-RAY
CHEMICALS
MAGNETIC TAPE
INSTANT PHOTOGRAPHY

F U T U R E I N F O C U S

Hindustan Photo Films Mfg. Co. Ltd. (A Govt of India Enterprise)
Registered Office: Indunagar, Udhagamandalam 643 005
Marketing Headquarters: Bell Towers, 1 Abdul Razak Street, Saidapet, Madras 600 015

R K SWAMY/HPF/8212

Dancer's dilemma

Protima Bedi's ambitious venture, Nrityagram, runs into trouble

It seemed, for the moment at least, as if Protima Gauri Bedi's pet project would die a premature death. For, Nrityagram, Bedi's village of dance, inaugurated six months ago by the then Prime Minister V.P. Singh, had just enough funds to get by until March-April 1990. And unless more money is poured in, the danseuse would be forced to close down, giving up on the dream she'd cherished for so long.

But Protima Bedi's not one to give up so easily. And the gutsy Odissi exponent flew off to Bombay to consult the other trustees of Nrityagram, declaring: "I can't let my baby die of malnutrition like this."

Finances proved to be a problem from the very beginning. The initial investment of Rs 4 lakhs went into the construction of the academy, leaving very little over for day-to-day expenses. With a view to making Nrityagram self-sufficient, Bedi began a sericulture project on the ten-acre plot, which now yields around Rs 3,000 every month. But the monthly expenses of the community come to Rs 15,000, not a large sum in itself, so the shortfall remained. Says Bedi : "If 15 industrial companies in Bangalore decide to give Rs 1,000 each, which is no skin off anyone's nose, it will help a lot."

The dancer admits that if she began more projects like the sericulture one, the community could make a lot more money. But that would ultimately be quite self-defeating. For, as Bedi explains: "If we enlarge activities beyond the dance-oriented ones, we will find our students more involved in those than in learning dance. The idea behind Nrityagram was to evolve a place where undivided attention could be given to perfecting the dance forms."

But despite the noble intent behind the scheme—reviving the *guru-shishya parampara*—not too many people were forthcoming with big donations. If private institutions failed Bedi, the Karnataka state government wasn't any better. Ramakrishna Hegde did give her land to set up the village, but successive regimes weren't quite so obliging. Bedi attributes this to her being an "outsider". B.V. Karanth's repertory, she says, gets adequate funds, because he is a Kannadiga. Protests Bedi: "I may be an outsider, but Karnataka should be proud of having such a place as Nrityagram."

Unfortunately, the state government doesn't seem to think so, forgetting even to clear the dues it owes Bedi. Says the lady: "For the Vasanthe Habba (Spring Festival) organised on the occasion of the inauguration, the state government had promised to reimburse me for the payment to the artistes. The money has yet to come. If people consider me an outsider, why don't they think of the initial inputs into Nrityagram which came from outside the state."



Protima Bedi's (inset) Nrityagram: a dream which is yet to be realised

Ramakrishna Hegde gave Protima Bedi the land to set up Nrityagram. But the successive regimes have not been so forthcoming. Bedi attributes this to her being an "outsider"

The financial crunch did get Bedi down initially. "For what have I sacrificed the good life, my family, my social circle? I live in a tent, use an open toilet and a hot water bath has become my idea of a luxury. What else can I do?"

In the end, Protima Gauri Bedi did the most sensible thing: she flew off to Bombay to arrange for more funds. And, apparently, hit pay dirt, for now the dancer proclaims: "I'm not leaving Nrityagram. I've found my roots here and here I stay." ●

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

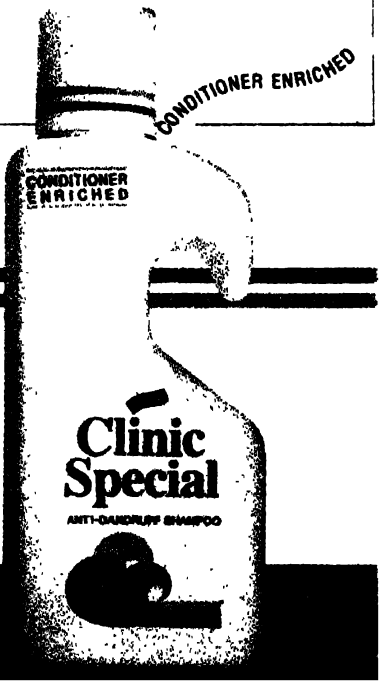
The beautiful way to get rid of your dandruff



Most people think that dandruff is just an irritation on the scalp. But it can also affect the way your hair looks. Dandruff makes it dull and lustreless. **New Clinic Special gets rid of your dandruff gently. Gives you great looking hair.** Its new international formulation loosens and lifts out dandruff from the scalp, where it really begins. **And it has a rich, creamy conditioner which leaves your hair soft and shiny.** So you can use it regularly even after your dandruff's gone. Use New Clinic Special to prevent your dandruff from coming back. And to keep your hair looking good.

NEW **Clinic Special**

ANTI-DANDRUFF SHAMPOO



KHAAS BAAT

When something happens to Anil Kapoor can Madhuri Dixit be far behind?

Some time back when Anil fell ill, the shootings of a few films were cancelled. The upshot of this was that Madhuri, his most consistent co-star, earned a holiday with her family in the States.

Now it is Madhuri's turn to be indisposed after she was bitten by a rabbit during the shooting of *Sahibaan* at Kulu Manali. Consequently, her schedule was disrupted and shootings of her films *Beta*, *Saajan*, *Zindagi Ek Jua* and *Pratikar* were postponed.

Anil could have gone off for a holiday himself, but a very pregnant wife Sunita is not exactly the most exciting person to have around during a quick getaway—or is she?



GAUTAM PATOLE

Anil Kapoor: holiday, anyone?



N. PRASAD

Naseeruddin Shah: the happy square

The lush east African setting in Rajiv Rai's *Vishwatma* proved to be an agreeable backdrop to a host of minor off-screen romances.

There was Rajiv's beau Sonam, who had made it a point to be there to keep an eye on him, though to be fair to her she does have a minuscule role in the film.

The other two heroines, Divya Bharati and Jyotsna Singh, also kept themselve occupied. Divya with Rajiv's best friend Shabbir, who had ostensibly gone there to help with the shooting. And Jyotsna Singh, in the best traditions of a starlet desperately seeking the big time, latched on to one Umesh Patel.

When the heroines of the film had been so forthcoming, the heroes could hardly be expected to play the prude. So Dimple, who was holidaying in London came down to be with Sunny and stayed on till the shooting was over. And Chunky basked in the company of the virginal Anu Kottoor. The only happy exception to this scenario was Naseeruddin Shah who appeared only too pleased to be with his wife Ratna.

So what if the others sneered and called him a square? ●

The family fief

Devi Lal and sons take over Haryana



HARYANA

The Tau of Indian politics is back in the deputy prime minister's seat. And Haryana can feel the difference. Within two days of Devi Lal's return to the Centre, the dissident drama witnessed in New Delhi was re-enacted in Chandigarh. There was a major split in the Haryana Janata Dal, with 41 of the total 86 sitting MLA s in the state breaking away and joining the faction of the party led by Chandra Shekhar. With this, the strength of the V.P. Singh-led Janata Dal in the state has been reduced to only 8. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stands isolated with 16 legislative seats. And, as usual, the political scenario in the Jat-dominated state is volatile.

While Haryana politicians feel the split in the state Janata Dal was only expected, they also blame Devi Lal and Om Prakash Chautala for V.P. Singh's downfall. Commented Ran Singh Mann, a former chief parliamentary secretary who had resigned with five other MLA's over the Meham issue: "I would put the blame entirely on Chautala for destabilising V.P. Singh's party. Haryana today is not run by rulers but by looters and the 41 MLA s who have joined the Janata Dal(S) have switched sides only for money and power. Devi Lal had threatened them with dissolution of the Assembly if they did not join him."

According to Mann and other members of the Janata Dal, the state is being run entirely by Devi Lal's clan while chief minister Hukum Singh has been reduced to a "signing machine". One MLA complained that even decisions on applications for Haryana Financial Development Corporation (HFDC) loans or selection to the Haryana Service Selection Board cannot be made without the approval of Chautala. "The MLAs with Devi Lal have no political commitment and that is why they agreed to join hands with the Congress(I). With talk of dissolution and political insecurity looming before them, they had no qualms about joining Chandra Shekhar," said one MLA.



NITIN RAI

Devi Lal: in full swing

Many leaders opposed to the Devi Lal-Chautala domination in Haryana feel the current domination of the duo could only be neutralised by an amalgamation of other political forces in the near future. Though Assembly elections are due only in June 1992, there are already efforts to unite the minority faction of the Janata Dal and the Haryana Panchayat Sangharsh Samiti led by Anand Singh Dangi. There is also some speculation about former chief minister Bansi Lal breaking away from the Congress(I) (which has only 5 legislative seats in Haryana) and joining any such Janata Dal-Dangi combination.

Such an electoral alliance might well become a necessity in the future because of the absence of alternate leadership in Haryana. Both Bhajan Lal and Bansi Lal had unimpressive runs as chief ministers, and even Ajit Singh has not been able to capitalise on the rural base created in Haryana by Charan Singh. In fact, the Janata Dal and BJP leadership in Haryana today blames V.P. Singh for not taking notice of the brewing discontent and the anti-Devi Lal feeling building up among some Janata Dal legislators.

It is inevitable that in any upcoming electoral battle, the Congress(I), the BJP and both the factions of the Janata Dal would pitch in candidates for most of the seats in Haryana. Bansi Lal could play a key role in any political alliances and in any case, the state Opposition would try and push home the issue of criminalisation of politics because of the unfortunate events in Meham. On the other hand is the Janata Dal(S) which will make the deaths because of Mandal and the Ram Janmabhoomi issues its main electoral planks.

What is important is that now with the Janata Dal(S) having 41 MLAs and the support of five Independents, the proxy rule in Haryana will continue. It is only a matter of time before Devi Lal's sons—Chautala and Ranjit Singh—assert themselves as political heavyweights. The self-imposed importance of Haryana's first family on national politics is hardly likely to end soon. ●

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi.

In and out

Chandra Shekhar may go slow in effecting bureaucratic changes



DELHI

The tension has eased slightly in the corridors of North Block and South Block. Word has gone around that the new Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, does not intend to make sweeping changes in the top echelons of the bureaucracy. At least not immediately. "The impression Chandra Shekhar wants to give is that he will not be vindictive against anyone who is identified with the old regime", said one senior bureaucrat.

While agreeing with this view, aides of the Prime Minister feel that the immediate changes, if any, will be restricted to certain key posts like those of the Cabinet secretary, home secretary, attorney general, and the solicitor general. Moreover, the chiefs of the premier intelligence agencies are also likely to be replaced. So, R.P. Joshi of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Gouri Shankar Bajpai, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and Rajendra Shekhar, director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), might be shifted.

Two officials, who have been asked by the Prime Minister to stay back with him are his principal secretary, B.G. Deshmukh and M.K. Narayanan, chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). According to sources in the Prime Minister's office, Deshmukh is somewhat reluctant to continue. But in case he does, he will create history of sorts by serving three Prime Ministers in the course of one year.

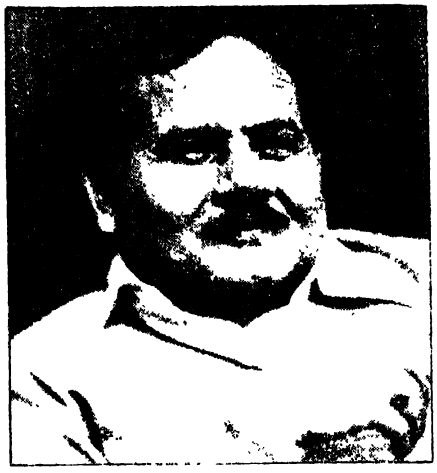
As far as Narayanan is concerned, he has worked with two successive Prime Ministers - Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh. Narayanan was the IB director during the Congress(I) rule but was found to be indispensable by the Raja also. In fact, though he was officially the JIC chief, Narayanan emerged as a key political adviser to the Prime Minister. This time around, Chandra Shekhar may redesignate him, but seems hesitant to do away with the brilliant police officer.

The appointment that is being watched with great interest in bureaucratic circles is of the Cabinet secretary. The present appointee, Vinod Pandey, was widely accepted as the second most powerful man in the country through 1990 - next only to V.P. Singh himself. But now Pandey is surely on his way out.

Understandably, Chandra Shekhar would like to replace Vinod Pandey with someone who is both reliable and agrees with his socialistic beliefs. Among the senior bureaucrats who are believed to have been shortlisted for the key post are: the agriculture secretary, S.K. Mishra, the West Bengal chief secretary, T.C. Dutt, the industries secretary, A.N. Verma, the home secretary, Naresh Chandra, and the Gujarat chief secretary, H.K. Khan. Among them, it is the present home secretary who is seen as the front-runner.

While Chandra Shekhar has told many of his confidants that he is averse to a major reshuffle of Governors, he is under considerable pressure to make gubernatorial changes in the two trouble-spots of Punjab and





(From left) Deshmukh: staying on; Lal and Pandey : new assignments

Blessed Turk

Morarji wishes Chandra Shekhar well

One of the first things the new Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar did was to meet former Prime Minister Morarji Desai. According to Chandra Shekhar, he met the octogenarian Desai to seek his blessings.

The police machinery was geared up before Shekhar arrived. The entire route from Santacruz airport to Raj Bhavan and from Raj Bhavan to Sarang building, where Morarji Desai now stays, was heavily policed. Plain-clothes men from the special branch were posted at vital points.

The area around Sarang was crowded with people eager to get a glimpse of the new Prime Minister. "I have just come to pay my respects to Mr Desai ," Shekhar told pressmen at Morarji's house. The former Prime Minister, in a light yellow *kurta*, smiled broadly when Chandra Shekhar presented him with a bouquet of flowers. After ten minutes, all journalists were asked to leave, and the two leaders began a closed-door meeting. Others present in the discussions were chief minister Sharad Pawar, trade unionist Shanti Patel, state Janata Dal (S) MP Babanrao Dhankne, and Janata Party president Subramaniam Swamy. The former Prime Minister's son, Kanti

Kashmir. The present Punjab Governor, Virendra Verma, has indicated to New Delhi that he will not step down voluntarily, while the former Governor, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, who resigned after the V.P. Singh government came to power, has expressed his desire to come back.



Among the ambassadors and high commissioners, Kuldip Nayar in London and Lt Gen. S.K. Sinha (retd) in Kathmandu have already offered to step down. The rest of India's ambassadorial team might stay intact.

But till the changes are effected, the country will be kept guessing on how Chandra Shekhar is going to pick the key players to form his bureaucratic team. •

Ritu Sarin / New Delhi.

Desai told SUNDAY "It was only a courtesy call. Since Chandra Shekhar was president of the then Janata Party when my father was heading the Janata Government in 1977, Chandra Shekhar came to receive his blessings, and, of course, Mr Desai wished him well. There was no talk of politics. Chandra Shekhar has promised to visit again when he comes to Bombay on 25 November."

The press had a tough time covering the visit. At first, security personnel refused to let journalists go up to Morarji Desai's sixth floor flat. Finally, after heated arguments, they relented and allowed small groups in. When members of the press complained to Chandra Shekhar, the Prime Minister smiled and promised that there would be no such trouble the next time. •

Bombay Parade/Bombay

Flood of fury

Biju faces angry crowds in Ganjam

ORISSA

A copter circled Ganjam district for some time and then began descending at Soroda. Inside was chief minister Biju Patnaik, taking a bird's eye-view of the havoc caused by the rivers Rusikulya and Badanadi which had overflowed their banks on 4 November. Below, around the helipad, a crowd of weary people stood waiting. And as the craft touched down and Biju emerged, hoping to hear a chorus of slogans in his praise, a volley of *chappals* and brickbats greeted the chief minister. For almost a week the people of Soroda had waited to vent their anger and an unwary Biju found himself at the receiving end.

If such was the reception Biju received, the plight of other ministers touring the district was worse. Surendranath Patnaik, minister of revenue, and Ramakrushna Patnaik, minister of rural development, were *gheraoed* and humiliated at Soroda and other places, as relief had not reached the people even four days after the floods.

To the people of Ganjam, the floods this season were the worst natural calamity in living memory. Nearly a hundred people are believed to have died, property worth Rs 2 crores has been destroyed and standing crops—Ganjam is known as the rice bowl of Orissa—ruined. But for four days, the nonplussed administration had remained paralysed.

While the people reeled under the floods, Biju was away in Delhi trying to solve the crisis in the Janata Dal. And after the hostile reception he got at Soroda a week after the disaster, the chief minister flew back to Bhubaneswar, where he held a press conference and lambasted the bureaucracy for failing to cope with an emergency.

But it was the state Cabinet more than the officialdom that lacked direction. Even ten days after the calamity, the chief minister and his colleagues were handing out divergent versions of the death toll and the damages. The ministers thus betrayed a total lack of coordination among themselves and between them and the bureaucracy.

Official sources admit that the tragedy was to a large extent man-made. The Rusikulya and the Badanadi, as well as their tributaries, were already flowing well above the danger level when the irrigation department released huge quantities of water from three reservoirs at Ghodahada, Soroda and Doha without forewarning the people. The disaster was aggravated by the fact that the people of Ganjam—unlike those living in the districts of Balasore, Cuttack and Puri—were unaccustomed to floods.

With six lakh people affected in 600 villages and standing crops destroyed on nearly one lakh hectares of land, the economy of Ganjam lies shattered, and so does the popularity of the Janata Dal government in the state. It will be quite some time before the economy is rejuvenated, but it may not be quite the same for the government's credibility which seems to have been largely washed away. •

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar



Marooned people in Ganjam: waiting for relief

Playing with fire

Incriminating documents go up in smoke in government offices



MADHYA PRADESH

Fire redeems. Fire purifies. And fire destroys incriminating evidence. Recently there has been a lot of purification, or whatever, in the government offices of this BJP-state. There have been several cases of fire, including one at a university, in the past three months.

First it was the office room of the collectorate in Raipur. Several files were destroyed in the accident. Most concerned certain scandals involving officials of the administration. Needless to say, quite a few skins were saved by the convenient flames.

This incident was closely followed by another. One particular almirah in the sales tax office in Raipur suddenly burst into flames. It contained all the files on two particular trading firms which had been raided recently and were found to have entered into an unrecorded transaction of Rs 50 lakhs.

And in Ambikapur, a fire in the irrigation office happened to completely destroy tender documents, cash books, receipts and several other papers. Some officials, it seems, were facing charges of corruption.

Incidentally, it is not only government offices that have sudden mysterious fires. The Ravi Shankar University in Raipur experienced it as well. Just two days after the local press flashed reports of university staff manipulating examination marksheets (including the photostat copy of a note by a university employee to a student asking for the promised money now that the job was done), a fire engulfed the section which stored all examination records. It is now quite impossible to substantiate any of those corruption charges. And possibly the system of made-to-order marksheets will continue as a result. •

M. V. Kher/Raipur

Not guilty!

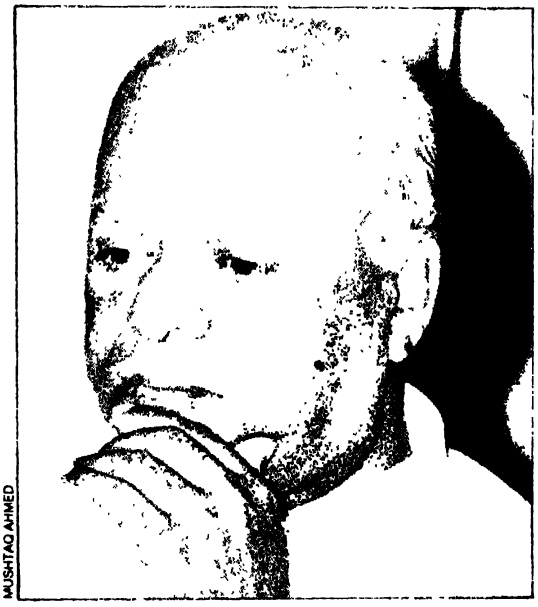
Former home minister Jalappa is acquitted in the Rasheed murder case



KARNATAKA

R.L. Jalappa is a happy man. The former home minister in the erstwhile Janata Party government headed by Ramakrishna Hegde, has won the first round in the controversial Rasheed murder case. Three years ago, M. Abdul Rasheed, a Kerala lawyer was found murdered near Salem and Jalappa was implicated in the case. Jalappa was acquitted, while seven policemen were sentenced to varying degrees of jail terms in a judgement handed down by the district and sessions judge of Salem, V. Rangaswamy, on 7 November. The case had taken the state by storm, as a sitting state home minister was charge-sheeted for abetting murder. It is highly unlikely, however, that it will peter down with the judgment.

The acquittal will not mean Jalappa's re-entry into mainstream politics just yet. With a new government at the Centre,he cannot look forward to easy legal battles that are sure to follow in the higher courts



MUSHTAQ AHMED

But for Jalappa, who has been sidelined in state politics because of the case, the judgement was small consolation. When contacted by SUNDAY, he said: "This case had certainly harmed me. It ruined me. The judgement shows that truth prevails."

A close associate of former chief minister Hegde, Jalappa is hedging about the verdict, for he knows that with a new dispensation at the Centre the tables could yet again be turned on him. With one DCP (deputy commissioner of police) sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment and two constables to life terms, the case is certain to go up to the Supreme Court.

For the present, Jalappa seems determined to lie low as he has done since the case hit the headlines in 1987. Though he had protested that he was not involved in the murder -and Hegde had staunchly stood by him— Jalappa had to resign as home minister and seek anticipatory bail.

Jalappa's role in the mysterious death of Kerala lawyer, M. Abdul Rasheed, was suspected because of his interests in a medical college. The Hegde government had, in 1987, granted permission for opening a medical college in Kolar to a trust headed by one Sadasivam of Kerala. But Jalappa, who was part of another trust called the Devaraj Urs trust had been able to get that order changed in favour of his trust.

On the cancellation of the permission, Sadasivam roped in Rasheed from Kerala to fight his case. But when Rasheed arrived in Bangalore on 9 August, 1987, he was arrested by

the city police and roughed up. Released on self-bail, Rasheed landed at newspaper offices to complain of police harassment at the instance of Jalappa.

Soon afterwards, Rasheed disappeared and his body was found four days later, near a railway track near Salem, about 200 km from Bangalore. Suspected foul play lead to the demand for Jalappa's resignation from the Cabinet.

Since it was a lawyer who had been murdered, the Bangalore Bar Association took up the issue and mounted pressure on Hegde to dismiss Jalappa. Besides boycotting the courts, they also wanted to seek the Governor's permission to prosecute Jalappa since Hegde was refusing to take action.

Although Hegde decried the demand as a ploy by the Congress government at the Centre to destabilise his government, he was forced to ask the CBI to enquire into the case. Under the Congress dispensation, the CBI quickly chargesheeted 21 people for "kidnap, wrongful confinement, conspiracy, murder and causing disappearance of evidence in the murder of Rasheed".

And soon enough the CBI accused Jalappa of "hatching a conspiracy and engineering the murder of Rasheed". Three days later, Jalappa resigned, saying the charges were "politically motivated".

Through 1988 and 1989, the case dragged on in the Salem courts with depositions by a number of witnesses produced by the CBI. But the case began to turn topsy-turvy early this year—for, by then, the Janata Dal had come to power at the Centre.

In rapid succession, the witnesses started turning hostile and accused the CBI of harassing and torturing them and getting them to attest "blank sheets of statements under duress". It was by then clear that the case had been progressing according to the dictates of the Centre.

The verdict, however, will not see Jalappa's confident re-entry into mainstream politics just yet. With Chandra Shekhar at the helm now—one of whose *bete noire* is Ramakrishna Hegde—Jalappa cannot look forward to having an easy run at the legal battles that are to follow in the higher courts. But that again depends on how long Shekhar's government will last and whose orders the CBI will follow next. ●

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

Famine blossoms

The flowering of bamboo creates panic among tribals

When flowers bloom in the lush bamboo plantations in the hills of the northeast, the tribesmen are thrown into a state of panic. The rare phenomenon of the flowering of a dwarf-sized bamboo species trigger a boom in the rat population. They devour the crops in nearby farmlands. The result is famine.

The mauve-coloured flowers sprouting in the hill-slopes in the sprawling Seppa valley in east Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh, are a palpable threat to the state government. The worries are justified, if the catastrophe caused by the flowering of a bamboo species named Mau in Mizoram in 1959 is anything to go by. Rodents had multiplied in millions during the flowering of Mau bamboos and ravaged the crops in the foothills. The ire of the Mizos over the government's indifference towards them during the famine that followed was exploited by Laldenga, the legendary Mizo leader, to gather momentum for a popular revolt.

The flowering of the bamboo species in Arunachal Pradesh was first noticed in September this year. The depradations by the rats in the paddy, maize and millet fields from Bhalukpong on the Assam border to Seppa valley in the north were reported soon after wards. As the agriculture department rushed its field-staff to the affected areas to fight the rampaging rodents with rat-traps and zinc phosphate, fresh alarms were sounded with flowering reported from the Tezu circle.

According to MLA Hari Natung, much of the crops in Kameng had been destroyed by October. The state veterinary minister, Kameng Dolo, also confirmed the reports of a near-famine condition in that inaccessible district. The rats, feeding on the flower seedlings, continue to multiply. Till today, 33,000 rats, of the 26 varieties in the state have been trapped with the help of indigenous devices. Chief minister Gegong Apang has sent an SOS to the Centre for both supplies and expertise in combating the rat menace.

This intriguing biological relationship between the bamboo flowering and an increase in the population of rats is now being elaborately studied by the life scientists of NEHU, Shillong, and Delhi University, in collaboration with the Shillong campus of the ICAR.



Bamboo flowers: evil beauty

While the bamboo flowering has occurred for the first time in Arunachal Pradesh, it is no longer a new phenomenon in Mizoram. Two different recurring types of famine (known as Thingtam and Mautam) strike the land in an ominous interval of 48 to 50 years. The Mautam ravaged their lands in 1861, 1911 and 1959. Its next upheaval is due in the year 2007. The Thingtam occurred in 1880, 1927, 1929, and due to strike again in 2025. Why the flowering sweeps the bamboo trees in cycles is still baffling to the biologists. Old Mizo folk-lore has an answer. It is God's own way of punishing His chosen people for their accumulated sins. ●

Santanu Ghosh/Itanagar

The last Metro

The MGM theatre in Calcutta is up for auction



WEST BENGAL

On 10 December, the Metro theatre of Calcutta will be up for sale. The scheduled auction would be an ironic death-blow to the cultural hallmark that once served as a status symbol for the upper crust of British Bengal. Yet a huge backlog of unpaid taxes has suddenly made the state government sit up, take notice and serve the same on the management.

Exactly 55 years ago, in December 1935, the Metro cinema hall opened in Calcutta, with Laurel and Hardy's *Bonnie Scotland*. Advertised by MGM as "India's finest cinema", this theatre had the distinction of running exclusively Hollywood greats in a carefully created atmosphere of sophisticated luxury. The visitors included British officers, Maharajas and corporate bosses; high society ladies moving in wisps of expensive perfume, their feet sinking ankle-deep in the lush softness of the red carpets. French chandeliers glittered, the air-conditioning sprayed a fine mist of delicate cologne, the bars served true French wine and Scotch whisky to the honoured guests. And the rest was left up to Greta Garbo, Gary Cooper or Marlene Dietrich.

Today, next to sepia and white pictures of young Liz Taylor, Richard Burton and Omar Sharif on the first floor, glares a garish coloured poster of *Pratibandh*—currently running at the Metro. The hall was thrown open to Hindi movies only after the Metro Theatre Company in the USA was sold out and a "Swiss company" bought the two Metro halls in Calcutta and Bombay. That was in 1972, and the theatre has been steadily dying ever since. The treasured ambience of yesteryears has been replaced by shrill whistles, cat-calls and bawdy comments.

"The audience today rips off the seats if unhappy with the show," says Santosh Mazumdar, the secretary of the Metro Cinema Employees' Union. "They scream for an extra-loud soundtrack. They have no class, no civic sense..." The grand Westex projector and soundbox installed for the release of *Ben Hur* in 1961 wheeze on.



Former information minister P. Upendra's interest in taking over the Metro had made the workers hopeful. But the change at the Centre has altered the picture

And the Metro has no money to bring back the past glory. The "Swiss company" that bought the halls was owned by a Shiv Shankar Gupta, a diamond merchant of dubious reputation, and there was a lot of legal trouble regarding the change of hand. The government takeover bid in 1976—on the basis of FERA violations—was countered by the management. But the finance ministry refused to let the matter pass. The Reserve Bank also opposed the applications of this apparently foreign firm, which had not gone through the procedure permitted by the FERA while buying the Metro theatres. Gupta immediately floated another company, Golden Films and Finance Pvt. Ltd, which collects the rent from four offices that occupy parts of the building.

"This money should be ours," says Santosh Mazumdar. "We get no money from the proprietor. All expenses of this establishment, including our salaries, are met out of ticket-money. In fact, we have no manager, assistant manager or accountant. Gupta is legally bound to pay the taxes, but he doesn't even do that." And with the taxes heaping up to almost 13 lakhs, the Metro is up for the auctioneer's hammer.

After discussions in Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister P. Upendra's interest in taking over and shaping up the Metro, the employees' union was hopeful. The changes at the Centre might put an end to that. But the union still hopes for a last minute turnaround. Rumours that the building will be pulled down and replaced by a hotel have the old employees sending heart-broken appeals to the government to save the cultural hallmark. But minus the glamour and the glory, the Metro might just be any other cinema hall. Unless one is taking a lazy trip down memory lane, that is. ●

Antara Dev Sen/Calcutta

Guarantee for gold

But will kabaddi be included in the 1994 Asian Games?

Will kabaddi end up as a one-Games wonder? Or will it find a place in the Hiroshima Asian Games in '94? Four years ago, in Seoul, a new sport was introduced in the Asian Games schdeule—taekwando. It was essentially a Far Eastern sport, with its base in South Korea. The latter had included it in the Games with the intention of bagging an additional gold metal. But when the roster for the Beijing Games was drawn up, taekwando found no place.

Kabaddi's case was slightly different. Although it was essentially centred in the Indian sub-continent, the game had had a longish run in the international arena. Kabaddi was included in the South Asian Federation Games and Asian-level competitions as well.

But strangely, kabaddi was not included in the New Delhi Asiad—though India did have the opportunity of doing so in 1982. But, thanks to the peculiar attitude of Messrs Bhalinder Singh and company, kabaddi was just an exhibition sport when the Games were held in India.

At the Asian Games level, the untiring efforts of the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI) officials were rewarded in China this year. The Chinese Olympic Committee was wooed by AKFI office-bearers from the time the World Table Tennis Championships were held in Calcutta in 1975. Their efforts were rewarded when kabaddi was included in the Asian Games held in Beijing this year

That's not all. The kabaddi team brought home from China the only gold medal for the country. Naturally, a great deal of interest suddenly shifted to this game, which has all along been labelled as a "country sport". Now, the government as well as sponsors are getting enthusiastic about an indigenous game that has actually been played in several parts of Asia for centuries, in different forms of course.

But, in this hour of triumph, clouds of uncertainty have gathered over the future of the sport at the Asian level. South Korea, despite its money-power and influence in the region, failed to get taekwando included in the Beijing Games. And kabaddi, too, does not find a place in the 1994 Asian Games.

The Asian Amateur Kabaddi Federation secretary-general, Achintya Kumar Saha, had made a trip to Hiroshima last year to try and convince the organisers that kabaddi should form a part of the Games there. But several factors have weighed against its inclusion and it does not find a place in the first list of games approved for 1994. However, efforts are on to have it included.

The primary objection was that Hiroshima was a small place and therefore, there wasn't either room or money to include all the games that the Olympic Council of Asia would have liked.



NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA

A tense moment during the India-Bangladesh finals in Beijing

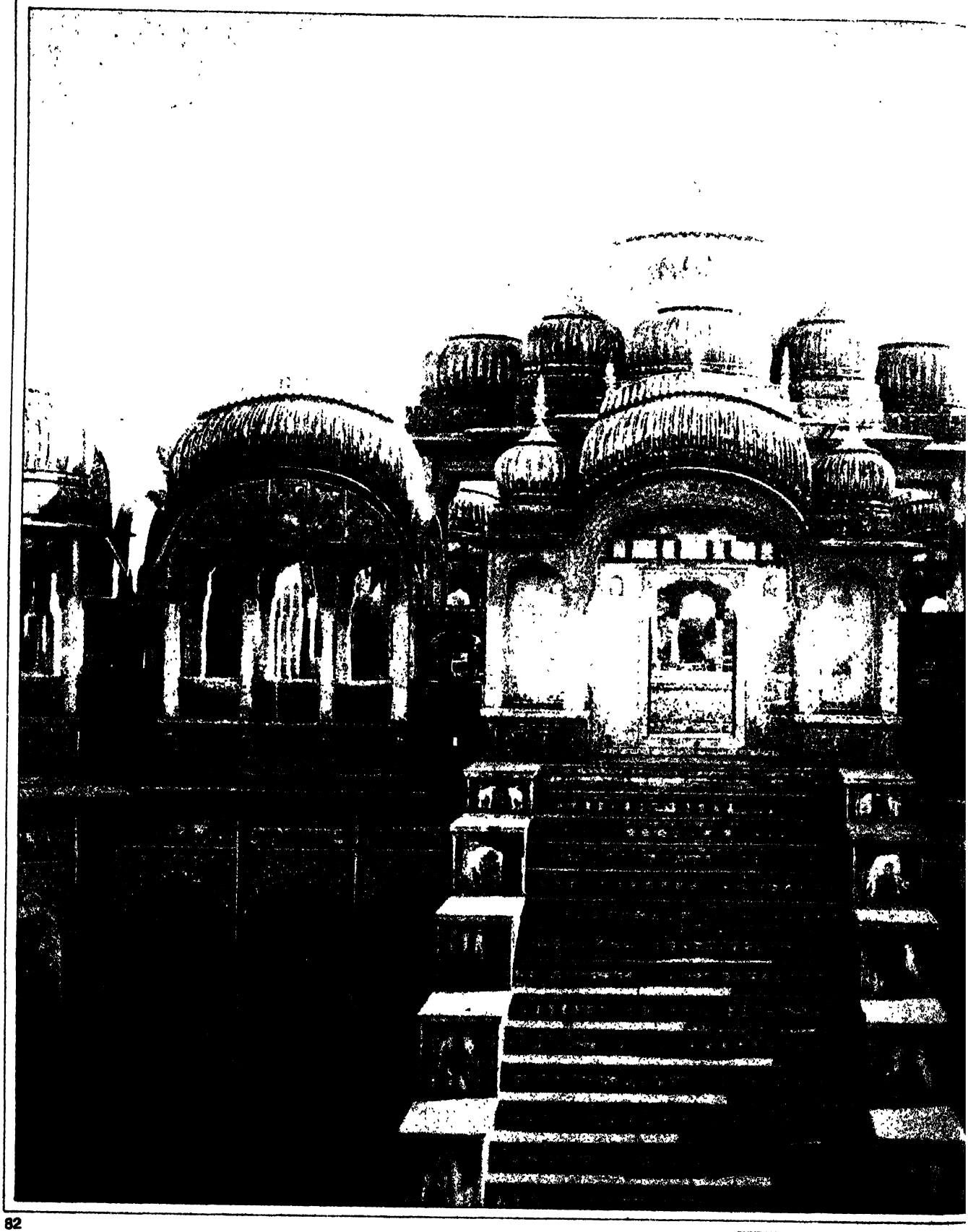
A.K. Saha's argument was that kabaddi personnel would not exceed 150 people - a small fraction of the total number of participants. More important was the cost factor. Saha convinced the organisers that their expenses would not even total one per cent of the total Games cost—an argument that seems to have satisfied the organisers.

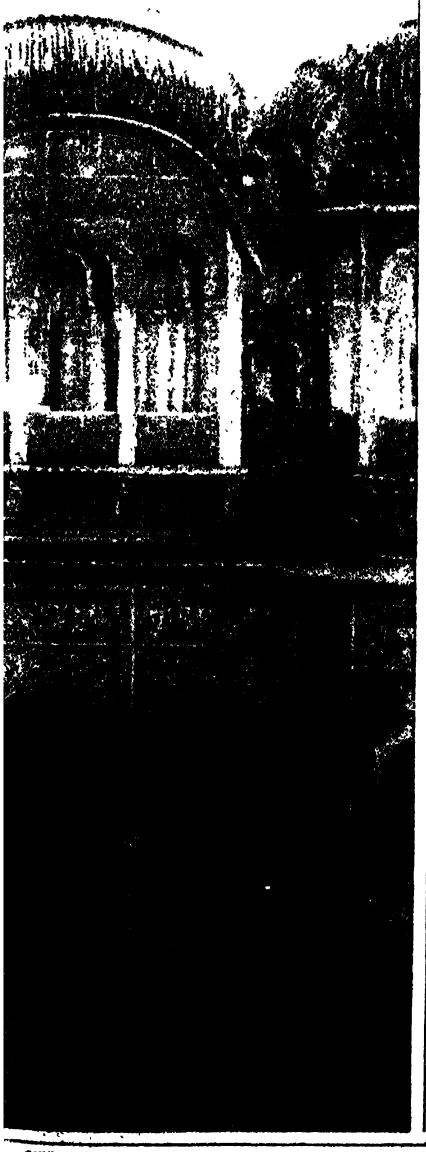
The actual problem, however, lies elsewhere. Kabaddi is now being played by India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Japan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia. The problem is that these national federations—apart from those in Japan, Bangladesh, China and India—are not rich enough to afford frequent foreign trips. That is why lobbying for the game is difficult at the international level. It has become imperative that more Asian countries are introduced to the game to create a mass base.

It is here that kabaddi needs the help of the Indian government. The AKFI has urged the government to include kabaddi in its cultural exchange programme with other Asian countries. The government has already taken steps in this regard, but there is need for more contact. A tour of Japan by junior kabaddi teams has already been approved by the government. So has a trip to Bangladesh for the men's team.

Right now, what is needed is a concerted attempt to get more countries interested in kabaddi. From the Indian point of view, this is essential because, at least for another two Asian Games, we could count on kabaddi fetching the gold medal. With the kind of performance put up by the Indian contingent in Beijing, the government and the Indian Olympic Association should ensure that kabaddi is included in the Hiroshima Asiad, because it is, at the moment the only sport that could ensure a gold. More important, if the game is included in two successive Asiads, it could become a permanent feature of the Games. ●

Arijit Sen/Calcutta





BIKANER

A celebration of the legendary Rajput kingdom. An extract from Naveen Patnaik's new book

Five hundred years ago, Maharaja Rao Bika founded Bikaner on the borders of the desert in a region called Jangal Pradesh.

Since then, the kingdom has been one of the most colourful in Rajputana. Its kings, palaces and heritage have featured in legends, songs and poems.

In these extracts from his acclaimed study of the traditions of the state Naveen Patnaik captures the flavours of Bikaner.



THE PUJA

(From far left) The traditional Rajasthan domes of a Hindu temple at Rathangarh, 25 miles from Bikaner; women holding butter lamps and auspicious tokens like coconuts and banana leaves

WORSHIP

SOME TWENTY miles outside the city of Bikaner stands a unique temple dedicated to Karniji, a woman who lived five centuries ago and was reputed to possess miraculous powers, such as the gift of prophecy. She is the guardian deity of the Bikaner dynasty because it was her predictions and blessings that guided Bika in the founding of his kingdom.

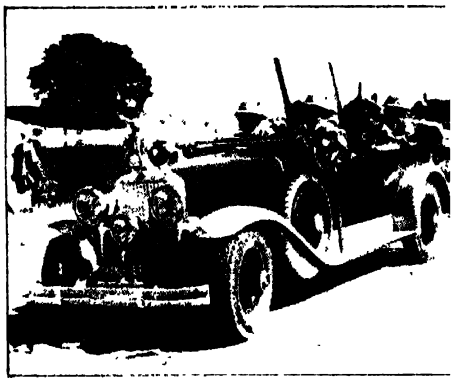
As a girl Karniji herded cattle and displayed great devotion to animals. In reverence to her memory, to this day any animal that strays into the temple is fed by her devotees. Karniji belonged to a local clan of troubadours, the Charans. According to legend, one of Karniji's clansmen placed the corpse of his only son before her and pleaded with the mystic lady to restore the child to life. Moved by the man's sorrow, Karniji entered into a deep trance in which she confronted Yama, the God of Death, and asked for the boy's soul. Yama did not yield to her appeal, answering that the child's soul had already been reincarnated in another body. An enraged Karniji vowed that none of her clansmen would ever come under Yama's power. She declared that when they died they would inhabit the bodies of rats, and when such rats died they would assume life as Charans once again.

Hundreds of rats scurry over the floors of Karniji's temple eating from huge bowls overflowing with sweetmeats, grain and milk donated by pilgrims. If an unwary visitor kills a rat, he has to donate a silver replica of his victim to the temple.

Other temples and shrines built by the pious abound in Bikaner. The best known amongst them is the Laxmi Narain temple where the Maharaja is considered the main disciple. The city also contains the beautiful Bhandeshwar temple built by those professing the Jain faith. And everywhere outside the places of worship in this pious kingdom, bards once recited ancient histories and sang the legends of religious mythology on holy days.







THE HUNT

(Clockwise from above) Lord Minto, his daughter Lady Eileen Elliot and Lady Minto with Maharaja Ganga Singh; the Maharaja at a lion shoot in the Gir Forest; setting off on a day's hunting of chinkara

Holy days are celebrated in Bikaner's towns and villages with festivals, other functions and fairs, each having their individual form and rituals. They come with the change of seasons—Basant and Holi during the spring, Teej and Shivbari during the rains and Sharad Purnima and Diwali in autumn.

Many other individual festivals are also celebrated, especially Ganguar, the great folk festival of Rajasthan, when women give thanks for a happy married life, and young girls pray for a good husband. At this festival, idols of the God Shiva and his consort Parvati are worshipped. At dawn maidens bathe idols of the God and Goddess and then decorate them with fresh blossoms, and at sunset place lit lamps in front of them. The Teej of Bhadwa is another important ceremony for the women of Bikaner. Wives fast for their husbands all day and then at night, having donned rich garments, they worship the moon with offerings of water.

The traditional fair of Shivbari remains a popular celebration. A few miles outside the city of Bikaner is a temple dedicated to Shiva, built on the banks of a large reservoir of rain water. In the month of Shrawan, when the moon is full, people come to worship the idol of Lord Shiva at this temple, with its battlements and dome shimmering in the moonlight.

The birthday of Lord Krishna is celebrated with nights of devotional music in the temples and the festival of lights, Diwali, is celebrated throughout Bikaner with fireworks and lit lamps. Holi, the spring festival of colour, is celebrated with great abandon. The revellers spray each other with coloured water well into the night, unlike other places in India, where the festival ends decorously at noon.

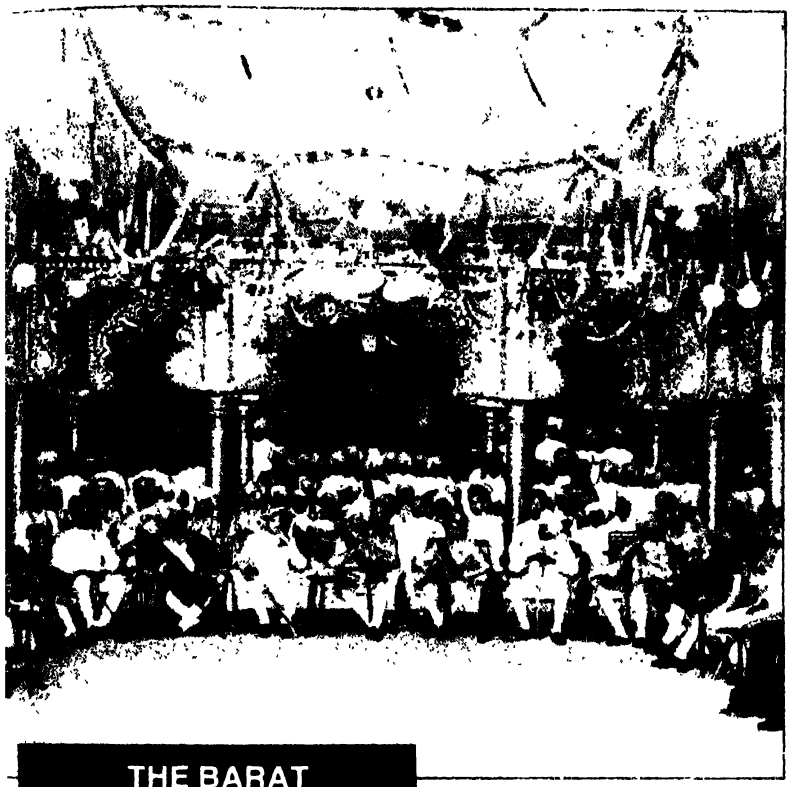
SHIKAR

THE ONE relaxation Maharaja Ganga Singh, a crack shot, permitted himself was the pleasure of the hunt—shikar. In the state of Bikaner there was little big game, so for hunting lion, tiger, bear and bison, the Maharaja was the honoured guest of rulers in whose jungles such game abounded, or of other high officials in provinces of British India.

In his own kingdom, Maharaja Ganga Singh made his hunting preserve at Gajner legendary for his Imperial Sand Grouse shoot. The grouse was considered a delicacy, but Gajner also offered wild duck, black buck, chinkara, and wild boar.

During the Christmas season, the Imperial Sand Grouse shoot at Gajner was the most sought-after invitation in the Indian social calender. Heads of state, international royalty, Indian rulers, viceroys, and Ganga Singh's personal friends were entertained at week-long house parties at the beautiful palace in Gajner leading down to the lake on which they spent the day in shikar.

Paradoxically, Ganga Singh, while a keen hunter, was avid about conserving wildlife. He introduced different breeds of deer and birds into the state, wildlife preserves were replanted with trees, bush and grass to provide food and shelter for animals, and wardens







THE BARAT

(Clockwise from above) Maharaja Ganga Singh as a guest of the Nawab of Palanpur during the wedding of the latter's brother; a bridegroom's procession with the bride in a covered palanquin; a wedding band marching past Bikaner fort

were posted to see that no poaching took place in the jungle. There was a ban on the hunting of animals during the breeding season, the killing of female animals and their young was strictly prohibited, and anyone caught trapping was severely punished. Enclaves were constructed to protect the animals in their habitat. An illustration of the care given to animals involved a species of Bikaner deer suffering from mineral deficiency. Royal game wardens were instructed to tie slabs of rock salt to the tree trunks so that the deer could lick it and cure themselves.

Ganga Singh's grandson, Maharaja Karni Singh, while sharing his grandfather's encyclopedic knowledge of Bikaner's birds and animals as well as his skill at shooting—he represented India in marksmanship at several Olympic Games—abhorred killing. Karni Singh converted the hunting preserves of Gajner into a wildlife sanctuary and now in the Christmas season, hundreds of visitors crowd the grounds of the hunting palace to watch the Imperial Sand Grouse, wild duck and cranes from distant Siberia drink from the waters of the lake, but the glamour of the brilliant hunting season is gone.

ROYAL ALLIANCES

IN THE kingdoms of Rajputana, princes and princesses were generally betrothed as children and married

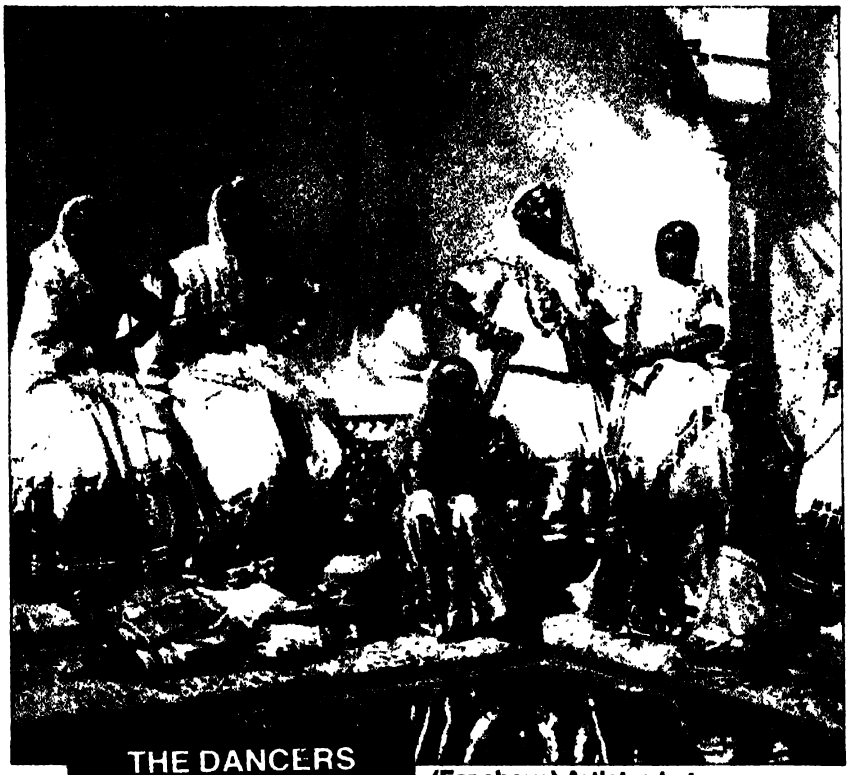
During the Christmas season, the Imperial Sand Grouse shoot at Gajner—Maharaja Ganga Singh's legendary hunting preserve—was the most sought-after invitation in the Indian social calendar

when they had barely entered their teens. Matrimonial alliances were arranged by their elders and the bride and bridegroom saw each other for the first time on their wedding night.

The organisation of such marriages was a lengthy affair. The horoscopes of the boy and girl had to be found compatible. Royal priests from the kingdoms entering into these matrimonial alliances had to discover an auspicious date for the wedding and consult each other on matters of ritual and etiquette, while ministers drove hard bargains on the dowry of the royal bride.

Traditionally, the weddings took place in the bride's kingdom, and during the last century wedding celebrations often took months and necessitated long journeys by caravan to distant kingdoms. In fact, even as late as the 1870s, when Maharaja Dungar Singh married a princess of Kutch, the journey to her state on the coast of the Arabian sea and the subsequent wedding celebrations took six months. A hundred restless young men who had accompanied their ruler





THE DANCERS

(Far above) Artistes between performances at a royal wedding; dancing girls prepare themselves for their royal audience

to his wedding party suddenly decided to wed 100 young maidens of Kutch on the same evening as their sovereign. When Maharaja Ganga Singh narrated this tale to a visiting viceroy, the Englishman exclaimed, "Phew! What a night."

By the time of Ganga Singh the days of travel by horse, camel and elephant were a thing of the past. Now the *barat*, or bridegroom's party arrived by private train or in their own aircraft. Having reached the bride's capital the *barat* would proceed in a grand procession of elephants, troops and bands to the wedding. The bride's palace was always beautifully decorated with flowers and wall paintings, and every tree and arch was outlined with garlands of electric lights. The bridegroom was greeted by the bride's father, watched by a crowd of kinsmen and courtiers. Blessing his future son-in-law with gold coins to remove the evil eye, the father-in-law distributed gold as largesse to the bridegroom's retainers. Then the bridegroom entered the harem quarters alone, where surrounded by giggling ladies he was blessed by the bride's mother. The mother ushered him into a courtyard containing the marriage pavilion curtained with garlands of flowers. In the presence of the royal ladies, with the only men present being the priest, the bride's father and the bride's brother, the groom circled the sacred fire with his veiled bride.

While the wedding ceremony was in progress the bridegroom's party was being lavishly entertained outside the walls of the zenana. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the bridegroom's party would carry the weeping bride off triumphantly in a *doli*, or covered palanquin, while the bride's family sang hymns of mourning for the loss of a daughter. ●



A Desert Kingdom. The Rajputs Of Bikaner by Naveen Patnaik. Published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London Distributed by UBSPD, Calcutta Price: Rs 300

ODDS AND TRENDS

From India with love

■ The postal department in London received a shock last month. A giant centipede sent by mail from India to a pet dealer in England escaped from its box and caused panic among the postal workers, until one brave man managed to put a bin over it.

"It's a nightmare because it can move so fast and its venom is worse than a bee sting," said Mathew Robertson of the London zoo's invertebrate house. Meanwhile, the centipede is feasting on crickets and locusts at the zoo, blissfully unaware of the chaos it caused.

The dinosaurs are coming

■ For those interested in primitive life on earth, the Children's Museum in Egmore might just be their hunt. A nine-metre replica of the tyrannosaurus, a pre-historic reptile, will be the major attraction at the museum very soon

Says Keshava Ram, director of the museum, "Although textbooks and relatively older scientific material placed the animal's existence in the Jurassic era (130-150 million years ago), advanced scientific thinking and practical experiments have led to the belief that the animal could have lived even a few thousands of years ago." Another model of a stegosaurus will soon follow the tyrannosaurus.

Ballooning Buddha

■ Don't be surprised if you happen to see a ballooning Buddha. Well-known balloonist, Vishwa Bandhu Gupta, has offered to lift the gigantic statue of Buddha out of Hussain Sagar Lake with the aid of a balloon. The 350-ton statue sank last year while being ferried to the middle for installation.

The 'sky-crane' used will be a hot-air balloon with a volume of over a million cubic feet. The advantage, Gupta insists, will be that the statue could be installed in the middle at the same time. The operation is feasible, according to him, although it will require the building of a record size balloon. The rescue, if successful, will be the first of its kind in the world, and will speak volumes for the Indian imagination

Jai Hanuman!

■ Unusual as it may seem, monekys have hit the headlines at Ayodhya. In a letter to President R Venkataraman, Dr S.M. Mohnot, a scientist, claimed that the primates of the temple town are displeased about the deployment of para-military forces there. Unaccustomed to the presence of so many men in uniform, the monkeys are suffering from trauma, Dr Mohnot insisted. Citing a study by the international unit of the Primate Protection League, he expressed concern about the increased rate of females aborting this breeding season. To further the crisis, hunger and diarrhoea have struck the monkey community. In a frantic bid to save the endangered group of our monkey-brothers, the doctor has called for *vanar seva* (serve the monkey).

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Simi Garewal



Sharmila Tagore

MILESTONES

DIED: Bhaichandra Digamber alias Abasaheb Garware, the founder chairman of the Garware Group of Industries, following a heart attack on 2 November. He was 87.

DIED: Mohammad Ismail, former Lok Sabha member and veteran CPI(M) trade union leader, in Calcutta on 14 November. He was 80.

DIED: T.R. Ramaswamy, veteran journalist and editor of *News Today*, on 9 November in Madras. He was 87

DIED: Satish Kumar, sitarist, of brain haemorrhage in New Delhi on 4 November.

AWARDED: Ustad Bismillah Khan, renowned *shehnai* player, **Hare Krishna Behra,** Odissi dance teacher and **Bhupen Hazarika,** film director and musician, the Kala Shiromoni award on 6 November in New Delhi.

AWARDED: Pradeep Kumar Banerjee, former Indian footballer and coach, an honorary diploma from International Olympic Committee (IOC) for "fairplay" in Paris.

WON: Stephan Uhl of Germany, the 11th Himalayan Car Rally on 8 November.

RELEASED: Sports Channel, the country's first video sports magazine, by Sunil Gavaskar in New Delhi on 14 November

MURDERED: Indu Dev, freedom fighter and prominent citizen in his house on 31 October in Allahabad.

RESIGNED: All the full-time Planning Commission members, following change in the government.

REMOVED: The National Test Range from Ballapal in Orissa, which had met with strong resistance from the people of the area when a missile was test'fired there last year.

INAUGURATED: A high altitude medical research centre containing sophisticated equipments to deal with medical problems in high altitudes, in Leh on 6 November.

BEGINNING 25 NOVEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



On the whole, this will be a good week for you. Professionals and businessmen will do well. Friends will prove helpful, especially regarding legal matters. The time is not ripe for gambling and speculation.

Good dates: 25, 28 and 1
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Jobs are in the offing for the unemployed. Romance is on the cards for you. However, be cautious in your choice of a partner. The domestic front will be peaceful. The health of an elderly relative may cause concern.

Good dates: 26, 27 and 30
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: North-west

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



Intellectuals, artistes and technicians will be rewarded for their efforts. An unfavourable period for those in love. A family member might create problems but you are advised to exercise restraint.

Good dates: 27, 29 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: South

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Financially, this is not a good week for you. Businessmen should be careful in embarking on new ventures. Your friends and relatives might be helpful. Domestic peace may be disturbed by your spouse.

Good dates: 28, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: North

LEO (21 July—20 August)



A favourable period for professionals, especially businessmen and doctors. However, be on the guard against deceit. The domestic front will remain peaceful. A good week for trekkers.

Good dates: 25, 26 and 29
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: South-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



This is not a favourable week for you. Avoid socialising for the time being. Take care of your health. Businessmen might go on a trip to further their connections. Artists will fare well.

Good dates: 27, 28 and 30
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: East

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



Your domestic life will bring you much happiness. Your health might bother you. Professionals, especially businessmen and financiers, can look forward to a busy week. They can go ahead with fresh investments.

Good dates: 26, 29 and 1
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: North

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



This will be a good week for lawyers. Businessmen will rake in a lot of profits from their ventures. Avoid arguments with friends and relatives. A favourable week for trekkers.

Good dates: 27, 29 and 30
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: West

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



Speculators will do well this week. Most of you will prosper financially. Those in service should not neglect their work. Professionals will be rewarded with promotions. Producers and directors may suffer some losses.

Good dates: 25, 27 and 30
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This will be a good week for the unemployed. Keep a check on your purse strings. Businessmen should be cautious about investing in new ventures. Avoid unnecessary risks.

Good dates: 29, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 7
Favourable direction: North

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



A lucky week for students. They will be successful in their examinations. Some may even win scholarships. You are likely to do well financially. But curb extravagance. This is not a good time for romance.

Good dates: 28, 29 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6
Favourable direction: East

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This will be a week of mixed fortunes. For those of you in service, problems might crop up. Do not take any important decisions. A favourable period for sportsmen. The domestic front will be peaceful.

Good dates: 26, 27 and 29
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: South-west

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—PISCES

The Scorpio woman is very ambitious as far as her career is concerned. The emotional attachment is strong enough so as not to separate the Piscean from his spouse. Their sexual life will be compatible and the relationship will be an everlasting one. ●

Drown the duo

Even the loss of the prime ministership hasn't taught the Raja any lessons. For, much to the dismay of his party colleagues, he continues to treat the casteist duo of Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav as favoured members of his coterie.

Yadav and Paswan are among the first visitors to 1, Teen Murti Lane every morning. And more often than not they bring along with them an assorted bunch of youngsters, all of whom are made to squat on the lawns while the Raja lectures them on his distinctive brand of secularism and casteism.

Once the morning *darshan* is over, V.P. Singh sits



Ram Vilas Paswan: rent a crowd

down to chalk out his tour programme, beginning with a visit to Bihar. Paswan and Yadav stand on either side, while the Raja scribbles down the name of a town or so, and then, suffering second thoughts, promptly erases it.

The Dal workers would rather he blanks out Paswan and Yadav. But the Raja doesn't seem to be in a particularly obliging mood these days.

HEARD AT CHANDRA SHEKHAR'S HOUSE

How could you have expected Routray to have loved nature considering what it had done to him.

A MANEKA GANDHI SUPPORTER

Kissa kursi ka

The seating arrangement for the special session of Parliament, even given the short notice, was bizarre to say the least. Yes, Chandra Shekhar occupied the Prime Minister's seat in place of V.P. Singh. But sitting directly opposite him in the seat of leader of the Opposition was none other than Rajiv Gandhi, whose party is propping up the minority Janata Dal (S) regime.

The Raja was put in the uncomfortable position of having to share a bench with BJP president L.K. Advani, who'd unseated him only a couple of weeks ago. The two leaders exchanged slightly frosty greetings and then ignored each other.



L.K. Advani: bench-mate of the Raja

Perhaps, what summed up the curious situation best was the point of order raised by a Dal member. How could they vote in favour or against the council of ministers, when the ministry hadn't even been constituted?

THERMOMETER

The anti-Mulayam brigade of the Congress(I)

- **Sheila Dixit:** Two Assembly segments of her constituency fall within Etawah district. Not surprisingly then, there is no love lost between Dixit and Mulayam. But it was Congressman Darshan Singh Yadav's arrest and the subsequent imprisonment of Dixit herself which increased the lady's animosity. Now leads the anti-Mulayam Singh faction.

- **Balram Singh Yadav:** He and Mulayam Singh began in politics around the same time; soon finding themselves in opposing camps. Over the years, Balram Singh has tried his best to cut down his rival using his Congress(I) connections. Hence the idea that Mulayam may survive due to Congress support is anathema to him.

- **Dinesh Singh:** Bears no personal grudge against Mulayam, but going by the feedback he gets from district-level party workers thinks it best that the Congress disscciate itself from Yadav's antics.

- **Mahavir Prasad:** The AICC(I) general-secretary has spent a lot of time with party workers from eastern UP, particularly from the Gorakhpur division (near Ayodhya). Hence, is aware that anti-Mulayam Singh feelings run high. Prasad, therefore, has thrown in his lot with the anti-Yadav lobby.

- **Rajendra Kumari Bajpai:** Had nothing against Mulayam Singh initially. But a visit to Ayodhya changed that. Soon after, Bajpai held a press conference to lambast the chief minister for his handling of the situation, which she maintained had heightened communal tension.

Where's the welcome party?

It wasn't much of welcome Shekhar received when he attended Parliament for the first time as Prime Minister. Only a motley group of officials were present on the steps of the House to greet him, with no senior leaders in sight.

But Shekhar had only himself to blame for this. For, the newly-appointed PM had neglected to appoint the minister of parliamentary affairs, or any other, for that matter. And since the Tau was hardly likely to accede to the request that he arrive before the PM to escort him in, Shekhar had to rest content with the usual crowd of bureaucrats.

Ambani can write to me too

The communists can't believe their luck. Soon after their allegation, on the floor of Parliament, that Chandra Shekhar's bid for the prime ministership was financed by the Ambanis and the Hindujas, who should write to the Prime Minister's Office but non-resident Sindhi businessman S.P. Hinduja.

Apparently, Hinduja has been sending letters to Prime Minister Shekhar, suggesting how best to improve the economic situation of the country, when he's not lobbying for auditing of the accounts of political parties.

But, we all know what the Prime Minister will say to that. He sees no reason why any Indian—non-resident or otherwise—can't write to him. So what if his name is Hinduja?

Mine by right

The failure of the Chandra Shekhar-Devi Lal duo to decide on their council of ministers has generated a fair amount of humour in political circles. The latest joke doing the rounds goes like this.

After hours spent negotiating who would get which ministry, the Tau and his Prime Minister were tired of the exercise. The Chaudhary, utilising his rural wisdom, came up with a solution.

"We'll take a walk down Rajpath," said Lal, "and you can take all the ministries on the right, and I'll take the ones on left."

So, Shekhar would get defence, external affairs, industry, environment, while his deputy will have to be satisfied with finance, home, railways, agriculture, information and broadcasting, human resource development, education, and petroleum and chemicals. And both would, presumably, rest content.

HEARD AT 10 JANPATH

All that tinkering with computers will come in useful now that Rajivji has to run things by remote control.

A CONGRESS PARTY LEADER



Chandra Shekhar: the Tau knows best

C H E C K – L I S T

All those whom Bommai betrayed

■ **R.K. Hegde:** Bommai began as a minister in Hegde's Cabinet in Karnataka, but soon upstaged him, by getting himself anointed chief minister. And among the first things he did on assuming office was to speed up the probe into NRIHA., with a view to nailing his predecessor.

■ **Devi Lal:** When Bommai was wrestling for the Janata Dal presidentship with Jaipal Reddy, the Chaudhary had put his considerable weight behind him. Lal cut short his Beijing visit to ensure that Bommai got the job. But it wasn't long before Bommai was denying that he was Devi's man and siding with V.P Singh on the Meham issue.

■ **Chandra Shekhar:** Not so long ago, Bommai would spend hours inside Chandra Shekhar's *kutiya* at 3 South Avenue Lane everytime he visited Delhi. It was on Shekhar's say-so that Om Prakash Chautala lobbied for Bommai during the election to the post of party president But no sooner had the dissident drama begun, with Shekhar in the lead, that Bommai cast his former friend as the villain of the piece.

■ **Ajit Singh:** Bommai joined up with him to take care of a common enemy: R.K. Hegde, *vis-a-vis* the telephone-tapping scandal. Soon the duo were meeting regularly over dinner and drinks in Delhi. But when it came to the crunch, Bommai failed his friend. Ajit, with a view to topple the Hukum Singh government in Haryana, coaxed a sufficient number of MLAs on his side and asked Bommai to call a legislature party meeting. Bommai refused.

■ **V.P. Singh:** Next on the list?

Return of the oddball

Guess who's a close second to Rajiv Gandhi on the comeback trail? None other than Congressman Sitaram Kesri.

At the lunch hosted at Maharashtra Sadan by chief minister Sharad Pawar in honour of Chandra Shekhar, Kesri was in his element. First, came a rousing speech on the virtues of that old Congressman Chandra Shekhar. Rajiv Gandhi had done just the right thing by supporting him in his bid for the prime ministership, Kesri declared.



Sitaram Kesri: back in action

Having done his bit by Shekhar, Sitaram decided to devote his considerable energies to Mulayam Singh Yadav's cause, flying off to Lucknow to persuade Congress MLAs to support the Uttar Pradesh CM's beleaguered government.

The Congress party, however, is less than pleased at this sudden re-emergence of Kesri, just when things are going right for it. The last person they want in the limelight is yet another discredited politico.

Golden moments. McDowell moments





A BRAND OWNED
BY ITC LTD.
MADE IN INDIA

Wills Filter set the filter trend in cigarettes long years ago. Today it's still the finest. In taste, in satisfaction. Hand-picked virginia tobaccos married to an efficient filter make it so. Millions of smokers have discovered it, then stayed with it.



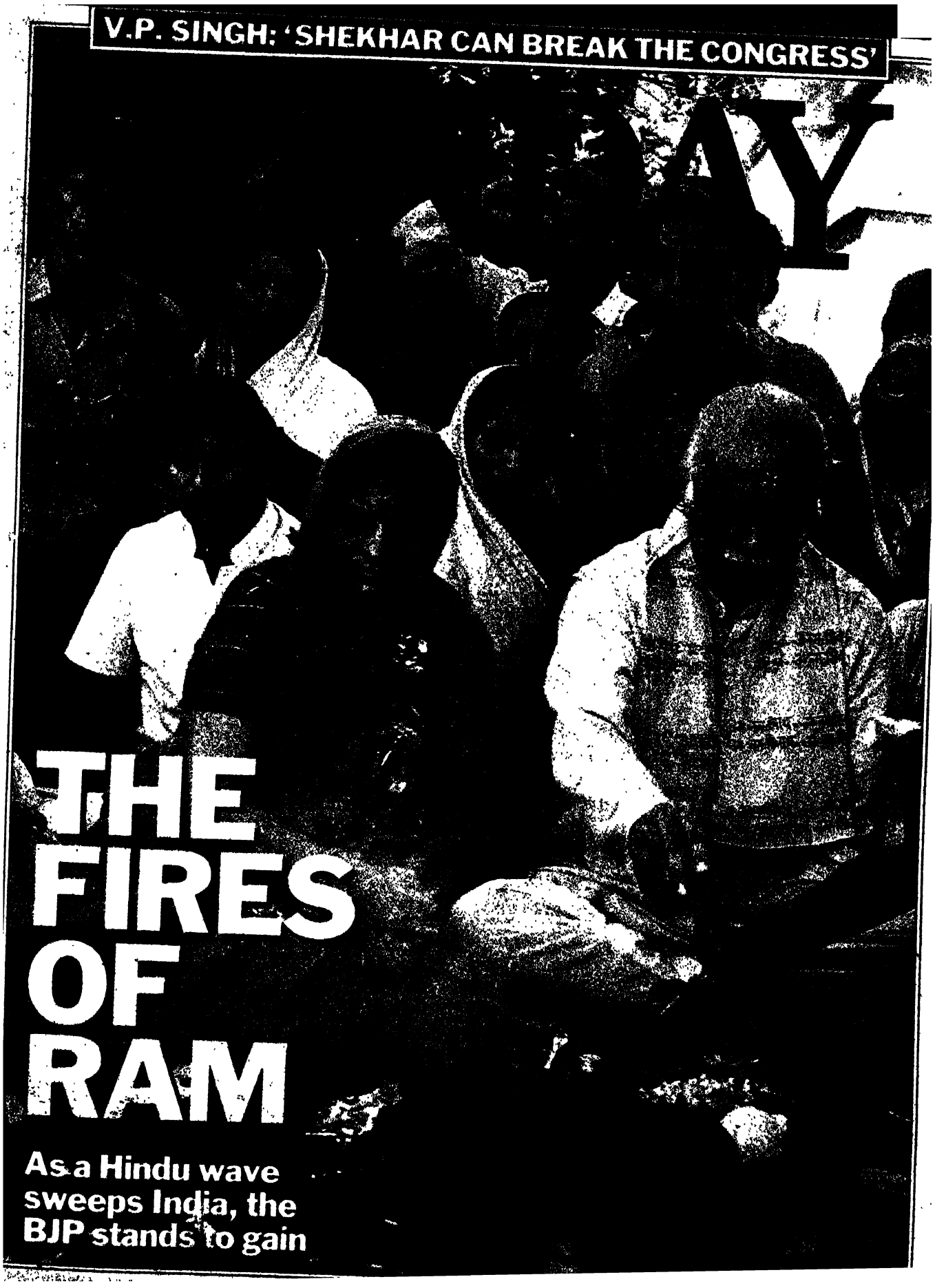
WILLS
FILTER

STATUTORY WARNING
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS
INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Filter and tobacco perfectly matched

HTA 3987

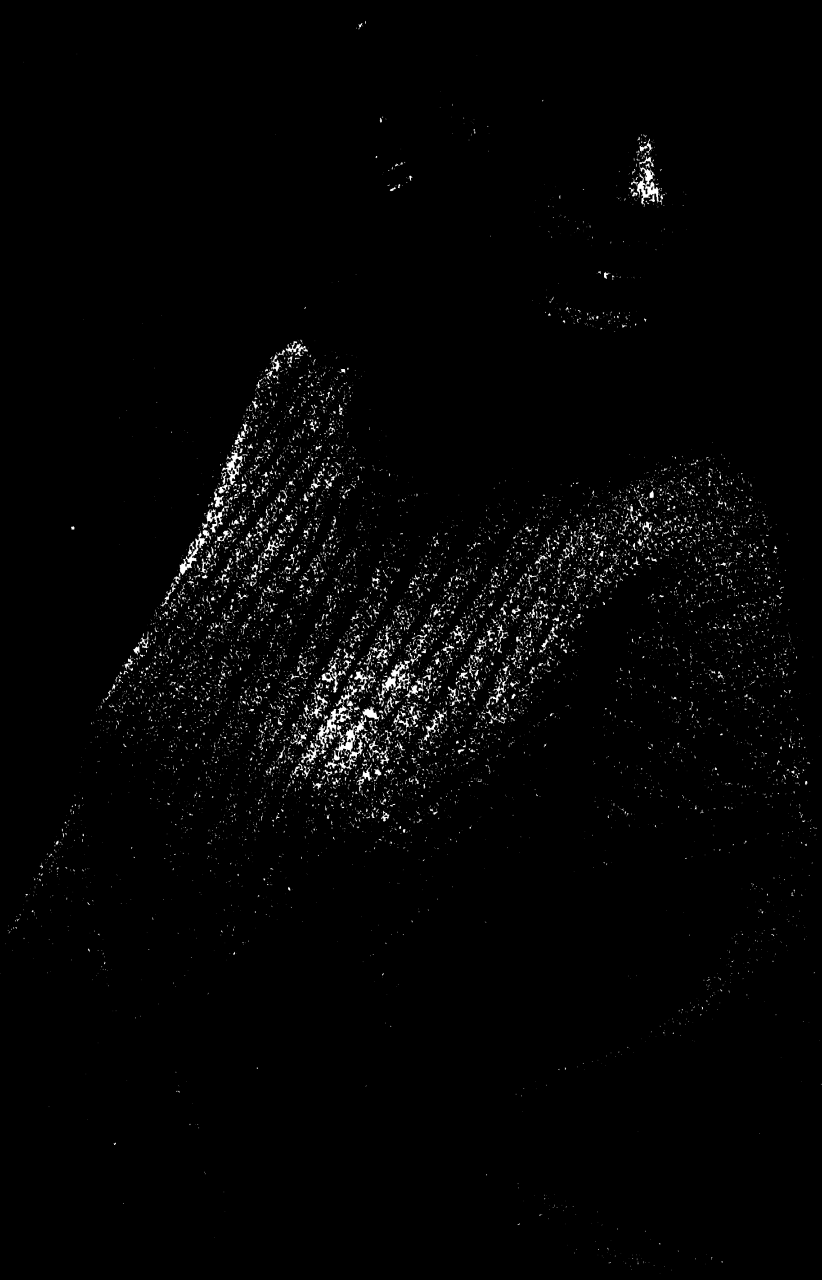
V.P. SINGH: 'SHEKHAR CAN BREAK THE CONGRESS'



THE FIRES OF RAM

As a Hindu wave sweeps India, the BJP stands to gain

TRUE TO NATURE



WOOLMARK

SYMBOL OF THE PUREST WOOLS

OF KNITWEAR THAT'S STYLISH

AS IT IS SENSUOUS

OF NATURAL BEAUTY WHICH ENDURES

COMFORTABLE, EASY TO MAINTAIN AND

GUARANTEED INTERNATIONALLY

LOOK FOR WOOLMARK

AND LOOK NO FURTHER

Woolmark

PURE NEW WOOL

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 47 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
2– 8 DECEMBER 1990



27
COVER STORY

The fires of Ram

As a Hindu wave sweeps India, the BJP stands to gain.

10
INTERVIEW

"Chandra Shekhar can break the Congress"

Former Prime Minister V.P. Singh on the new government, the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue and Bofors.



16
NEWSWATCH

The restive tribals

The ruling Congress-TUJS alliance in Tripura is in trouble.

36
SPECIAL REPORT

The SAARC Summit

What did the seven member nations achieve in Male? An on-the-spot report.

39
NEWSBEAT

A state of turmoil

Is Assam going the Punjab or Kashmir way?



48
BUSINESS/INTERVIEW

"I have no desire to run the government"

Industrialist Rahul Bajaj on his companies, his aspirations, the country and the future.



70
BOOK EXTRACT

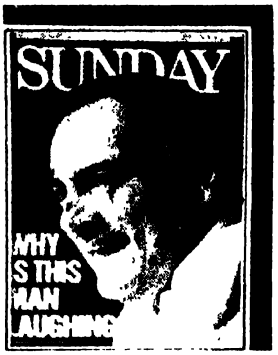
Khushwant's people

Veteran journalist and columnist on some prominent personalities.

LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 19
SOUTH BLOCK 21
FOCUS 23
Behind the act
PROFILE 24
The two Pawars
SPOTLIGHT 44
ODDS AND TRENDS 68
KHAAS BAAT 69
CINEMA 77
Finally, the film
NEWS 78
MEDIA MUSINGS 84
SPORTS 86
Where's the punch ?
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparency:
Jagdish Yadav

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura. 20 paise; North-eastern states 30 paise



The last laugh

The exit of V.P Singh was inevitable as the country cannot have the luxury of a day-dreamer and indecisive person as Prime Minister (*The desperate hours*, 11—17 November). The unholy alliance that has emerged after V.P. Singh's ouster is even more alarming.

Devi Lal as deputy prime minister, Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister and the Congress(I) holding the reins of government—all these are examples of political expediency and shows the extent to which our politicians can stoop. Rajiv will gradually edge out Chandra Shekhar and no other party will be able to come to power for another 15 to 20 years. Rajiv Gandhi will control Chandra Shekhar and ask him to hike prices of several items on the plea that V.P. Singh had caused economic chaos. Also, Shekhar on his own will not be able to solve the sensitive problems facing the country. Rajiv will then come to power by branding Chandra Shekhar as an ineffective Prime Minister.

In the scheme of things, Rajiv will have the last laugh.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

■ Rajiv Gandhi had every reason to be happy. For, the Congress president had a score to settle. He did not forget the way the Raja stabbed him in the back. Therefore, when Advani was arrested and the BJP withdrew support, Rajiv was presented with the best possible opportunity to seek revenge. So, 11 months after he was turned out of office, Rajiv is once again back on the centre-stage and ready to call the shots. And this has been possible more due to VP's bungling than due to the machinations of Rajiv.

Aslam Khan, New Delhi

■ Ideologically, Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi are poles apart. But in the present context, both of them had an axe to grind. They had a common enemy—the Raja. So, as the saying goes, political adversity makes for strange bedfellows, Shekhar enlisted Rajiv's support to bring about the collapse of V.P. Singh's government. For, Shekhar could never accept the leadership of the Raja, who, according to him is nothing but a manipulator and a blatant opportunist.

Joy Ganguly, Asansol (West Bengal)

■ Eleven months ago, V.P. Singh assumed the prime ministership of the country through intrigue and deception. And he left in utter disgrace. Going by the present circumstances, V.P. Singh seems to be the loser, but the people will surely remember him as the man who bowed out of office for taking a principled stand.

And, Rajiv Gandhi who is the real winner, will forever be remembered as the man who did not forgive the Raja but was quick to grab the opportunity to seek revenge by driving VP out of office. So, it was basically personal animosity which prompted Rajiv to side with Chandra Shekhar, more than anything else.

Kishore Umrigar, Bombay (Maharashtra)



Rajiv and Shekhar: how long will the smiles last?

Necessity of controls

Dilip Thakore in his column (*Boot-lick business*, 21—27 October) has gone overboard discussing the pathetic state of the Indian environment for business and industry. Frankly, his article makes no sense at all. Is he having a dig on the government policy, systems and procedures?

All countries, more so the developing ones, have controls. Everywhere it is necessary to fill up certain forms and convince a lot of government officials and financial institutions about the feasibility of one's project. Surely we can't get out of the quagmire by just snapping our fingers. It is necessary to work towards a better system and here all of us need to lend a helping hand.

If there are hurdles then one must realise that it is the basic Indian character which makes most of them. Finally, let us not forget that every country gets the government it deserves.

Krishan Kalra, New Delhi

Brute force

Governor Saxena's claim of success (*"There is a definite change of mood,"* 28 October—3 November) sounds ironical. Massacres of innocents are taking place in the Valley under the very nose of the Governor. The forces deployed are also responsible for several atrocities which have isolated them from the people they are there to protect. The killings of innocents by the security forces should be taken note of by the world and steps should be taken to stop these crimes against humanity.

Bhushan Bazaz, Srinagar (Kashmir)



Saxena: hollow claims

The ad boom

The article on advertising was brilliant (*Advantage*, 21—27 October). With advertisements and TV commercials becoming slicker and smarter, Indian advertising has come of age. This sudden improvement in the standards of ads is due mainly to the cut-

throat competition in the market.The smarter the ad, the more attention it is likely to draw. What with the Indian middle class emerging as the single-largest consumer force in the country, TV commercials are raking it in and the only way to survive in such an atmosphere is to be the best.

Of course, this advertising boom has been to the ad industry's advantage: creative talent is being sought like never before and the admen are obliged to give their very best if they wish to survive in the rat-race.

Amit Mathur, Sindri (Bihar)

A dangerous trend

Mahesh Jethmalani in *Fall from grace* (4–10 November) brings into focus the many conflicts that afflict India. It is a matter of concern for every secular-minded Indian to see the rapid rise of Hindu fundamentalism in the country. The BJP has tarnished the national image. L.K. Advani claims that Ram is a national hero to be revered by all Indians. In that case, every Indian, regardless of religious beliefs, should be allowed to visit temples. Preach what you practise and practise what you believe.

Lakshman Sharma, Rourkela (Orissa)

Merit or caste?

Jaya Jaitley (*In defence of Mandal*, 28 October—3 November) has missed the central point of the controversy. The issue is whether positions of public importance should be occupied by people on the basis of merit or caste. The Mandal findings serve to glorify the caste system. This is ridiculous to say the least.

Ashish Dholakia, New Delhi



Rajiv Gandhi on his Sadbhavna Yatra: riding a popular wave

Back to the people

Rajiv Gandhi's Sadbhavna Yatra has drawn large crowds (*Wave after wave*, 21–27 October). Which means that the Congress president is still a popular figure. There is a noticeable shift to the Congress side, but as always, the political situation remains the same.

A. Jacob Sahayam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)

Courting trouble

The special report on Ayodhya (*The battle of Ayodhya*, 11–17 November) brought out the inefficiency of the Centre in tackling the Ram Janmabhoomi / Babri Masjid issue. It was a wrong decision on the part of the government to settle the issue through the courts. It is doubtful that the verdict will be acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims.

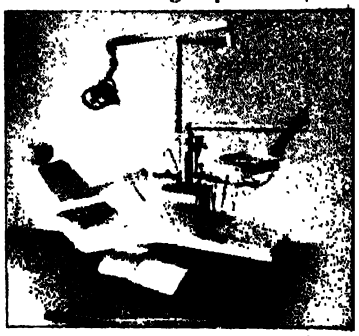
The best way to solve the problem is by convincing all parties to agree to an amendment of the Constitution. The amendment would give the government full rights to demolish the *mandir/masjid*. Communal harmony would thus be promoted.

S. Hussain, Dibrugarh (Assam)

No imports, please

The majority of Indian dentists cannot afford to use imported dental equipment (*Tooth ache?*, 9–15 September). In Calcutta, which is home to the first dental college in the country, no private practitioner has imported equipment of recent vintage. The imported equipment that is generally available are over ten years old or brought back by dentists returning from abroad.

Private dental colleges can use imported equipment as the Indian government allows them duty-free imports. Neither do they pay customs duty or central sales tax. Three years ago, 110 per cent customs duty was payable on such imports and 10 per cent central sales tax was levied. The cost of the equipment comes to around Rs 1.5 lakh. One can imagine the amount of money saved as a result of the exemption. Institutions using imported



Indigenous dental equipment

equipment can also charge higher capitation fees. All imports of dental instruments by colleges and institutions are routed through three traders who are the sole selling agents of foreign manufacturers. Two of the three are dental surgeons and are members of various dental associations. As a result, they are in a position to influence government decisions.

The IDA president's claim that 5,600 sets will be needed in a span of five years is a bit of an exaggeration. Any demand created can be met by domestic producers. At present, the country's entire demand is met by local manufacturers. It is wrong to say that Indian manufacturers can meet only 50 per cent of the requirement.

S.C. Vora, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Paramilitary forces guarding the Babri Masjid: a threatened bastion



The article (*Cesspools*, 14-20 October) highlighting the alleged harassment/corruption at Sahar Airport, Bombay, is a totally biased and unjustifiable verdict, based on vague and factually incorrect assumptions and perceptions. Upon grievances of a few passengers, a sweeping judgement has been pronounced on the entire Sahar Customs. The article laments that Hasmukh Shah had to pay duty on a VCP little realising that it does not get full exemption and he should instead have opted for the Red Channel. On Sahar's busy days a maximum of ten flights arrive in the space of two hours and not 30/40 as claimed. Only a few hundreds and not thousands of passengers arrive at a time in a module. The three X-ray machines, in both the modules at the Green Channel, do not cater to Red Channel passengers, whose baggage is checked from other machines. Perhaps, better home work and appreciation of the rules were needed while writing such an article. It totally ignores the positive achievements of the Sahar Customs during the previous six months, appreciated by the normal/average passenger - our top priority and not the elite ones. Our thrust area covers passenger facilitation and tightening of controls tempered with courtesy and firmness and accordingly the following steps have been initiated

Passenger facilitation

- The width of the Green Channel, in both the modules, has been doubled with a view to avoiding congestion and promote faster clearance of passengers availing Green Channel facility.
- Installation of three X-ray machines at the Green Channel, in both the modules, which takes hardly a minute per passenger for screening their baggage, ensuring thereby faster clearance. In rush hours, even X-ray is dispensed with at the discretion of the assistant collector on duty. Baggage is opened only on suspicion after X-raying.
- Introduction of two special NRI counters in each modules for providing all customs facilities to the NRIs under a single window concept ensuring their expeditious clearance.
- Placement of only gazetted officers in the Green Channel, thereby raising the level of supervision.
- Diversion of passengers at peak hours to other modules is resorted to for reducing the waiting time of the passengers and ensuring their expeditious clearance.
- The staff is being repeatedly advised to be extra courteous and prompt in clearing the ladies, the old and children.

Tightening of controls

- Visitors in the customs enclosure are not allowed. Normal customs facilitation is offered to all passengers. No special facilitation to anybody.

Strengthening of vigilance and anti-corruption measures at Sahar Airport

- Prompt action is being taken against all erring officers. Shifting to non-sensitive posts and even out of the airport is being done, thereby inculcating a sense of discipline/accountability amongst the staff.
- A complaint box is also placed in the arrival hall, where aggrieved passengers can drop their complaints.
- A notice board is placed before the office of the assistant collector, advising the passengers having grievances to contact him.

We have not been silent on corruption/vigilance and are taking prompt steps when facts come to our notice.

Customs' version



Much improved situation in the customs?

Rise in revenue and seizures

With the tightening of control and strengthening of anti-smuggling machinery, baggage revenue, during the current financial year upto September '90, touched Rs 68.50 crores against Rs 47.37 crores for the similar period in 1989, a hike of Rs 11.30 crores, i.e. 23.5 per cent despite relaxation in the baggage rules and arrival of over 1,15,000 displaced Indians from Amman who availed Green Channel facilities. Similarly seizures between April-September 1990 have touched Rs 64.03 crores against Rs 43.80 crores for the same period in 1989, a hike of Rs 20.23 crores, i.e. 46.18 per cent.

Disposal of confiscated goods

From July 1990 onwards, a special drive for disposal of confiscated goods from the airport is on and over 20,000 packages have been disposed of—a record feat.

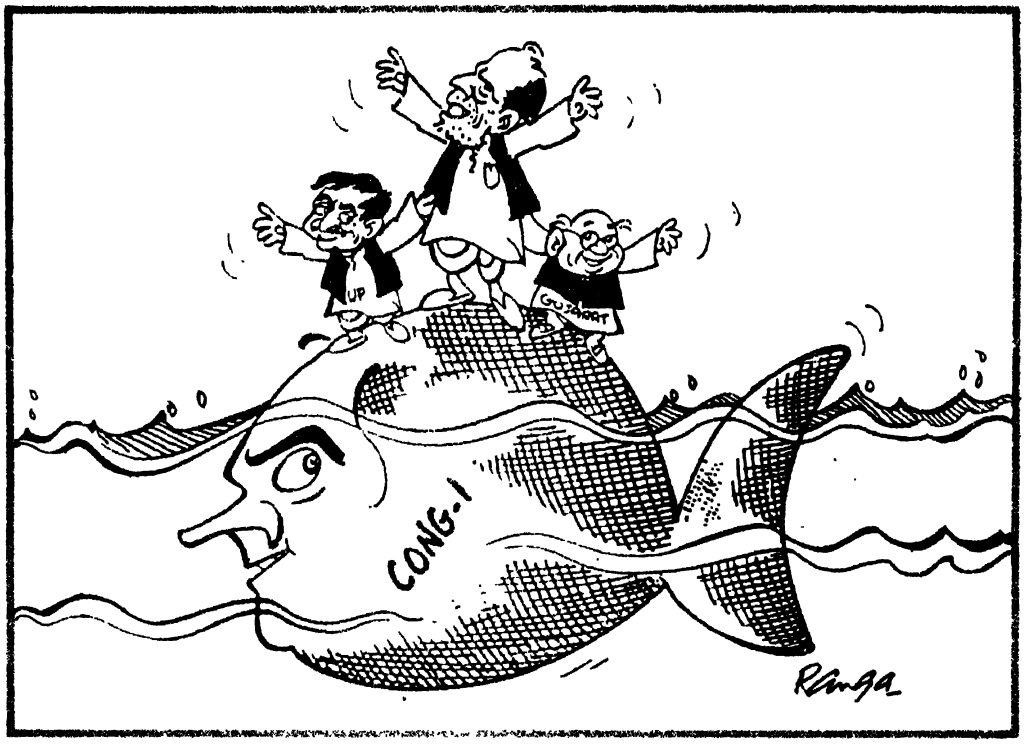
Appreciation from the public

We are receiving several letters from the user public appreciating the good conduct of our officers. Even the press has appreciated visible improvements in our functioning. The Sahar Customs rose to the occasion and ensured fast and courteous clearance of over 1,15,000 passengers arriving from Amman. Not a single complaint against Sahar Customs was reported. Rather, they appreciated our courteous behaviour. It was not a mean achievement.

Admittedly, we are extra-harsh to the smuggling type passengers, i.e. carriers. Visit/special facility requests are denied. Accountability is enforced at all levels. A new responsive and vibrant work culture is emerging at Sahar Customs. This policy is paying rich dividends in the shape of faster passenger clearance and also sharp rise in the baggage revenue/seizures. In the process, vested interests are getting hurt and feeling disturbed.

Although, I do not intend to defend the indefensible, the article should have been fair, balanced and a true reflection of correct facts. Our officers are also human beings, with same sentiments like others. It is not fair to condemn the entire Sahar Customs, which is determined to ensure better and faster passenger facilitation. Enforcement of baggage rules is their duty and they can't be condemned for doing their duty.

K.P. Singh, collector of customs, Sahar Airport, Bombay (Maharashtra)





■ There are many "firsts" to the credit of Mr. Chandra Shekhar. Now there is one more: the first puppet Prime Minister of India. Our basic quarrel is not with puppets but the puppeteer—Rajiv Gandhi

JAIPAL REDDY, *Janata Dal spokesman*

■ When Chandra Shekhar offered me the prime ministership, I told him I would be mad to accept it.

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister*

■ We hope it will not be a three-month wonder.

K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN, *former Union surface transport minister, on the Chandra Shekhar government*

■ Before the sapling planted could grow into a full tree, it was axed.

V.P. SINGH, *former Prime Minister, on the fall of the National Front regime*

■ Five hundred years hence people will worship V.P. Singh and me.

RAM VILAS PASWAN, *former Union labour minister*

■ I consider dying as a tiger better than living like a rat. So I appreciate V.P. Singh's courage of conviction.

M. KARUNANIDHI, *Tamil Nadu chief minister*

■ I only know how to leave posts, not how to get them.

OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA, *Janata Dal(S) general secretary*

■ I want this to be loud and clear: that I would employ strictest possible measures to improve tax collections and shall spare nobody.

YASHWANT SINHA, *Union finance minister*

■ I had said that one shouldn't change one's horses mid-stream. But when the horse loses breath and starts sinking, doesn't the rider save himself?

DEVI LAL, *deputy prime minister, on his decision to side with Chandra Shekhar*

■ Pooja was always tagging along with me. We were often laughed at as the Jawaharlal Nehru-Indira Gandhi team.

MAHESH BHATT, *filmmaker, on his relationship with his daughter, Pooja*

■ I'm having such a laugh at myself. I've never acted in my life. I don't even know what made me do it. But what the hell, why not!

ASHWINI NACHAPPA, *athlete, on her acting in a film*



VINOD MEHTA

Rogue's gallery?

Shekhar's Cabinet comprises a bunch of lightweight defectors



Families when a child is born,
Want it to be intelligent
I, through intelligence,
Having wrecked my whole life,
Only hope the baby will prove
Ignorant and stupid.
Then he will crown a tranquil life
By becoming a Cabinet Minister.
--Su Tung-P'o (AD 1036-1101)

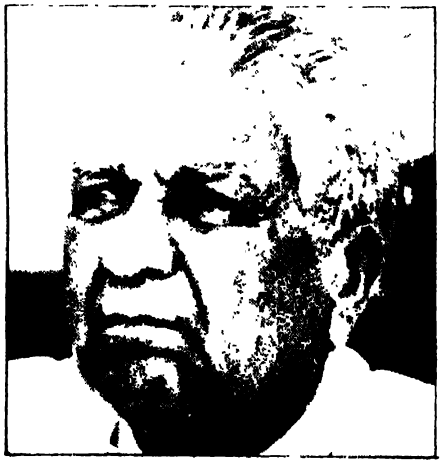
I wonder if my erudite neighbour in this magazine, who in the past few weeks has been feasting himself on self-congratulation, is familiar with these lines from an obscure Chinese poet reflecting on the birth of his son? Knowing Mani Shankar Aiyar's mental amplitude, the possibility cannot be ruled out. Six weeks ago, I suspect, he would have enthusiastically endorsed the sentiments of the Chinese poet, but today? It would be presumptuous on my part to speculate on the subject of M.S. Aiyar's column in the current issue, but I doubt very much if his fine mind and eloquent pen have been exercised to note the calibre and character of the Chandra Shekhar Cabinet.

Leaderwriters, while reminding us of the Prime Minister's "compulsions", have generally concluded that it is "lacklustre". That surely is the understatement of the year; Rogue's Gallery would be a better description. After all, the most senior and experienced member of the Cabinet is none other than the Emergency-fame V.C. Shukla, who, in the past five years and more, when not switching parties, has been busy playing havoc with Indian sport. Then we have the Prime Minister's prize catch, communication minister Dr Sanjay Singh, a man against whom a murder charge is pending, and who was so overcome by the unexpected elevation in rank that he lost the ability for coherent speech in front of television cameras. The inclusion of Maneka Gandhi who gets independent charge and whose sole contribution to the conduct of public affairs has been bad manners and a foul tongue, means that our front pages will never be dull or deprived of libel writs. In such a Cabinet it is entirely appropriate that Dr Subramanium Swamy should get law and justice and Devi Lal, tourism. Mr Chandra Shekhar, unlike his predecessor, is not a poet (unless the promptings of the muse are tucked away under his pillow) but no one can accuse him of not having a sense of the sardonic.

Congress media luminaries—and their number is legion—will jump up and say: what options did a Prime Minister with a 50 strong (the definitive figure is a matter of furious debate) team have? He had to choose from the talent available to him. Accordingly, this is the first occasion since 1952 that a Prime Minister is carrying three portfolios—home, defence, information and broadcasting—that invariably require independent charge.

Point taken, but with one caveat. Despite Mr Chandra Shekhar's formidable and well-tested manipulative skills, he has not been able to entice away even one senior Janata Dal central minister with the lure of office. (Considerable time and energy was spent in wooing I.K. Gujral and Ajit Singh, without success.) Therefore, this is not quite a Cabinet of defectors, as a Cabinet of lightweight defectors who either held no office in the previous dispensation or were minor players in the V.P. Singh formation.

Thus, it is our dubious privilege to be governed not by a minority but a minuscule government made up of nonentities. Mani Shankar Aiyar and his "I told you so" friends, who with rare prescience predicted the early demise of the V.P. Singh-led National Front because it was being pulled in opposite directions by two allies preferring to stay outside, are deafeningly silent about the durability of a government that has 10 per cent membership in the Lok Sabha. Readers will note that I have not invoked moral or legal electoral legitimacy as worthwhile



Tourism minister **Devi Lal** is going to remain permanently estranged. He has so many sons and followers that to accommodate all would be impossible



The most senior and experienced member of the Cabinet is **V.C. Shukla,** who when not switching parties has been playing havoc with Indian sport

concerns because these days we are all "grown men", especially Mani Shankar Aiyar who could conceivably fill one whole issue of SUNDAY—with a few French *bon mots* and Hindi lyrics thrown in—having fun with such trifling issues. Yet, 11 months ago, V.P Singh had to bear the full brunt of lofty Congress indignation about a government conceived in sin and delivered in treachery. If the BJP and communist support for the departing dispensation was 'immoral', how about Congress assistance for Janata Dal (S) or, more properly, Janata Dal (R)—R standing for Rajiv?

One possible justification could be the need-of-the-hour thesis. Since the received wisdom precluded general elections, the Congress patriotically responded to the President's call as it shared Mr Venkataraman's resolve to avoid an immediate poll. It is a good alibi, but fatally flawed. If Rajiv Gandhi and his party were so agitated about the state of the nation, they should have joined hands with Chandra Shekhar and become partners in a coalition. We would then have got a stable grouping from which an acceptable and experienced team of ministers could have emerged. Instead, what the Congress has gifted the nation for purely selfish and short-term considerations is a government with neither the will nor the capacity to govern at a time when by common consensus, the country is on the precipice of anarchy.

Unfortunately, the best laid plans of mice and men can go awry. In the original scenario, Rajiv was going to decide the date of the next general election. Six, nine, 12 or 18 months relief depended on the Congress President's mood and perception of party preparedness to do battle. Alas, the 'internal contradictions' (where have we heard the phrase before?) in the Janata Dal (S) are likely to upset Rajiv's time-table.

The internal contradicter, of course, is none other than our champion from Haryana Mr Chandra Shekhar may be the Prime Minister for the record, but real power lies in the hands of Devi Lal who believes with ferocious conviction that he single-handedly made the MP from Ballia Prime Minister, just as he fashioned the brief glory of the MP from Fatehpur. Or, at least, that is the way the Tau perceived it to be before the Cabinet was announced. Now that it has, all hell has broken loose. With only four berths for Devi Lal's men, out of which there has already been one resignation, Chandra Shekhar has made himself a new and reckless enemy.

It is not clear what and how much the deputy PM expected. Clearly what has hurt him is numbers, and also the manner in which he was excluded from the selection process. Understandably, the Tau feels both betrayed and insulted, slights which his followers emphasise have been delivered so early in the recently forged relationship. These followers will doubtless encourage Devi Lal to seek full and proper revenge regardless of the goodies dished out in the promised second expansion. There has also been a neat reversal of roles in the status of the feuding sons. Chautala is currently ensconced with the Prime Minister, while Ranjit Singh has emerged as key advisor to his father and principal strategist in the forthcoming Chandra Shekhar-Devi Lal war.

Another disgruntled chieftan is marking time in Lucknow. If there is one man Shekhar is petrified of, it is Mulayam Singh Yadav. The day before the Cabinet was announced, the PM was closeted in Gujarat Bhavan with Chimanbhai, Chautala and Yashwant Sinha, awaiting the arrival of Yadav. He failed to show up at the appointed hour. Trunk and lightning calls ensued, but they were of no avail as the CM was absconding. Absolute panic prevailed over the next two hours. Had he gone over to the other camp? Was he up to some trick? Mulayam Singh Yadav turned up eventually apologising for the delay due to aircraft problems. However, the consternation his delay caused reflects how critical the UP chief minister is to Chandra Shekhar's continued survival.

Between the two dangermen, Devi Lal and Mulayam Singh Yadav, it is the Tau who is likely to turn on the Prime Minister first. He has so many close aides, so many sons, so many followers that to accomodate them all would be impossible. He is, therefore, going to remain permanently estranged. When and how he publicly unfurls the banner of revolt is difficult to forecast, but it won't take long for the bickering to reach Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Since these days no politician, media pundit or taxi driver travels without his very own crystal ball and his own calendar circling the longevity of the present regime, here is mine. Devi Lal will resign before the end of the year, the Janata Dal (S) will split soon after, and Mr Chandra Shekhar will lose his majority by February or March 1991. Remember: You read it here first! ●



Sanjay Singh, the Prime Minister's prize catch, is a man against whom a murder charge is pending



Maneka Gandhi's sole contribution to the conduct of public affairs has been bad manners and a foul tongue



In such a Cabinet it is entirely appropriate that **Dr Subramaniam Swamy** should get law and justice

"Chandra Shekhar can

Former Prime Minister V.P. Singh on the Chandra Shekhar government, the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue, the BJP and more

V.P. Singh is back at 1 Teen Murti Marg, the residence he occupied when he was defence minister under Rajiv Gandhi. This is also the house from where he launched the Jan Morcha and his fight against the Congress. He still holds evening darshans but the crowds have thinned perceptibly. "I will talk frankly about my policies, but you'll get little from me about the behind-the-scene moves," the Raja cautioned before he began this interview. Indeed it was difficult to get V.P. Singh talking on who were responsible for the downfall of the National Front government. Excerpts:

SUNDAY: Which of the two was a greater hindrance to the smooth functioning of your government—Devi Lal or the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP).

V.P. Singh: It will not be fair for me to comment on a particular party or on someone who has worked closely with me.

Q: What was your experience with the BJP and the Congress(I), both of which contributed to the downfall of your government?

A: There are much larger issues before the country. That is where we are addressing ourselves. There are, of course, the issues of Kashmir, Punjab, Assam and Ram Janmabhoomi and also the changes that are happening in the world. If we do not respond to the fast-changing economic and political environment, India will suffer. Therefore, we need to think about these issues and rise above partisan matters. So, instead of playing games we should help the country to pull out of these problems. It is not so much this party or that party but the love of the country which should come first.

So, when the Prime Minister came to see me after the swearing-in, I told him that he will always have my cooperation and I will not be playing any games.

If you look at the newspapers you will see we are getting lost in smaller matters and this makes me very sad. There are also other challenges: like, what will be the shape of the Indian state? That is a very basic question that has cropped up. So, in all this casualness, the main issues get left behind.

Then, will religion be above the state? Should religion and politics be mixed? Should religious polarisation be allowed? The country's emotional and cultural unity is at stake today. The third important issue is that of equity. There are economic and social disparities and they have persisted despite 43 years of Independence. I am not taking any dogmatic stance but what is more important is to recognise and to put on the national agenda that there is an inequitous social and economic situation. Almost half a century has passed and we have not made any effort to solve this problem. If we do not address ourselves to it then we will be inviting a greater danger to the unity and integrity of the country and it will express itself in a more violent form than ever before.

I have always tried to address myself to these problems and as a family, everybody should have a share and the elder brother always makes sacrifices for the younger brother.

Q Why do you think you lost the support of the people? On the day you lost the confidence motion, crackers were burst...

A This does not bother me. I know what I was doing was right. I was prepared to make sacrifices...



break the Congress"

Q: Was it a happy relationship with the BJP?
A: I think you cannot take the BJP alone because it came along the way. You have to go back to what was the thinking behind the formation of the National Front. I had clearly stated that since Independence, the Congress party was the largest political organisation. Maybe, after Independence a developing country needed stability in the form of the Congress and it was after all, a product of the freedom movement.

But over the years, it became necessary for other political alternatives to emerge so that people would have some choice. People did not want a bonded democracy. You might remember that three years ago in December 1987, I had said that there was a need for a second centrist party. But if there is no other option available then people will stick to the Congress even if they do not want to.

And forming this second political option was more important than the formation or a change of government. In December, therefore, I had spelt out the need for the centrist parties to merge together and form an alliance with regional parties. That was the federative character of the National Front which also allowed the regional parties to play a useful role at the national level.

Then, to dislodge the Congress there was need of seat adjustments. Not alliance. I never said we will enter into an alliance with the BJP and you might recall I have never appeared on their platforms during the election campaign. So it was the right course.

If you remember that after the election I had said there will come a period of disequilibrium and there will be a recrystallisation of forces. What had happened was that the Congress had cracked My very sentence after the elections was: a few governments might be put in the melting pot and the country should have the courage because the central government is not the country.

This process of recrystallisation has come about now and I think it is not a one-time act. It will continue for some time and maybe it will take two years or more for a stable equilibrium to emerge. But we should not lose heart as a nation because something good for democracy is happening. The so-called stability of the Congress had become a dead and counter productive stability. The five years of a stable Congress government was a disappointment for the people.



Q: On the day you lost majority in Parliament, you gave a call for the formation of a national government but clearly branded the BJP as a communal party. Weren't their intentions clear to you from the very beginning?
A: We had questioned the BJP at the time of the formulation of the National Front manifesto itself. Much before the seat adjustments. We had asked them: 'What would be your position on Ram Janmabhoomi?' They said it is not an election issue for us. We lend moral support but we are not involved in the movement of the VHP. And they maintained that position during the elections and thereafter. The BJP did not raise the Ram Janmabhoomi issue during their poll campaign.

At no stage had the BJP told us that this (the Ram Janmabhoomi) was their own movement or that support to the government was dependent on this issue or even that this was above the court. All this was a sudden development, a radical shift from the stand taken by the BJP in the past. This led to a parting of ways.

Q: Did you misunderstand the intentions of the BJP? Did you feel cheated by them?
A: I never use derogatory words but I

feel that there was a major shift of stance by the BJP. We had made ourselves clear that while the BJP may give us support from outside we will not deviate from our position. That this matter (Ram Janmabhoomi) could be sorted out either through an amicable settlement or through the court.

The posers before us were whether religion was above the state? Will we concede that we were laying the foundations of a theocratic state? Can we give legitimacy to religious polarisation? If that was true than how do we hold people together who belong to so many religions?

The *rath yatra* was embarked upon obviously with elections in mind and now Advaniji has practically said it was a political campaign. So there were much bigger issues than merely *mandir* and *masjid*. The foundation of the whole state of India was in question and therefore we took a conscious decision that between this choice and maintaining the government, we will stick to the broader principles. I had said so many times that if it came to upholding a democratic norm and a government we will always uphold democracy and we had to prove ourselves when faced with such a situation. And by this sacrifice I think we have earned something for the country. Today you can go anywhere and see that India has credibility only because we are a secular nation.

Q: The question that many people are asking is: why did you allow the BJP's *rath yatra* in the first place?
A: They never said earlier that they were getting involved in it. The *rath yatra* was a sudden decision and there was no prior information about it.

You will remember that at that time I had called a meeting of religious leaders and another of the National Integration Council (NIC). In fact, at that time there was pressure from the NIC so that the BJP attends the all-party meeting. Everyone wants to be wiser afterwards but you see the trend that was developing. That the BJP did not attend the NIC was recorded by all the parties who may be pointing fingers at us today. So, while there were efforts going on for taking out the *rath yatra*, at the same time there were efforts to involve the BJP and to try and find a solution. And there were well-meaning people from both sides.

Q: Later, there were allegations about some double-dealing on the issue. What really happened?
A: The point was that all along there was hope of a solution. We felt that the various people involved in the negotiations would succeed in persuading the BJP hardliners. A lot of time was spent on finding a solution; otherwise the matter would have blown up right at the beginning. When you find that the country is on the verge of a bloodbath, isn't it sagacious to find a solution?

People are forgetting dates today. People are choosy about facts. All these efforts were going on simultaneously and we hoped that the final talks would take place in Delhi. But finally, the hardliners took over and they never gave up the position that this issue was beyond the courts and that they would build the temple in the disputed area.

Q: Is it that once the BJP started the campaign, it could not give it up midway?
A: Whatever be their compulsions, it was a position which we could not reconcile to. And then, the *rath yatra* was passing through BJP-ruled states— Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, except for a brief run in Gujarat. Finally we said Advani would be coming to Delhi and let us have a 'yes' or 'no' from him because it should not be said later that we did not make any effort.



Q Will the Mandal recommendations be implemented now that you are no longer in power?

A All state governments will have to accept these recommendations. Already, Maharashtra and UP have done it. The others will have to do it too

Q Why did you allow L.K. Advani's *rath yatra?* You could have stopped it at the beginning

A We were not even aware of the BJP's programme. Moreover, we were always hopeful that we would be able to persuade Advani to call it off during his break in Delhi. But unfortunately, the BJP hardliners took over

Q: What was the package you offered to the BJP?
A: Basically, I said you can start work in the undisputed area but I am not agreeable to any activity within the disputed place. And I said I will have a special bench which will do no other work but this. After all, the temple cannot be built overnight but will take at least 5-6 years and if the bench declares the structure a mosque then it is over. And if it is declared the Ram Janmabhoomi then you could take it but you wait for the court judgement. But we could not concede to anything like breaking the mosque or violating the court injunction. But they were not agreeable to all this.

Q: At what stage did you tell L.K. Advani that you were prepared to go along with him for the *kar seva*? This is what he had said in Parliament...
A: I said the same thing in the House also and I will say it again: that if they accept the court judgement and don't go into the disputed area there was no problem. It is in that context I had said it. And no Muslim has come even today to say that they are against the temple in Ayodhya.

Q: Were there pressures from within the Cabinet not to arrest Advani because with the decision, the fall of the government was imminent?





A: You have to take a decision based on a principle. After all, for me this was nothing new. In the past I had resigned as chief minister of UP and there was no question of feeling then. I was also shifted from the finance ministry and when I decided to resign as defence minister there was no sentimentality about it. The issues at stake this time were clearly bigger than the country we were running.

Q: You say the BJP's was actually a political *yatra* meant to gain political mileage. Have they achieved that?
A: One person came to meet me from Hardwar. He said he was a devout Hindu, he bathes in the Ganges every day but how can he accept all this from the BJP? They were, he said, in power in 1979 and before that and have run state governments also. At that time they conveniently forgot history, that Babar had come and demolished the temple. When they are out of power, when it suits them, they start raising the issue.

Q: So, do you think the BJP will be isolated in the next general elections? Or will they, as they claim, be able to increase their strength in Parliament?
A: I have faith in the people of India. Their emotions can be aroused on certain issues but when it finally comes to voting they have a lot of common sense.

I don't think the BJP can increase its strength because in many states like Himachal, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh there is no possibility of the party increasing its seats. The BJP can be a loser in the battle.

Q: In north India, will the fight really be between the BJP and the Janata Dal? The Janata Dal seems to have won over the Muslims and the backward classes...
A: It can also be between the Janata Dal and the Congress because what the BJP does not realise is that many of the issues they are counting on may not get them votes. In Bihar, 15 of the BJP MLAs walked out. This is virtually a split in the party in Bihar. You see the issues that we have raised will also force a recrystallisation in the BJP as well as in the Congress. If not among the known leaders, at least at the base level. At the base level there will be a realignment of forces though maybe not of the kind that the press is speculating about.

Q: After the BJP withdrew support, did some of your ministers, including Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan, demand that you should step down immediately and not wait for the confidence vote in Parliament?
A: Except for one or two, a majority of them wanted the issue to be taken before Parliament.

Q: Who are these one or two members?
A: I should not name them. Only one member of the Cabinet did not want to wait till Parliament was convened. Also, Bommai had held a meeting of senior leaders. Everyone felt that I should not put in my resignation.

It was never a question of prolonging the life of the government. If that was the case, then we could always have made a compromise with the BJP. It was a question of projecting the issue and so the political line taken by the party was that we have to project the issue, not prolong the government.

Even before going to the President, I asked whether I should put in my papers immediately. I was given clear instructions not to do so. The President also said the test of majority should be on the floor of the House. This was also the line of the left parties and the National Front and I carried out their directive. In fact, even in between, I gave a letter to Bommai saying that he may do what he wanted to

Q: Your idea was to start a national debate on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. Have you succeeded in doing that?
A: Yes, I think so. It has got a place in people's mind.

Q: Even when your government was formed, there were complaints from among a section of the Janata Dal that you had unfairly edged out Chandra Shekhar. Do you think he was plotting to overthrow you from then on?
A: Till recently he was in my party and it does not behove me to make personal remarks.

Q: Was there, according to you, any real evidence about the role of moneybags in sponsoring Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister?
A: What better evidence can you get than from their own camp—that is from Bhagey Govardhan. He had said that he was offered Rs 50 lakhs and a berth in the ministry and yet he did not go. Of course, later he moved over.

I have been trying to break the nexus between businessmen and politicians but unfortunately, I think we are going to see evidence of it more and more now. Though money has been contributed for election campaigns earlier, I don't remember it

being used to bribe MPs to oust a Prime Minister.

Q: What about the role of the Reliance Industries?

A: I see this as a great danger to Indian democracy and I fear it will grow. I will not take names but broadly speaking, there will be more and more interference from big business houses in politics now. First, they used to be interested only in their own licences and quotas; then they started exerting influence over politicians; now they have even started meddling in the formation of the government itself.

I have always said that the crown of Delhi is not in Delhi but in the treasure chests in Bombay and Calcutta. You see when there are big investments—thousands and thousands of crores—even a small variation of a rule can affect an industrialist by hundreds of crores. When the stakes are so high they have a compulsion to see that a government is favourable to them.

Q: What in your opinion are the drawbacks of the present government?

A: The major drawback is, of course, its dependency on the Congress and the relationship is so skewed that on one side is the government which barely has the strength of quorum while on the other side the support is four times larger. Politically it is an incongruous situation. Chandra Shekhar will certainly have to take the concurrence of the Congress on all major political and policy decisions.

Q: How will this be different from your government? After all, you too took the support of the BJP...

A: But we were the largest party. The relationship was entirely different because we had 144 seats. If you add the left we were about 200. And they were below 100. So it was a natural alliance while this one is an unnatural, odd one. Had the Congress formed the government and they were supporting it, they would have the mandate, the endorsement of the people.

The present government is being run by a splinter group of the Janata Dal which calls itself the Janata Dal (S). It did not exist and does not have the support or the mandate of the people. And if for any reason they had parted company with us, it would have been better if they had supported the Congress.

Q: Why didn't Rajiv Gandhi agree to form a government?

A: I said this in the House also—that what has happened is not fair to the country. I think either the Congress(I) does not have the guts to take responsibility or they want to enjoy power without accountability which is not fair to the country. And it is setting a dangerous precedent. On all accounts it does not enhance the image of the party.

Q: So, what according to you is the gameplan of the Congress?

A: Their plan is very simple and can be stated in one sentence. a successful Chandra Shekhar means oblivion for Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress will do everything to discredit Chandra Shekhar.

Q: Does Chandra Shekhar have the ability to break the Congress?

A: Yes, Chandra Shekhar can break the Congress. If this government succeedes, then certainly it is not in the interest of Rajiv Gandhi. It will hurt him more. As far as Chandra Shekhar is concerned, nobody wants to be unsuccessful and unhappy and he will try his best to succeed. At the same time he knows any signs of success will be an invitation for the Congress to pull the rug away. So he will try and hedge himself and also try to create another power centre in the Congress and try to split the party.

Or alternatively, if he had reconciled himself totally to the Congress, then he can join the Congress. But already there are rumblings of discontent within the Janata Dal (S). I am told that on the day of the swearing-in some dissident MPs in the Chandra Shekhar camp met at Chand Ram's place. So it has all begun.

Q:What is the likely scenario in the next few months? What will the government do if the Congress(I) calls for elections within six months?

A: Actually, all this is speculation. But the basic thing is that up to a certain level they have the same interests. But after a point they have contradictory interests. The longevity of the government depends upon the will of Rajiv Gandhi who is the real owner of this government.

Q: Why do you think Chandra Shekhar delayed forming the Cabinet?

A: There were internal problems. For 11 days the Prime Minister was unable to form his team and he even went to Parliament without a Cabinet. This is only due to internal contradictions and problems.

Q: Did your government make any progress on the Bofors investigations in the past 11 months? Why haven't the papers been laid before Parliament?

A: Our stand has been consistent; that we will pursue the investigations and the law will run its course. We had a big success because on the same papers which Rajiv Gandhi had we could freeze the accounts. That exposes the fact that the previous government de-

Q What is the likely scenario in the next few months? How long will this government last?

A If this government succeeds, it will be against the interests of Rajiv Gandhi... The life of the government depends upon the will of Rajiv Gandhi. He is the real owner of the government





liberately did not perform its duty on this case and the reasons for this are best known to them

Also we succeeded in the federal court regarding AE Services and orders are there in handing over the papers I am told (I don't know the exact details) even in the Marcos case the government was able to achieve such success

Q: Is it just that laundering money has become so legitimate that the Bofors investigations have not been clinched?
A: No, no The papers will be handed over to the CBI In such transactions the money is handed over to a chain of people There are several transfers to bury the money deep From there the lead will have to be investigated further In AE Services, I am told the persons behind the operation have not come forward before the court They want to conceal their identities while in the other companies which were in the Geneva court the person behind the accounts have sent their attorneys and are willing to come forward But the AE Services seems to be a very sensitive account and it was opened perhaps, a few weeks after Olof Palme met Rajiv Gandhi

Then the contract of AE Services with Bofors was that it would be signed before 30 March, 1986 So the theory about the winding-up charges and all that have been totally disproven with this The point was that we did not go very high-profile in publicising the Bofors investigations and that is why people got the impression that we did not do much Had we been high-profile, the defence would have taken this as political vendetta and so we allowed the law to run its own course

We also managed to extract the secret part of the Audit Bureau report of Sweden Why did the previous government not get it? Why didn't they blacklist Bofors?

Q: Now that the Congress(I) is running the government by proxy, do you think the Bofors investigations will go under the wraps again?
A: I think all the papers should be put in safe custody But the thing is that many people have given evidence in confidence during the investigations and if you make them public and expose them you are drying up your sources and the Swedish government will stop giving us information

Unless you achieve a certain amount of success your enemy can take counter measures Instead it can help the adversaries much more This is a sure way of killing the investigations

Q: To sum up, why do you think you lost the support of the people of India, who gave you such overwhelming support only a year ago? You must have heard about the sticker campaign against you and the bursting of crackers etc. on the night you lost the vote of confidence in Parliament?
A: This did not bother me because I knew what I was doing was right I knew when I was the finance minister that everybody was not going to be happy with my actions I knew I was annoying one section I knew I challenged the economic status When I was in the defence ministry and I ordered the enquiry into the HDW deal, I knew some people in government were going to be terribly angry with me It was a challenge for me and them Similarly, when I took positive actions on behalf of the weaker sections and the deprived I was clear I will be subjected to some sacrifices for the younger brother and if the inequities are not removed then they will express themselves in more violent forms



Q Did your government make any progress on the Bofors front?

A We had a big success. Because, with the same papers which Rajiv Gandhi had, we could freeze the accounts

Q: Has the issue of the Mandal report come to stay? How will this and successive governments grapple with the issue of reservations?
A: I tell you whatever may be said against me all state governments will have to accept these recommendations Already, Maharashtra and UP have done it The others will have to do it also So however cursed I may be the path that has now been opened will be accepted by most (state governments) And if I had not shown the path some day it would have been because the inequities are embedded deep in our system The inequitous power structure supports the inequitous social structure and *vice versa* To have an equitous social structure you have to have an equitous power structure

Q: Several times in the past you had said that you will not accept any office, but you rose to become the Prime Minister of the country. Will you accept this high office again?
A: I will not speculate on that At that time the consensus in our party and the two supporting parties was that we should assume office The other option was to allow the Congress to form the government which we had campaigned against

Q: What if such a situation arises again?
A: Why should I talk about that now? Let us wait and see what happens •

Interviewed by Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

TRIBES AND DIATRIBES

The infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals worries the natives of Tripura

In Tripura, the 839-km long international border with Bangladesh exists only in theory. Hundreds of people from both sides cross over every day and there are few official agencies to stop this traffic. The emigration from Bangladesh over the decades had caused serious ethnic strife in the past, culminating in the violence let loose by the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), a militant tribal outfit determined to drive out non-tribal settlers from Tripura. After the TNV laid down arms in 1988, following an understanding with the Centre, the interest of the tribals took a backseat in the state's politics for some time. But now the tribals are beginning to assert themselves once again.

There are fresh rumblings of discontent among them over the continuous flow of Bangladeshis into the state. The tribals today constitute barely 28.44 per cent of the state's population, which swelled from about 5,13,000 in 1941 to around 20,53,000 in 1981. At the time of Independence, the tribals comprised a little less than 50 per cent of the population. But since then they have consistently lost out in the numbers game.

The events in Ayodhya and the rest of northern India, have in a way made the Tripura tribals more apprehensive. The attempted *kar seva* in Ayodhya on 30 October and its backlash in Bangladesh, where temples were attacked, only made the fear of an exodus of Bengali Hindus real. In the first few days of violence in Dhaka, Chittagong and other towns across the border, a few Bangladeshi families did seek shelter in Tripura and the feeling was that a new diaspora had begun. Fortunately, however, the inflow petered off with the return of normalcy in Bangladesh and, according to the police, 12 out of the 35 families who had crossed over have already returned home. The others have stayed on with their relatives.

Though a crisis of sorts was averted, the fear persisted. And the tribals have renewed their campaign against the infiltration that takes place on a slow but steady pace everyday. If the state and the central governments fail to take preventive steps within the next few months, ethnic relations in this border state might be irreparably damaged, feel prominent tribal leaders.

The official figures of immigration from Bangladesh do not give a clear picture of the enormity of the problem. According to the police, the number of Bangladeshis driven back in 1987, 1988 and 1989 were 7,846, 3,542 and 3,843 respectively. And the number of Muslims crossing over was significantly higher than those of Hindus.

But both police and Border Security Force (BSF) sources admit that this may be a middling few who are detected and, moreover, there is no guarantee that they have not re-infiltrated. "The problem is that there



are no natural impediments to act as barriers," explains the state's director general of police, R.P. Sharma. Says a BSF officer: "They look the same, they speak the same language and it is almost impossible for BSF jawans, who come from outside the state, to differentiate between Indians and Bangladeshis."

Sudhir Mazumdar: rough ride ahead



Nripen Chakraborty: calculated move





ANISH GUPTA

A BSF jawan in a border village near Agartala: baffled, is he?

Today, the question of infiltration and the resultant uneasiness among the tribals have suddenly become a major political issue in Tripura and most political parties and ethnic formations are busy shaping their strategies to gain mileage out of it.

And if the problem snowballs—which in all likelihood it will—the ruling Congress(I)-TUJS (Tripura Upajati Juba Samity) will be at the receiving end. The coalition, which is already facing problems on several fronts and is tainted by charges of abusing power, hinges on a slender majority. The alliance has 34 seats in the 60-member state Assembly, of which the Congress(I) accounts for 26 and the TUJS, a party committed to championing tribal interests, 8. And since the state government is doing precious little to stop infiltrations, the TUJS is certainly on a sticky wicket.

And the one party which is making capital out of the TUJS discomfiture is the CPI(M), which has been virtually on the run since the Congress(I) staged an electoral coup in 1988 and unleashed a fierce onslaught against the Marxists. For nearly two years, the CPI(M) was down and almost out. But towards the middle of last month the party decided to play the tribal card and spring back into the reckoning.

On 20 November, former chief minister and CPI(M) central committee member Nripen Chakraborty wrote to Governor K.V. Raghunath Reddy demanding the introduction of the inner-line permit, which restricts the entry of non-tribals into notified areas. Chakraborty feels that by this move he will be able to shake the foundation of the ruling coalition by destabilising the TUJS, which is growing increasingly disillusioned about the government's inability to improve the lot of the tribals.

Chakraborty's detractors are, however, criticising the former chief minister for staging a volte-face. When in power, the CPI(M)-led Left Front had vehemently opposed the TUJS demands for restrictive measures in the tribal areas, saying that they smacked of secessionism. Now, the reversal of roles have led to switching of demands, and for expedient reasons largely.

The CPI(M)'s demand for the introduction of the inner-line permit and the growing disaffection among a section of the tribal population has placed the TUJS in a delicate situation. The Tribal Students Federation (TSF), which has about 50,000 members and is emerging as an opinion-moulder in tribal society, has already criticised the Congress-TUJS alliance for having failed on "all fronts" and has accused the government of being indifferent towards the threat posed by the influx of Bangladeshi nationals.

In the very first issue of *The Tripura Students' Voice*, the TSF mouthpiece that began publication from 1 November, the student body said: "It is a pity that the TUJS, which was at the forefront of the militant anti-foreigner agitation in the early Eighties in the state, did not issue any strongly-worded statement against infiltration. As a result, the illegal foreign nationals feel encouraged. It is strongly felt that if the state administration does not go ahead with necessary steps to prevent continued influx, the state of Tripura will be heading for another outbreak of ethnic violence sooner or later..."

TSF vice-president M.L. Koloi and the federation's finance secretary S.C. Jamatia told SUNDAY that the maximum infiltration was taking place at Kailasaha, Khowai, Sonamura and Belonia and accused the government of encouraging the inflow. "Corrupt ruling party leaders and MLAs are giving false certificates to the foreigners and passing them off as Indian citizens," said Koloi. The TSF is not yet certain about what measures were necessary to check the infiltration, but Koloi said that a central team must come down to assess the problem and take appropriate action. The students are so suspicious of the ruling coalition that they are even opposed to the idea of involving state government officials in any census work. The TSF fears that the real population figures would not emerge in that case.

The TNV supremo, Bijoy Kumar Hrankhawl, is a settled man today, holding a cosy job as the chairman of the Tripura Rehabilitation Plantation Corporation. For almost a decade, Hrankhawl was the most dreaded man in the state. He led a band of about 80 trained guerrillas who professedly fought for a 'free' Tripura and struck with deadly precision from their jungle hideouts. Apparently, in the end, the TNV entered into a secret understanding with

the Congress(I) well before the Assembly elections in 1988 and stepped up its murderous raids on the eve of the polls. The TNV virtually turned Tripura into a slaughterhouse, shook the people's confidence in the Left Front government and helped the Congress(I)-TUJS alliance come to power. A few months later, Hrankhawl signed an accord with the Rajiv Gandhi government at the Centre, bade farewell to arms and decided to back the coalition in the state on being promised that he and his associates would be rehabilitated.

But today Hrankhawl is not happy with the government he chose to support. "No action has been taken to correct the demographic imbalance and a deep-rooted misunderstanding may crop up again," fears the former militant. Both Hrankhawl and the TSF leaders point to the plight of 55,000 Chakma refugees who have fled the troubled Chittagong Hill Tracts and are housed in refugee camps near the India-Bangladesh border in South Tripura. "We the tribals have never demanded their resettlement in India, but the government has gone about freely settling the non-tribals from Bangladesh," laments Hrankhawl. In the 40 years since Independence, he says, never has the government—even for once—been firm on solving the problem. And the regime of chief minister Sudhir Ranjan Mazumdar has so far given no indication to suggest that it will act differently.

The state's deputy chief minister and senior TUJS leader Nagendra Jamatiya is also a worried man, but is reluctant to commit himself on the measures that he would like the government to take. The demands for inner-line permits are not without basis, he concedes, but chooses to take a broader view of the problem. "We need a national plan," he says, and emphasises that it is the economic backwardness of Bangladesh that is causing the migrations. The TUJS had ridden to power by promising the tribals a better deal, but the 31 months of the coalition has not improved matters. And Jamatiya, with the enormous task of settling 20,000 families of shifting cultivators on his hand, is in an unenviable position. "We have about one lakh landless tribals and about a lakh unemployed tribal youths, but we have no land and employment potentials are saturated," he admits.



Jamatiya: worried, but helpless



Hrankhawl: dreams die fast

What is significant is that while Jamatiya confesses that there is little land left where shifting cultivators can be settled—about 60 per cent of the land in the state falls under reserve forests and proposed reserve forests—Sriram Debbarma, a former general-secretary of the TSF and presently an executive member of the Autonomous District Council (ADC), says that tribals continue to suffer land-alienation even in the ADC areas where non-tribals are not entitled to acquire plots.

The TUJS is obviously caught in a dilemma between its allegiance to the tribal cause and having to share power with the Congress(I), which feels it can solve the infiltration and land-alienation problems by issuing identity cards to the people of the state. Radhika Ranjan Gupta, former chief minister and the present Pradesh Congress(I) Committee president, feels that the inner-line demand being raised by the CPI(M) is politically motivated and will create more problems than it would solve. "We often have to pass through more than one ADC area when going from one non-tribal area to another. The inner-line system would make movement impossible," he explains.

But Nripen Chakraborty views it differently. "Identity cards alone will not protect the ADC from encroachment by non-tribals. Actually, the Congress(I) is determined to change the very composition of the tribal compacts by letting the non-tribals settle there. At this rate, some of the present tribal areas will change their character altogether," says Chakraborty.

Politics in Tripura had always been sharply polarised between the CPI(M) and the Congress(I) with the former firmly entrenched among the tribals and the Bengalis going with the Congress(I). It is only recently that the purely tribal outfits like the TUJS, TNV and the TSF, preaching a pan-tribal philosophy, have emerged as important players in the state's politics. It is in the interest of both the Congress(I) and the CPI(M) to woo these forces, and they too are becoming increasingly aware of their ability to tilt the electoral balance. By highlighting the problem of infiltration and demanding the introduction of the inner-line permit, the CPI(M) has for the time being touched the right chord and may put the Congress(I) in trouble, depending on whether it manages to win over the tribals outside its fold.

The only deterrent that can nullify the CPI(M)'s efforts to forge an alliance with the smaller tribal parties is their rabid anti-communism. As long as they spurn the CPI(M)'s overtures, the Congress(I) will have little cause for worry. But there is no guarantee that the pawns will sacrifice themselves for the sake of the king. "We are not aligned to any political party, but would support any organisation that supports the TSF's demands," disclosed federation vice-president Koloi. And added: "If a resolution is passed, we may even join hands with the CPI(M)."

That certainly isn't good news for the Congress(I). •

Anish Gupta/Agartala

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Pride and prejudices



Where there is pride of birth there are seeds of prejudice against those born of different racial or religious parentage. If you subscribe to the slogan *Gaurav say kaho hum Hindu hain*—say with pride I am a Hindu—you undoubtedly also feel that those who are not Hindus have less to be proud of than you. The same applies to a Muslim saying "I am proud of being a Muslim", or a Sikh boasting of his Khalsa heritage. The fact that one's religion is almost entirely the one into which one was born and therefore an accident of birth should make us ponder whether or not such pride is misplaced and what its consequences are in a multi-racial, multi-religious society.

Prejudice of any kind racial, religious or linguistic does not become an educated person with pretension of being civilised. Nevertheless, it exists in most so-called civilised and advanced nations of the world. The classic example is the all-pervasive prejudice against Jews in Western Europe, the Middle East, the United States and Canada. Even in the erstwhile Soviet Union, committed to Marxism (Karl Marx himself being part-Jewish) which abominated racial prejudice,the Jews continued to be discriminated against. The defeat of fascism in Hitlerite Germany did not kill anti-Semitism. Nor in self-proclaimed tolerant France. In both countries, Jewish synagogues and cemetries were desecrated in recent months.

England has largely got over its anti-Semitism but even there many aristocratic families and the lunatic left-overs of Oswald Mosley make no secret of their dislike for Jews. In Canada and the United States they still have their exclusive country clubs and resorts which refuse admittance to Jews. This, despite the fact that many of the best brains, best musicians, artists, writers, industrialists an philanthropes are Jewish. Albert Einstein put it succinctly in his address to Sorbonne University in Paris: "If my theory of relativity is proved successful Germany will calim me as a German and France will declare that I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say I am a German and Germany will declare I am a Jew."

We have no anti-Jewish prejudice in India for the simple reason we have hardly any Jews. But we have plenty of prejudice when it comes to our relations with each other. And all based on stereotypes none of which are true. Most Hindus believe Muslims and Sikhs are fanatics and not to be relied on. Most Muslims and Sikhs believe that Hindus are cunning and shifty and should never be trusted. We have given offensive names to each other. Maharashtra,which has all our communities well-represented,has its own brand of nomenclature for the communities: a Muslim is a Mian Bhai, Parsee a Bawaji, Christian a Makapaon (bread-eater), Sikh a Surdee, Gujarati Hindus are Gujjoos, Marathas are Ghaatees. And so on.

"A prejudice is" as Ambrose Bierce in his *The Devil's Dictionary* describes "a vagrant opinion without visible means of support." It tries to find reasons to shore it but never finds any. "A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely re-arranging their prejudices," wrote William James.

With the resurgence of fundamentalism in our three major religious communities, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs (the Christians have so far remained uncontaminated),the problem of pride in one's faith and prejudice against others is no longer academic. We can see evidence of their resurgence in menacing proportions.

SHOOTER



Bajrang Dal: in a militant mood

Upholder of the law

A policeman found that his wife took a 100-rupee note from his coat's pocket. He at once caught her hand and said, "Dear, I am not only your husband but I am a policeman too! So, you are under arrest." Thereupon the wife said, "O.K. Then here is a 10-rupee note. Please accept it and settle the affair right now."

(Contributed by R.N. Lakhotia, New Delhi) ●

Does your office remind you of a match factory?



Fire !

The atmosphere fraught with endless possibilities. And the guilt sneaking up, knowing that the partitions and the ceiling can only fuel it.

It's amazing how many offices still work under threat.

The '90s office of Noorani Biswas & Kumar Associates, Bombay, fabricated with Gypboard



The world over, offices are being designed around the sophistication, durability, and economy of Gypsum board partitions and ceilings.

Because Gypsum boards are fire resistant, besides offering greater flexibility in workmanship, making it easy to make your office partitions and ceilings.

Gypsum boards are extremely lightweight, yet solid — of course, if you insist, you can have hollow Gypboard partitions too !

And Gypsum boards allow you to control the noise level in your office because they provide sound insulation.

It's superior, smooth and seamless finish lets you dress it up — with paint, wallpaper, even ceramic tiles !

To put the icing on the cake, you save 20% on Gypboard ceilings and 30% on partitions, over most other materials.

So make yours a Gypboard office. And go ahead—strike that match !

GYPBOARD
PARTITIONS AND CEILINGS

Isn't yours a Gypboard office — yet?

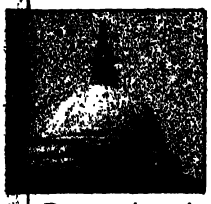
INDIA GYPSUM
India Gypsum Limited
815 Tolstoy House. 15-17 Tolstoy Marg
New Delhi 110 001
Madras :
PRODUCT TRAINING CENTRE
67 Spurtank Road, Chetput
Madras 600 031. Tel · 471970
Bombay :
96 Bajaj Bhawan, 9th Floor, Nariman Point
Bombay 400 021 Tel . 2021035, 2027852, 2021125
Calcutta :
Birla Building, 11th Floor
9/1 R N Mukherjee Road, Calcutta 700 001
Tel : 284168, 205550

R K SWAMY/IC/5946

INDER MALHOTRA

Farewell to arms

The two superpowers take a bold step towards disarmament



There can be no two opinions that the treaty for an across-the-board reduction in conventional arms signed by the heads of government of NATO and Warsaw Pact nations in Paris on 10 November—coinciding, incidentally, with Indira Gandhi's birth anniversary—is truly historic. Indeed, never before has mankind taken so sweeping and stupendous a leap towards disarmament and that, too, in peacetime, not at the end of a disastrous war.

Europe, the focus of two catastrophic World Wars during the first half of the twentieth century, has at last turned its back on the Cold War and heated contention that have been raging, with some ups and downs, since 1945. It has chosen instead peace and cooperation, as is underscored by the Paris Charter,the NATO-Warsaw summit's concluding document. But that is by no means all. What has happened also marks a major turning point in human thought.

Karl Marx is not the only prophet to have been discredited and disowned. The same fate has befallen Von Clausewitz, the author of the celebrated theory that war was "continuation of politics by other means". For, if the agreements reached in the French capital have any meaning at all, it is that the two superpowers and their allies have realised that war can no longer be an instrument of policy and politics. It is not merely nuclear war that is unthinkable; this is equally true of conventional wars, at any rate, in the European context.

The reason for this is not far to seek. On both sides of the previous divide in Europe, though not necessarily in many other parts of the world which remain underdeveloped, both the concentration and character of industries is such that anything like conventional hostilities on the scale of the Second World War would instantly unleash environmental disaster of a dimension that would put to shame a lakh of Bhopals. Such is the accuracy and lethality of sophisticated conventional weaponry that a few hits on nuclear power reactors, without any resort to nuclear missiles, would replicate Chernobyl all over Europe, with consequences too terrible to contemplate.

K. Subrahmanyam, the country's leading writer on strategy and defence, has drawn attention to another pertinent fact which Clausewitz and other thinkers of his time had not perhaps contemplated. It is the staggering increase in civilian casualties as the technology of war has improved and tactics of war have become increasingly indiscriminate. From one to 20 during the First World War, the



Mikhail Gorbachev: a visionary

ratio between civilian and military casualties shot up to 20 to one in Vietnam!

Gorbachev was the first statesman to come to terms with these rude realities of life. This indeed formed the basis of his New Thinking and eventually persuaded him, despite visible opposition at home, to accept an arrangement under which Eastern and Western Europe would have more or less equal conventional capability—forsaking the overwhelming Soviet superiority of the last four decades.

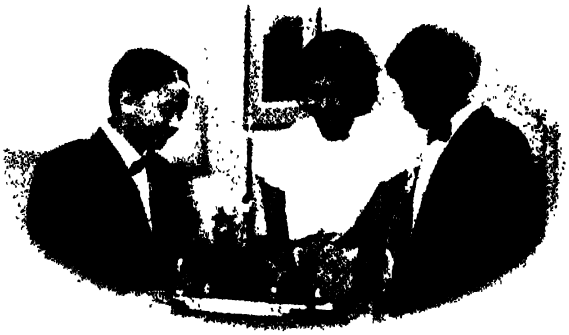
However, rare is a moment in life when there is no irony in the affairs of men and nations. What a paradox it is that the stride towards peace in Europe should have coincided with a clear slide towards war in the Gulf. Interestingly, it was at Paris that the Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, spoke out that the UN Security Council should meet soon to review its previous resolutions on the demand for unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and to take "more effective" action to enforce these resolutions. This clearly indicates that the Soviet Union has begun to acknowledge that its earlier stand of opposing any military action against Saddam Hussain would not work. Such is the Iraqi dictator's intransigence and so dishonest are his ploys to use foreign nationals in his clutches as pawns to buy time that even those anxious to avoid military conflict in the Gulf are beginning to give up. Even so, like the Russians, they want all the procedures of the UN to be followed scrupulously before any precipitate action is taken. The matter is too serious to be left to the unilateral initiative of the United States which the rest of the world is then asked to endorse, if not applaud.

Merely to state this is to stress that whatever arrangement is arrived at by the Big Two, in the context of Europe, cannot be automatically extended to other parts of the world. One has to deal with Saddam Hussains of almost every region.

Unfortunately, during the days when crucial developments have been taking place in the world, India has had no government worth the name, and and no foreign minister at all, even to take stock of these, leave alone formulating a coherent Indian policy in relation to them.

Since, to his great credit, Inder Gujral courteously declined Chandra Shekhar's persistent requests to stay on as the foreign minister, Vidya Charan Shukla has succeeded him. What this would mean in terms of foreign policy remains to be seen. For the present, one of the Emergency's main victims and principal hatchet men have jointly left for the Maldives.

YOU GROW UP WITH [illegible]
YOU STAY WITH IT.



...Suitings that
...sics

...y too!
...day's fashion
... you a range to

choose fr...
Bl...
Br...

Lal...
in style. ...

THE ORIGINAL DRESS CIRCLE!

Lalimli Dhariwal



Behind the act

Amnesty accuses the former VP regime of violating human rights

When the National Front wrested power from the Congress(I) last December, human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, had every reason to welcome the change. After all, the Rajiv regime's track record on the human rights front was not too impressive. The new set-up, in contrast, was packed with ardent advocates of civil liberties. In fact, Amnesty International had fought for the rights of many of the National Front ministers when they were thrown behind bars by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency.

But sadly enough, once in power, the National Front government proved no better than its predecessors. At least, that's what Amnesty International feels. A recent report released by the London-based agency says that things got worse on the human rights front during V.P. Singh's short but eventful tenure.

Initially, of course, the Raja and his colleagues started off on a promising note. Soon after taking over, the government repealed the notorious 59th Amendment Act, which was passed by the Rajiv regime ostensibly to curb terrorism in Punjab but ended up taking away some of the fundamental rights of the citizens. Then, it ordered the review of the cases of at least 1,400 political detenus in Punjab, leading to the release of 600 prisoners. But that was all. Faced with mounting extremism in Punjab and Kashmir, the VP government said goodbye to civil liberties and resorted to repressive measures to contain the deteriorating situation in the two states.

Although many detenus in Kashmir have been released during the 11-month period this year, several thousands are still said to be languishing in jails throughout the country. And, most of them without valid reasons or a fair trial, says Amnesty International. The agency is especially concerned about the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), 1985, and the National Security Act—these two legislations have been frequently used by successive governments whenever trouble has broken out—because they do not contain even the minimum safeguards against their abuse. The TADA, which is in force in both Punjab and Kashmir, provides the authorities with the power to detain anyone for a period of one year without trial. Many times, the Act has been misused as in Gujarat, where the legislation was promulgated to tackle a farmers' agitation.



V.P. Singh (above) belied Amnesty International's expectations and his tenure saw the outbreak of more violence(below)

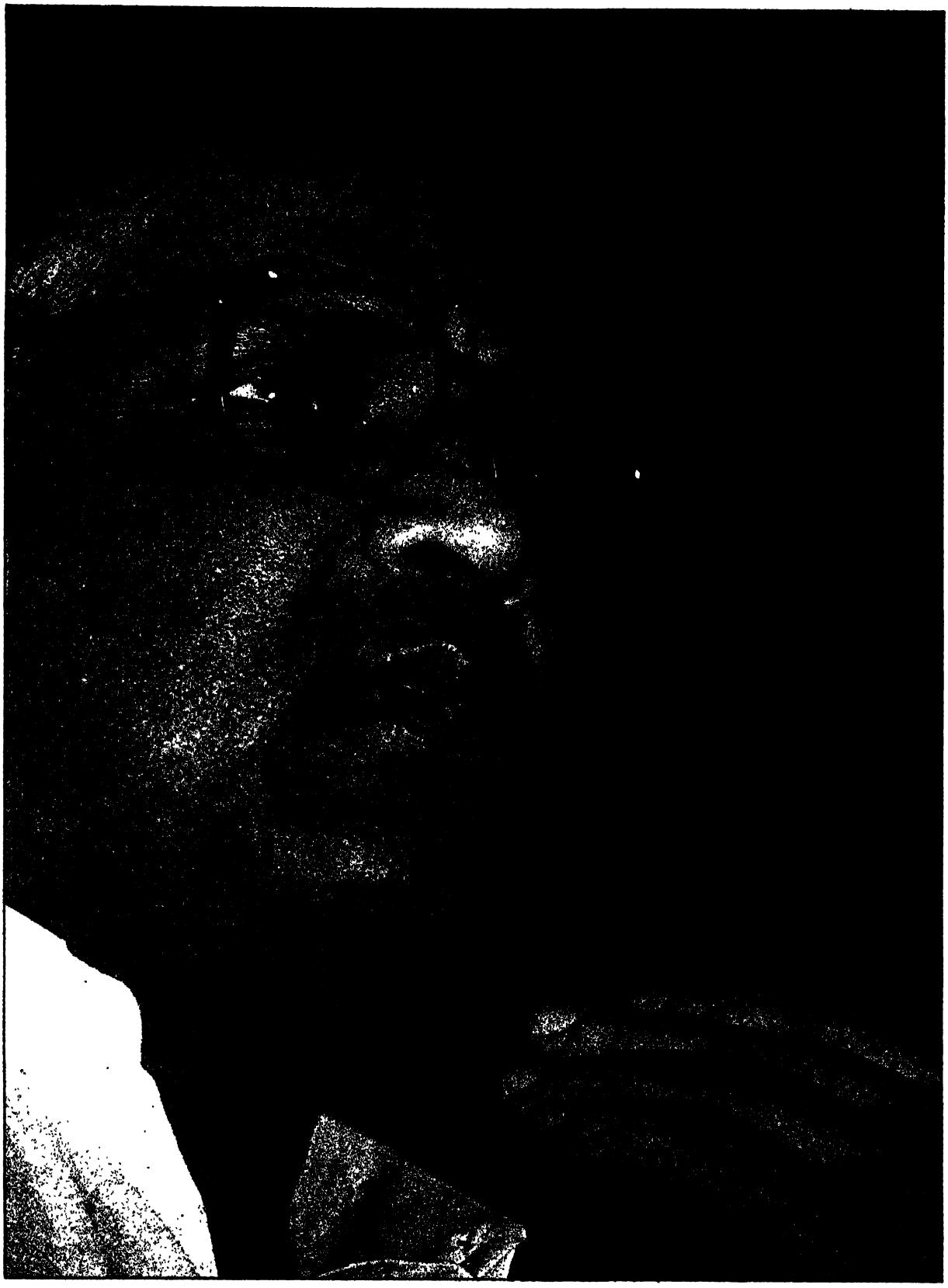


There are other such draconian legislations as well. Like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which was so long used only in the north-east to counter insurgency. But recently, the Act has been extended to Kashmir as well, where security forces are torching entire villages and settlements in the name of destroying militant hideouts. And, under the Act, the security forces enjoy legal immunity. Amnesty International believes that such measures give the administration powers to harass anyone found opposing the government.

There is yet another cause for concern for Amnesty International. Indian courts have rarely granted compensation to victims of human rights violations. In fact, the judiciary has taken an inordinately long time to settle such cases. Which gives enough time to the administration and the police to harass and wean away witnesses. What is more, in many instances, again in Punjab and Kashmir, the security forces have not even responded to court notices. And in the troubled Valley, violence has severely affected the functioning of the courts. In September, a lawyer of the Srinagar High Court reported that around 3,000 habeas corpus petitions were pending, but there was no progress in the hearings as the courts were "near defunct".

There are plenty of such instances in Amnesty International's report. Though written in the agency's typically guarded style, the report nevertheless is a severe indictment of the previous National Front government. Amnesty also notes that whenever instances of human rights violations were brought to the notice of the government, it dismissed them saying that the allegations were made to discredit the administration and the security forces. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi



The two Pawars

But there is really only one

There are two Sharad Pawars. The first is the dashing figure so beloved of the Bombay press. He is independent, super-competent and a powerful mover and shaker. He made Chandra Shekhar Prime Minister, turned down the home ministry and flew off to solve the Kashmir problem on a day-trip to Vaishno Devi. Not only is he a fellow with enormous self-respect, but he is also his own man. Three months ago, he was discussing the possibility of toppling Rajiv Gandhi with Veerendra Patil and Chenna Reddy. And now, he might well link up with Chandra Shekhar and consign Rajiv to the dustbin of history.

Then, there is the second Pawar: the man who presents himself to his leader at 10 Janpath. This Pawar is an able lieutenant. Should Rajiv give him a job, it will be done. When Veerendra Patil steps out of line, it is Pawar who flies off to rap him on the knuckles. If messages have to be conveyed to Shekhar, Sharad will rush off to deliver them. Not only is he quietly competent, but he knows how to tug at the forelock. His Delhi representative Suresh Kalmadi is always wining and dining those close to 'the high command'. And should the likes of Satish Sharma come to Bombay, then Sharad will be in attendance every night: going along to parties in Juhu, at the Taj poolside and even, the Nineteen Hundred.

Most politicians have more than one face, but what makes Pawar's dual personas intriguing is that they are totally irreconcilable. The Pawar who sets the press corps oohing and ahing at Bombay's Mantralaya is unrecognisable when he squats in the reception room at 10 Janpath, waiting for George to tell him that Sahib will see him now.

NOR HAS the contrast gone unnoticed. These days, Pawar is not short of enemies in the Congress. Already, the likes of A.R. Antulay stand on tip-toe to whisper into Rajiv's ear that Sharad is a dangerous, conspiratorial type who is not to be trusted. Others point to his close friendships with industrialists (of whom, Nusli Wadia is unacceptable at 10 Janpath, but at least Rajen Pillai seems set to become a Club Class version of Lalit Suri) and his readiness to run down such Congress favourites as Dhirubhai Ambani in private conversations with the media.

Two weeks ago, Pawar's detractors found new ammunition. Sharad had told Rajiv that George Fernandes had approached him to see if the Congress would support V.P. Singh in the no-confidence motion. During the parliamentary debate, Rajiv rose to his feet once V.P. Singh had berated Chandra Shekhar for seeking Congress(I) backing to point out that Fernandes had gone the same route unsuccessfully.

This was enough for Fernandes to intervene and to deny that he'd ever made such a move. Yes, he said, he had met Pawar, but Rajiv would have to hang his head in shame if he repeated what Pawar had said about Rajiv and the Congress(I)!

Rajiv let the matter drop and an embarrassed Pawar, while sticking to his original story, told *The Sunday Observer*, "I cannot divulge all that transpired in our meeting. I want to close this chapter."

As far as Pawar's critics were concerned, this was final proof of the chief minister's disloyalty.

THE PROBLEM with the disloyal-Pawar theory is that it greatly overestimates Sharad's power. Most versions of this hypothesis posit that he is a powerful regional leader who could easily win an election were he to dump Rajiv.

In fact, without Rajiv's support, Pawar would spend his whole life in Opposition. In 1980, his party contested the Assembly elections against the Congress and lost. In 1984, his version of the Congress lost in the Lok Sabha polls in Maharashtra and in 1985, the Congress(I) won a majority in the Assembly despite Pawar's opposition. The only time Pawar has led the Congress into an Assembly election was 1990—and it marked the first time in history that an undivided Congress *failed* to get a majority in the House and formed the government with the support of Independents.

So even if Pawar is conspiring against Rajiv, so what? He is shrewd enough to recognise that outside the Congress(I), he would be no more than a moderately powerful local leader. And Rajiv, in turn, is consequently not worried by reports of his disloyalty.

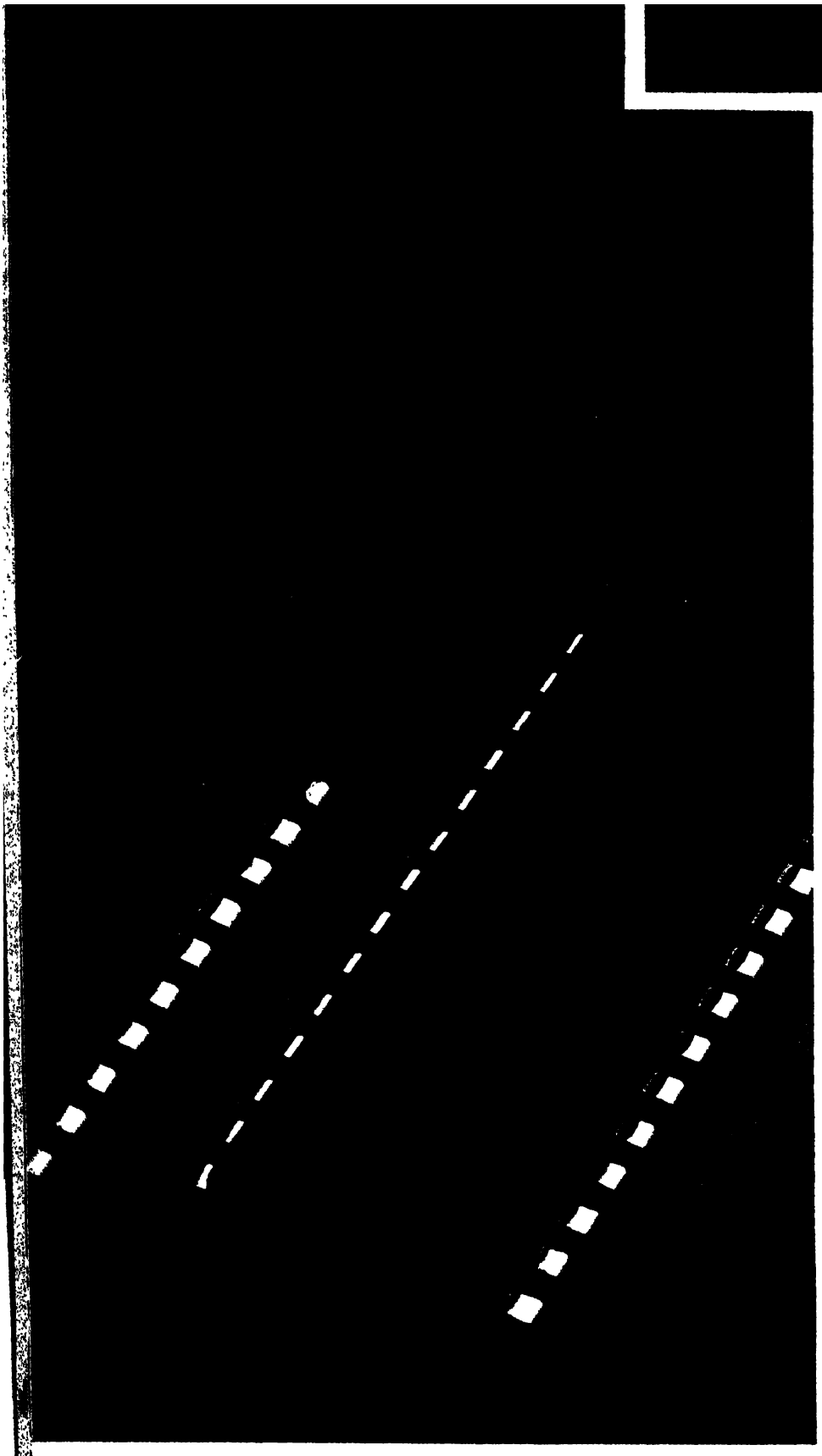
Why then does the press persist in seeing him as the leader of some new Syndicate, as a man Rajiv must kowtow to? Largely, one suspects because of the chief minister's own grasp of public relations. However much he tugs his forelock in Delhi and dances attendance on Satish Sharma, Pawar knows how to convey a different impression to the media back home.

Two celebrated instances:

1) When Kirti Ambani was arrested for the attempted murder of Nusli Wadia, Pawar's acolytes put it about that the chief minister had defied Rajiv Gandhi. In fact, Pawar had disregarded an instruction from Buta Singh, but the moment the Prime Minister's House got in on the act, he happily handed the enquiry over to the CBI. His purpose had been served: he had made a show of independence *without* really stepping out of line.

2) These days, Pawar has earned much publicity by claiming to have arranged the Congress-Shekhar marriage. In fact, he had little to do with it: R.K. Dhawan was the mastermind and Shekhar's link with Rajiv was Subramaniam Swamy, a veteran Pawar-baiter. Nor was Sharad ever offered the home ministry or asked to solve the Kashmir problem. But by leaking such stories and sticking close to Shekhar when the PM visited Bombay, he fostered this impression. More perceptive observers noted that when Pawar threw a party for Shekhar in Delhi, Rajiv Gandhi stayed away.

There may be two Pawars. But the first exists only in the newspapers. It is the second forelock-tugging persona that comes closest to reality. •



When it comes to compressed air, the electronics industry depends on Elgi.

As do the mechanical, the mining, the automobile, the aeronautical and a host of other industries.

Including some leading names like Tata, Raymonds, Voltas, H.A.L. and L & T.

Elgi's reputation for quality, flexibility and an ability to tailor customised solutions is probably the reason for this popularity.

But you know the best way to find out for yourself.

When you need compressed air, what you need is Elgi.

ELGI
SCREW
COMPRESSORS

Further details, write to Elgi Equipments Limited, India House, Trichy Road Coimbatore - 641 018 Phone: 30355. Grams: HYDRAULICS. Telex: 0855-222 ELGI IN. Telefax. (0091) 422-34344.
Call Ahmedabad: Tels: 409336, 409112 & 407563 Bangalore Tels 576636 & 567589 Bhopal: Tel 564733 & 565560 Bombay: Tels. 4930163, 4930164 & 4948429 Bhubaneshwar: Tels. 55004 & 56785 Calcutta: Tels: 280425, 287382 & 282029 Cochin: Tel: 380155 & 382443 Hyderabad: Tels. 665850 & 667850 Jaipur: Tel. 65012 Madras: Tels: 8250694 & 8250295 Madurai: Tels: 31404 & 37651 New Delhi: Tels: 5437588 & 5450095 Ranchi: Tel: 25607 Salem: Tels: 7920 & 77437 Distributors: Lucknow: Auto Service Equipment, Tels 247565 (Off) 249646 (Res.) New Delhi: Auto Service Equipment, Tel: 5752217 New Delhi: Service Equipment Company, Tels: 3313011 & 3310473 Pune: Ganga Equipments Corporation, Tels. 665467 & 664291



JAGDISH YADAV

THE FIRES OF RAM

As a Hindu wave sweeps India, the BJP stands to gain

"I am proud to be a Hindu," declares Lal Krishna Advani, the president of the second largest political party in the Indian Parliament, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). And the response is resounding. Millions of Hindus across the country are cheering him on. The new ideology is Hindu revivalism. The martial symbols of Aryan mythology and the strident calls to restore the glory of Hinduism have replaced the secular monotones of the past few decades.

There is no attempt even to mute the evocations to base obscurantism. There is only pride. And leading the new revival is the BJP, riding on the Hindu chariot. The immediate goal is Ayodhya, the ancient capital of the mythical warrior god, Lord Ram. The *masjid* erected over the spot where Lord Ram was supposedly born is to be moved and a magnificent temple built in its place. The objective is to redress a historical injustice perpetrated by a long dead Muslim emperor and to prove to the world that the flame of Hinduism burns eternal and ever more glorious.

The preserver of the Hindu tradition is the *sangha parivar*, the family of organisations that share the goal of Hindu revivalism. This family, consisting of outfits like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), is the vanguard of the new order. The membership, appeal and raw political power of these organisations are increasing at a formidable rate—faster, in fact, than any other group or political party in recent times. The old equations, the old vote-banks and the comfortable notions of the Indian polity are fast giving way. It is the age of the angry trident.

Till very recently, Hindu revivalism was just one minor note in the composite hubbub of Indian politics. Today, it has become the theme of national politics. And the transformation is astonishingly recent. Just how powerful the current upsurge is can be gauged from the fact that every major political party in the country is currently being ruled by the dynamics of resurgent Hinduism.

The fall of Vishwanath Pratap Singh is, of course the most dramatic example. He tumbled out of office not because of political machinations by his rival colleague, Chandra Shekhar, but because he failed to resolve the crisis thrown up by the assertive Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its ally, the BJP *(see accompanying piece 'Closet communalist?')*. Singh was clearly the victim of communal politics. The VHP had started its strident campaign during the early years of the Rajiv Gandhi regime and had got a tremendous fillip when the Congress(I) government at the Centre allowed the reopening of the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid in February 1986.

The VHP, and subsequently the BJP, discovered that they now possessed a powerful instrument for achieving their long-cherished aim: polarising the Hindus and using them as a political force to grab power at the Centre. The moment the gates of the Ayodhya *mandir/masjid* were opened, the VHP let loose a propaganda campaign, the likes of which have not been seen very often in the country. *Sammelans*, *yagnas*, video-tape shows and public meetings were held to drive home the solitary point: it was time for Hindus to rise up and redress the historical injustices perpetrated by the Muslims.

Specifically, the agenda called for the shifting of the dome-like structures over the building known as the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid and the construction of a magnificent, brand new temple on that site *(see box)*. This was an emotive issue and the Hindu leadership knew it could exploit it to the hilt. To bring about mass involvement in their programme, the VHP

leaders organised *shila* (brick) *pujas* all over the country and in Hindu communities all over the world. These *shila pujas* also helped in the collection of funds for temple construction. By the beginning of last year, Ram Janmabhoomi had become a major national political issue, which no political party could afford to ignore.

The Congress(I) most acutely felt the need to adapt to the changing equations and, in a somewhat desperate bid, allowed the VHP to perform the foundation-laying ceremony *(shilanyas)* for the proposed temple at Ayodhya. It is said that former Union home minister Buta Singh, who was contesting from Jalore in Rajasthan, a constituency dominated by militant Hindus, convinced Rajiv Gandhi to allow the *shilanyas*. It was a triumph for the Hindus. And the Muslims, perturbed and agitated, shifted their loyalty to V.P. Singh's Janata Dal.

The traditional champion of secularism, the Congress(I), had abdicated its responsibility. With 12 per cent of the population—that is, the Muslim segment of the population—alienated, the Congress(I) could never win, but neither could V.P. Singh's Janata Dal. For, now the country was hopelessly divided. On one side were the Muslims, another the Hindu revivalists and the progressive, mainstream vote was split along partisan lines. V.P. Singh was handicapped right from the start and knew he would have to play footsie with the BJP if he wanted the country's top job. Singh compromised but publicly acted the secular virgin, refusing to share a common platform and swearing that he would uphold the rights of all communities.

V.P. Singh and his allies in the left

The temple of doom

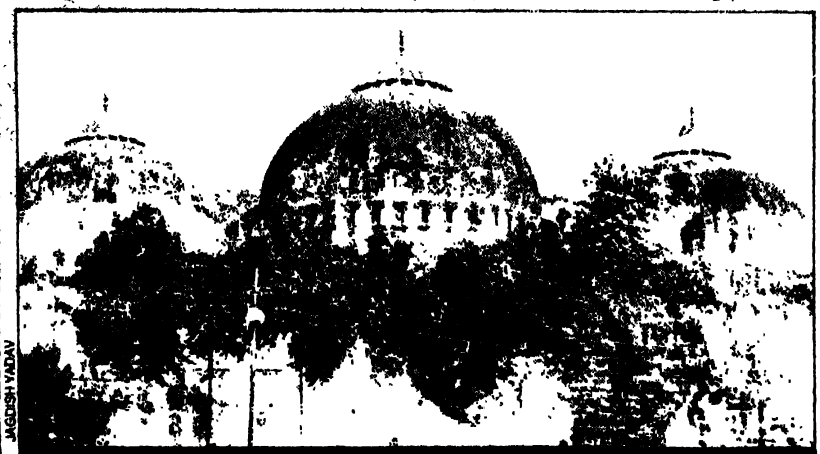
A layman's guide to the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi dispute

AYODHYA: A small town in the Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh, where the mythical Hindu warrior god, Lord Ram, is said to have been born. This town has once again become famous because of a campaign launched by Hindu organisations, which believe that the exact spot where Lord Ram was born is located inside a structure which the Muslims call Babri Masjid.

RAM JANMABHOOMI: Hindu organisations, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in particular, believe that the structure known as the Babri Masjid was orginally a temple built to mark the spot where Lord Ram was born. Hence the structure should not be called Babri Masjid but Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir.

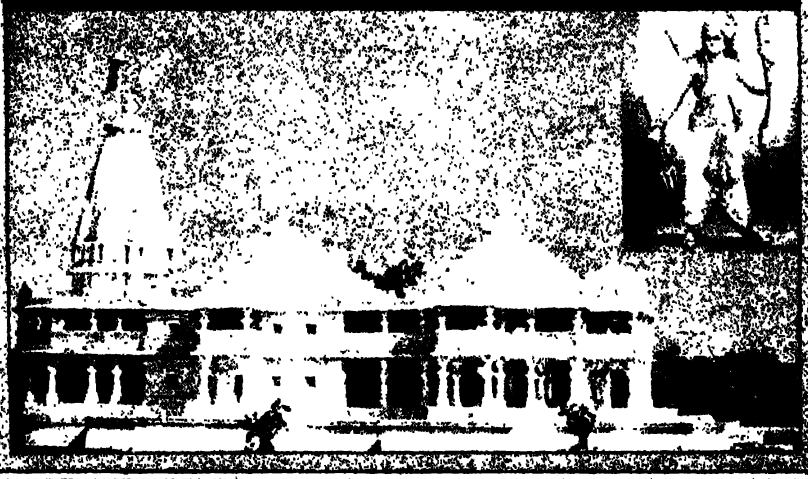
HISTORIC DISPUTE: The Hindus believe that the Moghul emperor Babar had, as was the practice of Muslim rulers in those times, demolished part of the original temple and put up three domes over the original pillars. Archaeological evidence suggests that the domes and the pillars that support them belong to two different periods and are made of different basic materials. Historical records show that various Hindu rulers had unsuccessfully fought the Moghuls over the Ayodhya structure.

REOPENING: The British had kept the *mandir/masjid* locked for the greater part of their rule. But *pujas* had been permitted from time to time. In 1949, an idol of Lord Ram was placed inside the sanctum sanctorum, but Nehru ordered the site to be closed. The controversial building's gates were reopened in 1986 following a court



JAGDISH YADAV

The Hindu fundamentalists plan to demolish the three domes and build a magnificent Sri Ram Temple, three times the size of the existing structure



had not gauged the extent of the groundswell in favour of the BJP and were astounded when that party secured as many as 88 Lok Sabha seats in the 1989 November general elections. Hinduism was clearly on the ascent. At that point, Singh could have declared that he would not form a government with BJP support. Devi Lal or Chandra Shekhar might have been less restrained and would, in all probability, have done in December 1989 what they did in October 1990.

Singh, at any rate, seems to have decided it would be politically shrewder to go along with the BJP, which at that time was taking pains to prove that it was a sober, mainstream party. Together with the left and the BJP, V P. Singh forged a minimum common programme and the government was formed. But for the first time in the history of the country, a blatantly pro-Hindu organisation, one that favoured a theocratic state, had got its foot into the portals of power.

"Vishwanath Pratap Singh compromised with the Hindu communalists at every stage," avers Shahid Siddiqui, editor of the Urdu daily *Nai Duniya*. "What Buta Singh had done shamelessly and blatantly, VP was doing covertly and with great finesse." The BJP soon made it clear that it was not prepared to be a mere bystander and forced V.P. Singh to rubberstamp many of its decisions, including the posting of Jagmohan as Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, the sacking of the income-tax official, Vishwabandhu Gupta, who had asked the VHP to submit its accounts, and the appointment of a few key people in critical posts.



In November 1989, the Congress(I) government allowed the VHP to perform *shilanyas* or foundation-laying ceremony for the proposed temple

order and since then the entire nation has been split on communal lines. The question—who will eventually get ownership of the structure—has become a prestige issue for both the Hindus and the Muslims.

VHP PLANS: The VHP has drawn up ambitious plans to build a magnificent Sri Ram Temple over the existing structure. It wants the three domes built over the old pillars to be removed by any possible means. The new temple will be constructed by incorporating the old pillars and the sanctum sanctorum where Lord Ram's idol is currently placed. The new temple (estimated cost: Rs 25 crores to Rs 35 crores) will be almost three times the size of the existing structure. The actual construction work will be supervised by the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Committee.

MUSLIM STAND: They claim that the structure is a *masjid* and cannot be touched. The bit about shifting the three domes is totally unacceptable. At best, the Muslims say that the new Ram Temple can be built adjacent to the Babri Masjid. Currently, there are court cases pending in the Allahabad and Kanpur High Courts regarding the legal ownership of the existing structure and its adjoining plots.

GOVERNMENT OF FORCE: The VHP points out that the courts can [illegible] and that the matter can be settled only in [illegible] and that the [illegible] structure [illegible] the *shilanyas* [illegible] temple structure [illegible]

The VHP, therefore, is bent on executing its plans with the help of force if need be and disregarding the verdict of the courts.

SHILANYAS: *Shila* (brick) *pujas* were organised all over the country by the VHP to raise funds for the temple. Hindus from all over the country and abroad contributed over Rs 8 crores. These contributions, along with the symbolic bricks, were preserved by the VHP. On 10 November, 1989, the Congress(I) government allowed the VHP to perform *shilanyas*, or foundation-laying ceremony, for the proposed temple. The precise spot where the foundation was laid (using the holy bricks sent by Hindu contributors) is 197 feet away from the sanctum sanctorum of the disputed structure. The *shilanyas* site is where the main gate of the proposed temple is to come up.

WARPATH: After the *shilanyas* success, the VHP believed that pressure tactics would compel the government to allow them to begin construction of the temple. 30 October was the day the construction work was to begin. It ended in a bloodbath. But the VHP programme shows no sign of letting up. [illegible]

Nineteen ninety was really the year of the *sangha parivar*—the family of organisations that pay homage to the concept of Hindu revivalism. At the core of this family is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a non-political Hindu organisation that be-

lieves in the ideas propounded by great Hindu thinkers like Swami Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghose. Vivekananda had established the connection between Hinduism and nationalism with his famous declaration that the "true believer" demonstrates faith "when the distress of every other man bearing the name Hindu comes to your heart and makes you feel as if your own son were in distress". Sri Aurobindo had reinforced the concept by holding that "all great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiest and most varied vigour have drawn their vitality from the fountainhead of some deep religious awakening".

These concepts were translated into politics by Balgangadhar Tilak, who maintained that Hinduism advocated action, social involvement and even violence to achieve just ends. Revivalists of the early 20th century opposed Mahatma Gandhi's idea of *ahimsa*, arguing that passive and non-resisting sufferance is a Christian, and not Aryan, principle.

The Hindu revivalist school of thought was pushed to the fringes by the resounding success of Gandhian politics, which had at its core the belief that Indian culture was essentially composite and not exclusively shaped by any one ethnic or religious community. Gandhi's ideas worked, despite the creation of Pakistan, and it was accepted that the basis of Indian polity had to be kept secular and non-theocratic. India's Constitution-framers understood that a democracy, made up of an overwhelming Hindu majority, could perpetrate the worst kind of discrimination against minorities. And it is from these basic principles that the idea of special protection to the minorities was evolved.

The *sangha parivar*, however, continued to be blindly opposed to Gandhian ideology. It believed that Gandhi's ideas had failed: Muslims had walked away with a massive chunk of the country and a continued adherence to "pseudo-secularism" would only further weaken the country. It decided to fight it out until the Hindu view finally prevailed in Hindusthan. The revivalists had a long wait. As long as secularism and socialism worked, Hindu revivalistic forces remained in the background.

From the mid-1980s, all that started changing. The revivalist upsurge stemmed not from any intrinsic increase in Hindu fervour, but from the growing failure of the system. After 43 years of Independence, political stability and sustained, equitable economic growth remain distant dreams. This, compounded with the propaganda of Hindu fundamentalist organisations, has given birth to the notion that a liberal, secular state might not be the answer to this country's problems. Half-truths have consequently begun to sound authentic to the Hindu ear.

Organisations like the BJP and the VHP have of late been making heavy weather of how minorities have supposedly been pampered by the Indian state. The insinuation is that the cause of all national ills lies in the policy of appeasement. The fact that Muslims can have four wives somehow bothers the average Hindu, who believes (quite erroneously) that the Muslim population growth is fast outstripping Hindu growth. Therefore, even liberal Hindus cannot understand what is wrong with the demand for a uniform civil code. They nod in solemn assent when Hindu fundamentalists point out that for Muslims, Islam comes first and then nationality. They agree that the government is being iniquitous by taxing Hindu religious organisations and exempting their Muslim counterparts. The point is not that all these notions are debatable but that they reflect the current psyche of the long-suffering common man, who, unable to satisfy his basic wants, is viewing the goings-on around him with increasing distaste and intolerance.

The revivalists have exploited such sentiments by insinuating that Muslims are essentially alien descendants of barbarous, anti-Hindu invaders and that their religion places Islam above the nation. Such pernicious views have unfortunately struck a sympathetic chord in Hindus chiefly because of the behaviour of a section of Muslims. In April 1987, for instance, a riot broke out in the small Gujarat town of Virpur after Muslims burst crackers to celebrate the Pakistani cricket team's victory over India at Sharjah. Members of the local VHP, the Bajrang Dal and a local outfit called the Hindu Suraksha Samiti sprang into action and for two days paralysed the entire Kheda district surrounding Virpur. By the time passions cooled, at least four people had been killed in communal clashes.

Indian Muslims celebrating Pakistani sports victories is not terribly uncommon and this phenomenon has

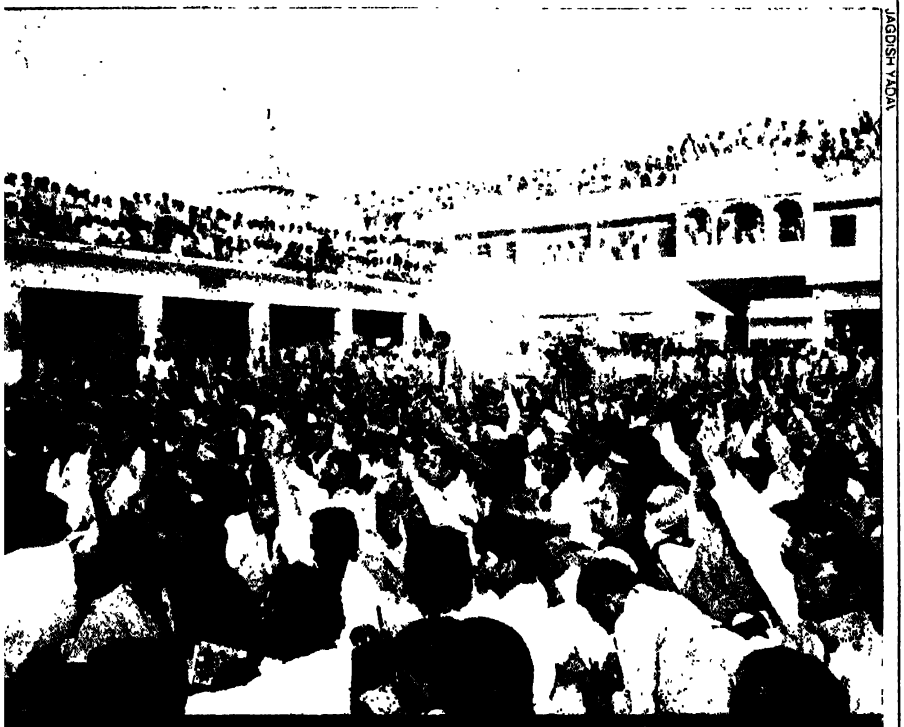


L.K. Advani boasts that the fervour created by Ram Janmabhoomi will not subside in a hurry. India's golden age of secularism is clearly on the wane

quite naturally bred suspicions about their nationalistic affiliations. Islam is seen to be on the ascendant. The Meenakshipuram conversions of Harijans into Muslims (1981) had fuelled countrywide hysteria. Hindu religious leaders complain that their attempts to spread Hindu education are being stifled by the government, which encourages and even funds Islamic educational institutions. Hindus are even more concerned about the flow of Arab petrodollars into India to spread the word of Islam.

All these things, coupled with the killing of Hindus in Punjab and the exodus of Kashmiri pundits from the Srinagar Valley, have created a siege mentality among the Hindu community. What it would not have accepted even five years ago meets with grave approval today. Some fundamental equation has changed. And the Hindu revivalists know it.

Advani, at a recent news conference, boasted that the fervour created by the Ram Janmabhoomi issue would not subside in a hurry. He hinted that the change in the Hindu psyche was permanent. India's golden age of secularism is clearly on the wane.



JAGDISH YADAV

30 October was the day the construction work on the Ram Temple was to begin. *Kar sevaks* gathered in Ayodhya in thousands before D-Day

The new Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, believes that he can succeed where V.P. Singh had so ignominiously failed. He believes he can resolve the contentious Ram Janmabhoomi issue, soothe communal passions and take the sting out of the BJP's sure-fire campaign. This is the primary item on his agenda. If he flounders, he will go the way his predecessor went.

By the last week of November, it was clear that the Congress(I), which had helped Chandra Shekhar become Prime Minister, will not allow him to do just as he pleases. Already, UP Congress(I) president Rajendra Kumari Bajpai is demanding that her party put pressure on the state's chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Bajpai speaks for a major chunk of the UP Congress(I) which wants Yadav to ease up on his offensive against supporters of Hindu revivalism. UP Congressmen point out that they had criticised Mulayam for being unduly harsh on the *kar sevaks* and for his attempts to gag the local press. Now, they can hardly support him without conditions.

Chandra Shekhar, however, is in no hurry to oblige the Congress(I). He knows that the Congress(I) is mortally afraid of the BJP's growing electoral prowess and, for the moment, is only too glad to leave the task of tackling the Hindu revivalists to him. For the moment, Shekhar wants to deal with the revivalists, the BJP included, in his own way. Subodh Kant Sahay, the minister of state for home affairs, who already has considerable knowledge of the vexatious Ram Janmabhoomi issue, has been asked to mediate between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Mulayam Singh Yadav too is to be involved—one of Chandra Shekhar's chief complaints against his predecessor is regarding the manner in which the UP chief minister was ignored in the *kar seva* affair.

But all this does not add up to a solution. Chandra Shekhar is attempting the impossible. He maintains that the entire issue can be resolved through amicable talks and mutual respect. But all that died a long time ago. Shekhar says he wants a solution under which the VHP's Ram Temple will be built, but the sanctum sanctorum of the Babri Masjid and the domes above it will not be touched. This might sound good, but if such a solution was acceptable to the VHP, V.P. Singh would not have had to go.

Singh was also trying for a similar compromise. The VHP, however, was adamant. The VHP and the BJP refused to budge on three points: firstly, they said that the sanctum sanctorum of the new temple must be where the idol of Lord Ram is currently located inside the existing structure; secondly, the architectural plan for the temple drawn up by the VHP could not be altered in the slightest; and thirdly, there could be no postponement of the *kar seva*. Singh fell because he could not persuade the Muslim leadership to accept the VHP's conditions.

The BJP knows it has a great issue in the Ram Janmabhoomi temple and it also realises that no secular government can possibly allow the shifting of the Babri Masjid without the concurrence of the Muslims. At another level, the BJP and the RSS leaderships despise Chandra Shekhar and will try their utmost to make life extremely difficult for him. The BJP's aim is to consolidate its electoral gains and to appear even more distinctively Hindu. It is convinced that glory and electoral victory is assured to those who have the courage to hitch a ride on the chariot of the Hindu warrior god. •

Indranil Banerjie with Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi



CLOSET COMMUNALIST?

Did V.P. Singh make a secret deal with the BJP?

The simple answer, of course, is no. For, as BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee has since clarified, there was no 'deal'; there was only an 'understanding'. But that clearly is not saying very much. For what, anyway, is the big difference between a 'deal' and an 'understanding'? The semantics, after all, are hardly important. What is, is the ethical question: did former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh wear one hat for the Muslims and another for the Hindus?

The Congress(I), quite clearly, feels tha V.P. Singh did precisely that. In a statement issued by 50 Congress(I) MPs on 27 October, Singh was charged of indulging in "sheer deceit" by entering into a "secret pact" to ensure BJP president L.K. Advani's safe journey to Ayodhya. According to another accusation, Singh had apparently even agreed to perform *kar seva* at the site of the proposed Ram Temple at Ayodhya. The Congress(I) statement read: "Mr Singh's hurriedly planted secular mask now lies in tatters...It exposes the true nature of Mr Singh as a man who will sell anything and anyone in order to protect his *kursi.*"

Singh, on the other hand, has adopted an equally moralistic defence. He has claimed time and again that far from being deceitful or manipulative, he has even sacrificed his government to uphold the secular basis of the Indian polity. Singh has justified his support to the BJP on two grounds: one, that at the time of the elections and prior to the formation of the National Front government, the BJP had not talked about making the Ram Janmabhoomi temple the basis of its support. At that time, both the BJP and the left had said they would support the government on the basis of a common minimum programme.

Secondly, V.P. Singh has argued that till the end he was trying to find a solution to the emotive Ram Janmabhoomi issue and cracked down on the BJP only when it became obvious that it could not possibly be resolved. It was apparent that the Hindu and the Muslim communities in the country were on a collision course. There could be only two solutions: either the Muslims would have to be persuaded to give up their rights to the disputed *mandir/masjid* or else the Hindu organisations, the BJP included, would have to be talked into compromising their rigid stance. From the beginning, Singh tried both approaches, explain the Raja's supporters, and what is so diabolical about that?

What remains obscure and more than a little intriguing, however, is the precise nature of the 'understanding' V.P. Singh had arrived at with the BJP leadership. If the matter was so straightforward, why the need for an 'understanding' with the BJP? And what precisely had been promised? And to what end?

THE 'UNDERSTANDING'

Contrary to popular impressions, the BJP leadership too was in a bind over the Ayodhya issue. It did not want the V.P. Singh government to collapse at that juncture. At the same time, it could not climb down from its avowed stand on the construction of a new temple at the Babri Masjid site. The BJP, consequently, convinced V.P. Singh that he could, if he tried hard enough, get the Muslim lead-



V.P. Singh failed to persuade the Hindu organisations to climb down from their avowed stand on the construction of a new temple at the site of the Babri Masjid

ership to accept the shifting of the Babri Masjid domes to a different site and allow the construction of the Ram Temple.

If anybody could achieve this, it was V.P. Singh, who had cultivated excellent relations with the top Muslim leadership in the country. The essence of the plan was that the government would acquire the disputed structure and its adjoining lands, thus nullifying the various related cases pending in the Allahabad and Lucknow High Courts; next, the Supreme Court would be asked to examine whether the *masjid* domes were built over an older structure; once it was proved that the domes were later additions (implying that there had originally been a temple at the site), the structure, including the adjoining lands, would be handed over to the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti. The domes would be shifted and a new mosque built at a different site. The Muslim leadership was also to be promised that the 3,000-odd similar *mandir/masjid* disputes pending in courts all over the country would be frozen by appropriate legislation.

The Muslims would, therefore, have a new Babri Masjid and legislative protection against similar disputes in the future, while the Hindus would have their Ram Temple. It looked like a very neat solution and the BJP convinced V.P. Singh to plug away at it. In the meantime, it was understood that Advani should be allowed to proceed with his *rath yatra* till 28 October, ie, two days before the *kar seva* date. Till that time, Singh was to continue to look for a solution. According to the spirit of the understanding, "all avenues were to be kept open for a negotiated settlement and no party should attempt a showdown in haste". This, in a nutshell, was the big 'deal'.



The BJP's Govind Acharya says that the party knew all along it had a ruthless adversary in V.P. Singh, but did not believe he was basically dishonest or a two-timing schemer

THE BREAKDOWN

Sources in the Union home ministry suggest that V.P. Singh might just have pulled it off. Several Muslim leaders had been informally sounded out and had agreed to go along with the plan. As far as the Muslim leadership was concerned, Singh was the best bet. The BJP was too dangerous to be allowed to grow by cashing in on religious indignation and the Congress(I) was not to be trusted, especially considering that it was the Congress that had opened up the Ayodhya Pandora's box. Moreover, key members of the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC), a Muslim organisation that had been resisting the idea of shifting the mosque, had been given Rajya Sabha seats and other important appointments by V.P. Singh. If the BMAC and a few key Muslim leaders okayed the plan, Singh would be through.

Ideally, the BJP wanted the matter to be settled by Diwali, 18 October. On that date, the Muslim leadership was expected to renounce its claims to the non-mosque part of the disputed Ayodhya structure. But V.P. Singh got the first shock on 17 October, at the all-party meeting held in New Delhi, where the CPI(M) pointed out that the plan would not work, that it would amount to a total sell-out to Hindu fundamentalists. The BJP too put its foot down and on that very day, Advani announced that his party would withdraw support to the government if his *rath yatra* or the 30 October *kar seva* was stopped.

V.P. Singh was cornered, but nevertheless made a last-ditch attempt to salvage the situation. On 19 October, he put the first part of the plan into action by issuing an ordinance taking over the disputed structure along with the adjoining lands and enforcing a constitutional provision to refer all disputes over the site to the Supreme Court. This last attempt, however, ended up in disaster. The VHP and the BJP were troubled because the ordinance did not go the whole hog. They, nevertheless, agreed that it could be the starting point for subsequent negotiations. The real problem was the fierce reaction of a section of the Muslim leadership, which felt that the ordinance would set a precedent and ultimately endanger the fundamental right of worship. This argument forced the other leaders, who had agreed to the plan originally, to reject the ordinance as well.

On 21 October, representatives of Hindu and Muslim organisations were brought to Delhi in a last attempt at resolving the dispute through negotiations. The meeting turned out to be a fiasco. The Muslims were furious be-



The former Prime Minister was equally unsuccessful at persuading the Muslims to accept the shifting of the mosque to a different site to make way for the Ram Temple

Give her your love and security.



Save in a Public Sector Bank.

Put your hard-earned money to work in a Public Sector Bank.
And look at all the advantages:

Safety: Your hard-earned money is totally safe and secure.

Deposit schemes to suit your need: Choose any deposit scheme from a variety of different packages e.g. Reinvestment, Fixed Deposits, Pension Plans, Recurring Deposits, etc.

Nomination facility: Banks offer a nomination facility so that your savings go to your loved ones.

Good returns: You can be assured of timely returns. And, on long term deposit schemes you can get a return of upto 19.6%.

Tax benefits: Interest income upto Rs.7000 per annum is exempt from Income Tax.

Loan facility: You can take a loan of upto 75% of your deposit. So, you will never be stranded without money.

Easy to withdraw: In case you need your money before your deposit matures, you can withdraw quickly and easily.

Over 59,000 branches: You don't have to go out of your way to save. With over 59,000 branches, there is sure to be one near your home or place of work.

JOINT PUBLICITY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

28 MEMBER BANKS

• Allahabad Bank • Andhra Bank • Bank of Baroda • Bank of India • Bank of Maharashtra • Canara Bank • Central Bank of India • Corporation Bank • Dena Bank • Indian Bank • Indian Overseas Bank • New Bank of India • Oriental Bank of Commerce • Punjab National Bank • Punjab & Sind Bank • State Bank of India • State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur • State Bank of Hyderabad • State Bank of Indore • State Bank of Mysore • State Bank of Patiala • State Bank of Saurashtra • State Bank of Travancore • Syndicate Bank • UCO Bank • Union Bank of India • United Bank of India • Vijaya Bank

Chaitra-BJPC18 R I

cause the dispute had effectively been taken out of the purview of the courts and had been handed over to the executive, which could act arbitrarily. The Hindus were equally incensed because the ordinance, equivocal as it was on the questions of ownership and the nature of the structure, did not touch the "core of the problem". In the end, everybody walked out of the meeting, leaving Singh holding the baby.

THE END

22 October must have been a long day for V.P. Singh. Both approaches had failed. Now he had to make the hardest choice of his career: give up the country's top job or else side with the Hindu fundamentalists. In the end, he chose to sacrifice his government. That very day, he withdrew the ordinance and late at night, instructed Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav to arrest Advani.

At that stage, the Mulayam Singh Yadav factor came into play. V.P. Singh's silent struggle with the Uttar Pradesh chief minister had all along been a suspenseful sub-plot. Mulayam never trusted Singh, who he believed was constantly plotting his ouster. Moreover, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who has always championed secular politics, never really believed in V.P. Singh's secular credentials. Ambition also played a major part. Mulayam felt the Ayodhya and the Mandal issues offered a great opportunity for his securing an important place in national politics. He wanted to play a key role in the negotiations on the communal question.

But V.P. Singh would not have that. He wanted to make sure that Mulayam remained a two-bit, state-level player. He alienated the UP CM by keeping him in the dark regarding the home ministry's covert negotiations. Mulayam, on his part, after coming to know of VP's understanding with the BJP, tried his best to sabotage it. And that too quite openly. During a meeting of chief ministers, Mulayam stomped out, declaring that he would not be party to any understanding with the BJP and would arrest Advani at the first opportunity.

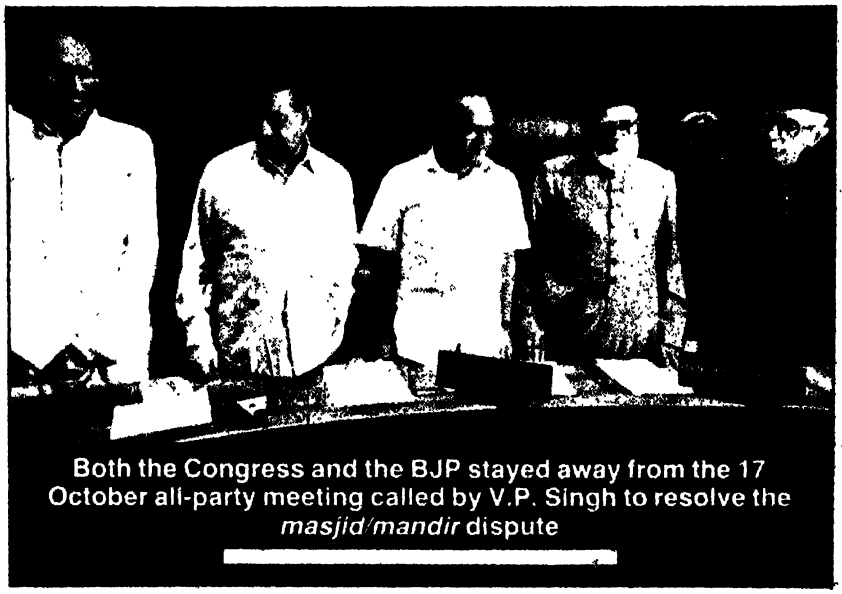
The day the ordinance was promulgated, Mulayam planned to arrest Advani, by stopping the Rajdhani Express carrying him to Patna. The train was to be stopped at a place called Rarah, between Itawah and Kanpur, in UP. A helicopter was kept ready. But at the last moment, senior state officials persuaded Mulayam against doing anything so drastic, especially since the PM had specifically instructed him not to do so.

At any rate, on 22 October, V.P. Singh knew that Mulayam was waiting to arrest Advani as soon as he crossed into UP from Bihar. Laloo Prasad Yadav helped out by arresting Advani on 23 October morning just before he was scheduled to cross over. The 'understanding' or 'deal' fell through.

THE WINNER?

As far as V.P. Singh was concerned, he had made the best of a terrible situation. When he had to go, he made sure he went like a hero, waving his secular credentials. Shahid Siddique, editor of the Urdu weekly *Nai Duniya* and one of VP's bitter critics, admits: "V.P. Singh has become the hero of the Muslims, who view him as a man who gave up his chair in his fight against Hindu communalists." Despite the question marks over the 'deal' and Mulayam Singh Yadav's recent tirades against V.P. Singh for his closet communalism, the former PM retains his credibility. Yadav's exposés on how key VHP activists were whisked away from UP in special aircraft and then allowed to disappear have not cut much ice with the Muslim population, which is more inclined to believe VP's admission that he was—till the last moment—attempting to find a negotiated settlement to avert communal warfare.

Arun Shourie's controversial '*Arey bhai masjid hai hi kahaan*?' story, for instance, oddly enough, has not been taken seriously either by the Muslim or the Hindu leadership. Syed Yusuf, secretary of the influential Muslim organisation, the Jamait-e-Islami Hind, says that the article was "mischievous and designed to create confusion amongst Muslims". Yusuf, who was present during discussions with V.P. Singh on the Babri Masjid issue, feels that Shourie deliberately placed the former Prime Minister's remarks on the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid question out of context. "Vishwanath Pratap Singh talks like that, it is his style...he would even ask laughingly, what is this mosque and temple all about? But that does not mean he was insincere." says Yusuf.



Both the Congress and the BJP stayed away from the 17 October all-party meeting called by V.P. Singh to resolve the *masjid/mandir* dispute

Surprisingly, Govind Acharya, the BJP's influential national executive member and special assistant to party president L.K. Advani, holds a similar view on the Shourie article. "Shourie did not do the correct thing by selectively quoting V.P. Singh," he feels. Acharya says that the BJP knew all along that it had a ruthless adversary in Singh, who was using every stratagem to outwit it. But at no point in time did the BJP leadership seriously believe that V.P. Singh was basically dishonest or a two-timing schemer. "In my opinion, V.P. Singh's real problem was that he underestimated his own clout with the Muslim leadership and when he found nothing was working out, he panicked and, in his typically impulsive way, decided it was time for a showdown with the BJP," says Acharya. ●

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi

Nowhere near the summit

The Fifth SAARC meeting in the Maldives achieves little

It was Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's maiden appearance on the international stage, and he performed remarkably well. At a time when the region they represent was experiencing widespread political turmoil, it seemed strange, even hypocritical, that the heads of the seven member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) should meet on an idyllic island in the Indian Ocean and talk only of economic and cultural cooperation. Only the Indian premier made a valiant bid to include bilateral talks as a crucial part of the Fifth SAARC Summit held in the Republic of Maldives on 21-23 November.

The meeting was especially significant because four heads of state—those of India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka—were meeting jointly for the first time. In his statement at the opening session of the Summit, Chandra Shekhar departed from convention to add an impassioned plea that the occasion be used to sort out the internal conflict that was plaguing at least six of the seven participating countries. "Let us exploit nature for the benefit of the toiling masses and the workers in the fields," he said, to thunderous applause. To spend this time on "mere formalities when there could be more fruitful discussion on issues agitating the minds of the people" would be a waste, he added. "May I know Mr Chairman," Shekhar asked, "why we are not addressing ourselves to the hard realities of life?"

Then, Chandra Shekhar blamed Nepal for affecting the environment of India, and said India was not giving advice but seeking help from that country to curb the detrimental effects of deforestation. For the Indian side, of course, the most crucial aspect was whether the two new leaders of India and Pakistan would get along, meeting each other for the first time since they assumed office only recently, both amidst uncertainty and violence.

At the opening ceremony, both leaders behaved like strangers even though they were seated next to each other. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, however, got up and congratulated Chandra Shekhar for his brilliant speech. But as the Summit progressed, it became abundantly clear that unless there was a political will to resolve bilateral disputes among the member countries, there would be no question of fruitful economic cooperation. It was felt that the resolutions adopted at earlier meetings were taking too long to be implemented, and the whole exercise was pointless unless the entire structure of the Summit was changed.

Never before has there been so much regional tension to contend with. India has problems with all the SAARC countries, except, perhaps the Maldives. Bangladesh has experienced bloody anti-government riots in recent weeks, and Bhutan is in the throes of political unrest. Sri Lanka's President Ranasinghe Premadasa did not attend the SAARC meet since he has sworn not to leave the island until the ethnic strife ends there, and in Nepal the transition from monarchy to democracy is proving to be difficult.

The region's economic problems are compounded by the crisis in the Gulf—many of the SAARC countries have to deal with the problem of vast numbers of their citizens returning home penniless. More important, the oil crunch has affected most of the SAARC nations.

Therefore, it was absolutely essential to abandon SAARC's earlier overcautious approach to the inclusion of bilateral issues in the Summit proceedings. "This Summit has been important, because it has set in motion a new mode of thinking, which will make economic and trade cooperation much simpler to achieve," explains



Mohan Kashikar, an academic from Nagpur University working on a paper on SAARC." But like the European Economic Community (EEC), the basis of this Summit will remain trade, industry and finance," he adds.

Two years ago, the idea to introduce visa-free travel between SAARC countries for Supreme Court judges and heads of national academic institutions was mooted, it has only just been implemented. Besides, there was also a proposal to allow limited convertibility of the currencies of SAARC countries, which would enable tourists to use their own currency in the region. This time, to give an added impetus to tourism in the area, it was decided that a scheme for the promotion of organised tourism would be launched. The SAARC convention on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances was also signed—members felt it would go a long way in curbing drug peddling and smuggling in the area.

Joint ventures were initiated in the field of cottage industries and handicrafts with the aim of promoting collective self-reliance in the region. The national studies on trade, manufactures and services has been concluded, and a regional study was now being undertaken.

The seven heads of state or government also decided to share information and exchange reports, studies and publications with the European Community and the Association of South-





(From left) Chandra Shekhar greets Abdul Gayoom; leaders from the seven member nations: striving for peace

East Asian Nations (ASEAN). After all, the region could not ignore the increasing international trend towards the opening up of global economies and the increasing integration of the pattern of global production, consumption and trade, and the growing multi-polarity of the world economic structure. "We are moving towards cooperation in core economic areas, and the establishment of a regional fund will be a major step," says Rajnikant Verma, joint secretary, SAARC. The regional fund would make available credit on easy terms for the identification and development of regional projects, though there is some conflict between the member nations as to which projects fall within the ambit of this fund. India would host a meeting in February 1991 to work out the modalities of the fund. Before that, the foreign ministers of member countries would meet in Islamabad from 18 December this year.

Recognising that environment is a major global concern, it was decided to observe 1992 as the SAARC Year of Environment. The region was prone to floods and tidal waves, and would also be affected by the greenhouse effect, and a regional study on the causes and consequences of natural disasters and the protection and preservation of the environemnt was being undertaken to see what could be done about curbing the disastrous effects of the destruction of rainforests. Keeping the vital importance of biotechnology for the long-term food security of developing countries in mind, an exchange of expertise in genetic conservation and the maintenance of germplasm banks was also finalised. It was decided that the SAARC countries would contribute to the establishment of a gene bank for developing countries by the Group of Fifteen developing countries (G-15).

Reaffirming their support to the UN Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis, the SAARC countries emphasised the need for a peaceful solution to the problem. They even went a step further, calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The Gulf crisis had dealt a severe blow to the economies of the SAARC countries, and the leaders stressed that they needed massive international assistance to compensate the loss suffered by them due to a sharp decline in remittances, a cutback in their exports and a severe strain on their balance of payments position imposed by increased oil prices.

It seemed strange that at a time when there was widespread turmoil in the region, the heads of the seven SAARC nations should meet in an idyllic island and talk of only economic and cultural cooperation

The business of the Summit over, the leaders—Hussain Muhammad Ershad, the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the President of the Republic of Maldives, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mohammed Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistani Prime Minister and Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka—participated in a retreat on the picturesque island of Giraavaru. Here, the atmosphere allowed for holding informal talks on bilateral problems and initiating steps to resolve them. "These are exercises in confidence-building," said a top aide of the Pakistani PM. The talks between Chandra Shekhar and Nawaz Sharif were naturally the most crucial in the Summit—the region's tensions would ease considerably if the two countries managed to establish durable peace.

At earlier summits, India had been criticised for playing the role of Big

A promising start

Chandra Shekhar and Nawaz Sharif stress the need to improve Indo-Pak relations





Chandra Shekhar and Nawaz Sharif: beginning of a new era?

There was none of the excitement that marked the meeting of the young, high-profile leaders, Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto in Islamabad at the fourth SAARC summit two years back. And yet, there was hope that Chandra Shekhar and Mohammed Nawaz Sharif will hit it off better than their predecessors.

No two leaders could be more different in terms of personality and yet both have a common interest to establish peace between India and Pakistan, which in turn, is the key to the easing of tensions in the region. The Pakistani Prime Minister is a businessman to the core, and may put economic considerations before everything else—Chandra Shekhar still clings on to his socialist image. The only common factor between the two is that both lead extremely shaky governments, which is another reason why they may not attempt something adventurous.

After ignoring each other at the opening session of the Fifth SAARC Summit, the two leaders met in Kurumbha, where the SAARC deliberations were held, and later at the Giraavaru island resort for the retreat following the Summit on 22 November. The two leaders met with aides for 45 minutes, followed by another session of 30 minutes. When asked at an informal press conference whether the talks would result in the easing of tension along the Indo-Pak border, Chandra Shekhar replied that not only would the tension decrease, they were working towards removing it completely. "The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere," corroborated foreign secretary Shaharyar Khan. "The war clouds have finally gone away."

The two Prime Ministers decided that all the differences between the two countries would be resolved "peacefully and through dialogue". But on the contentious Kashmir issue, neither side agreed to budge an inch from their positions.

There was no specific proposal for the two Prime Ministers to meet in the near future again. "But there was no hesitation on that account. I think if you touch the right chord, the response is bound to be positive," claimed Chandra Shekhar." Everybody agrees, including Nawaz Sharif and myself, that we should not have any tension between us, and we will work towards that end."

Expressing satisfaction at the progress at the Summit, Chandra Shekhar said, "I was literally scared when I came here, but soon I felt very much at home, like part of the family."

Brother in the region. "SAARC is necessarily Indo-centric," explains Rajnikant Verma. No other country has borders with all the six countries. Obviously, Bhutan and the Maldives would have no tension with each other, since they are so far away."

In this context, Chandra Shekhar's initiative to build goodwill will go a long way in establishing peace in the region. After his rousing speech at the opening session, he decided to dump his prepared concluding address and gave an emotional extempore speech instead. He slipped into Hindi in which he was far more comfortable. Except for the Pakistanis and some of the Nepalis, other foreign delegations are unlikely to have understood the language, but the Indian leader was in his element when he spoke the language he was most fluent in. Besides, the speech—his first from an international forum—was being televised live to the audience back home. "If there were doubts that the Summit would achieve little, and that there would only be confrontation among the leaders, these have been belied," he said, stealing the show. "I did not feel I was among the people of alien nations, but among a family. We may have poverty, and fewer resources than the rest of the world, but we have the strength and goodwill of our people, and we can overcome these problems together. As I went down the streets of Malé, I could not help noticing all the smiling children. It is to these children, who are our future, that we have a responsibility. Our hearts beat as one and there should be no differences between us, only goodwill, affection and harmony. We part with this confidence," he concluded.

There couldn't have been a more emotionally-charged speech, and the message that India intended to hold out the olive branch was loud and clear. It was decided that less time would be spent in future on time-consuming protocol and formalities, and that more effective steps would be taken to implement the decisions made.

In many ways, it was Chandra Shekhar's initiative that saved the SAARC show, which began amidst apprehensions that the Summit would achieve very little. And though fewer expectations were raised than when Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto met in Islamabad for the Fourth SAARC Summit in 1988, there may be more tangible results from this one. ●

Shiraz Sidhva/Malé

Towards anarchy

Elections or no elections, Assam is going the Punjab way

The year: 1985. The venue: Guwahati Stadium. The occasion: the swearing-in ceremony of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) ministry headed by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. A capacity crowd of around 55,000 lustily cheered as Mahanta and his colleagues, who had led a violent agitation for six long years, took the oath of office. Hope was in the air.

But times have changed. And though five years may be a small time in politics, it was enough to shatter the dreams of the AGP and the people of Assam. Ironically, wherever Prafulla Mahanta goes nowadays he is greeted with black flags. And the cheers of yesteryears have turned to angry voices.

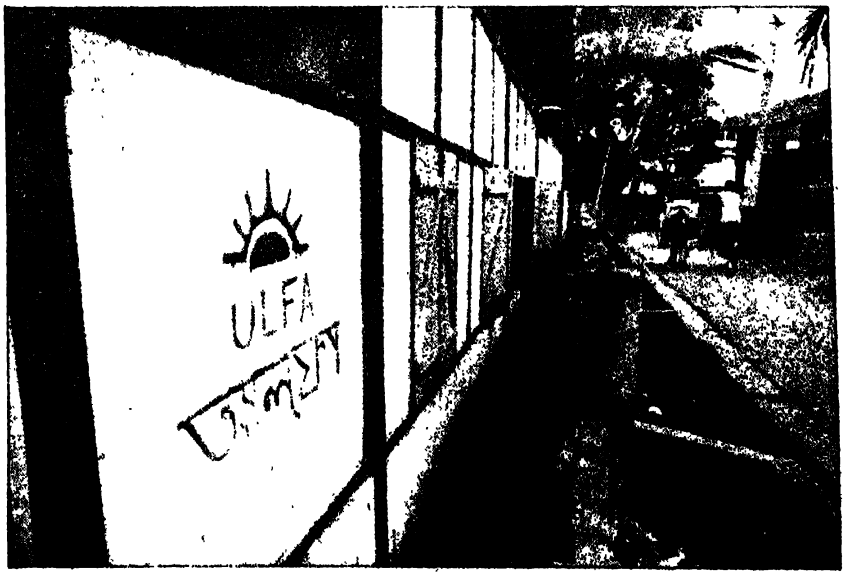
The situation in Assam today is indeed grim. Perhaps even worse than the agitation days of 1983, when the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) raised the battle-cry against what they called "foreign nationals". Nowadays, the cry is one of secession with the dreaded United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) leading the way. And with the extortion money going up by the day, the state's tea industry— which churns out about 60 per cent of the country's produce and rakes in precious foreign exchange—has taken a severe knocking. The flight of capital from the state is also alarming. As if that is not enough, the Assamese society today is divided and sub-divided along caste, ethnic and tribal lines with each community up in arms against the other. And the less said about the state's law and order situation the better. Fears Nandeswar Talukdar, secretary of the state's CPI(M) unit: "The unity of Assam is in danger."

Not just the unity, but the economy as well. If there is one industry that means a great deal to the state—in terms of revenue and employment—it is tea. But ULFA activists have virtually overrun the tea gardens in Upper Assam, intimidating senior tea executives, demanding money and even threatening them of dire consequences . All because they "haven't done enough for the development of the state". Many tea companies paid up quietly, without even informing the police. Some however, resisted. But the ULFA made its intentions clear by gunning down Surrendra Paul, owner of the Assam Frontier Tea Company near Tinsukia on 9 April. Today, no one is willing to take risks and the exodus of tea executives from the state began. In June, five senior officers of Jokai India Limited, a company having ten gardens in Dibrugarh, left Assam. Soon, the Bodo militants followed the path shown by ULFA. And on 19 October, Bodo extremists stormed the Borsola Tea Club at Tinkhora Tea Estate, near Dhekiajuli



BSF men patrol the streets of Guwahati: there is fear everywhere

ULFA posters in the outskirts of Guwahati: rule of the gun



in Sonitpur district, and looted valuables from tea executives who were celebrating Diwali. Before leaving, they sprayed bullets at Jawaharlal Jain, manager of the Diroi Tea Estate, killing him on the spot. It was perhaps time for the central government to step in.

It did on 8 November when the Government of India, with the help of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Air Force, army and Indian Airlines, airlifted managerial staff and their families from the distant reaches of Upper Assam and Guwahati and flew them down to Calcutta. The state government was kept in the dark about the operation. These executives worked for Doom Dooma India Limited, Brooke Bond and Lipton (all member companies of the Unilever group) and were facing threats to their lives. The ULFA activists had actually demanded Rs 35 lakhs (Rs five lakhs from each of Doom Dooma's seven tea gardens in the state) way back in May. The deadline was to expire on 8 November. Similarly, both Brooke Bond and Lipton were asked to surrender five per cent of their net profits, which works out to a few crores. But none of the companies buckled under the threats. Instead, they decided to evacuate their senior staff from the state and suspend operations in the tea gardens. The decision has left over 40,000 labourers without jobs. The Unilever group, which even complained to the Indian high commissioner in London, justified its action on the grounds that the danger to the life of its staff in the tea gardens was enormous and the security arrangements were not foolproof.

The Doom Dooma incident had its fallout in the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC). Over the last 20 years, the GTAC has become the largest CTC auction centre in the world. The local people have benefitted enormously from the centre, both directly and indirectly. And the

"We could have a Punjab-type situation"

If polls are not held on time, says Assam chief minister Prafulla Mahanta

SUNDAY: Do you think that elections in the state will be held on time?
Prafulla Kumar Mahanta: I think elections can be held and we have made this clear to the election commission also. We will extend all possible help for the holding of free and fair polls and are trying to mobilise public opinion to this end.

I have met Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and former PM V.P. Singh in Delhi and told them that despite the opposition from some of the political parties in the state—Congress(I), Janata Dal and the Congress(S)—elections should be held. The democratic process should not be stopped, otherwise we could have a similar situation like Kashmir and Punjab.

Q: What about the law and order situation? Is it conducive for holding polls?
A: We have received complaints of violence from certain areas like Darrang, Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur. But we are doing our level best to set things right.

Q: Recently Rajiv Gandhi said that he is opposed to the holding of elections in the state
A: The Congress(I) is not ready for elections. Moreover, the people of Assam do not by and large support the party. Therefore, the party is not willing enough.



Q: Which are the parties in the state that are in favour of elections?
A: The left parties including the CPI(M), CPI and the RCPI prefer polls. It is the Congress(I), Janata Dal and the Congress(S) which are opposed to this. These parties have indirectly talked of imposing President's Rule in the state. What is, however, ironical is that in such an eventuality these same parties will say that it is the AGP government headed by P.K. Mahanta which is responsible for such a situation.

Q: What if there is President's Rule?
A: Things will get even worse. The law and order situation might deteriorate further. There could be more bomb blasts. Besides, people of Assam are strongly against such coercive measures.

Q: Your government is accused of having failed to contain the ULFA menace. Are you taking measures to tackle this problem?
A: Yes, both politically and administratively. We have also requested the Centre to do something to bring back the ULFA activists to mainstream politics. The members of this outfit feel that the Centre has neglected them for the past 30-40 years. They feel that the Centre has not utilised the state's resources, has not done any development work and has exploited the people. It has not even done anything to control the floods that ravages cultivation so many times a year. So, unless the Centre does anything to assuage their hurt feelings, nothing much can be achieved.

Q: There has been reports and allegations that the ULFA has links with the AGP
A: That is not correct. Besides, our ideologies are also different. But I must admit that some of the boys of the Assam agitation have [illegible]

Assam government nets in around Rs 14 crores in sales tax directly from the G TAC without even spending a rupee or employing a single hand. But the sudden withdrawal of Brooke Bond. Lipton and J.V. Gokul—these three companies buy about 50 per cent of the total offerings—has adversely affected the auction.

For example, as many as 50,000 packages of tea worth over Rs 14 crores remained unsold at the auction held on 13 and 14 November. The small tea companies can in no way fill the void created by the three giants. Though the price of tea has not really dipped —it has dropped by Rs one to Rs two per kg—the sales have. And, officials of the GTAC have informed the state government about the crisis. Explains Naresh Rajkhawa, a veteran journalist who looks after the publicity of the Assam Branch Indian Tea Association (ABITA): "Assam's economy is based on tea. But if so many packages of tea remain unsold, it could set off a chain of adverse reactions. The unsold packages will have to be taken back to the warehouses which will, in turn, raise the warehouse charges. Then, the labourers won't get their wages on time—this could be the beginning of one of the biggest threats."



Rows of empty seats at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre: hard times

The tea personnel are not the only ones to feel panicky. The common man too feels threatened. And with reason. The ULFA had killed five people in 1987. In 1988, the death toll rose to 24 and the following year the figure stood at 28. And till August this year the ULFA had gunned down 36 people. Explains a rather defensive director general of police (DGP) B.D. Kharkwal: "We haven't given up. We are trying our best to contain the situation." But the influence of the ULFA has spread far and wide across the state. "Nowadays it is respectable to be a member of this outfit," explains the state Janata Dal chief, Golap Borbora. And at some places like Lakhimpur and Dhemaji it is the writ of the ULFA that matters. The organisation may be doing commendable developmental work in the villages like building roads and running schools, but it is their terror tactics which is isolating them from the masses. "In Upper Assam businessman used to keep their shops open till midnight. But now you will find shops closing down after sunset. It is all because of these extortion threats," says Borbora. Even the state capital, Guwahati, is not free from the ULFA

joined the rebel outfit.

Q: It has been further alleged that the ULFA might have a say in the selection of AGP candidates for the forthcoming Assembly polls.
A: The ULFA activists do not believe in either the Indian Constitution or democracy. So, if they give up violence and join mainstream politics and start participating in the democratic process, it will be a good thing for all of us.

Q: What is the state of the tea industry?
A: Our problem is that these tea people did not inform us—the police or the district administration—about the ULFA threats before. It is when the ULFA has increased the extortion money that they are coming to us for help and protection, which we are giving. But it is a law and order problem and they should have informed us earlier.

Q: What about the evacuation of some top tea executives of the Unilever group from the Doom Dooma tea gardens? Consequently two of the major companies, Brooke Bond and Lipton, have stopped operations in the state which have left at least 40,000 labourers unemployed.
A: We had no knowledge of the evacuation. I think that a central agency was involved in the act. Besides, these two companies have also stopped functioning without even informing us. We have requested these companies to resume work and have also assured the industry of providing security.

Q: Is it true that you have failed to provide adequate security to the state's businessmen?
A: We provide security to those who are asking for it. But the trouble is that we can't provide security to those who do not want it.

Q: How is the morale of the state police?
A: The death of Negi (SP of Dibrugarh) was a setback for the Assam Police... Negi was a courageous officer. The state police should nevertheless work fearlessly. After all, it is their duty to protect the life and property of civilians. So, if they become conscious of their own safety, then how can they work?

Q: How do you assess your performance in the last five years?
A: We have mainly concentrated on development work. We have decentralised planning upto the subdivisional level. Construction of primary school buildings in rural areas have been another achievement. Besides, we have built village roads and tanks and opened primary health centres. But there is still room for improvement in the agricultural sector.

threat. Border Security Force (BSF) jawans have been deployed in the city's main shopping area, Fancy Bazar. The shop-owners of this area are mostly Marwaris and have been asked to contribute to the ULFA fund. Says Rajkhawa: "One day three ULFA terrorists came up to my house and asked for my rifle. But I didn't give it to them. They can't demand anything like that. Today they are asking for my rifle. Tomorrow they will want the TV and then probably my daughter ...what will I do then?" But not many people had the guts to offer resistance. They just gave them what they wanted: money, rifles or even their Maruti Gypsies—the favourite vehicle of the ULFA.

However, ULFA is not Assam's only problem. The clout of the ULFA in Upper Assam, particularly in the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, is being challenged by the tribals and the Ahoms who have set up the URMCA (United Reservation Movement Council of Assam). This outfit is slowly gearing up to take on the might of the ULFA. "The ULFA is a secret police force of the AGP government," points out Ranauj Pegu, president of the URMCA. Clashes have already taken place between the two outfits. Moveover, the Bodo tribals along with the Karbis and Missings are also arming themselves for any confrontation. What is more, Bengali Muslims, who constitute 40 per cent of the population of the state, are also collecting arms, to avoid a repeat of the 1983 massacre. So where does this all lead to: battle, elections or President's Rule?

The AGP, which did precious little during its five-year rule did achieve something tangible for the state during V.P. Singh's brief tenure as Prime Minister. A friendly National Front government conceded to certain long-standing demands like an increase in oil royalty for the state, besides promising to set up another oil refinery, two central universities and an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Assam. The previous government even sanctioned a gas cracker unit. Besides, the Centre also agreed to include Assam among the Special Category States which are entitled to central funding in the ratio of 90 per cent by way of grants and ten per cent as loan. The Centre also invested substantially in the state's oil industry. But these were small gains and there was no denying the fact that the AGP's support base had withered considerably. The tribals have become vehemently anti-AGP. The various ethnic groups like the Karbis and Missings too do not view the AGP favourably.

The severe criticism of the revised voters' list by the AASU is certainly a big blow for the state government. AASU members have been constantly demanding that the people who settled in Assam between 1966 and 1971 should be detected and their voting rights scrapped for ten years (1985-1995). But AASU office-bearers are extremely unhappy with the revised voters' list prepared in February, 1990, and they believe that false documents of citizenships were accepted by the administration. Meanwhile, the Janata Dal and the Congress(S) led by former chief minister Sarat Chandra Sinha—who has a sizeable following in the state—are going all out to take on the AGP. Besides, the fall of the National Front government at the Centre has made the state Janata Dal more militant. Golap Borbora is almost unequivocal about his party's stand: "The National Front (AGP is a constituent member of the Front) cannot compel us to do anything. The law and order situation in the state is bad. And unless the AGP does something to improve this condition, elections will be held at gunpoint...There will be mass rigging." Moreover, with Rajiv Gandhi once again becoming a key figure in central politics, the state Congress(I) is also making a serious bid for power. "In between 1986 and 1990, 51 Congress workers were killed in the state. But no inquiry had been ordered because the AGP and the ULFA were behind the killings," points out the APCC(I) chief, Hiteswar Saikia.

For the average Assamese it has been a long, long story of deprivation, despair and neglect. And even today he doesn't know how to get out of the trap. ●

Sarthak Banerjee/Guwahati



GOLAP BORBORA

President, Janata Dal, state unit

The law and order situation in the state is bad enough and unless the AGP does something to tackle the problem, elections will be held at gunpoint



NARESH RAJKHAWA

Veteran journalist

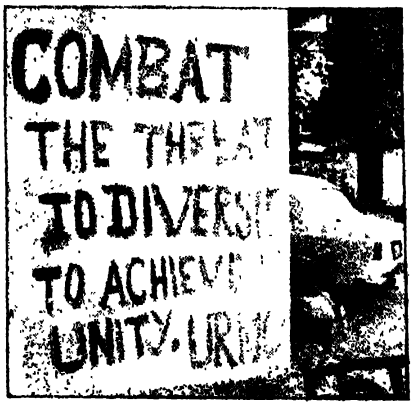
Today the ULFA activists want my rifle. Tomorrow they will demand my TV and then probably my daughter...what is the government doing?



HITESWAR SAIKIA

President, Congress(I), state unit

In between 1986 and 1990, 51 Congress workers were killed in the state. But no enquiry had been ordered because the AGP and the ULFA were behind the killings.



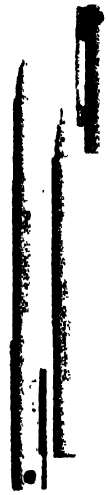
URMCA posters: challenging the ULFA

PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHOKE CHAKRABARTY

Bestsellers

PENNED BY LUXOR

PILOT



Pilot Hi Tecpoint 05 by Luxor.

BALL POINT PENS



Plastic barrels:
Left to Right
Ranger, Monami
and Trendy.



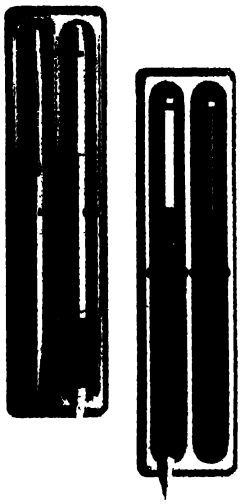
Metal barrels:
Left to Right Jotter, Crola,
Sterling Chrismatic and Goldline

MARKERS



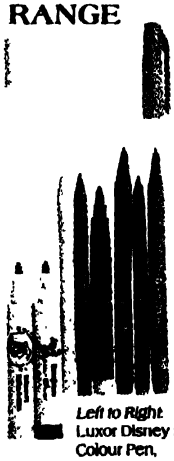
Left to Right Luxor Excel
2 in-1 Marker, Monami
Oil Magic Twin Dual Marker,
Excel Metal Body Permanent
Marker in fine (bullet)
and broad (chisel) tips

GIFT SETS



Left to Right Sterling and Vintage,
Also available gift set
of Crola.

CHILDREN'S RANGE



Left to Right
Luxor Disney Funset
Colour Pen,
Luxor Bambino Colourset Pen,
Disney Inoxcolour Plastic Crayons,
Luxor Donald Duck Magicset Colour Pen,
Luxor Sign Pen,
Luxor Mickey Mouse Sketch Pen
and Luxor Colour Pen

MICROTIP/ FINE WRITING PENS



Left to Right Hi-Roller,
Finewriter,
Graphic 05
and Stylo microtip

HILITERS



Left to Right Luxor
Fluorescent
Textliter
and Luxor
Fluorescent Hiliter.

Vital tips
for exciting writing

Available in a wide choice of styles, finishes, body colours,
ink colours and tips. For a variety of applications. Available:
refillable inks and refills manufactured by Luxor for all pens featured here.

Luxor(R)

LUXOR PEN CO., 229, Okhla Industrial Estate,
Phase III, New Delhi-110020, India. Tel. : 633318,
6833372, 6835607. Tlx. : 031-75069 SION IN.
Fax : 011-6847602. Tel. : Delhi (Sales) : 522956,
Bombay : 6730251, Calcutta : 250407.

CLARION D-251

LET'S SAVE PETROL

"Together let us solemnly pledge to keep our cars off the road once a week."

Thus the message, signed by 13 prominent personalities: Lata Mangeshkar, Sachin Tendulkar, Hema Malini, Sunil Gavaskar, M. Balamuralikrishna, R.K. Laxman, Mohammad Azharuddin and M.F. Hussain.

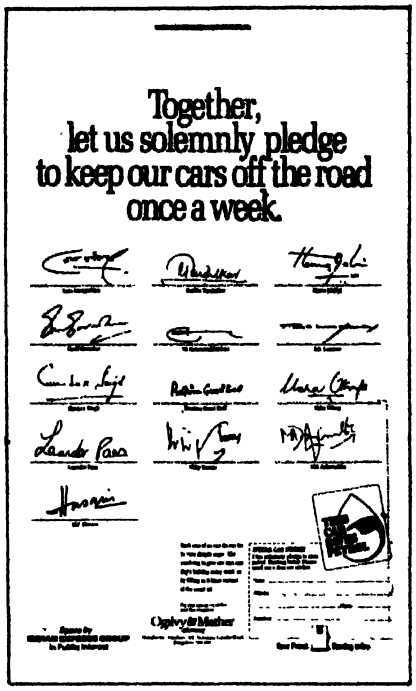
Part of the current drive to save fuel, the statement went on to cajole people to give their cars a day's holiday every week, and resolve to fill in eight litres instead of the usual ten.

All those of you who are willing to give it a try, are entitled to a free car sticker which says: "This car saves petrol".

All you have to do is write in to Ogilvy & Mather at Mahalaxmi Chambers, Bangalore.



Sunil Gavaskar





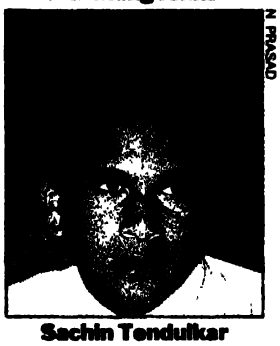
SHOOTER

Lata Mangeshkar



NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA

Leander Paes



N. PRASAD

Sachin Tendulkar



DURGAPASAD

Dilip Kumar



M.F. Hussain



GAUTAM RAJADHYAKSHA

Hema Malini

A WEEK TOO LATE

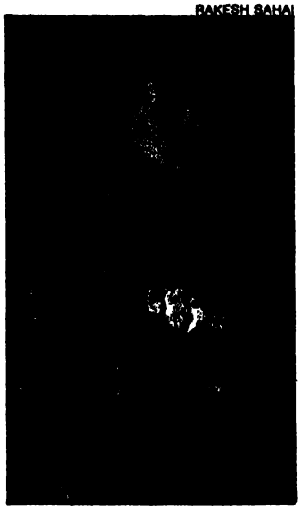
[redacted] The last time she held an exhibition, the media ignored the paintings and concentrated on the guest list. But that was when husband Satish was the Prime Minister's right-hand man.

Last month, Sterre Sharma, the attractive, unaffected, Dutch wife of the man whose swimming pool once enthralled an entire nation, held another exhibition at Bombay's Taj Art Gallery.

She had hoped that V.P. Singh would still be Prime Minister so that



her work would not be seen as having benefitted from Satish's influence. Unfortunately, the



RAKESH SAHAI

Sterre Sharma: artistic success

government fell a week before the show opened and the good captain was once again the new heart-throb of the fat cat.

Despite the guest list, the exhibition was an artistic success, garnering good reviews from the normally cynical Bombay press and this time Sterre took no chances: she made it clear that the proceeds would go to charity, lest the papers repeat that old taunt about profiting from Satish's success. And the quality of the paintings spoke for itself.

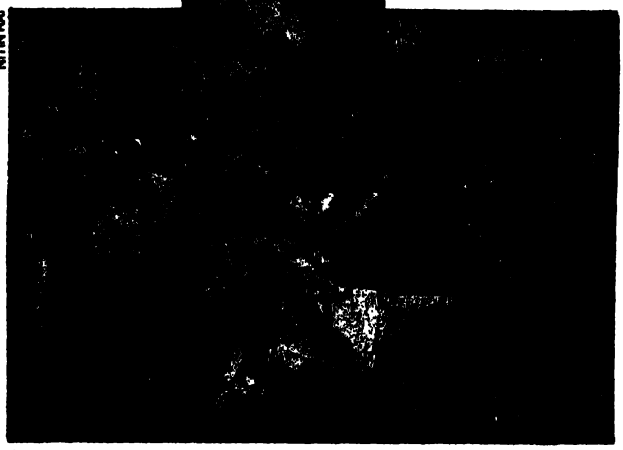
BACK TO THE GRIND

Now that mid-term polls seem inevitable, never mind the timing, N.T. Rama Rao has begun working on his mythological *magnum opus, Vishwamitra,* yet again.

Last year, the National Front chairman had been gearing up towards a December release, in the hope that general elections would be held around that time, and he could build his campaign around the film. But Rajiv Gandhi took care of that one, announcing polls in November. NTR promptly put the movie on the back-burner, where it remained until recently.

But now that elections aren't too far away, or so the former Andhra Pradesh CM believes, he's resumed work on *Vishwamitra.* And once the film is complete, with NTR playing the sage to Meenakshi Seshadri's Menaka, it will form the cornerstone of the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) campaign.

NITIN RAI



(Inset) N.T. Rama Rao: on the sets again

WE LOVE YOU, KULDIP

He's got his fair share of flak. But Kuldip Nayar will leave England in a blaze of glory, if the move to table an all-party motion in the House of Commons, lauding his performance as the Indian High Commissioner to London, works out.

The motion, expressing the appreciation of the British people for Nayar's efforts to improve Indo-British relations and his work for the Indian community in Britain, would be the first such ever moved in the Commons.

Said MP Keith Vaz, "Many members from all parties have already expressed support for the motion," adding that Nayar's resignation was a "very, very, sad decision," and a "terrible event" for the Indian community in Britain.

But unfortunately for the former envoy, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar has his own views on the matter.

PHAL S. GIROTA



Kuldip Nayar: Keith Vaz (below) spearheads the move for a motion of thanks



PLATINUM IS BEST

His songs play at every street corner in north India: he stars in *Pop Time* as the representative of Punjabi music: his albums, more often than not, break all sales records as far as the regional music market goes.

That should be enough to satisfy most people.

But Gurdas Maan is not one to rest on past laurels, even if they include two platinum discs (for *Akhiyan Udeekdiyan* and *Mohabbat Zindabad*). And he's proved that yet again with his new album, *Dil Da Badshaah,* released by *sarod* maestro Amjad Ali Khan at a function in New Delhi.



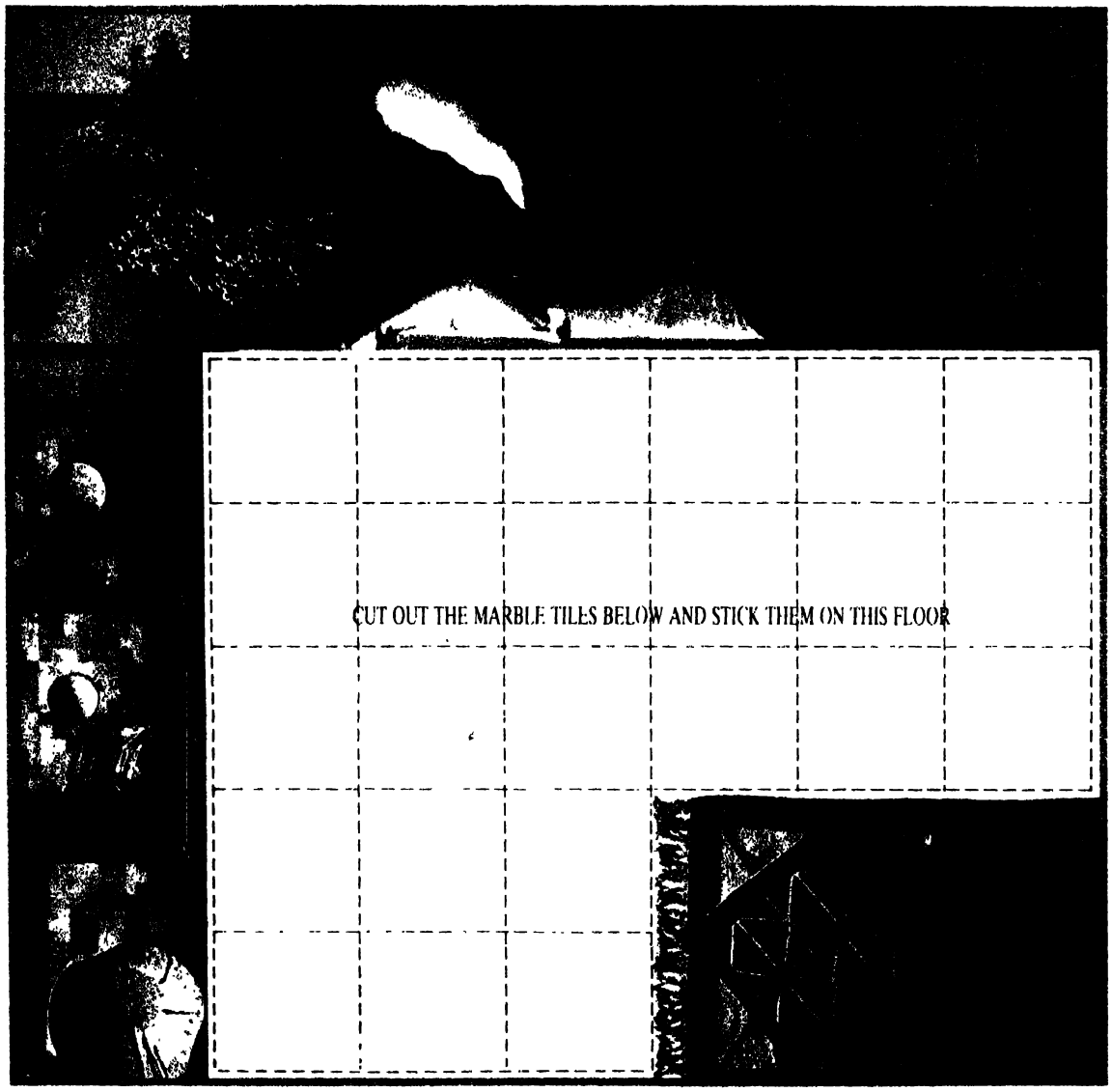
Gurdas Maan: new album

Maan has another treat in store for his fans, his forthcoming film currently under production and directed by that failed actress of Hindi cinema, Preeti Sapru.

And guess who his co-star is going to be?

None other than Malkit Singh of *Tutak tutak tutiyan* fame. ●

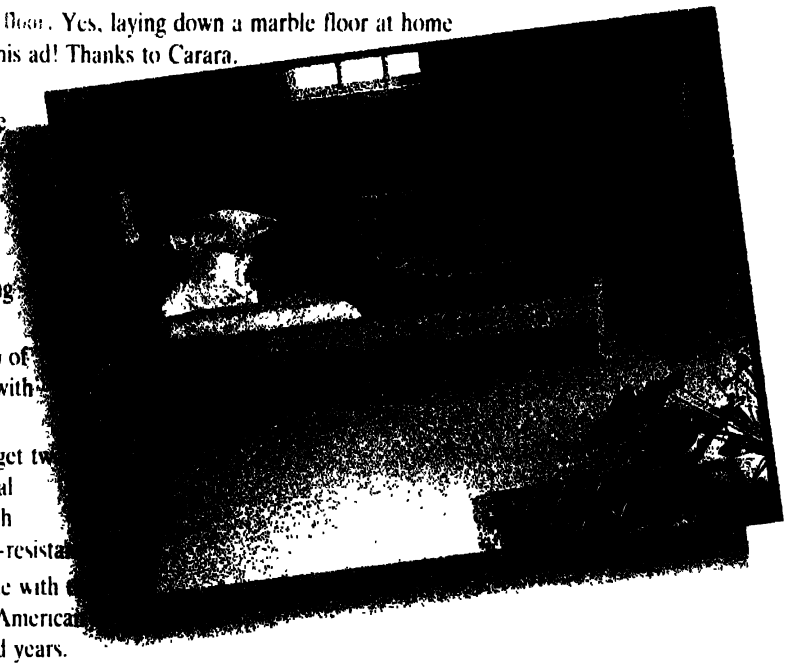
IN JUST A FEW MINUTES, YOU COULD CREATE A MARBLE FLOOR ON THIS PAGE.



Armstrong World Industries permit INARCO Ltd. the use of the brand-name Armstrong, under licence.

IN JUST A FEW HOURS, WE CAN CREATE ONE IN YOUR HOME.

Carara. The quick and easy marble floor. Yes, laying down a marble floor at home is as simple as sticking on the tiles in this ad! Thanks to Carara.



All you have to do is get Carara laid over your existing floor. In a shade that matches your walls and furnishing.

It'll take just a few hours. No mess, no inconvenience.

Blended Marble Carara is made of blended marble, a unique floor covering material.

80% of each Carara tile is made up of fine granulated marble, held together with imported binders.

Colours to match your mood. You get two exquisite designs and a range of original shades to choose from. And the smooth toughness of marble: Carara is scratch-resistant.

World class expertise. Carara is made with the technical expertise of Armstrong, the American floorings giant. So it lasts for years and years.

What's more, giving a room a Carara floor costs you less than giving it a new coat of paint!

Hurry, call any of our offices today. And stick on a brand new marble floor.

Armstrong

CARARA

BLENDED MARBLE TILES

Instant floor decor

INARCO Offices: Bombay: 12-A, Advent, Gen. Bhosale Marg, Bombay 400 021. Ph. 2022621, 2022213.

HTA 2965

GAUTAM PATOLE



"I have no desire to run the country"

Industrialist Rahul Bajaj on his aspirations, the government, his companies and the future

He does not pull his punches. He thinks straight. He is brutally frank for a businessman. And he admits his failures. Rahul Bajaj is also India's scooter—and fast-emerging motorcycle—king, presiding over an empire, that brings in Rs 1,600 crores a year in sales.

Bajaj met SUNDAY *s* ***Godfrey Pereira*** *over two interview sessions—once in Pune, while the Raja sti!" reigned, and later in Bombay after Chandra Shekhar took over. To speak his mind about a wide range of subjects. Excerpts from the interview:*

SUNDAY: What is it that you have got that puts you where you are?

Rahul Bajaj: Well...it is just hard and sincere work, with a lot of planning. In 1968, the annual turnover of Bajaj Auto was around Rs 72 million. Today, for 1989-90, the annual turnover is Rs 10,640 million. Well, its simple, really. I lead from the front. If I do not put my back and mind to a certain problem, I certainly cannot expect anyone to join me. And, I think all the time. In my mind production never stops.

Q: Did you get socked on the field because the tough guys in class considered you a sissy?

A: *(Laughs)* See, I went to Cathedral High School in Bombay. I was always a first class first student, always. And no one dared to 'sock' me as you put it because I was the school's boxing captain. I was pretty good in the gloves department. I had a natural talent for keeping away the knocks, watching for the other guy's guard to move and then, **WHAM.** I was prefect of 'Savage' house, and also was the table tennis champion. And if anybody called me a 'sissy' they certainly did it where I could not hear them *(smiles).*

Q: Did your late father, Kamalnayan

Bajaj, inspire you? He was a tough, no nonsense man.
A: Oh, he was tough all right What impressed me—and still does—was my father's integrity. See, he might have not been the most popular man, because he was straightforward. He simply liked to call a spade a spade. Sure, he also had a lot of friends who knew what he was all about, and they respected him for that.

Q: Did you want to get into the family business?
A: I don't think that I wanted to do anything but join the family business. At dinner it was always business talk, so I guess...well, it's like osmosis, it just seeped in. Looking back, I guess I began getting interested and involved in the family business when I was 14. And today, here I am.

Q: After you finished law college what made you want to go to Harvard University?
A: Simple. Because it is the best business school in the world.

Q: Did you have to compromise on much that you learnt at Harvard?
A: It is not a question of compromise. Where marketing is concerned, its importance is only just being felt. But here in India, a clearance form can take six months to be passed. There is nothing much you can do about that, but work hard at it and save your own time.

Q: You have had problems with the tax man. Have the government's attitude and policies hampered the growth of Bajaj Auto?
A: No, not really. I must say that I have had no problem with the government. They have been fair to me, and well, I have just been putting my head down and working.

Q: You are perceived as Mr Clean, so why the tax raids?
A: You are asking the wrong man. In 1985, V.P. Singh raided me when he was the finance minister. They got some information, which they made a complete mess of. They came to Bajaj Auto and took the register. But eventually, they could not do anything.

Q: How would you like the government to behave towards business houses?
A: We want the government off our backs. All this talk of de-regulations is just hot air. The fact is that we are regulated. See, in business, nobody is a saint, but when you have to run to the government for every little thing, then there is bound to be frustration, and this later manifests itself in various ways.

Q: How do you view the present government?
A: Which government?

Q: The government of Chandra Shekhar supported by the Congress(I).
A: *(Laughs)* We were talking just a couple of days before and it was a different government. Today it is Chandra Shekhar. Tomorrow, who knows? Journalists keep on changing the government.

Q: What kind of a government are you looking for?
A: I want a government that will provide stability to this government (and) country. A government that will be able to take care of the law and order problem. Which can maintain a check on the prices, and at least, keep inflation from soaring, which today is easier said than done—partly due to the Gulf crisis. And a government which, over a period of time solves problems like the Mandal Commission, Ayodhya, Punjab, Kashmir. A government which encourages growth of industry, entrepreneurship, de-regulation. That is the kind of government that I would support.

I want the poor to rise. Once they have money they have purchasing power, their lives are better, because they work for their living. And they will also be able to afford things like my scooters and motor cycles. If there is no purchasing power in the country how will I grow?



Q: Many of your contemporaries are very close to Delhi and the powers that be—to diversify, to obtain licences...
A: I cannot talk for others. They do it for their reasons. Obviously, no one does something to harm themselves. I have never had the desire or the inclination to take that road. My relationship to people in New Delhi is as good as anybody else's. When you want undue favours, you have to pay for it with undue favours. I do not want to build my business on undue favours, so I simply don't ask for these favours. And I have no desire to run the country. If I had that desire then I would run for Parliament and run for Prime Minister. But I definitely do not want to run this country as an industrialist.

As an industrialist I believe that I have the right to influence people, be they ministers or Parliament members. I think that it is justified if I think on industrial and economic policy matters—if the government is doing the right thing or, if the policies are going to harm business. But the problem is that industry is not always united. If industry were, we could influence in a big way the opinions that matter. But I am not personally (doing that). And I am not passing value judgement on others, but it is not fair (that) everybody is in a different position.

Q: Where management is concerned, how do you handle your executives?
A: I have always led by example. And let us look at it this way. Why did I decide to set up shop in Pune in the '60s? Why not Bombay? Why not New Delhi, where the powers that be sit? When I came to Akurdi in Pune, people said that I was crazy. It was deserted, and there were snakes around, plenty of them, but I had to be where my work was.

Q: Still, people wonder. With all your money why stay in a factory complex?
A: Look, I live like a top executive and not like a top industrialist. That is the Bajaj way. That is the way I was brought up. I told myself that I was not going to be an absentee landlord. I am not like many of my contemporaries. We do not believe in an ostentatious display of wealth. I do not think that is in good taste. Just look at how



"I would rather be the best than the biggest. Our aim was to be the biggest in India, which two years ago, we achieved"

some of the industrialists live.

Q: Well, could you name a few?
A: Oh no! They are known to me and it will cause unnecessary trouble.

Q: Today, it is widely known that many top industrialists, many of them well known to you, have profited by leaning towards politicians.
A: What you are asking is have I ever gone to politicians for help regarding Bajaj Auto. The answer is NO. I do not need any complications and I do not want to run the country. I want to do my work, in which I am totally involved.

Earlier I had said that I do not lead a life that many of my contemporaries lead. I have never felt the need for a diversion, or hobby, or whatever. Sure, I know that I need exercise, I know that I am not getting any younger, but then there is so much of work to do. Even if I go to a party, and the conversation does not interest me, I switch off, and automatically think of work plans. For me it is an ongoing process. I have to make Bajaj Auto an international success.

Q: Where growth is concerned you have not gone through the acquisition route. The Ambanis have tried it, R.P. Goenka, Vijay Mallya and Manu Chhabria have done it.
A: I would prefer to stick to my knitting. I have a dream for Bajaj Auto, to make it number one in the world, and that is what I am concentrating on. Yes, there have been pressures to diversify, but I have stuck to my guns. The Bajaj group is a family that has over 25 businesses, but Bajaj Auto is where my energy goes, and it excites me tremendously. For me it is the flagship, and I am going to steer it to international success. We have a record of a vehicle produced every 35 seconds, and I must say that I am proud of that. My dream is to produce one million vehicles a year by 1990-91 and a turnover that will cross the Rs 10 billion mark. It is possible and I am going to do it.



GAUTAM PATOLE

"If the country is doing well, then Bajaj Auto will do well. Then obviously, Rahul Bajaj will not be doing too badly"

Q: What were the business strategies and policies that went into making Bajaj Auto what it is today? And have those policies changed with time?
A: I can give a two hour answer to this question. Well, let's see, how would I put it? Quite frankly, what goes into the making of any successful company? Team work, hard work, leadership. No one man can bring a company up, it has to be team work. And this team work, how does it come about? Good management. How does good management come about? There has to be a leader.

Q: Well, but what were the strategies used by you at Bajaj Auto?
A: Now strategies were some of the things where we have been different at Bajaj Auto from some other large groups. There are various routes by which you can reach New Delhi. I am not saying that the route that we followed is the only route. But till now, the route that Bajaj Auto has taken seems to have paid dividends. For example, we have had no diversification. With our resources, our cash flow, our profitability—for the last 20 years, for the last ten years, for the last five years, for the last two years—I can easily set up a Rs 2,000 crore petrochemical or fertilizer complex which half a dozen of the large groups are doing. They are doing a good job. And before you ask, yes maybe I am wrong in not doing it.

But at Bajaj Auto I said we will stick to our knitting, and if at all, we will expand in the motorised two and three wheeler field. If we can diversify, keeping in mind Government of India's regulations, and the market of this country, we will go into related fields. For example, like some years ago we were looking at the possibility of making cars. For various reasons it did not materialise. We were thinking of acquisitioning, sorry not acquisitioning, because I do not believe in hostile takeovers, but for buying Ashok Leyland, because it was along similar lines we made a bid (in 1987). We did not get it, so fair enough.

Q: What went wrong?
A: The government did not permit it at that time.

Q: Getting back to your work...
A: Stick to your knitting. Which means: do not diversify into unrelated fields. I would rather be the best

than the biggest. So our aim was to be the biggest in India, which two years ago, fortunately we achieved. And (we are) till today. We do not know what will happen tomorrow, we hope we will retain our leadership position. Now, the dream is that in a few years we will become an international player, and we want to now diversify, not in terms of products in other fields, but with the same products we want to diversify geographically, selling to other countries. But that will take time because there are lots of problems, *vis a vis* cost, quality, technology.

Q: Let's get back to takeovers. Would you still rule it out, if it was not in your words, 'a hostile takeover'?
A: Well, if the owner for some reason wants to get out, if I consider it a worthwhile company to add to our group, and an amicable deal can be arrived at, I would not rule that out. But we have built our own plants, we have employed our people and that is the way we intend to grow.

Q: What do you think has made you into a manager that people talk about? And what are your weaknesses?
A: Everybody has weaknesses. People always underestimate their weaknesses. I think from the feedback that I have got, my weaknesses are that I do not delegate, I am too aggressive, I try to get people involved but maybe because of my aggressiveness I shut people off. I don't think that these are serious weaknesses, but this is what I have heard. So I am mentioning them. My over-confidence, I am told, is the third. I am sure that there are many others but you must talk to people who don't like me.

Q: What is the best way of conducting business in India?
A: See, because of the regulated economy, yes the environment is different. And these are obstacles for doing certain things that you want to do for being internationally competitive. But otherwise, where work is concerned, the aspect that must be stressed is, not making a lot of noise, certainly not being flamboyant. As I have always said, leadership is not charisma, leadership is not public relations. Leadership is performance, leadership is credit-worthiness, leadership is the bottom line. With leadership, the other factors fall into place. What use will it serve if I have great marketing strategies and my product does not measure up to the promises made? If you create a good product that is cost-worthy, backed by solid marketing and technology, I don't see how it will fail. But I can say with pride, without sounding like a saint, that we have tried to follow business ethics.



"Do I live as a poor man lives, as my grandfather lived or Gandhi lived? My answer is no. But do I live as some other rich people live? Again my answer is no "

Q: You sound a little self-righteous...
A: See, I am not here to make a confession on the one hand, and I am not here to show off on the other. And you are not trying to be clever and neither am I. For example, if somebody said are you a trustee for your wealth, in the sense (Mahatma) Gandhi said one should be, my answer is no. Do I live as a poor man lives, as my grandfather lived or Gandhi lived? My answer is no. But do I live as some other rich people live? Again, my answer is no.



Q: What path should India follow where business management is concerned? The American, Japanese or German?
A: Here, we only talk of our rights, we do not talk about our obligations and duties, and I am not trying to be a saint again, I am not a saint myself. But like John Kennedy said, 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country'. And that is precisely the kind of thing which we don't have. While hard work is common, technology and R and D is common to all these countries, but... we have maximum to gain from the Japanese.

Q: What about Bajaj Auto? Have you tried to incorporate the Japanese system?
A: What we are trying, and what we have not succeeded in, is the Japanese system of concensus working... I do not believe that a committee can take a major decision. Sure, committees have a role to play, but not this. You have to delegate with accountability, you have to motivate your people, you have to make your senior executives

feel that they are entrepreneurs, you have to get them to work together. It is easier said than done. I must confess that they are not working together at Bajaj Auto to the extent that they should be, and that is *my* failure.

Q: Do you view this as one of your weaknesses, this inability to get your senior executives to work together?
A: It is not a weakness...I have some others, I don't know. We are bad people, otherwise they would not be there. But the Indians do not work together like the Japanese do. It is the Indian culture, the Indian individuality, it is the Indian tradition. It is not my failure, it is a national situation. It will take time and you are not God to do this overnight.

Q: I heard that you have not been keeping too well recently?
A: You heard? Not true. You want to go a round, or a couple of them? I was the school boxing champion, remember? Well, I had a heart problem in 1984, nothing after that, nothing before that. So what you heard is not true. The rest is up to Him (*points upwards*).

Q: How do you view the competition that you have been facing from Kinetic Honda scooters?
A: Not only Kinetic Honda, but also LML (Lohia Machines Ltd). The market is very very competitive and the best guy is going to win. If I have the larger market share it is left to see if we can retain it. We will be fighting our competitors with quality, technology, marketing, better designs from our R and D experts. We will give it everything that is there to give, and we will not do anything underhand, and I guess so will they. But we will give no quarter and we expect no quarter. Each will, and should, want a larger and larger share. Now for scooters, I have a 70 per cent market share, and I want a larger market share. Why not? Bajaj Kawasaki (motor cycles) which was the lowest has now reached 25 per cent where market share is concerned.

Q: Do you feel that the monopoly that you once had is now coming to an end?
A: Very beautiful question. But there was never a monopoly because there was never a single manufacturer. Others could not compete strongly, well, it is their problem. We just happen to be a little better and till yesterday our market share has not fallen.



"Sure they (his children) are interested in the family business, but first, they will have to learn the ropes at the workshop level"

Q: Considering the gas crunch, what are your plans for the future?
A: First let me make this clear. Our R and D people must be given credit for creating India's very first totally indigenous motorcycle. It was the Bajaj M50, which was later powered (up) and is now known as the Bajaj M80. Presently R and D is also working on various fuel-efficient two and three wheelers, and of course, we have the Kawasaki Bajaj KB 100. Our R and D people are busy working on various plans and designs. We have over 15,000 employees who will translate these plans into reality.

Q: Do you feel that you should step up the pace if you want to beat Honda in the auto game internationally?
A: Well, Honda spends more on R and D in one year than is possible for us right now. Their expense on R and D is more than double our annual turnover. Still, we lead the world market in three wheelers, and that is not bad.

Q: Is that the reason you began advertising in *Time* magazine. What was the feedback like?
A: Well, I was not looking for sales feedback. That was corporate advertising. Then at that time we were exporting to Indonesia and Japan, but the *Time* magazine Bajaj Auto ads were not meant to make the sales graph jump.

Q: How do you view Indian consumerism? Do you consider current trends good or bad?
A: Where I am concerned, where industry goes, bad quality and irresponsible manufacturing should be curbed.

Q: Why did you take on the chairmanship of Indian Airlines, between 1986-89?
A: Simply because they asked me.

Q: Well, I'm sure that was not the only consideration.
A: See, there were so many top industrialists around. Why did they ask me? They believed in my managerial skills, and in my ability. I am sure that many were considered, but the fact remains that they still chose me. I am not trying to sound pompous, I am simply stating what happened.

Q: What's it like living within the factory complex?
A: It is like living in a glass house. When you stay in a factory complex, you cannot have orgies. And you are there, right on the spot to tackle anything at any part of the day or night. For me there are no disadvantages. Sure, I have my privacy and I am right at the centre of everything.

Q: You have two sons and a daughter. Are they actively involved with Bajaj Auto?
A: Well, right now Rajiv, my eldest son, is coming up through the ranks. Sanjiv, my second son, is studying and so is my daughter Sunaina. Sure they are interested in the family business, but first, they will have to learn the ropes at workshop level and then move on.

Q: How do you see the future of Bajaj Auto? And what about yourself?
A: Forget myself. Well, for Bajaj Auto I see a very rosy picture, I see a tough fight ahead but then that is what good managers, good leaders are there for. If the country is doing well, then Bajaj Auto will do well. Then obviously, Rahul Bajaj will not be doing too badly. ●

ECONOMY

Walking the plank

As India moves along the path to economic hara-kiri, the new team has its hands full trying to cope

When V. P. Singh reigned, money matters were at such a low ebb that it scared the living daylights out of India. The Raja is gone, but he has left behind such a policy mess that things are going to get scarier.

The new team is in, and learning the ropes. Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and his money men have their work cut out for them. It is unlikely that any major policy decision will be taken in the next two weeks. Ministers are still being briefed by their secretaries, lobbyists are crowding the capital- both to kowtow to the new ministers and to air their views, grievances and needs. And the economic nightmare- initiated by Rajiv Gandhi, perpetuated by V. P. Singh and exacerbated by Saddam Hussain- has yet to be absorbed by the new team.

Most of the ministers are past masters at politics, but have little or no knowledge of economics and finance. To top this, there is the ever-present scare that the PM will do a hatchet job on liberalisation and consumerism, despite his claims to the contrary. And that the Gulf crisis is going to be India's undoing.

For Chandra Shekhar and his team, it could be the worst of times, and yes, even the best of times—provided they can reverse just about anything that is wrong with economic policy-making.

Which is very unlikely. What follows is a round-up of how new equations and policies are taking shape.

Chandra Shekhar: has his work cut out for him



JAGDISH YADAV

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

You have got to hand it to finance minister Yashwant Sinha, the man works hard. He spends close to seven hours a day just getting briefed. Then, paper and political work.

Sinha will have to work harder. The deficit could touch Rs 14,000 crores, almost double of what the Raja's regime had estimated for 1990-91. Foreign exchange reserves are at Rs 3,200 crores, enough for just *one month's* imports. Even government officials admit that inflation is close to ten per cent, and if the Gulf crisis persists, it could go higher.

"We have to cut unnecessary expenditure," says deputy finance minister Digvijay Singh. "For example, I was looking through files and I saw that Rs 1 crore was allocated for each foundation stone-laying ceremony (for public sector enterprises). This is useless. It has to stop." He adds: "Chandra Shekharji has reduced the PM's convoy from nine cars to three. Ministers had two official cars, now they have one. We have to show by example. India's finances are in a big mess."

"We're hoping that by end-December, the Gulf situation will even out," says a senior finance ministry official, "and oil prices stabilise at US $24 a barrel." Otherwise, he adds, "Unscrambling the situation will be very difficult."

The good thing is that ministry bureaucrats feel that Yashwant Sinha is a solid man and can understand problems. And as Sinha is an ex-Indian Administrative Services officer, they can trust him (Sinha and finance secretary Bimal Jalan worked together at the industry ministry for a while).

But it will take more than trust to get the economy back on the rails.



Yashwant Sinha: challenging task ahead

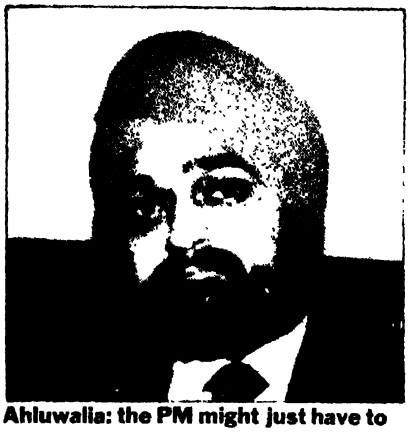
While on their way to brief Sinha yet again, last week, a visitor wished Jalan and chief economic adviser Deepak Nayyar, luck. The response: wan smiles.

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

The PM's portfolio, and that is the problem. Chandra Shekhar is keeping his cards close to his chest and there is not a word about what will happen to former minister Ajit Singh's still-doomed new industrial policy proposals.

However, the PM has hinted that liberalisation will continue. And his right-hand man, Union commerce minister Subramaniam Swamy, has said that procedures will be simplified. Much the same as the previous government's plans. But direct foreign investment is still a grey area, and the ministry is mum about it.

The bad thing is, unless India unveils its liberalisation plan quickly, the International Monetary Fund is likely to delay its official sanction for a US



Ahluwalia: the PM might just have to follow the policies that he championed

$450 million (Rs 810 crores) contingency loan package to India. "After all," says a key government policymaker, "you have to give them some indication that you can pay them back. For that, the economy has to do well."

A bit of good news. Industry will carry on. And as SUNDAY goes to press, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, the brain behind the liberalisation moves, is still special secretary at the PM's office. And people such as industry secretary A. N. Verma still look to him for counsel.

But if the PM sacks Ahluwalia, as he has threatened to do often enough, he stands to lose a brilliant economics man, who is also experienced an amazing six years at the PMO. "Politicians say a lot of things when they are out of power," says a top ministry bureaucrat. "But when they come to power, they have to deal with realities."

This could still save Ahluwalia, though the man himself seems to have given up hope. If he manages to stay on, he could experience victory of sorts. The PM might have to follow most of the policies that Ahluwalia championed—and the PM criticised earlier. Liberalisation, privatisation, easing foreign investment norms, the works.

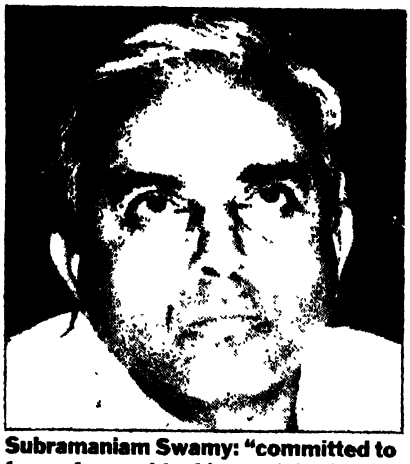
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

"It seems that the previous commerce minister (Arun Nehru) did nothing at all," says Subramaniam Swamy, the latest incumbent. While that may not be true, the fact is that the trade deficit has increased. For April-September 1990, the deficit is pegged at Rs 4,233.63 crores, 35.2 per cent more than the deficit of Rs 3,130.56 crores during the same period last year.

To offset this problem, Swamy plans to initiate policies to build "export competitiveness" in India. No hard policies yet, but Swamy talks of how the government is "committed to frame forward-looking policies ...it will also be our endeavour to make our economic policy easy to understand and the direction clear."

Swamy's first test: the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs at Brussels, Belgium, from 3—7 December. "We're not going to give an inch," says Swamy. "But we're caught between a pincer. If we concede in Brussels, then we lose. And if we don't, the US hits us with Super 301 (Trade sanctions)."

For help, he may call on India's ambassador to the US Abid Hussain, who keeps in touch with US trade representative Carla Hills, the lady Swamy will take on at Brus-



Subramaniam Swamy: "committed to frame forward-looking policies"

sels. Swamy is characteristically upbeat. Says he: "With my background (a PhD in economics, and ten years as a professor at Harvard University) I should be able to absorb things quickly." And hopefully, act quickly.

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION

"My first priority," says civil aviation minister Harmohan Dhawan, "is to get the (Airbus) A320s back in the air. They were used to evacuate people from the Gulf, and are also being used on (Indian Airlines') overseas routes."

Brave words. The thing is, it is easy to believe Dhawan. For starters, he is efficient, and makes quick decisions. Like the day last week, when a MP from Jammu & Kashmir's Kargil constituency petitioned him. The problem, says the MP, is that roads in his constituency are impassable with snow, and the region is cut off. It is normal, he tells Dhawan, for a helicopter to operate in such an emergency, but this year, nothing has been done. Dhawan immediately picks up a phone, and orders a bureaucrat that the service be started right away.



Harmohan Dhawan: his priority is to get the A320 s back in the air

Dhawan, who is as comfortable wearing a safari suit as he is in a regulation *kurta-pyjama*, has a disarming air about him. He still smokes Wills king size filter cigarettes—refreshing in a set-up that refuses to do without a Dunhill.

All this, however, will not help his career as a minister much. His predecessor, Arif Mohammad Khan, was efficient and disarming, too. But he could not get the A320s up in the sky. Or improve Indian Airlines' (IC) service, or Air India's overheads. Or, save Vayudoot from quicksand, and Pawan Hans, for that matter.

But Dhawan could be different. One indication: "Do you know that IC planes come back with no cargo from overseas trips?" he asks. "I asked one officer why. He told me there are no imports. Then," says Dhawan, laughing, "India must be the richest country on earth."

Another instance. "I told an Air India official," says Dhawan, "that given the choice, I would never fly Air India. I asked him to give me one reason as to why I should. The officer said 'I'll get back to you.'"

"I like things to move," says Dhawan. For his sake and the country's—long traumatised by the civil aviation mess—one hopes he can pull it off.●

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi

STOCK MARKETS

Now what?

The economic mess is keeping share bazaars depressed, but Reliance could help spark off a boom—again

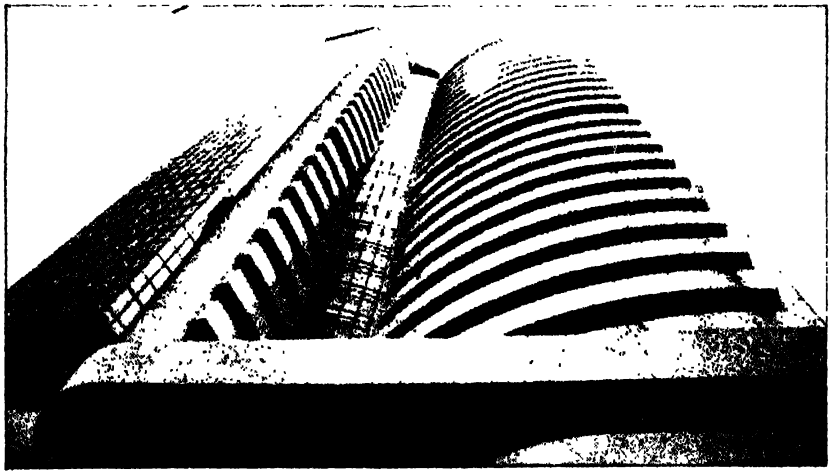
"Reliance is going to look good, very good", says Vishwaraj Chauhan, a leading share broker at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). "Look at the power of (Dhirubhai) Ambani." Adds another broker, Uday Upadhyay, "Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) is the best bet now. The next government, as everyone knows, will be headed by Rajiv Gandhi. Ambani and Gandhi are good friends, so Reliance will continue to shoot up for at least another five years."

On 21 November, the day Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar expanded his Cabinet after considerable hedging, Dhirubhai was all anyone discussed at the BSE. There was talk about how Yashwant Sinha was made Union finance minister only after the 'great man' gave his approval. About how Larsen & Toubro (L&T) will now revert to the Ambani wing and how Nusli Wadia, chairman of Bombay Dyeing (and Dhirubhai's bugbear), was finished forever. And about clout. "Now when Ambani and Gandhi decide that Chandra Shekhar will have to go," says Chauhan, "he will go. It is that simple."

But the stock markets did not reflect the euphoria about the corporate comeback of the year. RIL shares closed for the day at Rs 206.50, lower than the Rs 235 levels in the first week of November. L&T was at Rs 126.50, a rupee lower than its price a day after the new PM was sworn in, and Bombay Dyeing was at Rs 170 per share, *higher* than the post-swearing in level of Rs 165. And the BSE index recorded an amazing dip of 1265.2, almost 150 points lower than its level in the first week of the month. It appeared that nothing—not the talk of "corporate democracy" being restored *a la* Ambani, the prospect of the market riding the RIL wave back to an 1985-like boom, a proposed Rs 570 crore issue by the house, and so on—could cheer up India's share bazaars, and if Bombay Dyeing went up, it did so of its own accord, backed by a solid corporate performance.

Because, Ambani notwithstanding the Gulf crisis, the petroleum price hikes and shortages, the inflation and utter lack of government direction for industry, are not easy to ignore. *(See story on page 53.)* Neither is a Cabinet that is as green or inept as they come.

And the stock markets. It has not been a very good year, despite strong half-yearly results from the corporate sector. In the beginning of 1990, there was talk of how the capital markets mop up Rs 10,000 crores plus in investment. Now, it appears that the figure could be as low as Rs 3,000 crores. But the markets will bounce back, says Harbinder Singh, stock analyst. "I feel that Sinha can do no harm," he says. "We have had a great monsoon and if the political climate does not produce a storm, the market will even out."



The Bombay Stock Exchange: it did not reflect the euphoria about Reliance—the 'corporate comeback of the year'

On the tenth floor of the BSE, a bunch of top stock brokers and analysts meets informally to review the situation. "I have nothing against Yashwant Sinha being made finance minister," says Chamanbhai Patel, a respected long-time broker. "But the problem is the government. You must remember that Devi Lal is deputy PM once again." He adds: "I do not think Sinha will want to interfere with business houses, because if they do so right now, with the oil crisis, then it will be bad for their (the government's) business. But who is to say what will happen tomorrow? Before Sinha has the time to formulate progressive policies, he and his government could be out of power. This caretaker government is bad for business."

It may be, already. The lull at the BSE lasted three days, before prices and indexes began moving up. RIL had inched up to Rs 207 a share on 23 November, and Bombay Dyeing was at Rs 182.50. And the BSE index touched 1304.5. And L&T, spurred on by purchases estimated at two lakh shares—"knowledgeable circle purchases", as the trade calls it, an euphemism for the Ambanis grabbing whatever L&T shares they can get—gained Rs 30, to close at Rs 150 a share. ●

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

■ Ice him?

National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) chief Verghese Kurien could have another interest group gunning for him soon: the ice-cream lobby.

The oil barons of Gujarat are livid that Kurien is marketing edible



V. Kurien: lobby time

oil, and have tried to bump him off *(see SUNDAY 11–17 November, 1990)*. And if he starts selling ice-cream—which could be as soon as spring 1991, then it will be another battle joined. Actually, it has already started. For the past few months, lobbyists in New Delhi have been saying what a nasty man Kurien is, and how he plans to corner the market by keeping all the milk for the NDDB ice-cream, cutting back supplies to private ice-cream makers. This should certainly hurt Kwality, Vadilal, Go Cool and Dollops—made by Cadbury India—and all are top brand names. The ice-cream manufacturers are trying to strike deals with various state governments, goes the grapevine, in a bid to bypass Kurien. It may not work: ask the oil barons.

STOCK QUOTE

"Good grief! Things are bad enough as it is."

A prominent New Delhi travel executive, on Devi Lal picking up the tourism portfolio

■ The lost lady

It appears that Jaya Jaitley is taking her new job as chairperson of the National Institute of Design (NID) seriously. Or trying to. The lady—better known for promoting Gurjari (the Gujarat government's handicrafts effort), slamming Mrinalini Sarabhai, defending George Fernandes and the Mandal Commission report—made her way down to the ministry of industry (MOI) last week. (Ahmedabad-based NID takes its orders from the MOI, and has strong links with Indian industry.) Only, Jaitley had no clue about where exactly the ministry was located. She was striding into commerce minister Subramaniam Swamy's lair at Udyog Bhavan, when a couple of cops showed her the correct way, to the next block.

Only if former industry minister Ajit Singh was as circumspect. He could have appointed someone who *does* know his/her way around, in Delhi and at NID, instead of someone whose direction has been questioned. Ask NID officials: they are plainly scared to get someone like Jaitley, when they are used to dealing with clear-thinking bureaucrats. Otima Bordia, for one.



Jaya Jaitley: oops!



Rajan Pillai and Rajan Jetley: crack team



■ R&R

The two Rajans were in New Delhi last week. Rajan Pillai, chairman of Britannia Industries Ltd and the overlord of a US $400 million (Rs 720 crores) corporate empire. And Rajan Jetley—former Air India boss and currently, Pillai's live-wire point man in Singapore—presumably, to say hello to the new government and plumb the future.

Which looks good. Pillai is respected in government circles, and as far as Jetley is concerned, there is a bit of awe. The first Rajan is a level-headed, non-resident Indian with money to spend. The latter's connections have always been fantastic, and the way events seem to be leading in Delhi, these are expected to remain fantastic. In the next five years, Rajan & Rajan are likely to oversee major corporate expansions, both in south-east Asia and—especially—in India. ●

EVENT OF THE WEEK

Withdrawing the diesel supply cuts



●A temporary measure, at best. Because, even as the new government reverses a decision imposed by the previous one, it does so without a clue about what to do next. Yes, freer availability of diesel will help transportation of products and people, cut back hoarding and blackmarketeering in diesel and reduce inflation—though very marginally and very locally. But withdrawing cuts also means more imports. And the way things stand now, if India imports enough crude petroleum to satisfy demand, then it can't import much else. Not enough money. The choices? One: reimpose diesel cuts. Two: supply diesel but cut petrol supplies by more than the present 20 per cent. Three: freely supply both and pull the plug on India. And four: tell Iraqi President Saddam Hussein what a nice man he is, and could he please, please pull out of Kuwait?

Making millions?

Subramaniam Swamy is accused of misusing party funds

He had been in office for just two days. But that was time enough for a scandal to hit Union commerce, law and justice minister Subramaniam Swamy.

In its 24 November issue, *Current*, a weekly newspaper published from Bombay, front-paged an article accusing Swamy of political deal-making and raking in crores of rupees in the bargain. *Current* also published photostat copies of two bank draft receipts, one for Rs 45 lakhs and the other for Rs 10 lakhs—and Swamy's signatures are on both. "Both drafts were obtained after paying hard cash over the counter," accused *Current*. "Let Swamy deny it!"

"I don't deny it," retorts Swamy, leaning back on a sofa in his offices at the commerce ministry. "The photostats deal with the money that I transferred from the Delhi account of the Janata Party to the Bangalore account of the Janata Party last year, during the Lok Sabha election period." He adds: "This money was meant for Mr Deve Gowda (he was the Janata Party chief in Karnataka), who was at that time leading our election campaign in the state (Karnataka). The money went to Deve Gowda in Bangalore."

The dates on the drafts—the one for Rs 45 lakhs is dated 15 November, 1989, and the other, for Rs 10 lakhs is dated 23 November, 1989—drawn on Vijaya Bank's Barakhamba Road branch in New Delhi, checks out Swamy's assertion. But *Current* is adamant that something is fishy about the drafts.

The article also mentions that Swamy, a former professor of economics at Harvard University, purchased yet another draft on 30 November, this time for Rs 15.09 lakhs. *Current* goes on to say how the directorate of revenue intelligence sleuths, who were tracking the transactions, have suspended their enquiry now that Swamy is a minister.

In addition, the article quotes Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar as saying: "Money morality is only important in the jargon of hypocrites. All of us in politics are getting money which is black money."

"Almost all political parties and politicians do transactions in cash," says Swamy, "and no records are ever maintained. But as soon as I became the working president of the Janata Party and chairman of its parliamentary board, I imposed a rule that funding of party expenses must be done through bank accounts."

There are advantages of following this practice, says Swamy. "One, records are maintained of how much money is sent to which account. Two, it makes it unnecessary to carry money in suitcases in a clandestine manner." He added: "Look, if I wanted to salt away money, I wouldn't put it in a bank. I would put it in a suitcase."

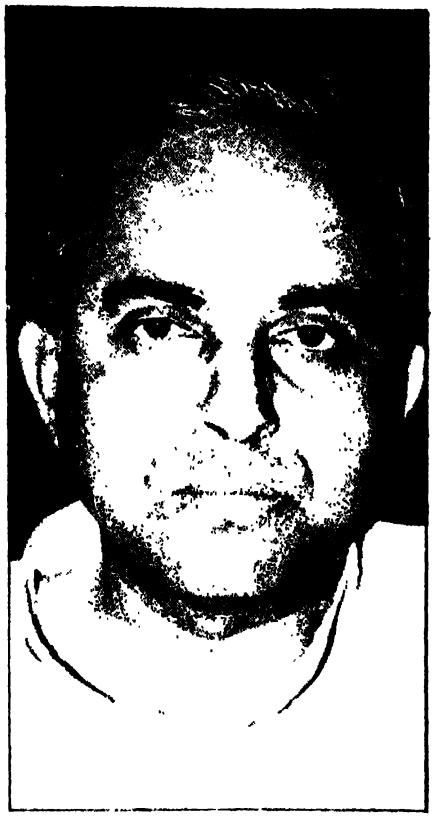
Current mentions that the PM and Swamy are friends of godman Chandraswamy and international arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi. (On another page, there is a picture of Swamy garlanding Khashoggi on the dealer's birthday.)

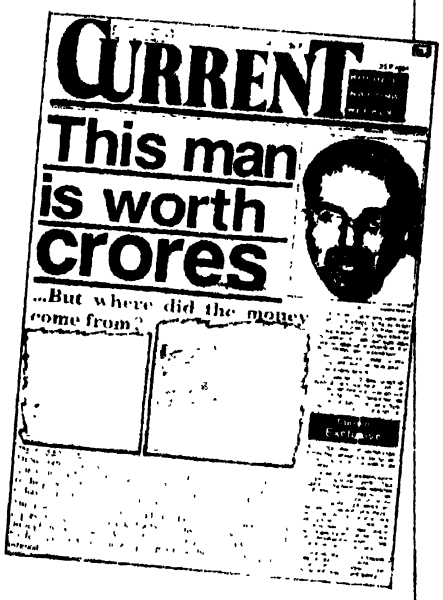
"Shekhar may defend the use of unaccounted wealth," says the *Current* article which, incidentally, is without a by-line, "but he and his Sancho Panza must answer who has made such huge sums of money available to them."

"According to the law," says Swamy, "political parties do not have to declare where their donations come from." He adds: "I have not even bothered to reply to the article."

The way things are, *Current's* accusations and Swamy's retorts, are perhaps, just the beginning of an extended brawl. Whatever one may say of Swamy, one thing is certain: controversy has a way of finding the man. And now, the minister. ●

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi





In its 24 November issue, *Current* front-paged an article accusing Swamy of political deal-making and raking in crores of rupees in the bargain

A singular talent

A collection of Dhiren Bhagat's writings evokes memories

I remember giving Dhiren Bhagat his first column. It was 1979, *Bombay* magazine had just been launched and as managing editor I sought to introduce a Diary page, modelled perhaps on *The Spectator* or *New Statesman* diaries. Nobody in Bombay could understand what I meant when along came Dhiren, an old friend from school and university.

Could he do the first Diary? I asked. He agreed at once and then took a month to deliver (so Barota Malhoutra launched the column). But when the piece came in, it was exactly the sort of Diary I had imagined.

Then, we got down to brass tacks. Editing his copy I discovered that he preferred the archaic usage: "I telephoned to him." Given that *Bombay* was a modish magazine, I asked if I could delete the 'to'.

"No," said Dhiren.

"But you always say, 'I telephoned him'," I pointed out. "What difference does 'to' make?"

"It makes a difference," said Dhiren. "It is how I would like to write."

He won that battle.

Then there was the small matter of the picture to go with the Diary. "I'll get Gautam Patole to take one," I told him.

"No," said Dhiren.

I was surprised.

"I'm sure he'll use Maharashtrian colours," he snorted.

I informed him that the picture would be in black and white.

"Never mind," he responded. "I'll give you one that somebody in London took."

The next day he turned up with this wonderful picture of a foppish man with a dreamy expression.

"It's a terrific picture," I said. "Who is it?"

He stared at me as though I was an imbecile. "It's me," he said.

"No, it isn't," I countered. "You look nothing like the man in the picture."

"If you want to use a photo," he said agitatedly, "that is the one you'll have to use."

I gave in.



GAUTAM PATOLE

In 1983, Dhiren was back in Bombay. Four years ago, he had been pleased with the column but now he dismissed *Bombay* as a 'socialite register' and said that he thought journalism was a waste of time and effort. He pointed to the Diary column in *Bombay* and noted that it had degenerated into a series of ghost-written celebrity-pretends-to-be-honest pieces soon after his article had appeared.

He was right, of course, but I was a little taken aback when he added in the next breath that he wanted to write regularly for *Imprint* to which I had moved from *Bombay*. He had already been promised a column by Vinod Mehta at *The Sunday Observer*, then Bombay's hottest new publication and had visions of being the star-writer on *The Illustrated Weekly*, soon to be relaunched by an old friend of his called Pritish Nandy.

He was 26.

I was slightly astonished by his chutzpah. It took nerve to bad-mouth all of us and then expect the top slots on all our publications.

Who *was* Dhiren Bhagat, anyway?

But I published him nearly every month.

Vinod Mehta gave him a regular slot and treated him as the *Observer's* star.

And Pritish Nandy gave him *carte blanche* to do whatever he wanted at the new avatar of the *Weekly*.

By the time he was 27, he was the rising star of Indian journalism

By 28, he was being chased by London's *The Spectator*.

By 29, he was one of India's top columnists.

By 30, he was hired by London's *The Observer* as New Delhi correspondent as part of a cushy deal whereby he got a lot of money and wrote little.

By 31, he was breaking story after story in the Indian and international media.

Three months after he turned 31, he was dead.



Dhiren Bhagat was comfortable being himself. He made no compromises as a human being, and as this collection demonstrates, as a journalist either

It was two years ago, last week, that Dhiren crashed his Maruti Gypsy on New Delhi's Willingdon Crescent. To mark that anniversary Penguin India (in the person of David Davidar, whose idea it was) has published *The Contemporary Conservative—Selected Writings Of Dhiren Bhagat*. (Hardback. Viking Imprint. Rs 175). Edited with great pains and much affection by Salman Khurshid, one of Dhiren's Oxford mentors, it collects the best of his journalism, some poetry and a little fiction.

Those who did not know Dhiren may find themselves asking a variation of the questions I asked in 1983; who *was* Dhiren Bhagat, anyway? Why should a journalist who died when he was only 31, and who wrote for only five years have his articles collected in

such a handsome volume?

The Contemporary Conservative should answer that question. It doesn't include that first *Bombay* magazine Diary but it shows how, by 1983, Dhiren was already writing differently. There was no more archaic usage and the battle over the photograph had been resolved. (He used it for his *Sunday Observer* column and then had second thoughts after it attracted offensive letters to the editor. Two years later he let Gautam Patole photograph him; a picture from that session appears on the cover of *The Contemporary Conservative*.)

Instead he focussed on challenging the conventional wisdom. In his early columns, he claimed that *Midnight's Children* was overpraised (for which Salman Rushdie never forgave him), that Arun Shourie wrote unreadable prose ("If Shourie really wants an aqueous metaphor I suggest he pull the flush and let the water flow through his muddled brains"), that Khushwant Singh was an old bore who made up stories about his sexual exploits (Khushwant loved the piece so much that Dhiren soon became a protege!) and that the Rajni Kothari-kind of intellectual thrived on humbug and cant ("The same old mumbo-jumbo: polity, criminalisation, lumpenisation, systemic features, polity").

Nandy used him as star inquisitor. The first issue of the new *Weekly* carried one of Dhiren's most successful interviews, a comprehensive hatchet job on Maneka Gandhi that Nandy loved so much (such is irony) that he let Dhiren do pretty much what he wanted after that. Coup followed coup: Charan Singh, N.T. Rama Rao and Bhindranwale all got the Bhagat treatment.

By then, he was into the big-time. Mani Shankar Aiyar put him on Rajiv Gandhi's plane and he asked the then Prime Minister questions that nobody had dared put to him. (A sample Bhagat: "May I ask what class you got at Cambridge?" Rajiv: "Zero, flunked out.")

The interview was meant for *The Spectator* but when a transcript appeared in *The Sunday Observer*, Mani Shankar Aiyar was livid. Bhagat retaliated by lampooning him in *Private Eye*, the British satirical magazine. The two became implacable enemies after that. Then two weeks before Dhiren died, they made up at a party. The reason was simple enough. Bhagat got into an argument with G. Parthasarathy, Mani's successor as Rajiv's press aide and after Parthasarathy had impugned his patriotism ("You bloody Oxford-Cambridge types have no stake in India," to which Bhagat retorted, "Does that include Rajiv?"), Dhiren decided to make common cause with Aiyar.

By 1988 when Dhiren started a column for me at SUNDAY (well represented in this collection), he had shifted to Delhi at the London *Observer*'s expense and begun to make his presence felt in political circles. Mohan Katre, then director of the Central Bureau of Investigation gave him a copy of the draft of Zail Singh's letter to Rajiv Gandhi. The draft included handwritten corrections by the *Indian Express*' S Mulgaokar. Bhagat used the document to raise questions about the role of the *Express* and got into a scrap with the paper that continued till his death. (When Suman Dubey resigned as the editor, Dhiren wrote him a letter. "I must congratulate you for doing a brave and principled thing. The *Express* is no longer a newspaper, it is a partisan pamphlet.")

The Mulgaokar story made Bhagat a hero to the Congress but as Vinod Mehta notes in his perceptive introduction to *The Contemporary Conservative*, Congressmen were quick to call him a traitor when he later revealed that RAW was importing rocket launchers that it might be planting on Sikh terrorists.

He followed this up with another scoop: the admission by Mani Dixit, then India's high commissioner to Sri Lanka, that the Tamil Tigers had been paid off by the Indian government to support the India-Sri Lanka accord. ("In my experience," Dhiren said later, "anybody called Mani who is a member of the Foreign Service is indiscreet.")

He had come a long way from that day in 1979 when we had argued about archaic usage and the choice of photographs. Since entering journalism full-time in 1983, he had risen effortlessly to the top.

Many people offered him jobs (he spent a week in Hyderabad being courted by Ramoji Rao once) but he never accepted employment arguing that to do so would be to lose his independence.

Despite the handicap of not having a paper to back him, he was rarely turned away by the mighty and always came back from assignments with a scoop that everyone else has missed.

In it's obituary, the London *Observer* called him "one of nature's self-made originals". It is a description that captures the essence of Bhagat's charm. He was comfortable being himself. In earthy political gatherings, he would speak his Oxford-accented English and make no attempt to talk down to others. At upmarket cocktail parties, he would come in *kurta-churidar*, drink only *nimbu-pani* (he drank no alcohol, did not smoke and was a vegetarian) and hold forth in Punjabi.

He made no compromises as a human being. And as this collection of his writings demonstrates, he made no compromises as a journalist either. •

Vir Sanghvi

The Contemporary Conservative Selected Writings Of Dhiren Bhagat. Edited by Salman Khurshid. Published by Viking. Price: Rs 175.





In his early columns Bhagat claimed that *Midnight's Children* was overpraised, for which **Salman Rushdie** (right) never forgave him, and that **Arun Shourie** wrote unreadable prose



Not guilty?

Rekha presents her side of the story

If the marriage had shocked an entire nation, the suicide left everyone aghast. It was only seven months since film star Rekha had wed Delhi-based industrialist (Fusebase, Hotline) Mukesh Aggarwal in a secret ceremony. And followed it up with a flurry of interviews to every film magazine worth its gloss on her new-found marital bliss ("the grass in greener" etc) with proud husband beaming happily in the background.

This was in March.

On 2 October, Mukesh Aggarwal, who'd been hard-put to contain his glee only months ago at having obtained the woman of his dreams, was found hanging from the ceiling of his Mehrauli farmhouse, Basera, his wife's *dupatta* serving as his noose.

Why had the dream soured so soon? What went wrong with the Mukesh-Rekha marriage? Why had the star's husband chosen such a drastic way out of what had clearly become an untenable situation?

As such questions did the rounds, most people seemed to accept that the actress had been, in one way or the other, responsible for the tragedy. As Mukesh's friends and family censured the widow (*"Hamare bhai ko kha gaye", "Rekha gaye chulhe main, mere bhai ko das liya"*) for driving Aggarwal to the brink, the media joined in the orgy of condemnation. While film glossies went to town (some even slightly over the top) with the story, even the mainstream media highlighted instances of the actress's alleged high-handedness.

The story of Mukesh's last trip to Bombay was pulled out to pillory Rekha. Hadn't the besotted man gone to visit his estranged wife in the hope of effecting a reconciliation? Hadn't she thrown him out of her house? And hadn't he dealt with that rejection by taking an overdose of sleeping pills? He'd been saved that time, but that sort of incident was bound to recur given the relationship between the couple. And, sure enough, it had, with predictably tragic consequences.

At the time of Mukesh's death, the actress was in New York, in connection with a stage-show. The news of her husband's suicide was relayed to Rekha, but alleged Mukesh's elder brother Anil Gupta (see *Sunday* dated 14 - 20 October 1990) the star didn't even send a message of condolence. "All we want is a sorry from her," said Gupta, "but even that hasn't come."

Instead, Rekha remained incommunicado, refusing to speak to the press or the family. From New York she flew off to London to spend a couple of weeks without responding ing to the charges which had her out as the vamp of the piece.

It was a month before the actress hit back at those who had declared her guilty *in absentia*. First, came a libel suit (see *Spotlight* dated 25 November–1 December 1990) against *Cine Blitz* for its cover story on her husband's suicide. And soon Rekha was giving a spate of interview about how much her heart had "fluttered in the last few weeks" and proclaiming: "I'll fight this scandal. Fight it till the last drop of my blood. For nothing and no one can be more important than my self-respect."

As the actress presented her side of the story, it became rapidly clear that the two versions (Rekha's and the Aggarwal family's) were irreconcilable. The much-maligned star's defence:

Mukesh's Bombay visit

The charge: Having decided soon after the marriage that things were not likely to work between her and Mukesh, Rekha informed her husband that she wanted out. Aggarwal tried to talk her into changing her mind, but the actress refused to take his calls. In a last-ditch effort, he arrived in Bombay, sister-in-law in tow, to see his wife.

But Rekha locked him out of her house. Mukesh was reduced to running after her car as she made off for her shooting. In a fit of despair, he took an overdose of sleeping pills and had to be rushed to hospital. He was saved, but took a long time coming out of the depression.

The defence: When Mukesh decided to come to Bombay, the couple had already been having major disagreements. So, to obviate the possibility of unpleasant scenes, Rekha decided to check into a hotel during his stay, while Mukesh and his sister-in-law stayed at her house. Says the actress: "My being there would have given him false hopes. I saw no point in leading him on."

About his running after the car, Rekha asks: "I was never at home during his stay, so whose car would he have been running after?" Also if reconciliation was on his mind, asks the actress, "why did he carry 60 Calmpose pills and a ready suicide note in his pocket? Didn't he for a moment think of the danger this could lead me to?"

Indifference/High-handedness

The charge: Once Rekha had made up her mind that the marriage was off, she cut Mukesh out of her life completely. Whenever her husband called from Delhi he would be fobbed off by her secretary Farzana with the usual excuses ("Madam is in the bath", "Madam has gone for shooting"). Aggarwal died believing that things would have worked out if he'd been allowed to speak to his wife.

After his death, Rekha was informed almost immediately. But leave aside attending the funeral, she didn't even call the family to condole them.

The defence: Let alone refusing to take his calls, the actress insists she'd "called every day. Yeah, till the day I left for my show". According to Rekha, the last conversation took place in his office, when the couple accepted that a split was inevitable. For the benefit of disbelievers, the actress presents her telephone bill (see *photostat*) with calls listed to Mukesh's Delhi number.

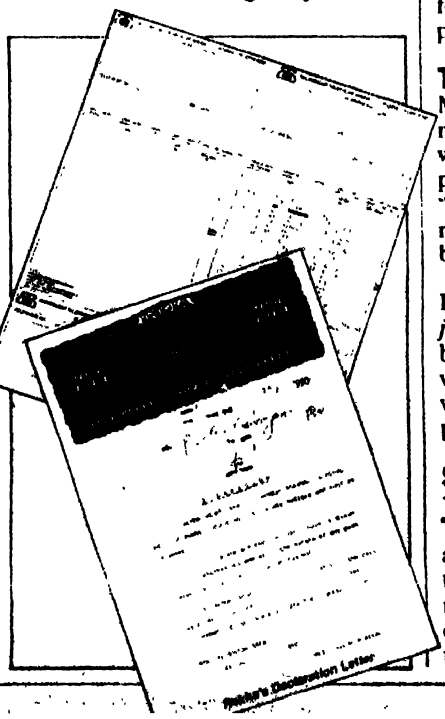
Yes, admits Rekha, she had been informed about her husband's death, but there was no way she could have made it to the funeral. No it wasn't just the time factor, the organisors of the show she's backed out of were suing her for damages and she couldn't leave America until the case was settled. But she had called Delhi and spoken to Mukesh's sister-in-law, Mitto *bhabhi*, who advised her: *"Jo theek samjho woh karo. Hame tumse koi shikayat nahin, tum apna dhyan rakhna.* (Do whatever you think is right. We don't attach any blame to you. Look after yourself.)"

The sudden volte-face executed by the family, says Rekha, has left her totally perplexed.



While Mukesh's family and friends berated Rekha for not attending the funeral, the actress claimed that she'd been unable to leave America because of a law suit

Photocopies of Rekha's divorce petition and telephone bills: no, she had no claims on his property and she called him regularly



Divorce papers

The charge: It had taken Mukesh a while to recover from his abortive suicide attempt (during his Bombay visit). And just when he seemed to be on the road to recovery, his wife served him with the divorce papers. According to Aggarwal's elder brother, Anil Gupta: "I tried to hide them from him for a while. But he found out." And that was what finally pushed him over the edge

The defence: Once she and Mukesh had decided on a divorce by mutual consent, Rekha maintains she was in no hurry to initiate divorce proceedings. "We thought," she says, "we would wait until I came back from my shows on 10 October, my birthday."

But Anil Gupta called her from Delhi to insist: "*Hame ek taraf karke jao.* (Finish your dealings with us before you go.)" Says the actress: "I was too dumbfounded to reason it out with him." And so, she despatched the papers before she left for America.

Suicidal tendencies

The charge: The Aggarwal family and Mukesh's numerous friends insist that too much is made of the dead man's suicidal tendencies. Anil Gupta clarified that his brother *hadn't* tried to kill himself after his girlfriend Kitty

Malhan ditched him. "He just thrown something at the TV set out of sheer frustration," said Gupta, "and a splinter came and slashed his wrist. So everyone assumed that he'd tried to commit suicide."
It was only after he met and married Rekha that he became suicidal. And what better proof of that than the fact that he'd used her *dupatta* to hang himself.

The defence: Aggarwal had tried to commit suicide as many as seven times before. And not every attempt occured after his marriage. Also, there was no reason to presume that the *dupatta* he'd hung himself with belonged to the actress, merely because the family said so.

Mukesh's will

The charge: Public opinion had it that the actress had married for money. And now that he was dead, she would inherit his property. Even if she wasn't mentioned in the will, said Rekha's detracters, she still had rights as a wife, th. divorce not having come through.

The defence: According to the actress, her divorce petition (*see* photostat) makes it clear that she had no interest in or claims on her husband's property. Despite this, says Rekha, her in-laws asked her to sign a declaration renouncing her claims. "Don't they know," she said, "that such declarations cannot be sent for signature without appropriate accompanying documents such as the post-mortem reports and the deceased's will?"

Farzana

The charge: Rekha is a completely changed person in her secretary's presence. So much in thrall of Farzana is the actress that she falls in line with whatever the latter says. Farzana was never happy with "Madam's decision to marry, and made no secret of her animus against Mukesh. She often failed to relay messages and refused pointblank to call Rekha to the phone when Mukesh wished to speak to her. According to Anil Gupta: "She and Rekha stay together, sleep together. Rekha has a *char anne ka dimag*. Farzana controls her completely."

The defence: Says Rekha: "Anilbhai couldn't be further from the truth, for I take sole responsibility for my actions and am solely responsible for my decisions."



Soon after the wedding Rekha gave a series of interviews on her new-found marital bliss, with Mukesh beaming proudly in the background. But seven months later Mukesh was dead, and Rekha an object of national hate

Such is the actress's fury at the unsavoury allegations about the nature of her relationship with Farzana that she has sued a film magazine for Rs 1 crore for its cover story, which mentioned the same.

Akash Bajaj:

The charge: Rekha discovered soon after the wedding that Mukesh had an on-going affair with his business associate and friend Akash Bajaj, a psychotherapist. Calling him on his private number at the farmhouse, Rekha was horrified to hear Akash's voice at the other end. The actress served her husband with an ultimatum: it was either Bajaj or her. If he wanted the marriage to continue he had to stop seeing Akash.

The defence: Aggarwal stopped seeing Akash after he got married. A month after the wedding, however, Akash's mother died. And Rekha prevailed upon a reluctant Mukesh to go over and condole with his friend. Asks the actress: "Why would I want to break two friends?"

Recreating Mukesh

The charge: Having married Aggarwal, Rekha realised that he wasn't really her idea of an ideal husband: he was much too fat, smoked too much and dressed all wrong. He had to change, the star decided. So, the hapless Mukesh was forced to give up smoking, go jogging every morning, and change his wardrobe.

The defence: None. Rekha admits that Mukesh jogged every morning and gave up smoking. But not under duress. "He did it to prove something to me. And what's wrong with making my husband health-conscious and preventing him from taking pills?" she asks.

While the actress systematically demolished every charge levelled against her, the Aggarwals held their peace. When contacted by SUNDAY, the family refused to comment on the actress's rejoinder until Mukesh's will was probated, for fear of further complicating matters.

For the moment at least, then, Rekha has the last word on the subject. But we haven't heard the last on the Rekha-Mukesh affair, though. And with time, the story promises to get even more bizarre. ●

Seema Goswami/Bombay and Delhi

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

The Saffron Swastika

There are frightening parallels between Hitler's Nazis and the BJP



I don't know what good the Toyota *yatra* did for Ram but it certainly did a pile of electoral good for Advani. Never before has the *kesri jhanda* fluttered in as many electoral hearts as it is doing now. And the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is busy fixing 6 December as the next rung of the BJP's vertiginous ascent to the top of the ladder. The date is significant—but, perhaps, for a reason not quite known to the stormtroopers of our homegrown Fuehrer. For 6 December will also see the commencement of the Golden Jubilee year of the day Admiral Tojo of the Land of Toyota, the Minister of War of Imperial Japan—that is, the Bajrang Dal to Hitler's BJP—launched the attack on the American naval base of Pearl Harbour in Hawaii which brought the United States into the World War, thus converting the localised confrontation in the European theatre and its colonial extensions—into the Second World War.

What is bringing December 1990 on us is much the same as brought 6 December 1941 on the world: the easy victories of the forces of fascism in early skirmishes against the secular democracies, which convinced the fascists that, provided only they remained on the offensive, their eventual victory over reason and good sense would be assured.

Tragically, far too few of us are disposed to learn any lessons from history. The editor of one of our most widely-circulated Urdu newspapers—himself a Muslim and, therefore, somewhat in the position of a Jew in the Weimar Republic that preceded Hitler's Third Reich—who publishes much of what I write, regretted to me a few months ago his inability to carry a previous column of mine on this theme saying that his readers would get bored to tears with some distant happening in distant times in some distant land. Could I not, therefore, give him something more spiced with contemporary *murch-masala*? "Like what?" I asked. "*Misal ke taur par, mandir-masjid ka waad-wiwaad*," he replied ("For example, the *mandir-masjid* controversy.") But, I protested, I had brought in the story of Hitler setting out from Berchtesgaden for Berlin only because Advani was threatening to set out from Somnath for Ayodhya. The Urdu editor was unconvinced. So here goes again.



The ***kar sevaks*** were in Ayodhya not to build a *mandir* to Lord Ram but to break the law and avenge themselves on Islam

In the last days of the First World War, the old Hohenzollern monarchy of the German Empire was dismantled and Germany encouraged and assisted to build itself up as a modern republican democracy. The Constitution adopted in 1919, a few weeks after the Treaty of Versailles, in the small German town of Weimar (from which the new Republic derived its name) was considered a model of its time. Despite the vicissitudes of post-war reconstruction, Germany, under the leadership of such outstanding democratic statesmen as Gustav Stresemann—a man remarkably like Nehru in his commitment to democracy and his opposition to majority communalism—the Weimar Republic secured its frontiers, forged for itself a new identity, grew enormously in international stature, and set itself up as a wise and tolerant society that, having learnt much from its past mistakes, would not countenance foul-mouthed attacks by the country's lunatic fringe on the country's Jewish minority. Hitler's National Socialist Party (the Nazis), campaigning on a platform of "Appeasement for None; Justice for All" secured in the elections of 1928 and 1930 just about the same percentage of votes as did the Jan Sangh/BJP between 1952 and 1989. If in 1929 anyone had suggested that within 1000 days, Hitler would become chancellor of Germany, he would have been

Thus spake the siyasi sanyasin

• "Let those who have been hatching conspiracies to prevent the establishment of Ram in this country, from the time of Mohammad Bin Qasim to Mohammad Ali Jinnah, not be misled into thinking that the Hindus are impotent cowards because they have suffered years of slavery. They are not. They are the descendants of brave and courageous forefathers."

• "Chandra Shekhar says that if the Hindus wish to build the temple, they can build it at another site. I say to Chandra Shekhar: all right, I will change the site—but tell me are you ready to change your father?!"

• "Our motherland cries out for succour, cries out for martyrs who will cut the enemies of the nation to pieces. We have no need of any Buta Singh or Joota Singh. What our country demands is men of character, men of iron who understand that freedom is only freedom when that freedom is placed at the feet of the Lord of Somnath."

• "We tell our Muslim brothers to remember the poets Rahim and Raskhan who devoted themselves to the quest for the dust of the feet of Lord Ram...We cannot suffer any more the descendants of Babar, all those who join Babar to their names, who join Babar to themselves, those cowards, those impotent men who flee the field of battle, who attach themselves to that Aurangzeb, that Babar who raised the sword of oppression in this country, who by force disseminated, propagated and spread Islam in this country, and who now proclaim with pride that they are Muslims."

• "In Hindu culture, if a Kansa is born among us, the Lord Himself comes down to earth to separate his head from his body. We do not take the name of Ravana or Kansa with pride. But you proclaim with pride the name of Babar, the name of Aurangzeb... This is why within this country, however many songs Mahatma Gandhi might have sung about Hindus and Muslims being brothers, such fraternity has never been established."

• "So that Hindu and Muslim might live together in this country as brothers, we even called that Akbar Great which evil-minded, sinful Akbar put up a Meena Bazar in Agra to demonstrate his disrespect for Hindu society. Despite all our sacrifices, even unto the dismemberment of our Mother's limbs, we who have done all we could to maintain fraternal goodwill, we it is who are accused of being communal!"

• "When we raise the issue of the Ram Janmabhoomi, we are accused of playing politics, of seeking votes. *Arrey*, we are sadhus and mahatmas who, seated on the throne of the sages, are monarchs already of the Universe. We do not seek power in Delhi. We seek Ram. We seek the Ram Janmabhoomi."

• "Mulayam Singh Yadav can trust the Provincial Armed Constabulary no longer. For even though they wear the uniform of the PAC, in their breasts beats a Hindu heart."

• "Mulayam Singh says that he will pit one section of our society against another, but the 30th October will show whether Mulayam Singh's schemes will succeed. Then you will know whether this site is the Ram Janmabhoomi or the Babri Masjid. Then you, Mulayam Singh, will discover that on the chest of every Ali will leap ten Bajrang Balis!"

• "The truth is that it is the Hindus who are suffering injustice and true is it also that he who inflicts injustice is not so great a sinner as he who suffers injustice. Therefore, to fight against this injustice, let us join together and build a grand temple to Ram. And if this means a bloodbath, then let there for once be a bloodbath."

• "We have tried, times without number, to explain our stand to the likes of Shahabuddin but, as you well know, the tail of the dog will always remain curled and however much you might try you cannot make it straight!"

• "Hindus, why don't you say that we are Hindus and for the sake for the honour of the Hindu, we are ready even to be wiped out?...For our honour, we are ready to sacrifice our lives, we are ready even for complete annihilation, and we are ready to sacrifice ourselves. But before we sacrifice ourselves, we will exact thousands of sacrifices from the other side. If we are ready to shed our blood, we are ready too to shed the blood of others. We have sacrificed far too much for other religions. Mahatma Gandhi ruined us by telling us that if we are slapped on one cheek, we should turn the other. *Arrey*, if your second cheek too is slapped, where are you going to find a third cheek?"

• "...If you do not rouse yourselves now, then for centuries you will not be fit to raise your heads again. It is on the strength of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal that your future will be built. The 30th of October will show whether, in this country, it is the Hindu who will remain—or the Muslim!"

• "Whoever resorts to treachery, be it that empty-headed Pandit Kamalapati Tripathi, or be it Shahabuddin, be it a Hindu or be it a Mussalman, he who does not love



Uma Bharti claims the iss
security forces at t

this country has no right to live in it."

• "Oh! Leaders of our times, just open your eyes: more coffins are being sold in our poor land than loin-cloths. The lust to fill their coffers does not shame them even into forbearing from stealing the loin-cloth off the corpses in their coffins!".

• "Who can hide this burning truth about the Ram Janmabhoomi that the Ram Janmabhoomi belonged to the Hindus, belongs to the Hindus and shall forever belong to the Hindus. We shall feel free to breathe in peace only when we shall have erected a great temple on the Ram Janmabhoomi."

• "In 42 years, everything in India has been ruined...For this, you alone are responsible. For you are



shooting by Mulayam Singh's
ard of the *kar sevaks*

the children of this land, it is you who gave your invaluable votes to those who have misgoverned this land. You have forgotten your own strength, you have forgotten the strength of your arms. You have forgotten the glory of your forefathers, you have forgotten the pride of Maharana Pratap—and that is why these impotents are seated on the throne of power and leading the nation into darkness."

• "We have till today never raised our sword against the helpless. We are those who embraced our invaders as brothers. The government of the day accuses us of being communal. But ask this blind government why it is that it is only on the festivals of Diwali and Dussehra that riots take place. How is it that there has never been a riot on the day of Moharram? When the processions of the followers of other religions are taken out, stones are never rained down upon them from our *mandirs*, but whenever we take out our *shobhayatras*, it is not from temples but from *masjids* that we are pelted with pebbles. Let there be a search made of every temple in India. But if you undertake a search of any *masjid*, you will find it filled with arms and ammunition and explosive substances of every description. And yet it is we who are called communal!"

• "We welcome those Muslims who regard themselves as the descendants of the poets Rahim and Raskhan but, however bitter this truth may be, however much it might pierce your heart, however much our listeners can bear it no more, however much you might be drowned in sweat, let those who think of themselves as the descendants of Babar and Aurangzeb know that we are no longer apprehensive of accidents, that the lava boils in our veins and arteries, that we can no longer bear this unending oppression, that those who cut both arms of my Mother, who worship the invader Babar and abuse our Lord Ram, that these deceitful people have no place whatsoever in our country, that they leave this Bharat, this Hindustan."

• "So, this then is my plea to you, that you, my Hindu brothers, understand the need of the hour, now the time has come to explain to this Government of India, to these leaders of the nation who know only how to place the noose around the necks of good people, that they must now halt this injustice which they are inflicting upon us—for we know how to avenge ourselves on those who perpetrate injustice on us!"

• "This in the name of Ram we swear
We shall build the *mandir* only there!
Jai Hind!
Jai Ram!" •

gently carted off to suitable establishments in Agra or Ranchi—trussed up, no doubt, in a straitjacket.

Two major developments—one political and the other economic—changed all that.

First, the political. As Stresemann's health declined, leading to his death on 3 October 1929, his hold on the German electorate declined and a scramble for the succession began. Political groups that had no hope of securing power on their own entered into electoral adjustments with the Nazis (much as the National Front groupuscules did with the BJP), sought out "common elements" in their respective platforms and manifestos (much as the Janata Dal did with the BJP in the heyday of its "value-based" politics), secured the outside support of the Nazis to prop themselves in power (rather in the manner of our centrist and leftist converts to "coalition politics" last year—to wild applause from the likes of otherwise decent, reasonable people like George Verghese and Pran Chopra). The non-Nazis even handed over an entire Laender (state) to Nazi rule in the manner in which last February the Raja of Manda surrendered total control over Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh to the BJP (with the full approbation, need one add, of the same Nikhil Chakravartty who is now so censorious of cohabitation with communalism!)

The BJP, like the Nazis, is, of course, not in politics to cook *khichri* for others but to grab the *rasoi* (indeed, the whole Janmabhoomi) for itself. It was the levers of power provided opportunistically by others—including right-wing Conservatives, centrist Christian Democrats and leftists Socialists—that took Hitler where it did. Equally, it is the levers of power provided opportunistically by others—including right-wing capitalists, centrist casteists and left-wing communists—that has brought the BJP where it has.

On the economic front, the late 20s was a period of astonishing recovery and growth for the Western world. Millionaires popped like champagne corks in the firmanent of global business. Wages rose. Inflation dropped. The rigours and deprivation of the Great War of 1914-18 were left behind. A generation exulting in democracy and prosperity christened the decade the Roaring Twenties.

The bubble burst in October 1929

with the collapse of the stock market on Wall Street and the Great Depression that followed. Millions were thrown out of work. The illusory fortunes of the new rich were wrecked. And the Weimar Republic crumbled to give way to the Third Reich. It was the economic collapse of 1929-33 which gave Hitler his opportunity.

In 11 months of the grossest economic mismanagement this country has known, V.P. Singh (with a little help from the oil sharks—Sheikh, Rattle and Roll, as Elvis Presley would have said!) has brought us to the brink of a disaster whose proportions are only just becoming public. Our foreign exchange reserves are being depleted by a thousand crores a month. At this rate, we will be flat broke by February—not a sterling in the treasury, not a dollar in the *tijori*. That is also the month in which I shall finally bury my last regrets at quitting the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), because my erstwhile colleagues are not going to get their monthly pay cheques (while I can only hope Aveek Sarkar will prove more considerate than Bharat Sarkar!) And don't just blame the Arabs (who, as the BJP is quick to point out, are all Muslims and, therefore, NQU—Not Quite Us). For, on the domestic front, inflation is running at double-digit figures despite our silos overflowing with the largest harvest ever (thanks to a sweetheart of a monsoon which even the Dandavate-induced loan waivers confusion couldn't deflect).

Thus, between Germany in the winter of 1929 and India in the winter of 1990, there are frightening parallels in the economic situation. The only forces that can draw comfort from the impending catastrophe are those that have found their political voice in the BJP. For economic anarchy provides rich soil in which to tend the tender plant of communalism. Hitler discovered this when he blamed it all on the Jews. The BJP is discovering it as it blames it all on the co-religionists of our largest minority.

Where do we go from here? Too large a number of politicians, of all hues, are beginning to wonder whether it wouldn't be best to steal the BJP's thunder by stealing a few of its ideological clothes. Draped, they think, in a paler shade of saffron, they might succeed in outmatching the Rabble-Rouser-in-Chief to the BJP, the shaven-headed, saffron-clad *siyasi sanyasin* Uma Bharti. That way lies disaster. Our secular future cannot afford a failure of nerve at this critical juncture in the building of our modern nationhood.

The reassertion of secularism has to begin at the precise point—and in the precise circumstances—where secularism is most under attack. Otherwise, we will slip unwittingly into the trap that is being laid for us by the widely-circulated cassette containing the venomous spoutings of this *siyasi sanyasin*. *(See box.)*

The lady claims the issue is the shooting by Mulayam Singh's security forces at the vanguard of the *kar sevaks*. That is not the issue. The firing in Ayodhya was merely the consequence of the heedless confrontationism of the local administration.



L.K. Advani has warned the *"Babar aur Aurangzeb ki aulad"* (the descendants of Babar and Aurangzeb) that they will be safe only in a "Hindu Raj"

The issue is: why were the *kar sevaks* at all in Ayodhya? They were, assuredly, not there to build a Ram *mandir*—for there are already over 200 Ram *mandirs* in Ayodhya and no one will stop anyone from building 2,000 more. The VHP/ Bajrang Dal/ RSS activists were in Ayodhya from 30 October to 2 November (accompanied by hordes of BJP cadres—but not, let it be noted any BJP leaders, not even Uma Bharti—for the leaders had carefully notified the UP government well in advance of their travel plans so that they could be arrested and comfortably lodged in Circuit Houses well away from the firing which they knew their workers would provoke in Ayodhya!) The *kar sevaks* were in Ayodhya not, as I was saying, to build a *mandir* to Lord Ram (who, in any case, is *rama* that is, manifest everywhere and, therefore, in no need of a BJP *mandir* even on his alleged *janmabhoomi*) but because of the incitement by *siyasi sanyasins* (and *sanyasi siyasats*!) to break the law, spill their blood and avenge themselves on Islam—all so that there might be come accretion in the one-in-ten Indians who put their stamp on the lotus symbol in November 1989.

Advani, for his part, has warned the *"Babar aur Aurangzeb ki aulad"* (the descendants of Babar and Aurangzeb) that they will be safe only in a "Hindu Raj"! He sounds exactly like Adolf Hitler telling Max Planck: "I am not an anti-Semite. It is just very regrettable that the Jews have this unfortunate identification with Marxism"! (Thomas Mann, Diaries 1918-1939, p. 161). Can you not discern the dulcet tones of the unctuous Advani: "I am not an anti-Muslim. It is just very regrettable that the Muslims have this unfortunate identification with Babar and Aurangzeb"!

The BJP have picked the expression "appeasement" to describe national policies based on compassion and sensitivity to minority concerns. It is an expression taken straight from the history of Hitler, because it first gained general currency when in 1938, British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain sought to head off Hitler's war by compromising with Hitler and urging the European democracies to accommodate themselves to European fascism. Winston Churchill described this as "appeasement". It is a term used not against one's countrymen but against one's enemies. The BJP may consider the Muslims to be their "enemies"; no decent, civilised Hindu can share this view. It is by such subtle verbal tricks of equating the minorities with treachery (and, thus, the majority with a monopoly over patriotism) that the BJP is misleading the misled.

We cannot beat the BJP by joining the misled. We cannot beat the BJP by donning a paler shade of saffron. A civilised community, such as the Hindu community, knows that civilisation begins with Compassion for the Few-and only that can lead to Justice for All. Members of the BJP are certainly not the mandated representatives of the Hindus. I doubt, indeed, that they are Hindus at all! ●

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.

Games people play

Labour disputes make Appu Ghar a centre of controversy

As far as the management of Appu Ghar is concerned, fun and games are definitely over. With labour problems on the increase and demands for the nationalisation of the amusement park becoming more strident, the six-year-old outfit, set up by International Amusement Limited, is facing its roughest times ever since it was set up with the help of non-resident funding, and inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1984.

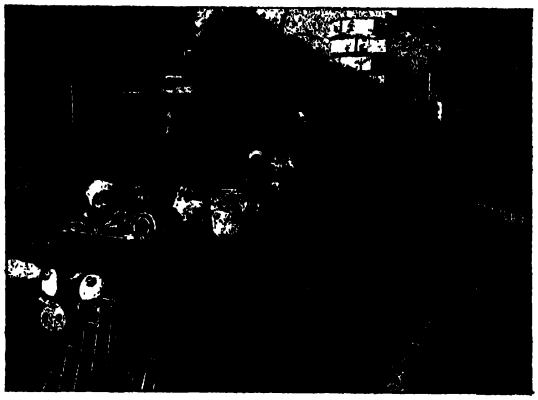
Trouble had been brewing for a while, with some employees getting disenchanted with the 'official' union Appu Ghar Karmachari Sangh (AGKS), and approaching the Hotel Mazdoor Union (HMU) with their grievances, which ranged from wages (lower than those guaranteed by the Minimum Wages Act), to the non-regularisation of temporary workers and the failure of the management to pay bonus. According to the secretary of HMU, K. Patra: "Over the years the number of workers owing allegiance to our union has increased. And now of the 300 workers in Appu Ghar as many as 250 belong to the HMU."

This claim is strongly refuted by the AGKS head, V.D. Dutta, who insists that his is the legitimate union, registered with the authorities and recognised by the management, with the majority of the workers on its rolls. Ever since its inception in 1988, the union has managed to extract such benefits for the workers as provident fund, gratuity, wage hikes, and bonus in the sixth year of the company's existence.

The management, too, chooses to recognise the AGKS, though the general manager of Appu Ghar, K.C. Arora denies that the union is granted the rare privilege of holding its meetings in the general manager's office. Says Arora: "We don't recognise the HMU. Appu Ghar doesn't belong to the hotel industry sector, so how can this union operate here?"

Patra thinks differently. According to him, there are any number of food stalls, even a restaurant and a convention centre within the premises of Appu Ghar, and the park also has its share of clerical and security staff. "So, why can't the HMU function here?" Patra asks.

As a matter of fact, it does. Recently, after a worker was demoted after being caught giving free rides to people, the HMU swung into action, gheraoing Arora's office. Six workers were suspended for misbehaviour and the HMU alleges that they were threatened that they should leave the union, or else retribution would follow.



The Appu Ghar management insists that there are no profits to share with the workers, while the employees clamour for nationalisation

The union, however, went to the labour commissioner's office to protest the management's unfair labour practices. And a week or so later, the suspended workers were taken back, after they had given an assurance that such behaviour would not recur. The management appeared to regard this as an apology, but union sources insisted that it was only an "assurance", nothing more.

But semantics aside, the HMU alleges that the management habitually short-charges the workers. Appu Ghar is a profitable concern, they allege, and makes lakhs out of the leasing of stalls alone. Now, the management has also developed a manufacturing unit in NOIDA, Indo-Italian Amusement Limited, which makes and sells rides to such amusement parks as the Pune-Pimpri Chinchwad Municipality Park and Disneyland of Om Prakash Chautala fame. Such ventures mean big money, though Patra charges that the management sold a NOIDA-made ride as an Italian one, only to have it sent back by the buyers. But such one-time mishaps notwithstanding, the NOIDA venture makes good profits. And there's no reason why some of those shouldn't percolate down to the workers, who get paid a pittance (Rs 750 to unskilled labour and Rs 850 approximately for security personnel).

Public relations officer of Appu Ghar, Sangeeta Das, has a different story to tell. According to her, the amusement park barely manages to break even. The cost of the rides has remained stagnant from 1984 at Rs 1, 2, and 3, (though visitors to Appu Ghar will have some difficulty reconciling that with their experience) and thus profits are non-existent.

In addition, the management has to make a payment of Rs 4,00,000 to the Trade Fair Authority of India (TFAI) from which it has leased land, and one-third of that amount is doled out as property, electricity and other taxes. The entertainment tax of 25 per cent imposed by the government makes things even more difficult.

Such claims do not, however, wash down well with the workers affiliated to the HMU. And they insist that either the Appu Ghar management give them benefits on a par with those working with the TFAI, or let the government take over, if they insist on pleading lack of finances.

In that event, at least, the workers will get a fair deal.

After all, the least you expect of an amusement park is fair play. •

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

The beautiful way to get rid of your dandruff



Most people think that dandruff is just an irritation on the scalp. But it can also affect the way your hair looks. Dandruff makes it dull and lustreless. **New Clinic Special gets rid of your dandruff gently. Gives you great looking hair.**

Its new international formulation loosens and lifts out dandruff from the scalp, where it really begins.

And it has a rich, creamy conditioner which leaves your hair soft and shiny. So you can use it regularly even after your dandruff's gone.

Use New Clinic Special to prevent your dandruff from coming back. And to keep your hair looking good.

Stings and swings

■ It's not the increase of free-trippers, or the encroachment of railway land, or even the disruption of traffic by demonstrators that disrupted the Eastern Railway communications network recently. It was monkeys and bees.

Bees swarmed the microwave towers along the Dhanbad-Gaya-Mughalsarai section, attacking the staff in charge of maintenance.

The massive felling of trees in the region also resulted in the monkeys shifting attention to the same towers, using the hanging parabolic copper wave guides as a swing, causing further disturbance in microwave communication.

With the animals taking over, the communications system seems headed for further trouble.

Peel to heal

■ Potato peels have suddenly become objects of reverence. At least, to doctors tackling the increasing number of burn cases. An ideal skin cover, potato peels allow the skin to dry and breathe at the same time.

Says Dr M.H. Keswani:



"They are less painful to remove, and work so well and are so suitable for our country, it is a method of treatment most advisable to adopt."

The peels prevent the dressing from sticking to the skin and keep the bandages moist. The peels are now being stuck onto gauge padding and made into bandage strips 10 feet long and six inches wide.

With potatoes chipping in to provide a healing touch, the things we all throw away in the name of garbage might be worth more than we imagine.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

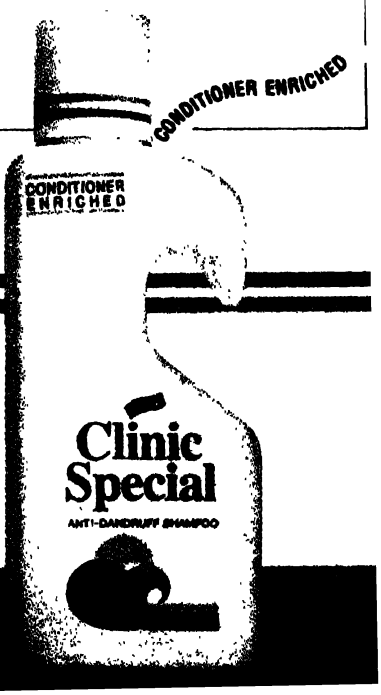


Farha



Boy George

NEW Clinic Special
ANTI-DANDRUFF SHAMPOO



When it comes to arranging publicity stunts, there's nobody quite like Boney Kapoor.

And when it comes to entering into the spirit of things with proper enthusiasm, there's no beating the Sanjay Kapoor—Tabbu *jodi*.

At a recent location shoot of *Prem*, the lead pair were in their element, posing cosily for the benefit of photographers, eating out of each other's plates and cuddling in dark corners.

Even the fact that Tabbu was suffering from flu didn't dampen their ardour.

Obviously, it takes more than fear of infection to put the Kapoor kid off.



Sanjay Kapoor and Tabbu: what's a cold between good friends?

Farha insists that marriage isn't going to make any difference to her career; she'll continue working just as she did earlier.

But which career could she be talking about? As far as we know, she hasn't signed a new film in months.

Farha: I haven't quit, I haven't quit



The Amala-Nagarjuna love affair continues. And the pair is currently banking on their joint starrer *Shiva* (Hindi) to make an impact in the Bombay film industry.

If *Shiva* is a hit, the duo will shift base to Bombay, and, with luck, make a new life for themselves—married, or otherwise.



Amala: banking on Shiva, and Nagarjuna

It's one thing when Anuradha Poudwal dubs songs originally sung by Alka Yagnik. And quite another when she threatens to do the same to Lata Mangeshkar. Or, to be precise, when Gulshan Kumar, T-Series boss, sets her up to re-record Lata's numbers.

Film gossip has it that Kumar wanted Anuradha to sing those numbers for Kirti Kumar's *Radha Ka Sangam*, which had originally been recorded by Lata. Music director Annu Malik put his foot down, and nothing came of that.

Though, it did prove that Gulshan Kumar is well and truly besotted to the circular singer.

While on Telugu superstars, here's the latest on Chiranjeevi. Now that his Hindi film *Pratibandh* has proved to be a box-office success, and the critics more than enthusiastic, Chiranjeevi has decided that Bombay may be a viable proposition, after all.

Only, unlike Nagarjuna, he won't be accompanied by a nubile girl friend, when he makes the change of residence.



Sheena Sippy: Salman's favourite photographer

The letter 'S' seems to have a special significance in Salman Khan's life. No, we aren't referring to either lady love Sangeeta Bijlani or his air-hostess friend, but to that photographer who sparkles on both sides of the lens: Sheena Sippy.

Apparently, the dimunitive heart-throb refuses to be photographed by anyone other than good friend Sheena. Sippy alone, he claims, understands his best angles.

While he, no doubt, best appreciates her curves.

Khushwant's people

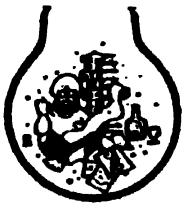
Veteran journalist and columnist on some prominent personalities



Over the years, Khushwant Singh's weekly columns, With Malice Towards One And All *and* Gossip Sweet and Sour *have regaled readers of over 50 publications, except when the Sardarji went abroad on one of his numerous junkets. And at all times, Singh has been at his provocative best, attacking sacred cows and presenting his unpopular views without a thought about the public outcry that would follow. It was this irreverance and the often brutal honesty that went with it- that made him such a great read.*

Now, Rohini Singh has put together a compilation of Khushwant Singh's columns, More Malicious Gossip, *presenting us with the Sardarji at his best. This extract has Khushwant expressing his views—often widely divergent at different points of times—about such celebrities as Giani Zail Singh, Rajiv and Sanjay Gandhi, George Fernandes and others*

SEEING ONESELF



THE GODS in their wisdom did not grant me the gift of seeing myself as others see me. They must have thought knowing what others thought of me might engender suicidal tendencies in me and decided to let the stew in my own self-esteem. Now I am up against the formidable task of having to write about myself. The young lady who is compiling, sifting and editing an anthology of these articles insists that the collection will not be complete without a prefatory piece on what I think of myself.

It is a daunting assignment. Have you ever tried to look at yourself squarely in the eyes in your own mirror? Try it and you will understand what I mean. Within a second or two you will turn your gaze from your eyes to other features—as women do when they are making up or men do when they are shaving. Looking into the depths of one's own eyes reveals the naked truth. The naked truth about one self can be very ugly.

I know I am an ugly man. Physical ugliness has never bothered me nor inhibited me from making overtures to the fairest of women. I am convinced that only empty-headed nymphomaniacs look out for handsome gigolos. They have no use for the likes of me; I have no use for the likes of them. My concern is not with my outward appearance, my untidy turban, unkempt beard or my glazed look (I have been told that my eyes are that of a lustful *badmash*) but what lies behind the physical, the real me compounded of conflicting emotions like love and hate, general irritability and occasional equipoise, angry denunciation and tolerance of another's point of view, rigid adherence to self-prescribed regimen and accommodation of others' convenience. And so on. It is on these qualities that I will dwell in making an estimate of myself.

First I must dispose of the question which people often ask me: "What do you think of yourself as a writer?" Without appearing to wear the false cloak of humility, let me say quite honestly that I do not rate myself very highly. I can tell good writing from the not so good, the first rate from the passable. I know that of the Indians or the Indian born, Nirad Chaudhuri, Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitava Ghosh and Vikram Seth handle the English language better than I. I also know I can, and have, written as well as any of the others—R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Mulgaonkar, Ruth Jhabvala, Nayantara Sehgal or Anita Desai. What is more, unlike most in the first or the second category, I have never laid claims to being a great writer. I regard self-praise to be the utmost form of vulgarity. Almost every Indian writer I have met is prone to laud his or her achievements. This is something I have never done. Nor ever solicited awards or recognition. Nor ever spread false stories of being considered for the Nobel Prize for literature. The list of prominent Indians who spread such canards about themselves is formidable: Vatasyayan (Ageya), G.V. Desani, Dr Gopal Singh Dardi (Governor of Goa), Kamla Das and many others.

Am I a likeable man? I am not sure. I do not have many friends because I do not set much store by friendship. I have found that friends however nice and friendly they may be demand more time than I am willing to spare. I get easily bored with people and would rather read a book or listen to music than converse with anyone for too long. I have had a few very close friends in my time. I am ashamed to admit that when some of them dropped me, instead of being upset, I felt relieved. And when some died, I cherished their memory more than I did their company when they were alive.

I have the same attitude towards women who I have liked or loved. It does not take much for me to get deeply emotional about women. Often at the very first meeting I feel I have found the Helen I was seeking, and like Majnoon sifting the sands of desert wastes my quest for Laila was



Much has been said about the choice of Zail Singh as President. No credit is given to him for his transparent humility, his undoubted knowledge of Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi and the gift of the gab

over. None of these infatuations lasted very long. At times betrayal of trust hurt me deeply but nothing left lasting scars on my psyche. The only lesson I learnt was that as soon as you sense the others cooling off, be the one to drop them. Dropping people gives you a sense of triumph, being dropped one of defeat which leaves the ego wounded. I do not have the gift of friendship. Nor the gift of loving or being loved.

Hate is my stronger passion. Mercifully it has never been directed against a community but only against certain individuals. I hate with a passion unworthy of anyone who would like to describe himself civilised. I try my best to ignore them but they are like an aching tooth which I am periodically compelled to feel with my tongue to assure myself that it still hurts. My hate goes beyond people I hate. I drop people who befriend them. My enemy's friends become my enemies.

Fortunately there are not many people I hate. I could count them on the tips of fingers of one hand—no more than four or five. And if I told you why I hate them, you may agree that they deserve contempt and hatred.

I hate name-droppers. I hate self-praisers. I hate arrogant men, I hate liars. Is there anything wrong in hating them? People ask me, why can't you leave them alone? Why can't you ignore their existence? Now, that is something I cannot do. I cannot resist making fun of name-droppers, calling lairs liars on their faces. And I love abusing the arrogant. I have been in trouble many times because of my inability to resist mocking these types. And since most name-droppers, self-praisers and arrogant men go from success to success, become ministers, Governors and win awards they don't deserve, my anger often explodes into denouncing them in print. I have been dragged into courts and before the Press Council. This can be a terrible waste of time and money. I think I will have wax images of my pet hates and vent my spleen on them by sticking pins in their effigies. May the fleas of a thousand camels infest their armpits!

I am not a nice man to know.

ZAIL SINGH



ZAIL SINGH's final tryst with his fellow politicians was apparently a very memorable one; his swan song as a member of the Congress-I a *tour de force* of sentimental oratory. This was on the evening of Thursday the 8th of July when he bade farewell to his party colleagues in the Central Hall of Parliament. Since the meeting was not open to the Press I have put the details together from accounts given by my friends in the Rajya Sabha. When Zail Singh entered the hall, Mrs Gandhi was speaking to the members. He was visibly embarrassed. Mrs Gandhi further embarrassed him by her words of welcome: "See he is blushing like a bride." And so he did to the roots of his beard:

"Like a bride full of blushes when lingering to take
A last look at her mirror at night ere she goes..."

The PM's words gave him the theme of his farewell address which he delivered for over 50 minutes without the help of a single note. He spoke of his humble beginnings and how he learnt to read the lines on the palms of labourers, ironsmiths, carpenters and other workmen; the warm welcome he had received all over the country, particularly in the South where he had been told that his inability to speak English would prove a handicap. He criticised the "consensus" notion by saying that what the Opposition wanted was to set up its office in Rashtrapati Bhavan. "That I will not allow; neither them nor the Congress-I," he said very pointedly. Whereupon Mrs Gandhi quipped that he would not be able to keep her out as one room in Rashrapati Bhavan was used for Cabinet meetings. The Giani continued that having been an active politician all his life he felt like a fish being thrown out of the stream. "You have decided to retire me from politics; however mine will be a kind of *Shahi* (royal) retirement." He ended his speech by telling them that he felt like a bride taking leave of her parents, brother and sisters when every one in the family is in tears. And so apparently were many of his audience.

Much has been said by the Opposition against the choice of Giani Zail Singh for the top position in the Republic. No credit is given to him for his transparent humility, his undoubted knowledge of Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi, the scriptures of all the religions practised in the country and his gift of the gab. He will be by far the greatest orator we have had as President (and I am not forgetting Dr Radhakrishnan). Zail Singh exudes the aroma of the earth because he is closer to India's soil than any of his predecessors. I am not in the habit of making forecasts; but when I do, I am usually right. I forecast that Giani Zail Singh will be the most popular President that India has had so far.

PRESIDENT ZAIL SINGH

WHEN GIANI Zail Singh took over as President of the Republic, I wrote: "I am not in the habit of making forecasts; but when I do I am usually right. I forecast that Giani Zail Singh will be the most popular President that India has had so far."

That was more than three years ago. In the last two years much has happened to his image. More has been written about him than was on his predecessors because of his role in the many catastrophic events that engulfed the country. Instead of being the most popular he has become the most controversial President. What his image will be like when he lays down office a year and a half from now is hard to figure out. However, having read just about everything in print about him as well as gone through six biographies I will try to answer a few questions uppermost in people's mind.

No need to bother about the biographies. Without exception they are *qaseedas* (eulogies) written by nondescript biographers produced by nondescript publishing houses. Large chunks of them consist of excerpts from newspapers and pictures supplied by the President's P.R.O. In any event all of them were written after Giani became President and none come up to events in which his name came to be embroiled.

What we have to find out is how much substance there is in the charges levelled against Gianiji in other much more widely read books published since Operation Blue Star. The list of journalist-authors who have pronounced on him is formidable: M.J. Akbar, Kuldip Nayar, Chand Joshi, Arun Shourie, M.V. Kamath, Patwant Singh, Harji Malik, Tavleen Singh, Subhash Kirpekar, Shekhar Gupta, Sunil Sethi, Mark Tully, Satish Jacob and Pranay Gupte. Four questions cry out for answers. First, did Giani Zail Singh play any role in elevating Bhindranwale from a rustic *bhai* to a political monster? Second, did he as President sanction the storming of the Golden Temple by the Army and did he warn Mrs Gandhi of its impact on the Sikh community? Third, what did he do to curb the anti-Sikh violence following the assassination of Mrs Gandhi and what help did he render the victims? And finally, is there any truth in the press reports that the present Prime Minister rarely bothers to consult him on important issues?

I have not the slightest doubt that Gianiji did not pick up or promote Bhindranwale. To the best of my knowledge, he met him once when he was head of the Punjab Congress in Opposition during Janata rule. That also at a *keertan* in a gurudwara. After Mrs Gandhi's return to power he was made home minister at the Centre and Darbara Singh became Punjab's chief minister. It was Mrs Gandhi's practice not to consult state's leaders she brought to the Centre on matters relating to their home states. She also knew that Gianiji and Darbara Singh did not see eye-to-eye on political matters. It was Darbara Singh who announced over the radio that warrants of arrest against Bhindranwale had been issued, allowed him six days during which he dictated the time and place where he would surrender to the police, kept him in a Circuit House rather than in a prison and then had him let off.

When Indira Gandhi succeeded Lal Bahadur Shastri, fairly and squarely beating Morarji Desai, it was said she became Prime Minister because she was Nehru's daughter



I am still not sure about Gianiji's role (he was by then President) in sanctioning the storming of the Golden Temple. He agreed to putting Darbara Singh's government in cold storage and proclaiming Governor's Rule. He stayed his hand for quite some time before he agreed to declare it a "disturbed area" and hand over administration to the army. Therefore, there was no need to consult him about Operation Blue Star. He heard about it over the radio. It stands to reason that had Gianiji been consulted he would have at least advised the Prime Minister to pre-date or defer action and avoid embroiling innocent pilgrims who would be present on the martyrdom anniversary of the builder of the temple. Mrs Gandhi apparently did not realise that the Akal Takht would be rid of Bhindranwale's men without having to be knocked down. What she saw of the havoc appalled her. The generals incharge of the action either misled her or botched up the Operation.

I have no convincing replies to his staying in Rashtrapati Bhavan while Delhi was witnessing a carnage of Sikh lives following the assassination of Mrs Gandhi. As Head of the Army why did he not order the troops out at once? And why after the carnage was over, did he not visit refugee camps and solace the victims? I am on even less sure ground about his relations with the Prime Minister. If they are strained, as papers report, they will impair the institution of the President. Only future historians who have access to secret papers (if any have been preserved) will be able to throw light on them. Or perhaps earlier if Gianiji writes his autobiography and decides to reveal the truth as known to him. Till then we have to withhold judgement.

RAJIV GANDHI



IN THE next few days, Rajiv Gandhi is likely to announce his decision to quit flying and enter politics. He had no interest in politics and a very poor opinion of politicians. He was most reluctant to change his profession and his wife, Sonia, totally opposed to his going into the hurly burly of political life. However, he has at last decided to yield to the pressure put by members of the Congress party.

Mrs Gandhi's critics, particularly among the so-called intellectuals, have



Rajiv was most reluctant to change his profession and his wife, Sonia, totally opposed to his going into the hurly burly of political life.

mounted a propaganda campaign questioning Rajiv Gandhi's entry into politics. "He is only being brought in because he is the Prime Minister's son and Sanjay's brother," they say. That may be so. But they overlook the fact that it is also his right as a citizen of India to do so. He is not—as the Opposition maintains—"succeeding" either to his mother or his brother, but only offering himself (albeit reluctantly) to help as anyone else might in the organisation. It would be a gross travesty of democratic principle to deny him rights enjoyed by all others simply because of his ancestry or relationship. He has yet to prove himself. And it will be for the people (not only his critics) to accept or reject him.

It is worth recalling that when Pandit Nehru first became President of the Indian National Congress, there was similar criticism that he had been chosen because he was Motilal's son. When Indira Gandhi succeeded Lal Bahadur Shastri, fairly and squarely beating Morarji Desai, it was said that she became Prime Minister because she was Jawaharlal's daughter. And when Sanjay burst on the Indian political scene and established his unquestioned power over the party machine, similar insinuations were made against him. But it was clear as daylight for anyone who wished to see that Nehru, Indira and Sanjay, each in his or her turn, were not imposed on the people but chosen by them. What could have been more democratic?

And now it will be Rajiv. There is little doubt that his way to the political path was paved by Sanjay Gandhi. People who believed in what Sanjay stood for hope that he will carry on the task that this valiant son of India left unfulfilled. Sanjay was much more than a Member of Parliament, the Prime Minister's right-hand man and leader of the Youth Congress. He had succeeded in firing the imagination of the people that they could within their lifetime, convert the dream of a more prosperous and powerful India into a reality. If the people are now eager to pass on the torch that Sanjay lit into the hands of his elder brother, they do so in the hope that Sanjay's unfinished mission will now be accomplished.

STILL THE BEST BET, IF HE LEARNS

THE MOST significant thing that happened in the first month of 1987 was that people began to look for blemishes on Rajiv's face. This very month, two years ago the same people were loud in praise of the many qualities he possessed: his good looks, his candour and courtesy and assured us that we were fortunate in having so forward-looking a man as him at the helm of our affairs. Why did the magic mirror which once reflected his image as among the fairest of the fair start showing warts and pimples?

Rajiv's own contribution to this change has been most noteworthy. Perhaps his massive victory at the polls gave him an illusion of invulnerability. He succumbed to the temptation of riding roughshod over dissenters, ignored institutions and traditions of governance, appointed friends unknown to the public to important public positions and unceremoniously fired those whose vibes did not please him. He began to pronounce with authority on subjects with which he ha little familiarity. The *subjantawala* destroyed the image of a modest young man eager to learn. Said a south Indian friend to me: "A man who till the other day only knew how to handle the joy-stick in a cockpit can hardly be expected to deliver learned sermons from the world's pulpits."

Rajiv's image has by no means suffered irreparable damage. He should know that he still remains our best bet to lead the country. He can afford to dismiss the rantings of politicians but he must take the near-unanimous criticism by the press, the *trahison des clercs*—the revolt of civil servants—more seriously. The press enjoys more credibility with the people than politicians. Civil servants have taken a lot of mauling from politicians and will not take any more. I raise my glass to toast the Venkateswarans of India:

"God give us men!
Men whom the lust of office does not kill"

SANJAY GANDHI



IT WAS a hot sweltering afternoon when neither man nor beast stirred out of the shade. And there was I standing under a scorching sun midst a sweaty crowd on the roundabout near India Gate. I wanted to say my last farewell to my young friend as he passed by. I recalled that 16 years ago I had stood at the same spot in the same kind of torrid heat to watch the cortege of my friend's grandsire. His grandsire had been a national figure for more than half-a-century and then Prime Minister for 17 years. There had been elaborate *bandobast* for his funeral. My young friend was a political *parvenu* who had been vilified and slandered from the day he became a major, persecuted and gaoled off and on and had only recently managed to get into Parliament. Yet the crowd at his funeral was larger than the one I had seen at his grandfather's. Someone had quoted an apt couplet in Urdu:

"Ai gulcheen-e-ajal tujh se nadaani hooee
phool voh tora ke gulshan men veeranee hooee"

(O thou picker of life's flowers;
you made a grave mistake;
You plucked the one flower which laid
the garden desolate)

The cortege came along led by bands of young men chanting:

"Jab tak sooraj chand rahega
Sanjay tera naam rahega"
(As long as the sun and moon go round,
Sanjay will thy name resound)

Back home I pondered over this strange phenomenon. The only explanation I could find was that in the last year or two of his life unnoticed by anyone, a Sanjay cult had grown.

It was very much like the cult of Che Guevara based on the worship of a man who lived dangerously, cocked-the-snook at convention and tradition, was more feared than loved, and above all, feared nothing himself. All these applied to Sanjay. I recall his saying that a leader who is feared is more respected than a leader who is loved. "That's why when I tell them to do something, they damn well do it."

Who will now become the leader of the Sanjayists? I don't see the mantle drop on the shoulders of his brother, Rajiv. He is too withdrawn, unambitious, and a man of the family. Nor on Kamal Nath or Jagdish Tytler or the young Scindia. None of them have the derring-do or the panache that was associated with Sanjay. The only possible inheritor of the cult figure is Maneka. She is like her late husband, utterly fearless. And when roused, the very reincarnation of Durga astride a tiger.

The Sanjay cult was based on the worship of a man who lived dangerously, was more feared than loved, and feared nothing himself



GEORGE FERNANDES



IF ANYONE looking for an appropriate subject for a biography, I can suggest one person through whose life he can tell the story of contemporary India including its achievements and failures. He is George Fernandes.

I have known George in different incarnations. I first met him at a cocktail party in the house of a Bombay industrialist. He was a trade union leader basking in the glory of being a giant-killer having trounced Maharashtra's leading *dada*-politician, S.K. Patil in the Lok Sabha elections. Why was he socialising with an industrialist? And why at a cocktail party when he did not drink? Some years later on my way back from office, I saw him standing on a stool in the middle of Kala Ghoda square facing the Jahangir Art Gallery, haranguing a large mob. At one time he edited a weekly, *Pratipaksha*, in Marathi and Hindi. In one of its issues he described the Parliament as a brothel house. The case was taken up by the privileges committee. And for reasons unknown, dropped.

When Emergency was declared, George went underground. However, he managed to let his friends know that he was still around. Once I was summoned by Mrs Gandhi to Delhi for an off-the-record and strictly private meeting. The day I got back to Bombay I found a letter from George on my table with a one-line query: "How did your meeting with Madam Dictator go?" A few months later, the Calcutta police nabbed him and he was brought to the Red Fort of Delhi for interrogation.

The next time I saw George at Palam airport. As I came out of the Airbus, I noticed an enormous limousine flying the Indian tricolour draw up along the ramp. Members of a Russian trade delegation came down the steps. Camera bulbs flashed as they shook hands with some dignitary sent to receive them. It was the Hon'ble Mr George Fernandes, minister for something or the other. I met him several times after the Janata was thrown out of power. He won and lost elections, but political reverses never seemed to dampen his zeal for living. He continues to exude confidence that it will not be long before he will be riding limousines flying the tricolour as the Hon'ble Mr George Fernandes, minister of something or the other.

I had Fernandes almost all to myself (he is always escorted by the nicest looking girl in the neighbourhood) for an hour.

I asked him about his underground days as the elusive pimpernel. "The police thought I was in the garb of a sadhu; so they went about interrogating sadhus. That was too obvious a camouflage. I let my beard grow and taught myself how to tie a turban. The beard grew fast enough but the hair on the head remained short. I passed off as a Sardarji."

"But you don't speak a word of Punjabi; anyone speaking to you in Punjabi would have become suspicious."

He laughed uproariously. "I only knew three words *Sat Sri Akal*. I avoided Sardarjis like the plague. I tried to speak English with a Canadian accent hoping to pass off as an emigre Sikh who had forgotten Punjabi."

"What name did you assume?"

"I kept changing them. Twice I travelled by air using your name when I booked my seat."

"Good Lord! Quite a few of the Indian Airlines stewardesses recognise me. Surely that was asking for trouble!"

"Not at all. They may have recognised you but not me. And they had no reason to know that I was using your name."

It was after several months that the police realised that George was disguised as a Sikh. He made the mistake of staying in one place longer than he should have. A note he sent to a friend to get money led to his arrest in Calcutta. The police wanted him to admit he was George Fernandes and not a Mr Singh. He stoutly denied it. "If you are so certain I am Fernandes, why are you bothering me? In any event you



There is a lot more to George Fernandes than a swashbuckling comprador of Indian politics

can ask me all you want but I will say nothing of what I did or whom I met from the day I went underground to my arrest."

The police tried to break him down. He was too important a politician to be subjected to third degree. But they did their worst to frighten him. They took him into the jungle to give him the impression that they would shoot him and pass it off as having killed him in an encounter. After they brought him to the Red Fort, they changed their tactics. First they used the filthiest abuse for him. '*Ma, bahin, beti*, no one was spared," said George with a smile. "Then they stripped me naked; a naked man feels very defenceless and betrays himself. While two officers were interrogating me, there were dozens of eyes watching every movement of mine from behind glass panels. They gave me a very rough prickly blanket to sleep on. It was like lying on a bed of nails. When none of this worked, they tried to break down my morale by other devious ways. After many hours of grilling interrogation in a hot room, they would ask me politely if I would like chilled beer, lemonade or ice-cream. I said, "Yes, thank you." Nothing came. After keeping me hungry for two days, they would ask me whether I would like Mughlai or Chinese dinner. When I expressed my preference, they forgot about the meal."

There is a lot more to George Fernandes than a swash-buckling comprador of Indian politics. He is a highly civilised man, an aesthete, widely read, a compelling orator and a man who has a clear vision of the future and his own role in fulfilling it. He may never become the pillar of administration but he will always remain a force to reckon with.

DHIRENDRA BRAHMACHARI



PUBLIC REACTION to his fall from grace and the discomfiture in which he finds himself reveals another, perhaps the dominant, aspect of our national character: rejoicing over the sorrows of others. I have yet to meet anyone including those who once fawned on him who has now a kind word to say in his defence.

I had passing acquaintance with the Brahmachari. I met him when he had recently installed himself in Delhi as a teacher of Hatha Yoga and was eager to cultivate people in high positions. A senior official of the ministry of education (he was seeking a grant from the ministry for his ashram) brought him to my apartment. He instructed me on the appropriate asanas for imaginary ailments from which I have always suffered. I was very much taken by his unusually handsome appearance: tall, ramrod straight with the cleanest-clearest eyes I had ever seen.

Thereafter I met him on a few other occasions. He sent me the manuscript of his book on Yogasanas for corrections. I spent a New Year's morning in his ashram to interview him and his patients for an article for *The New York Times*. By then he had become a prosperous and powerful man. His four telephones rang all the time: ministers of Cabinet and other VIPs rang up to wish him a Happy New Year. There were a bevy of bosomy young ladies to receive the calls. A large foreign-made limousine was parked in the driveway, a herd of imported black Jersey cows grazed on the lawn and he had his own plane in a hangar in Palam.

To be fair to Dhirendra Brahmachari, he did not exploit his *chelas*—only people who exploited him to forward their own interests. However, it was clear as daylight that he had his feet in two different boats, the spiritual and the material, and would inevitably come to grief.

I believe it is the ambivalence in Dhirendra Brahmachari's character, the desire to get the best of both worlds, that roused the peoples' ire and jealousy. They rejoiced when he was taken off television and chortled with pleasure when they read of the seizure of his gun factory. "Envy, among other ingredients, has a mixture of love and justice in it. We are more angry at undeserved than at deserved good fortune," wrote Hazlitt. Most of us felt that Dhirendra Brahmachari's fortune was undeserved.

Has Dhirendra Brahmachari any friends left? Perhaps a few fence-sitters who fear that he may stage a comeback. I hope by now he must have learnt that a face-flatterer and a back-biter are one and the same person. We are a nation of fence-sitters, face-flatterers and back-biters

NARGIS DUTT



FOR MANY years the picture of Nargis troubled my midnights and my noon reposes. She remained a lovely, distant apparition beyond the approach of earthly mortals like me. Then one morning my telephone rang and a dulcet voice announced: "This is Nargis Dutt speaking. Can I speak to Mr so-&-so?"

"It is so-&-so speaking. Would you by any means be Nargis the film star?"

"*Jee-han.*"

"Mother India and all that?"

"*Jee-han.* Can I come and see you?"

An hour later, she breezed into my office causing many a heart wildly aflutter. She was as beautiful as she

was unassuming and friendly. "I have come to ask you for a personal favour," she said. "I believe you have a house in Kasauli. My children are at Sanawar and I can't find anywhere to stay during the School Founder's Week celebrations. I was wondering if you could let me stay in your house."

"Of course!" I replied, "but only on one condition." I paused to create the necessary suspense. She looked quizzically at me: "What?"

"Provided thereafter I have your permission to tell anyone I like that Nargis slept in my bed."

She burst into peals of girlish laughter. "Done!" she said putting out her hand to make a compact. "I stay in your house; you say I slept in your bed."

Nargis repeated this dialogue many times without the slightest embarrassment. She has the knack of making people happy. And a malicious sense of humour. But the last time she was in Delhi to attend the session of the Rajya Sabha, she was somewhat lacking in her usual exuberance. "I shouldn't be here. My doctor told me I have some kind of jaundice. I promised the local Rotary I would come—I couldn't break my word, could I? And there is this debate on Baghpat."

The debate, as you might recall, was largely the tirade let loose by the Opposition on the shooting of three men and the alleged rape of Maya Tyagi in the police station. The atmosphere in the House was surcharged with emotion. A lady member somewhat dark and corpulent exploded a volcano of angry epithets pouring lava on the government which though headed by a woman allowed women to be insulted, molested and raped. "There is rape here and a rape there! Every day we hear of rape, rape, rape," she shrilled. Nargis who was sitting next to me became suddenly very animated. "Why are you getting so excited?" she shouted. "No one will ever rape you."

One thing that intrigued me was her faith. Was she Muslim or Hindu or both or nothing? She wore a *bindi* on her forehead, married a Brahmin, gave her children Hindu names and was often seen in Swami Muktanand's ashram at Ganeshpuri. Nevertheless, she was buried with Muslim rites in a Muslim graveyard with her Hindu husband reciting the *fateha*. I can't think of any one Indian family which better exemplified the principle of *Sarva Dharma Samabhav*.



Despite Mountbatten's awe-inspiring image, I was not wrong in suspecting that the emperor had no clothes

MOUNTBATTEN



TWO BRIEF encounters, one in London followed by another a few months later in Toronto (Canada), have stayed in my mind. At the time I did not have the nerve to put my reactions in print: he was the Lord of Destiny, an awe-inspiring figure of whom singing anything but paeans of praise would have sounded discordant. Zieglar's excellent biography *Mountbatten* (Rupa) assures me that I was not wrong in suspecting that the emperor had no clothes. Or wore flimsy see-through raiments.

The first meeting was unscheduled. Lord Mountbatten was the chief guest at a reception in India House. By some error he turned up 15 minutes before he was expected and even the host, Krishna Menon, was not present to receive him. I rushed down to greet him, apologised for the misunderstanding and suggested that he relax in my temporary office.

His Lordship was out of countenance. He had come splendidly attired in an Admiral's deep-blue uniform splattered with gold epaulettes, ribbons and a chestful of medals. Instead of making a spectacular entry at a glittering reception as he had planned, he was having to waste time with a nondescript clerical type. I did my best to keep him amused. I asked him about the partition and the stormy days that followed. He answered me in bored monosyllables. I tried to provoke him: "Lord Mountbatten, many people feel that if you had not forced the pace, the exchange of populations might have been smoother and we might have been spared the enormous bloodshed that took place."

He was needled into replying: "I don't give a damn about what my critics say today," he said angrily. "I will be judged at the bar of history."

I was taken aback by his pomposity. However justified, I did not expect a sophisticated English gentleman of breeding to air assumptions of immortality. It wasn't pucca.

The next encounter revealed another facet of Lord Louis' character. He was to inaugurate an international trade fair in Toronto. Out of the blue we were informed that His Lordship had desired that his escort should be provided by the Indian High Commission in Canada. We were very happy to learn that he had such affection for India that even after laying down office as Viceroy and Governor-General he wanted to perpetuate his Indian connection.

It was a warm, bright summer morning. There was an enormous crowd. He arrived in his Rolls Royce flying the Union Jack. This time he wore a white shark-skin uniform with the same gold and silver tinsel and medallions spread over it. We lined up behind him: two bearded Sardars in black *sherwanis* and *chooridars* followed by our army, navy and air force attaches in their respective uniforms. The Canadians went delirious at the sight. This was the British Empire at the zenith of its glory! ●

More Malicious Gossip By Khushwant Singh Edited by Rohini Singh. Published by Konarak Publishers Pvt Ltd Price Rs 30

Finally, the film

At last, the production of The City Of Joy *gets under way*

If the then information and broadcasting minister, P. Upendra and the West Bengal culture minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharya had maintained a discreet silence, Roland (*Killing Fields*) Joffe would have been just another distinguished foreigner working in Calcutta during its tercentenary year, filming his version of Dominique Lapierre's novel, *The City Of Joy*.

But Joffe was denied permission to shoot, and his script denounced as being "harmful to the national interest". And thus began a controversy which was to drag on for nearly a year. Calcuttans, who always love an acrimonious debate, soon got in on the act. While some embraced Joffe as the latest victim of a bloody-minded government, others dismissed the director as a "poverty-profiteer". As the verbal fight escalated, it seemed unlikely that the film would be made in the next couple of years, if at all.

Surprisingly enough, the clearance came after five months (Joffe plans to begin shooting on 11 February). But not before "reassurance sessions" with government officials, prolonged negotiations with the film's financiers, and script approval by Bengali author Sunil Gangopadhyay, after 14 drafts had been prepared. "Any script where two different cultures mix is always difficult to write, you have to get it just right," says a boyishly grinning Joffe. "Bringing *The City Of Joy* script to Calcutta was like dropping soluble aspirin in water. The script fizzed, bubbled and became something new."

What made the task slightly more complex was the fact that Joffe and scriptwriter Mark Medoff deviated from the novel at times. Father Kowalski, the Polish-American Roman Catholic angel of the slums is missing, for instance. Says Joffe: "He is an interesting character, but makes the film ethnocentric in a Catholic sense. I have no desire to make a film on Catholicism."

As in most Joffe films, the interest here is focused on the interaction between two men belonging to different worlds. The filmmaker throws together the emaciated Hasari Pal, a rickshaw-puller (played by Om Puri, Shabana Azmi plays his wife) and Max Loeb, a wealthy American doctor in the slums of Pilkhana.

Though filming is only three months away, the director insists he still doesn't know who is going to play Loeb, admitting, however, that there are three distinguished American actors on his shortlist. Adds producer Iain Smith: "We want to keep the cast under wraps." But informed reports have it that Victor Banerjee is among those tipped for a major role.

Initial plans to shoot the film at the slums in Pilkhana were quickly shelved, when logistic problems presented themselves. Instead, production designer Roy Walker and art director John Fenner chose a site on the wasteland near the city's dock area in Kidderpore. The set, a 500 feet by 150 feet plot, is an astonishing exercise in realism and a virtual replica of the shantytown of Pilkhana. After bulldozers had levelled off the area, 200 people worked for eight weeks to put up the set.

Says production manager Philip Kohler: "We brought truckloads of stuff—rusty metal sheets, mouldy wood, chipped doorframes, asbestos sheets, tiles green with moss, everything was welcome."

Under the shadow of the giant backdrop, stretches the main street, tenement huts on either side, some with faded signboards. The street opens into two courtyards, where important sequences will be shot. The final one being the flood sequence, which will leave the sets three feet under water. Several million gallons of water pumped from the nearby pond and a "rain-rigger" to provide "telescopic rain" will be necessary to achieve that effect.

In the chaotic production office is a miniature model of the city of joy and rolled up maps of the site. Each shack on the main street is represented by a small square, numbered and coloured to indicate the religion of the inhabitants. "These are only the bare bones," says Smith. "The set has still to be dressed."

But, as beginnings go, it's not too bad.●

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta





PIRAK SEN

Soon after Roland Joffe (above) got the go-ahead, the sets (left) were up at Kidderpore

Having his way

L.K. Advani goes to Ayodhya



UTTAR PRADESH

The wave returned. Hindutva practically engulfed the troubled state of Uttar Pradesh as BJP president L.K. Advani visited Ayodhya on 19 November. "Barely 20 days ago, the entire administration in UP was geared to thwart Advani's entry into the state," said Naram Dutt Tiwari, former Congress(I) chief minister, in the Assembly. "And there he is now, being accorded a hero's welcome."

The mood was clear from the excited crowds that spilled into Gonda, a town some distance from Ayodhya, to greet Advani when he arrived by the Vaishali Express from Delhi. Fiery slogans by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activists (like "*Bachchu bachchu Ram ka, Janmabhoomi ke kaam ka* ") along with the relatively staid "*Jai Shri Ram*," rent the air. Advani's visit appeared to soothe the wounds of the police firing in the beginning of the month. Appropriately, the speeches made on the occasion were extremely aggressive, repeatedly reminding the people of Ayodhya and Faizabad of the "black days" of the past and reaffirming the VHP's conviction of success in the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue, thus aggravating an already volatile situation.

But that did not seem to bother the BJP or its leaders. The visit was a huge image-boost to Advani, and also strengthened the BJP's position in UP. Party supporters deftly used the occasion to whip up support and to keep the *mandir/masjid* issue alive till the elections. And all this after BJP spokesmen repeatedly denied that the party had anything to do with the VHP's *kar seva*.



Advani in Ayodhya: unstoppable

Three days before Advani's visit, the BJP supporters got down to the task of organising "mass awakening" programmes in the twin cities and the neighbouring villages. Audio cassettes were distributed and frequent meetings held to drive home the fact that the Ram *rath* would eventually reach Ayodhya because anyone who dared stop it would not remain in power. The rhetoric and the general hysteria reached a crescendo with Advani's arrival in Gonda, where, contrary to his previous schedule, the BJP president was compelled to stop and address a gathering of nearly 90,000. A sizeable section of this crowd followed him right up to Ayodhya.

Advani decided to make good use of the situation and in speech after speech he reiterated the fact that a solution to the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue lay in shifting the *masjid* to a distance five kms from its present site. "Some 500 mosques have been relocated to construct a dam in Andhra Pradesh" he said. "Therefore, Muslims should not get particularly sentimental about the one in Ayodhya."

Understandably, the UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav was one of Advani's principal targets, who, the BJP leader declared, would not succeed in stopping the *kar sevaks* because of their "genuine feelings and commitment to the cause of the temple". He also felt that the present government would not be able to solve the problem if they stuck to the court decision alone. This was an "emotional" problem. "I am a politician and not a religious leader," he said. "But because Ram symbolises our spiritual aspirations, it is my duty as a responsible politician to liberate the temple."

The VHP, too, tried to utilise the mass hysteria generated as a result of the visit by announcing that the next phase of *kar seva* would begin on 6 December. Said VHP general secretary Ashok Singhal: "We will resort to *satyagraha* to perform it." The party has also decided not to accept the Rs one lakh that Yadav said would be given to the families of those killed in the 30 October police firing. Instead, it has called upon people to donate generously to a trust set up by the party for the purpose.

Advani also visited the victims in a place that has now been re-christened "Rambhakt Balidaan Marg" and assured the people that the guilty would be brought to task. With the announcement of the next leg of the agitation, which would include a *shuddhi karan* or purification programme for all temples in Ayodhya, the battle lines seem to be clearly drawn. And very soon Ayodhya might give us another chapter of blood, sweat and tears. ●

Radhika Ramaseshan/Lucknow

Passing fancy

Bal Thackeray shocks the Shiv Sena and the BJP by flirting with Chandra Shekhar

MAHARASHTRA

The Shiv Sena has always bowed to the BJP. So, when Sena supremo Bal Thackeray went against the wishes of the BJP and swore allegiance to Chandra Shekhar, there was a major embarrassment. The BJP leadership was outraged and the top brass of the Shiv Sena alarmed. But Thackeray's word was out, and his word, to his party, is law.

Thackeray began changing colour when V.P. Singh was rapidly losing ground "I may have differences with Chandra Shekhar," he said, "but I will prefer him as Prime Minister." Thackeray's preference did not really make a difference to the party, but the supremo was, in his characteristic way, laying the fuse for a future shock. Even on the day L.K Advani was arrested on his way to Ayodhya, Thackeray had not changed his stance "We will completely toe the BJP line " he proclaimed. Then at a massive annual day rally in Bombay, the Sena supremo came up with the bombshell. He declared his trust in Chandra Shekhar, categorically stating that the Shiv Sena would support him as Prime Minister.

Not surprisingly, Thackeray's announcement set off a wave of resentment. Politicians like Pramod Mahajan, responsible for the BJP-Sena political pact, were extremely unhappy. The fall-out of Thackeray's statement shocked several top Sena leaders. Threatened with a split within his own party, and a backlash for the four-member Sena band in the Lok Sabha, Thackeray finally backtracked. He announced that he was now withdrawing support of the Shiv Sena to Chandra Shekhar's government.

In the midst of this turmoil, Thackeray held meetings with chief minister Sharad Pawar. Pawar had engineered Congress(I) support for the Chandra Shekhar government. And Thackeray, it appeared, was desperately trying to appease both the Congress(I) and Chandra Shekhar. So, finally the Sena supremo began meeting his arch-rival. But Pawar, the wily politician, was hedging. When the state Janata Dal formally split recently—with its president Mrinal Core swearing by V.P Singh while Kamal Morarka, viciously opposed the Raja Pawar gained control The Shiv Sena, having patched up with the BJP, remained the only force to reckon with.

However, Thackeray refuses to admit that the meetings with Sharad Pawar were sessions of political wrangling. "Why should I not meet Sharad Pawar"? he retorts. "After all he is the chief minister! And we talked about the 40 lakh hutmen that I want to rehabilitate " When pressed on why he had to seek out his old and constant rival of whom he has been bitterly critical all along, Thackeray shrugs and says, "How can I tell you everything that took place at those meetings? This is politics!"



Thackeray: attempts at grabbing Pawar

Thackeray and his partymen are now looking forward to a mid-term poll. Sources within the Shiv Sena say that this could prove to be a golden opportunity for the party in Maharashtra. If Rajiv Gandhi comes back to power, he may want Sharad Pawar by his side in New Delhi. And this will leave Maharashtra wide open for the Shiv Sena. Presently, there is nobody in the Congress(I) who can match Pawar's expertise and experience when it comes to dealing with the problems and power games in Maharashtra. Ramrao Adik, and Shushilkumar Shinde certainly cannot measure up to Pawar's sheer political ingenuity and manipulative power.

And after all the talks with the CM Thackeray has once again started spouting anti-Pawar rhetoric. "Sharad Pawar is one of the richest politicians around," he says. "He has the capacity to buy people." Rather carried away, the supremo also declared that the Shiv Sena would never, have anything to do with the Congress or Sharad Pawar or, for that matter, Chandra Shekhar. Denying that he was serious about supporting Chandra Shekhar, or that he was piqued when the BJP stole his thunder, and took credit for whipping up sentimental support for the Ramjanmabhoomi temple issue in Maharashtra, Thackeray says, "It is all in the mind of the press. No one can steal my thunder in Maharashtra."

But this show of confidence does not wash. There have been too many contradictions recently coming from the Sena supremo. Talk of revolt crops up now and again with Thackeray asserting that as long as he holds the whip,the tigers must jump through a ring of fire if he commands.

Quite obviously, Bal Thackeray would like to rule Maharashtra. At the moment he seems to be waiting for Rajiv Gandhi to return to power and summon Sharad Pawar to New Delhi. And once Pawar leaves, the tiger will roar. •

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

Red-alert

Will the Shekhar regime spell trouble for the LDF?



KERALA

With V.P. Singh bowing out the Nayanar Government is in a fix. The CPI(M) and its partners in the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) coalition have been forced to rework their entire political strategy to retain whatever political advantage the LDF had gained in the state on account of V.P. Singh. Chief minister E.K. Nayanar had an excellent rapport with VP and often said that a phone call to Singh was enough for him to get his



E.K. Nayanar: bracing himself

way. According to the Marxist leader, V.P. Singh had done more for Kerala than any other Prime Minister. The long pending demand to upgrade Trivandrum as an international airport and to declare coconut to be an oil seed, were conceded by the Centre during the last days of the Singh regime. And, above all, the threat of dismissal of the LDF government, which was a lingering nightmare during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, disappeared when V.P. Singh came to power.

But the situation has changed overnight. The LDF will now be forced to rework its political strategy to retain whatever political advantage it had gained on account of V.P. Singh. The Janata Dal in Kerala depends on the CPI(M) vote bank for its survival in the state. So none of its top leaders, including the MLAs, was tempted to move over to the splinter Janata Dal (Socialist), formed by lower level, virtually unknown, leaders. Rosalin Panjikaran, a practically unknown lady who claims to be a close friend of the PM, heads the Janata Dal (S) in the state. None of the dissidents and die-hard Lohiaites, who were fighting each other within the Janata Dal, were willing to cross over—mainly due to their total dependence on the Marxist party. Even Thampan Thomas, former MP and State Campaign Committee chairman, who was bitterly opposed to V.P. Singh, has decided to stay on, since the Marxists are backing Singh to the hilt.

And now the state is feeling the impact of VP's fall. Last week, the Centre reduced the rice allotment for the state by 10,000 tonnes for the month of December. This has created a major political row in the rice-eating state. The Marxists feel that the cut in the quota seems to indicate the way things were likely to move in the future; while Opposition leader K Karunakaran has asserted that the reduction came about because of the "inaction of the previous V.P. Singh government at the Centre". It is the same story all over again, only those who were supporting the Centre have now become its critics and the earlier critics are today the biggest defenders of the Centre.

Meanwhile, with a change of government at the Centre, the CPI(M) has decided to postpone the elections to the district council which was to be held in December. Though CPI(M) state secretary V.S. Achutanandan declared that the postponement was due to "uncertainty regarding the stability of the present government at the Centre," other political parties say that the Marxists simply have cold feet.

As the CPI(M) tried hard to play down the riots in Matancherry, in the heart of Cochin, the Congress(I) resurrected the horror to project it as a prime example of the deteriorating law and order situation in the state. Yet the Opposition finds itself torn by internal dissidence and dissatisfaction among party cadres over its support to the Chandra Shekhar ministry. The fall of the V.P. Singh government

Judge thyself

His sexist comments get the Chief Justice into a mess



Justice Mishra: eating crow

The new Chief Justice of India, Ranganath Mishra, has created a minor constitutional crisis. On 7 November, Justice Mishra was speaking at a women's conference organised by the Brahma Kumaris, a religious society. Mid-way through his 40-minute speech, the Chief Justice (CJ) suddenly delivered a scathing attack on women.

"Women should go back to their homes and not think of competing with men on everything," he declared and explained that work was the binding feature between a man and a woman and if one tries to get equality, then "love perishes, love dies". Finally, he disagreed with the banners the organisers of the conference had put up, which read "The world will rise when the women rise" and stated that the world could only rise when "women are women".

The remarks of the CJ were briefly reported in the newspapers the following day. But the tenor of Justice Mishra's remarks were enough to prompt women's groups to search out the recordings of the speech and threaten mass action. Rani Jethmalani commented that the CJ's words go against Article 51A of the Constitution which grants the fundamental right of equality of men and women. A senior lawyer of the Supreme

should have come as a shot in the arm for the Congress(I)-led UDF but, instead, it has created utter confusion in the rank and file. The Muslim League, the second largest partner of the UDF, voted for V.P. Singh but now wants to join Chandra Shekhar. And the younger leadership in the Muslim League wants to come out of the Congress(I) fold and join the LDF to support V.P. Singh.

Meanwhile, another constituent of the Opposition UDF, Kerala Congress(Mani), has become the laughing stock of Kerala today—thanks to the machinations of Karunakaran. The Kerala Congress strongman, K.M. Mani, was to be sworn in as Cabinet minister in the Chandra Shekhar government, but at the last moment he was asked not to come for the swearing-in ceremony. Congress partymen, however, feel that it is best that Mani has not been given a ministerial berth because with both the Assembly and the state elections around the corner he would have thrown his weight around and become quite difficult to handle.

All in all, VP's exit seems to have created panic and turbulance in the state—for the ruling party, as well as for the Opposition. ●

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

Court said, "What Justice Mishra has said is not an isolated stance. We have read his judgements and in many of them, his bias against women shows up clearly."

As the women planned to launch a signature campaign against the Chief Justice, Indira Jaisingh, another Supreme Court lawyer known to take up women's issues frequently in court, wrote to Justice Mishra, demanding an apology.

Justice Mishra realised that he had stirred a hornet's nest and responded to the plea of the women lawyers almost two weeks after he made the controversial remarks. In a letter addressed to Brinda Karat, secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), Justice Mishra clarified that he had made the remarks in a personal capacity and that this should not be linked with his official position. Stating that "he had the highest respect for ladies" he took a position which was an anti-thesis of that taken by him earlier. ●

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

A tale of two gurus

The godmen who might be running India



MADHYA PRADESH

It reads like the eternal Indian fairy tale, the story of Ram and Shyam. Only, this time the two seem to have magic powers. They made leading ministers out of ambitious nobodies. The blessed ones: Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and external affairs minister V.C. Shukla. The godmen: Bhagvan Ram and Radhe Shyam.

The two godmen are very highly respected in political circles, as well as by the humble godfearing mass of devotees. Bhagvan Ram is a very well-known *tantrik* of Varanasi, and now resides mostly in his *ashram* in Raigarh district of Madhya Pradesh. Belonging to the famous Aghor Tantrik lineage, this godman was originally known as Bhagvan, and later suffixed "Ram" to it. He has an *ashram* for lepers in Jashpur, and is reputed to be a kindly soul who doesn't use his *tantrik* powers to harm anyone. He is also regarded as the top social worker in the whole of Chhattisgarh.

And he keeps top company. Not only is the present PM a devotee of his, but former PM Morarji Desai had come to pay his respects to Bhagvan Ram, and former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh Arjun Singh is also a follower. Chandra Shekhar visits his *ashram* religiously, at least once a year, usually more. This time, when he stayed there for a few days in the first week of October, nobody quite knew what happened. Some said the *tantrik* had refused to meet Chandra Shekhar, while others declared that he had blessed the hot-shot leader. As for the leader himself, he answered all questions regarding Raigarh, but did not reveal the outcome of his meeting with the godman. But Shekhar's recent good fortunes may make one wonder whether there is any reason to doubt the blessings of this powerful *tantrik*.

Shyam's part of the story is even more intriguing. V.C. Shukla is a blind devotee of Radhe Shyam, a godman of Patharia in Jabalpore division. The regular, tranquil visits of Shukla to his guru's place get alarmingly frequent whenever Shukla faces a dilemma, or goes through a rough time. Even the minister's big bungalow in Raipur is named "Radhe Shyam Bhavan". The guru is known to be a likeable person, a family man with no great airs but some divine powers.

The powers, divine or otherwise, show. For example, during the days of the Dal turmoil, Shukla had decided to support V.P. Singh, and had instructed his supporters to do likewise. Thus the Raipur District Janata Dal Committee, staunch Shukla loyalists, even adopted a resolution supporting





Shekhar and Shukla : godfearing?

VP and condemning Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal. But then Shukla went to Patharia, met his guru and announced his decision to support Chandra Shekhar. His bewildered supporters followed suit. Only Tarun Prasad Chatterjee, MLA and president of the Raipur District Janata Dal Committee (Urban), chose to go on record as having conveyed to VP his loyalty and support.

However, coming back to godman Radhe Shyam, all associates of Shukla are convinced that the panic trips to the guru do benefit the politician immensely. Whatever heights Shukla has reached, he believes the blessings of Radhe Shyamji to be behind them.

And the Prime Minister isn't doing so badly either. The windfall that changed the colour of his life might have been a pleasant blessing from the great *tantrik*, Bhagvan Ram.

So that is the story of Ram and Shyam, the magic wands that might rule the country from behind the curtains. ●

M.V. Kher/Raipur

Grounded!

Air hostesses protest against the new retirement policy

Air India's hostesses are on the war-path again. Since the government decided, on 16 October last year, to "ground" hostesses at 45, the ladies have been agitating against what they call an unjust and sexist enforcement. And demanding the retirement age be set at 58. The decision is particularly unfair, they point out, since all over the world the retirement age of air-hostesses is 60 years. Air India, by implementing this new age limit, is guilty of treating its hostesses as mere sex objects.

"We are ready to go all the way to Parliament," says R.E. Ramanathan, secretary of the Air Corporations Employees Union (ACEU). "The message is clear: you had better stop flying by the time you are 45, because passengers prefer nubile, young girls. Older women make them uncomfortable."

The airline officials seem to have no plans regarding re-employment of the grounded hostesses. "Besides says Ramanathan, "there is a lot of resentment among the ground staff. They have already begun taking exception to 'untrained personnel' jumping the rank. Will Air India, then, relegate every grounded hostess to the post of a clerk?"

The airlines officials, however, are in no mood to accept these demands. A senior airlines manager has no trouble explaining why. "People whotravel do not want old women serving them."

The women have formed an organisation called the Air India Hostesses Association, to fight the unjust rule. But this organisation is yet to be recognised

Trapped between an insensitive management, an unfair ruling and a lot of red-tape, the ladies are in a tough situation. But they are determined to fight and be treated as efficient workers, not just pretty faces. ●

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

The middle man

Biju feigns neutrality regarding the changes at the Centre



ORISSA

On 16 November, after more than six months, and in the wake of the split in the Janata Dal, the party wing in Orissa held an executive meeting. And the state party neither pledged support for V.P Singh, nor condemned the dissident leader Chandra Shekhar. This surprised quite a few, no doubt, especially since Biju was toeing the VP line till a short while earlier.

The unanimously adopted resolution merely granted full authority to the chief minister—who is also the president of the state party - to unite the factions at the national level. Apparently not worried about sounding ridiculous, the resolution authorised Biju to decide on the future course of action, since "under his enlightened guidance and farsighted leadership, the future of the Dal is bound to bounce back to life and prosperity".

However, not all Dal-men backed the resolution without reservations. Some disagreed, but did not dare go against the wish of their leader , Patnaik. They did demand a positive stand from the CM, wanting to know which way exactly the state party was leaning, and pointing out that the executive meeting had been summoned after so long at this crucial time, precisely because the party needed to adopt such an unambiguous stand. It was clear that these legislators were in favour of VP and itching to condemn Chandra Shekhar. Senior MLA Harish Baxipatra had even expressed his desire to move a resolution to this effect, but backed off fearing Patnaik's ire. Amar Satpathy's proposed amendment to the resolution, which was supposed to be backed by Umesh Swain and Raja Rajendra Pratap Swain, met a similar fate.

Biju Patnaik: Inching towards Shekhar?



So the pro-VP MLAs, though the overwhelming majority, failed to dent the neutral resolution passed. In fact, possibly the only positive thing that they achieved was restraining the eager Biju from lending "constructive support" to the Chandra Shekhar government, as he had announced earlier. Also to avoid a confrontation with the pro-VP members, Ashok Das, the working president of the state party, said to the press that the state party continues to be in the Dal led by S.R. Bommai and V.P. Singh. This reference had been carefully avoided in the resolution, which was actually drafted by Das.

But despite this careful neutrality, Biju's leanings show. He justified not condemning Shekhar with the argument that it was important for the state to have friendly relations with the Centre, simply for the sake of assistance. He also sternly reminded the pro-VP MLAs that all of them had been elected not in the name of VP, but in the name of Biju, so would they kindly "stop chanting VP...VP..".

The fangs were spared, however, since the former Union minister Srikant Jena, a staunch supporter of VP and keen rival of Biju, was absent, along with other pro-VP members, as the executive meeting coincided with the Lok Sabha's special session. But although Biju still looms supreme over his political fiefdom in his home state, his strength might be sagging. Times of trouble lie ahead. And this time the eternal carrot of ministerial berths may not be of much help.●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

High on gas

A new chemical promises to slash fuel costs

Swapan Kumar Das slid into the driver's seat, turned the ignition key and started thinking hard. The cost of petrol had gone up again, and the 120 km drive to work and back would be quite unfeasible. He needed to find a way to save petrol. Ten years later, Das is handing out little bottles of fluid to taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers, free of cost. The fluid, when added to petrol or diesel, gives 30 to 40 per cent extra mileage.

"Ever since the acute shortage of fuel following the Gulf crisis, I have an average of 70 taxi and auto drivers coming to me every day," says Das. "The liquid doesn't damage the engine, it has passed the chemical scrutiny of the National Test House."

The magic additive, Petrosol, is derived from coal tar. It can boost the efficiency of any petroleum-based fuel: petrol, diesel, kerosene or furnace oil. And Sen has different varieties to suit different fuels- -Petrosol/P for petrol, Petrosol/K for kerosene, and so on. All one needs to do is add half cc of the liquid to a litre of fuel. "It's just a catalytic agent," explains Sen, "which produces oxygen in the combustion chamber and lowers the flashpoint of the fuel. Since the fuel then ignites at a lower temperature, its efficiency increases." A benzene derivative, this is completely combustible and stands above other agents which increase fuel combustion because of its special anti-knock characteristic.

It seems that the Bangladesh government tested his chemical a few months ago and pronounced that fuel efficiency is increased by more than 25 per cent in foreign cars. Hindustan Motors is examining the additive now. And almost certain of a major breakthrough, a lot of industrial groups have approached the inventor: like the Reliance Group, the Bangur Industries, the Pittsburg Paint Group of the USA or consultants Harry and Allen Lindsay of Ireland. But Sen has refused all and is waiting for a grant from the United Bank of India.

"These names are well-known, I grant, but are they respected?" asks the concerned inventor. "Besides, the national interest comes first. If this works out, then we spend less on petroleum imports." Which make up a huge chunk of our total import bill. So Sen has got a cottage and small-scale industries licence and plans to set up his very own 'Strans Otto Systems'. The name, though strange, is important, says the inventor with a very straight face. "If I can't convince," he grins, "I would prefer to confuse."

SEN, 50, has very little formal education. After graduating from high school, he had to fend for himself and his widowed mother, and had no opportunity for continuing his studies. Nevertheless, the self-taught chemist has eight patents to his name, both Indian and foreign. His passion for tinkering has made him a master of converting waste to wealth: his earlier inventions include tiles and decorative items from water hyacinth, water and fire-proof material from sawdust and high-strength wood substitutes from straw and plywood waste.

Petrosol can be further enriched to serve as a fuel by itself. The inventor uses the gas derived from this modified liquid to cook. But his car uses the fluid as a catalyst. In the last five years, Sen has saved an incredible amount on petrol. And others are catching on.

"For the past one year, my cost of petrol has decreased by a sure 35 per cent," says Sadhan Adhikari, a bank employee, who has been a regular user and is awe-struck by Petrosol's properties. "My Ambassador and my friend's Maruti give better mileage. Besides, my bike runs smoother, with less smoke emission and leaves the spark-plug cleaner," he elaborates enthusiastically. Possibly because the temperature is reduced by 10 degrees and the fuel is completely burnt out, leaving practically no deposits.

If the project is as successful as it now seems likely to be, India might survive the oil crunch. •

Antara Dev Sen/Calcutta



Swapan Kumar Das uses an enriched version of Petrosol as an independent fuel. The gas burner can be lit by simply blowing into the bottle of this coal tar derivative

V. GANGADHAR

Chocolate lead

An ad takes up all of The Afternoon Despatch & Courier's *front page*

When Marlowe's Faustus sold his soul to the devil, he at least, had adequate compensation. The company of Helen of Troy whose face had 'launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium'. But when a newspaper sells its soul, in this case, its front page, to accommodate an advertisement for chocolates, the journalistic fraternity is quite rightly indignant

The newspaper concerned was Bombay's *The Afternoon Despatch & Courier* (ADC), edited by Behram Contractor, popularly known as Busybee. On a day Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was in Bombay, readers were shocked that the entire front page of the newspaper had been taken over by Nestle's Chocolates. Gloated a senior ad person with the paper, "We made a neat little packet or, say, a good chunk of money, but I cannot let you in on the secret". The editor, who is unsparing in his criticism of other papers (he called the 48-page new avatar of *Sunday Observer*, a sheer waste of newsprint!) was quoted as saying, "It was an honour to carry the ad. One has to keep doing new things."

The editorial staff of the paper were not so happy. There were rumours they volunteered to collect and pitch in an equal amount, provided the ad was not published. And while the advertising fraternity crowed about the coup, the more professional among them, like C.Y. Gopinath (a brilliant writer himself) said, "The front and the edit pages belong to the readers. These pages are the special ones which no amount of money can buy. That's why replacing news on the front page with an ad becomes blasphemous."

The city's number one eveninger, *Mid-day*, had also been approached by the ad agency but did not succumb to the lure. But the ADC had always been an ad man's paper. Look at the way it had been projecting Lintas chief, Alyque Padamsee's *Othello*. Almost every day, there would be an interview, a photograph or a write up about the play!

That the 'chocolate-led' issue sold 72,000 copies should be taken with a pinch of salt, though it may not go well with the chocolate taste. The ADC's circulation is nowhere near that figure. Meanwhile, one of the hotshots of the paper came out with the statement that the front page would never be sold again. That, however, is like a girl who had lost her virginity claiming virtuously, "Oh, no, it won't happen again."


The Afternoon
Despatch & Courier
Rs.1.25

No News

is good news because Nestle Premium Chocolates have arrived in Bombay
Now everything else can wait including the news.



The ADC had always been an ad man's paper. Look at the way it had been projecting Lintas Chief **Alyque Padamsee's** *Othello*

Premature conclusions

Bombay was shocked by the killings of two nuns at a suburban orphanage. A couple of days after the killings, came further shocks *Indian Express* and *The Times of India*, published news reports that the postmortem reports on the victims revealed they were used to frequent sexual intercourse and that one of them was suspected to have been suffering from venereal disease. The *Express* report, actually, led with this bit of shocking news.

Immediately there was a furore. Christian associations, church persons and women's groups came out with strong statements denouncing the maligning of the dead. Subsequently, the *Times* and other papers carried a story quoting the crime branch of the city police (which had taken over the investigations) that the postmortem report did not mention "either about sexual intercourse or venereal disease" and that all such conclusions were "premature".

The publication of such details raises quite a few issues. How come only the *Times* and the *Express* carried references to the sexual intercourse and venereal disease? If there had been no mention of these in the report, how did they come to be published? The police explained that genital swabs and other samples from the bodies of the victims had been sent to the Forensic Laboratory to ascertain whether sexual assault could be the motive for the crime.

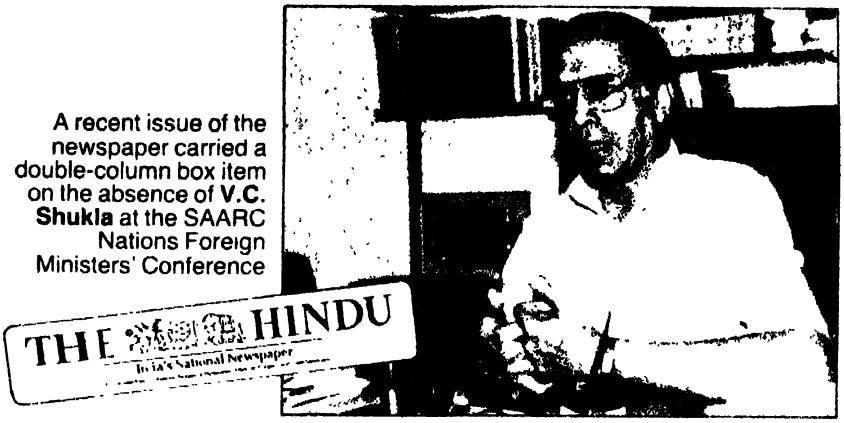
It appears that somebody at the lab had drawn premature conclusions and leaked them to the press. While wishing that the *Times* and the *Express* had properly checked the authenticity of the leaks, it is regrettable that the press seems to be obsessed

with the 'rape' angle. Every single report on the killings mentioned over and over again, that the women had not been raped.

Murder is messy, foul. In order to solve the crime and book the guilty, the personal, intimate details of the victims had to be made public. Sexual motives would throw an entirely new light on the crime. But why speculate on these?

A change of style

Gimmicks on the pages of the venerable *The Hindu*! No, no, not Chitra Subramaniam and yet another expose on the Bofors. A recent issue of the newspaper, carried a double-column box item in bold print on the op-ed page. Headlined, 'Dear Foreign Minister, We Await Your Arrival in Male', the box item was in the format of a letter from K.K. Katyal, the paper's New Delhi Bureau Chief to the absentee Indian external affairs minister. Katyal was among the media persons who had assembled at Male for the SAARC Nations Foreign Ministers Conference and had been quite upset at the 'unprecedented event' of the 'doleful sight' of the empty chair for the minister!



A recent issue of the newspaper carried a double-column box item on the absence of **V.C. Shukla** at the SAARC Nations Foreign Ministers' Conference

The letter then goes on to cover New Delhi political gossip about the Prime Minister's problems over Cabinet formation, making certain tongue-in-cheek observations on the issue. For a paper which had to explain to its readers that the Art Buchwald column was not to be taken seriously, the op-ed page box was a bit revolutionary and quite a change from the highly personalised reporting style of the late G.K. Reddy, Katyal's predecessor.

The letter format suits the edit page better. I remember, Mr Sham Lal of *The Times of India*, addressing Jean Paul Sartre or Albert Camus and questioning them where they thought the world was going? But on the op-ed page, that too on a current political issue, Katyal's experiment stood out like a sore thumb. •

Available By Post (Inland)

INDIA'S LARGEST SELLING WEEKLY IN ENGLISH

SUNDAY

Rs 310 for a year (52 issues);
Rs 610 for 2 years (104 issues)
An annual saving of **Rs 54**
on the newsstand price

Postage free
Address your order to :
The Circulation Manager (U)
Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd.
Calcutta-700 001
Please draw your demand draft/cheque in favour of Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd., Calcutta

Without punch

The Sixth World Cup Boxing Championship was a damp squib

That amateur boxing will always remain a minor sport is evident every time the event is held anywhere in India. If further proof were needed, it came in the form of the sixth World Cup competition. Touted as the biggest sporting event in the country, it came and went practically unnoticed. And, had not India won a bronze medal, the first ever, in a world meet – it would certainly have been written off as a colossal waste of time and money.

Bombay was allotted four of the twelve weight categories by the Amateur International Boxing Association. The other eight had been divided between Havana and Dublin. This was the first time that the World Cup competition had been divided into three sections. It was also the first time that India was staging the event.

But there seemed nothing to recommend it, not even the fact that the super-heavyweight category was included in the first leg. Bombay, traditionally a sports-minded city, seemed to have ignored its existence. It appeared as if there were more officials and ushers at the Bombay Gymkhana than spectators.

In fact, according to an usher, "people were being cajoled into filling the 5000-odd seats." But even this "free offer" was not being taken readily by sports enthusiasts. They preferred the national swimming that was on simultaneously at Andheri and the Rovers Cup football at the Cooperage. Ultimately, it was left to members of the Bombay Gymkhana to bring in friends and acquaintances.

It is not as if boxing is not popular, especially the professional variety. But the build-up for this event did not appeal to Bombayites. And the vast difference between amateur and professional boxing was never more in evidence. A title bout in any weight category of professional boxing would attract many times the number attending an amateur bout.

An attempt was made this time to increase the duration of a fight. Instead of the usual nine minutes into three rounds, AIBA introduced two-minute fights spread over five rounds. The intervals of two minutes was reduced to one. Boxing, essentially an easy in courage and craft, was reduced to a frantic search for point-scoring punches. From the spectator's point of view, this was not even as exciting as the sparring session of a professional.

From India's point of view, however, this was a good investment. While the whopping expenses, estimated at about Rs 60 lakhs, were borne by a sponsor, the Indian Amateur Boxing Federation managed to get Doordarshan coverage on the second channels of the country.

From the boxers' point of view, the event provided the opportunity of getting top-class adversaries. Pugilists from over thirty countries turned up with their best boxers, only one for each weight. As hosts, India was allowed to field two boxers in each category.

But even here, the public was short-changed. The Soviet Union, one of the strongest countries in amateur boxing, did not send a team. Nor did Australia and a couple of others. But Pakistan set a bad example. Inspite of the fact that the president of the international body happens to be Pakistan's Anwar Chaudhury, even after confirming entry, the country did not send a squad.

Eric Griffin of the United States



RASHBEHAR DAS

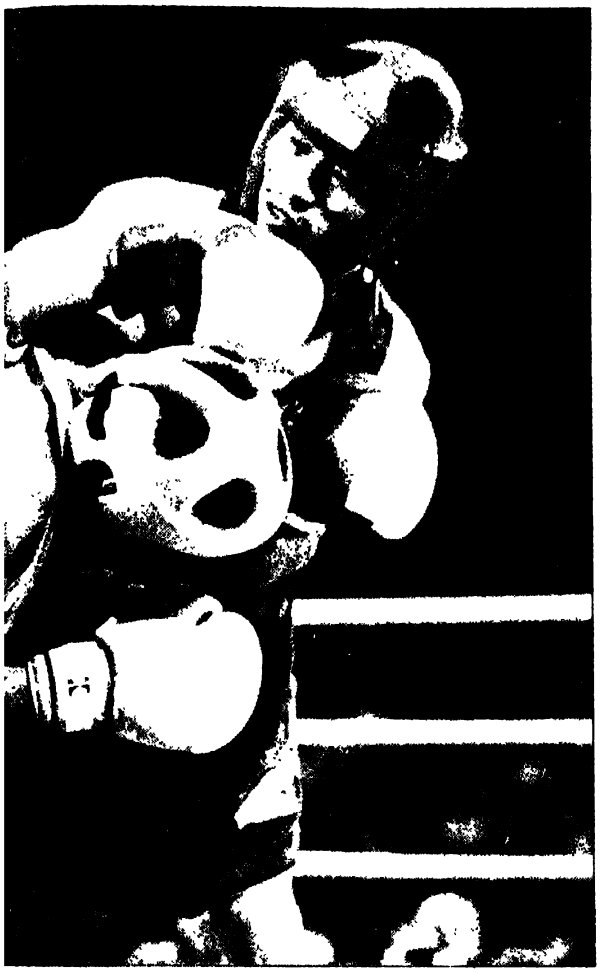


RASHBEHAR DAS

It will be interesting to see what punishment is meted out to the defaulting countries. Taking action against the USSR is almost impossible. The Pakistan association will not take it lying down if their own representative in the world body agrees to sanctions against the boxers and the association concerned.

Chaudhury's reaction to the news of his team's withdrawal was interesting. When first asked for his reaction by an Indian news agency, he hinted that it was due to the unsettled conditions in this country in the wake of the Babri Masjid issue. Then, probably after second thoughts, he told the press politics had nothing to do with the team's absence, "they are idiots for not coming".

From India's point of view, the championship being held at home came as a boon. "Computers have





Zhoramthanga (facing camera), the gutsy, experienced, pugilist had the measure of Yadav from the start and emerged the winner. He won India the bronze medal

been installed to ensure fair and correct decisions," the organisers said. But then, these were being operated by the judges themselves. There were several decisions which boxing pundits said should have gone against Indian boxers but didn't, perhaps because the competition was being held here.

Dharmendra Singh Yadav, an 18-year-old with a great future, was distinctly lucky that he was boxing in India when he was given a points verdict against West Germany's Jan Quast. The Germans had separate boxing federations despite the October reunification. Quast came into his quarter-final bout with cool confidence and certainly had the measure of the Indian in at least three of the five rounds—the first, second and the fourth. But these were apparently not enough to merit victory, which went Yadav's way, with a comfortable 11-7 points.

The same was the case of Mizoram's Zhoramthanga. The 24-year-old sports officer is easily the gutsiest boxer in India today. But that was not enough to gain a victory of Robert Wen of Scotland. What made spectators break out into derisive laughter was the scoreline—16 to four. If at all Zhoramthanga won, it was by a whisker. Mukund Killekar also had the benefit of a benign band of judges, while Sarabjit Singh missed his Cinderella shoes in the semi-finals when he met Svilen Russinov of Bulgaria. He lasted just a round and a half. In the box-off for bronze, he lasted a little longer.

The semi-finals also saw high drama when the over-enthusiastic Zhoramthanga initially refused to heed India's Soviet coach, Anatoli Volkov. The latter threw in the towel immediately after the third round against Eric Griffin of the United States. He was not willing to give up his fight with the world champion although he was taking quite a beating. He gesticulated wildly and then labelled the coach's decision as unfair.

But Zhoramthanga could derive some consolation from the fact that, on that day, four of the eight bouts were stopped by the seconds of the losers well within the duration of the bouts. This was a professional strategy adopted by coaches to avoid a knockout decision, which debars a boxer from entering the ring for the next four weeks. This holds true of bouts stopped by the referee, too.

But this means the spectators were robbed of good contests just so that a boxer could slot himself for a medal. The paying public wants a contest, not a medal.

Ultimately, India did gain a medal through Zhoramthanga. The more experienced pugilist had the measure of Yadav from the start and emerged an overwhelming winner. He also netted Rs one lakh as a medal winner for India—just compensation for his heroism and tenacity from being a school dropout to emerge as a champion in the light-fly class. At least from India's point of view. But there was one hard-luck story here—that of Manoj Pingale. The Indian contingent had placed a lot of hope on this lad who had reached the third round of the Seoul Olympics, losing to the ultimate bronze medallist. Pune's boxing hope lost to Wayne McCullough of Ireland in the bantamweight by a margin of 27-24. But he is dedicated enough to pursue his goal of glory in the future.

On paper, the Indian performance is praiseworthy—three boxers in the semi-finals of the World Cup and one bronze medal. But further progress will depend on the kind of coaching imparted to the boxers. While everyone is full of praise for the reticent Volkov, they do realise the folly of not having assistant coaches to help him. This was tried out during the World Cup and it was a great success. B.S. Thapa, Isaac Amaladass and D. Devan, all former national boxers, were inducted as assistants to Volkov.

What the boxers feel is that they do not get enough competitive boxing. They need regular outings, preferably against better opposition. But who will arrange this? When last seen, the IABF chief, Aspy Adajania, was busy trying to sell video cassettes of the 65 or so bouts in the World Cup to foreigners. The price? Twenty dollars a bout. One can understand his enthusiasm—the money is to be shared between Doordarshan and IABF—but what good will it do Indian boxing? ●

Arijit Sen/Bombay

BEGINNING 2 DECEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



A successful week lies ahead of you. Financial prospects look bright but check extravagance. Businessmen and professionals will make steady progress. The health of your children may bother you.

Good dates: 2, 3 and 8
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: North

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



This is a week of mixed fortunes for you. Domestic problems might bother you but they will soon tide over. Mediapersons will do well. A favourable period for film stars. They can sign new assignments.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 7
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



A week of mixed fortunes is in store for you. On the financial front you may run into rough weather but your friends will bail you out. Professionals should avoid taking hasty decisions regarding their careers.

Good dates: 2, 4 and 6
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: West

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



A fairly successful week lies ahead of you. Do not neglect your health, or else it might lead to complications. A hectic period of socialising is on the cards. A favourable week for sportsmen. TV celebrities will fare well.

Good dates: 3, 5 and 8
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South

LEO (21 July—20 August)



This may not be a favourable week for you. People working in public sectors should be cautious in dealing with their superiors. Keep an eye on the health of your family members. Social engagements will keep you busy.

Good dates: 4, 6 and 7
Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



A favourable period for most of you. Legal problems will be resolved this week. The time is ripe for romance and matrimony. Letters might bring good tidings. Servicemen should not change jobs.

Good dates: 2, 5 and 6
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: East

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



This is a favourable week for you. The domestic front will be peaceful. Professionals and businessmen will do well. Students will perform well. However, politicians are advised to maintain a low profile.

Good dates: 3, 4 and 5
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: North

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



This is a favourable period for matrimonials. Professionals are likely to be promoted. Speculators might be successful. Some of you may gain through unexpected sources. Women are advised not to waste their time.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 8
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 9
Favourable direction: West

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is a good week for professionals. Consult your elders before going for a change in career plans. Professional photographers may do well. A friend will be particularly helpful. Your children will do well in their studies.

Good dates: 3, 6 and 7
Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 5
Favourable direction: South

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This is not a favourable period for romance. A misunderstanding could lead to problems. A successful period for architects. Financial gains are in store for you. Promotions are in the offing for professionals.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 8
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: East

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



The unemployed may be blessed with fresh opportunities. Friends and relatives will be helpful to you. You can go on a holiday. The domestic front may not be peaceful. Your wife might create problems.

Good dates: 2, 3 and 4
Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: West

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This is a favourable week for love and matrimony. Be prepared for setbacks on the professional front. Computer scientists will do well. New opportunities are in the offing for students.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 8
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: South

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—ARIES

This relationship might see a lot of conflicts, since both the partners are born fighters. The Aries man, though willing to listen to the Scorpio woman's point of view, will not be less stubborn than the latter when the two disagree.

Blood isn't thicker

The desertions from the Raja's camp continue. The latest to change sides is V.P. Singh's brother-in-law Mandhata Singh, a Rajasthan MLA.



V.P. Singh: exit, the brother-in-law

Mandhata Singh has left the ranks of the Janata Dal to join the splinter group, headed by Digvijay Singh (*not* the deputy minister, finance), which has allied with the BJP, in Rajasthan.

The Raja—or the Rani, for that matter—can't be too pleased about this. But Mandhata Singh is unperturbed.

After all, isn't he tipped for a ministry in the near future?

Straight drive

Cricket jargon seems to have caught on in a big way with politicians. And we're not just referring to Margaret Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Howe. Even Gujarat chief minister Chimanbhai Patel has begun talking in cricketing metaphors when it comes to describing his political career.

Recently, addressing a group of newsmen, Patel said: "For the past 20 years, I had been fielding (in Opposition). But now I will hit sixers and boundaries and complete two centuries (terms)."

Yes, we all know where we've heard that one before.

HEARD AT CBI HEADQUARTERS

Cross Chandra Shekhar with Subramaniam Swamy, and what do you get? Chandra Swami.

A SENIOR OFFICIAL



Chimanbhai Patel: star batsman

CHECK-LIST

The books they'll write afterwards

- **Chandra Shekhar:** How To Conquer Ambition
- **Ashoke Sen:** Scruples
- **Sanjay Singh:** My life As A Shuttlecock
- **Subramaniam Swamy:** How To Win Friends And Influence People
- **Jagdeep Dhankhar:** How To Win Fame And Influence Photographers
- **Kalyan Singh Kalvi:** A Guide To Women's Welfare
- **V.C. Shukla:** External And Other Affairs—A Memoir
- **Om Prakash Chautala:** The Wit And Wisdom Of Chaudhary Devi Lal
- **Devi Lal:** My Son's Father
- **Maneka Gandhi:** My Family And Other Animals

It wasn't me, it wasn't me!

Rajiv Gandhi may cry himself hoarse about not having had anything to do with the constitution of the council of ministers, but nobody seems willing to believe him. No, not even the members of the Mahila Congress.

Soon after the swearing-in ceremony, several irate women workers demonstrated in front of the Congress president for allowing the appointment of a pro-sati leader such as Kalyan Singh Kalvi to the ministry. His induction as a minister was nothing short of an insult to Indian womanhood, they informed Rajiv.



Kalyan Singh Kalvi: creating problems

Gandhi made all his usual noises about Shekhar, and Shekhar alone, having decided on the ministers. But to little avail. The protests continued.

As, no doubt, the misconception.

Hey, that's my letter!

One of the first things Yashwant Sinha did after becoming finance minister was ask for the file comprising complaints sent in by various members of Parliament. He would take action on these, the minister decided, before embarking on his other duties.



Yashwant Sinha: apply, apply, no reply

But he was in for a surprise. For as many as 27 letters were written by Yashwant Sinha, MP. Many of them were several months old, on which the Janata Dal(S) leader had assumed, mistakenly as it turned out, that action had already been taken. Little had the former bureaucrat known then, that his predecessor, Madhu Dandavate, had little use for his helpful suggestions.

But Sinha can hardly complain. He is now finance minister in place of the good professor, and can implement them under his own supervision.

The buck stops here

You've got to hand it to Harmohan Dhawan and Digvijay Singh. They certainly know how to beat party MPs at their own game.

Soon after being sworn in as civil aviation minister and deputy minister in charge of finance, the two leaders announced that if any MP wanted some work done by their ministries, they should approach them personally, instead of resorting to the usual letter-writing.

Generally what most members do when approached by their constituents for some favour or the other is to write in to the concerned minister, and then promptly forget all about it. When questioned about the progress on the matter, they reply, "Sorry, but the minister refuses to take any action on the matter. You know how people become once they come into power."

With one stroke, Dhawan and Singh have destroyed that scenario.

Dal(S) MPs will have to think of more inventive methods of passing the buck.

HEARD AT TEEN MURTI

No wonder the telecom strike is over. The union leaders were worried that Sanjay Singh would shoot them

A V.P SINGH LOYALIST

CHECK-LIST

Who's close to Chandra Shekhar

- **Kamal Morarka:** Has been there almost from the beginning. A Bombay industrialist with vaguely leftist sympathies, Morarka has stuck by Chandra Shekhar since the latter's days as a Young Turk.

  He is the man Shekhar trusts the most because he knows that Morarka not only has unflinching loyalty, but is also rich enough in his own right to not want to make money out of politics.

- **Yashwant Sinha:** The man Shekhar depends on the most. A former IAS officer, Sinha was special assistant to Karpoori Thakur when he decided to join politics.

  From 1984-90, he functioned as Shekhar's one-man secretariat, during which period he convinced his leader of his ability.

- **Subramaniam Swamy:** That he should now be one of Shekhar's most voluble supporters is ironic. In 1984, he was expelled from the Janata Party for abusing Shekhar in print.

  Over the last three years, however, Swamy and Shekhar have made up and the bearded boss of Ballia seems fond of the former Harvard professor's iconoclastic streak.

- **Harmohan Dhawan:** An industrialist and hotel owner from Chandigarh, Dhawan is a hard-core Shekhar loyalist. Along with Sinha, he led the signature campaign for V.P. Singh's removal and took on the Raja (with Shekhar's tacit approval) before his boss was ready to play his hand.

- **C.V. Gautam:** Debonair, bearded, Chandra Shekhar aide, who has emerged as the V. George of the government. Gautam has stuck by him since 1977 and understands his leader's mind. Within the Shekhar camp, his relative sophistication has led some rustic party workers to complain about his "five-star" leanings.



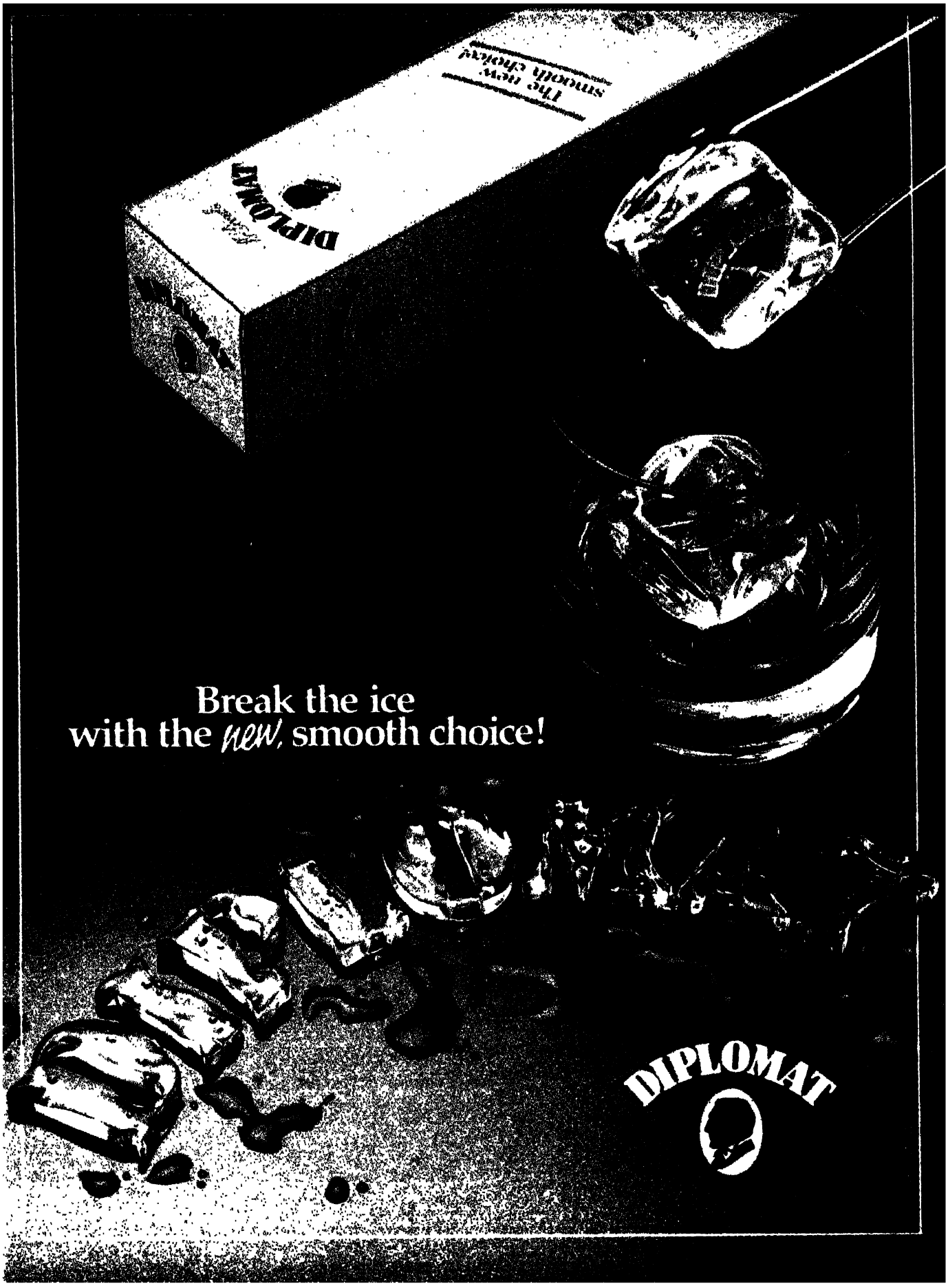
Harmohan Dhawan: beating the system

On the comeback trail

With the Congress-supported Chandra Shekhar government in power, two high-level officers may well be on the verge of staging a comeback: former director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) M.K. Narayanan and the former cabinet secretary, T. Seshan.

Narayanan's chances are rated as excellent after the Prime Minister upbraided the current chief of the IB, R.P. Joshi, saying that his bureau spent all its time chasing politicians, instead of pursuing terrorists, foreign agents and the like.

Seshan, too, has become more high-profile now that a Congress government, if only by proxy, is back in South Block. And he may well end up playing an important role in the new dispensation.


DIPLOMAT
The new smooth choice!
Break the ice
with the new, smooth choice!
DIPLOMAT

Over Rs. 100 crores in foreign exchange in a single year.

Century's magnificent obsession with exports has won for it important international markets – and steadily rising foreign exchange earnings. Achieved entirely by the export of products manufactured at its own factories.

Over the last four decades Century has continuously diversified into new areas and today it is one of the most sought after multi-dimensional corporations in India. Internationally the company has generated a healthy respect for India and Indian products.

In its relentless pursuit of growth, Century is now envisaging new ventures in areas of high priority – such as power and petrochemicals. To create more productive assets for the country. And more opportunities for our people to better the quality of their lives.

CENTURY TEXTILES AND INDUSTRIES LIMITED
Century Bhavan, Dr. Annie Besant Road,
Worli, Bombay 400 025.



"Scaling new heights Setting new standards. That is Century."

Mr. B. K. Birla – Chairman

Divisions:

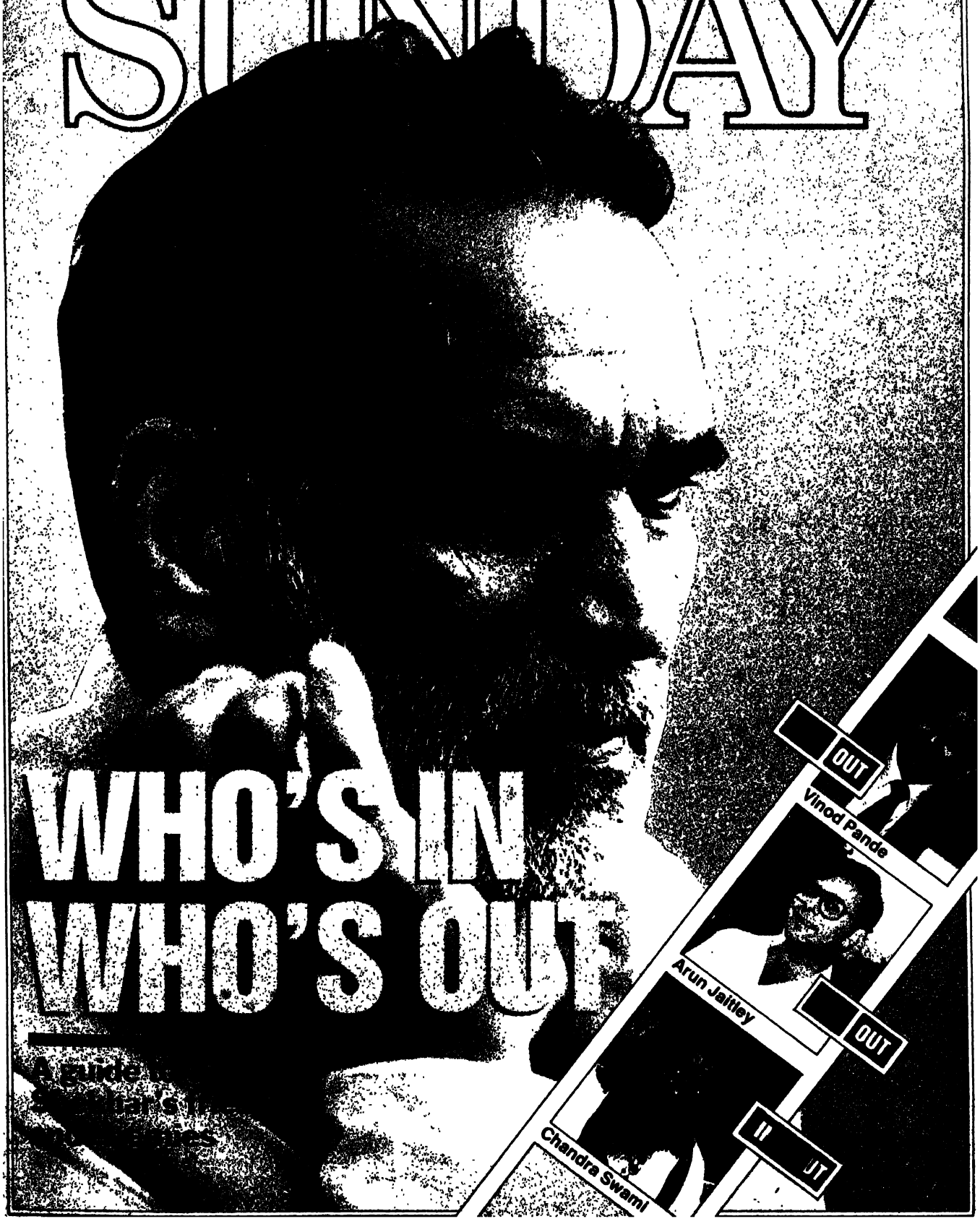
- Century Textiles
- Century Rayon
- Century Chemicals
- Century Cement
- Malhar Cement
- Manikgarh Cement
- Century Pulp & Paper
- Century Shipping
- Century Builders

CENTURY

National perspective – Global vision

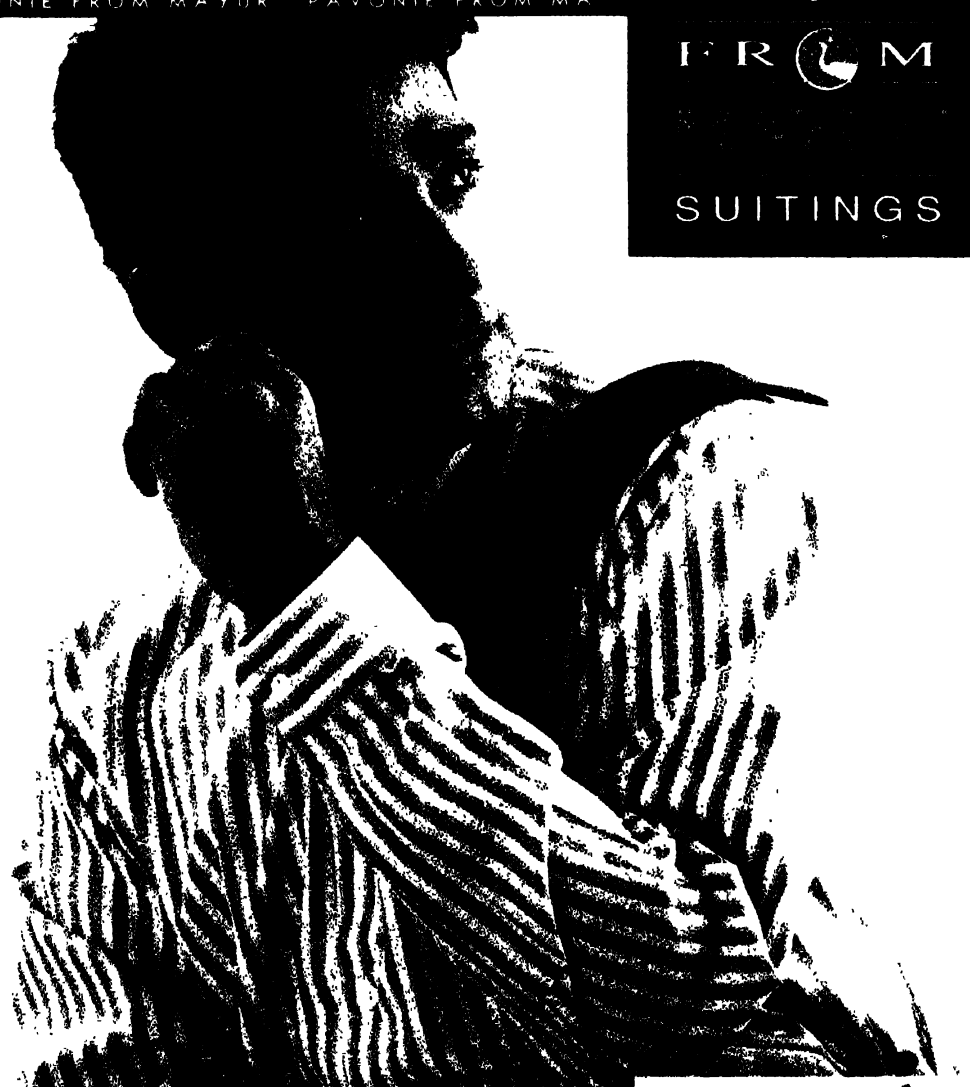
ARUN SHOURIE ON EDITORS AND OWNERS

SUNDAY



PAVONIE FROM MAYUR

SUITINGS





Pavonie

Ready to Wear

SHIRTS ■ TROUSERS

CRAFTED
TO PERFECTION.
DISCOVER THE EXQUISITE
STYLING. THE
SUPERIOR FABRICS.
THE SPLENDID RANGE.
AND ITS UNMISTAKABLE



For trade enquiries, contact

Rajasthan Spg & Wvg. Mills Ltd.,
Gulabpura 311 021

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 48 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
9—15 DECEMBER 1990



28
COVER STORY
Who's in, who's out
A guide to Chandra Shekhar's friends and enemies.

12
EXCLUSIVE
Editors, owners, readers
Arun Shourie asks: who has the *Brahmaastra*?



22
IN-DEPTH
How the Valley was lost
V.P. Singh left Kashmir in a bigger mess.



44
TRENDS
Little big men
There's more money in small business than ever before.

51
BUSINESS
"Shekhar can only survive with radical economic policies"
An interview with S.K. Goyal, Chandra Shekhar's economic adviser.

66
SPORTS
Victory at last!
India defeats Sri Lanka after a drought of 14 Test matches.



72
BOOK EXTRACT
The Bhagat interviews
Maneka Gandhi, N.T. Rama Rao and Rajiv Gandhi get the treatment.

LETTERS 4
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 7
SIGHT AND SOUND 9
COUNTERVIEW 10
SOUTH BLOCK 18
EVENT 67
Weekly fair
SPOTLIGHT 68
ODDS AND TRENDS 70
KHAAS BAAT 71
MEDIA MUSINGS 80
NEWS 82
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Cover transparencies:
Shooter, Jagdish Yadav and Prakash Bandekar

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise; North-eastern states 30 paise



Time to act

At last, Chandra Shekhar achieved his goal by joining hands with Rajiv Gandhi (*The making of the Prime Minister*, 18—24 November). We have to wait and see how he wins the trust of the people. All are anxiously waiting for any activity that will lead to the betterment of the nation.

B.N. Bose, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ After 30 years in politics, there is very little left to be said about Chandra Shekhar. But Shekhar still remains a myth. For no one knows how well he is going to fare at the highest seat of the land

But one thing is certain. While V.P. Singh tried to divide and rule, the new Prime Minister will seek to heal and unify. India at last seems to have a Prime Minister who can look his people in the eye Though he relies heavily on Congress support, he has the advantage of being untried and untested. He has been waiting in the wings for so many years to rule the nation. Therefore, one can only hope for the best.

Surendra Singh, Patna (Bihar)

■ The Raja played into the hands of Chandra Shekhar. Had V.P. Singh resigned as soon as BJP withdrew support, he could have succeeded in keeping Shekhar



Chandra Shekhar: in the hot seat

■ There can be no doubt that money power played an important role in the recent political crisis in the capital. The leading industrialists of the country descended on Delhi as soon as the BJP withdrew support to the government. If there is an iota of truth in this, then it is a shame that the world's largest democracy was a pawn in the hands of a few rich people.

Chitra Menon, Mysore (Karnataka)

out of the running for the prime ministership. For, Shekhar had only a few supporters and was not at all prepared to stake his claim to form the government. By hanging on to office till 7 November, VP gave him the time to get his act together.

What made matters easier for Shekhar was the Raja's avowed preference for a mid-term poll for which he did not find any takers. Shekhar was opposed to this idea and he cashed in on this issue and pulled the rug from under the Raja's feet.

Irfan Ahmed, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)

True India

In his latest novel, *The World Of Nagaraj*, R.K. Narayan once again shows his inimitable style (*Profound and simple*, 11—17 November). His depiction of Indian town life through Malgudi is popular throughout the world and his characters come to life.

Unlike many others, Narayan has kept his identity as a true Indian who has never forsaken his homeland but preferred to remain in a Malgudi-like India.

Because of this, Narayan remains one of the most readable and sought after Indian novelists.

Harekrushna Mahanta, New Delhi

Ineffective

The cover story (*The desperate hours*, 11—17 November) exposes the unsuccessful attempt by V.P. Singh, and his coterie of advisers to cling to power. The former Prime Minister proved himself to be a disaster. He knew his limitations yet took up the challenge of leading the nation and thereby dragged the country into the doldrums.

The implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations is one such example. Previous governments would not touch it for fear of far-reaching consequences. V.P. Singh's decision to accept the Mandal report was only a move to counter the threat of Devi Lal. It was an ill-conceived move that has raised a furore which is yet to die down. Moreover, Advani's *rath yatra* could easily have been stopped before it actually got under way. By the time a decision was taken,it only served to add fuel to the fire. The Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue is still unresolved. Nobody knows where to go from here to solve the problem.

The economy is in a mess and it is the common man who has to bear the burden



V.P. Singh: followed the divide and rule policy

of escalating prices.

Only a handful of people enjoy power at the cost of the poor citizens. It seems India is destined to suffer.

Jagadish C. Patra, Matkambeda (Orissa)

■ It has been rightly pointed out that Chandra Shekhar has been blinded by his lust for power and has forgotten the lessons of the past. By depending on Rajiv Gandhi to stay in power, Chandra Shekhar has given up all his principles. He has betrayed the people.

Shekhar is the Charan Singh of 1990. Rajiv Gandhi is the *de facto* ruler of India. The crisis reveals that Rajiv has inherited much of his mother's political shrewdness.

Chandra Shekhar is bound to have a short tenure at the Centre during which there will be a complete breakdown of law and order in India.

Rohit R. Das, Bangalore (Karnataka)

Self before service

Though the government passed the CPA, the irony is that most government departments refuse to be covered under the Act (*Fight back*, 4—10 November). The government is still wary about making the Act powerful. There are innumerable complaints against services provided by government concerns.

As consumerism is still in its infancy, compensations are rarely awarded. There is no justice for the consumer in these days of shoddy products and merchandise.

A. Srinivasa Murthy, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

A wrong assessment

I somehow couldn't agree with Khushwant Singh when he praises Arun Shourie and *Indian Express* sky high (*Mahatma Shourie*, 4—10 November).

Public memory is short but not so short to forget the strike the management resorted to following the non-implementation of the Bachawat Award at their Delhi office.

Let the management not forget that employees are an asset and that the *Indian Express* empire has been built on their toil and sweat.

S.M. Annam, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

A secular force

Reports from Ayodhya once again bring to our attention the ineffectiveness of our civil information system and the organisation of our peacekeeping forces (*The battle of Ayodhya*, 7—11 November). Muslims have been wrongly blamed for provocative acts that spark off communal riots. However, the Muslims have been the ones who are demanding a restructuring of the security forces.



Securitymen clash with *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya: taking sides

Reviewing the whole Ayodhya episode, it is high time that there was a large-scale revamping of our security forces. In the national interest, all communities should have representation in the forces.

This will prevent any bias from creeping in during the maintenance of law and order.

Mohammed Rais, New Delhi

Spreading hatred

L.K. Advani has become a threat to the nation's unity (*Jinnah of the Hindus* 18—24 November). Those who are making efforts to turn India into a Hindu state are certainly no lovers of their country. India belongs not to Hindus alone, but to all religious communities. It will be a good idea for Advani to give up his idea of forming a Hindu state.

When one group tries to dominate another, it only invites trouble and the net result is violence which leads to chaos and anarchy.

S. Hussain, Dibrugarh (Assam)

Taking on the oil lobby

The article *Kill to profit* (11—17 November) exposing the nefarious game that the "Telia Rajas" are playing in the edible oil sector has been objective and comprehensive. The battle that the NDDB has launched to assist and help the oilseed producers and consumers to come out the clutches of the a very powerful section of the oil kings has also been put in the proper perspective.

L.K. Advani: dividing the people



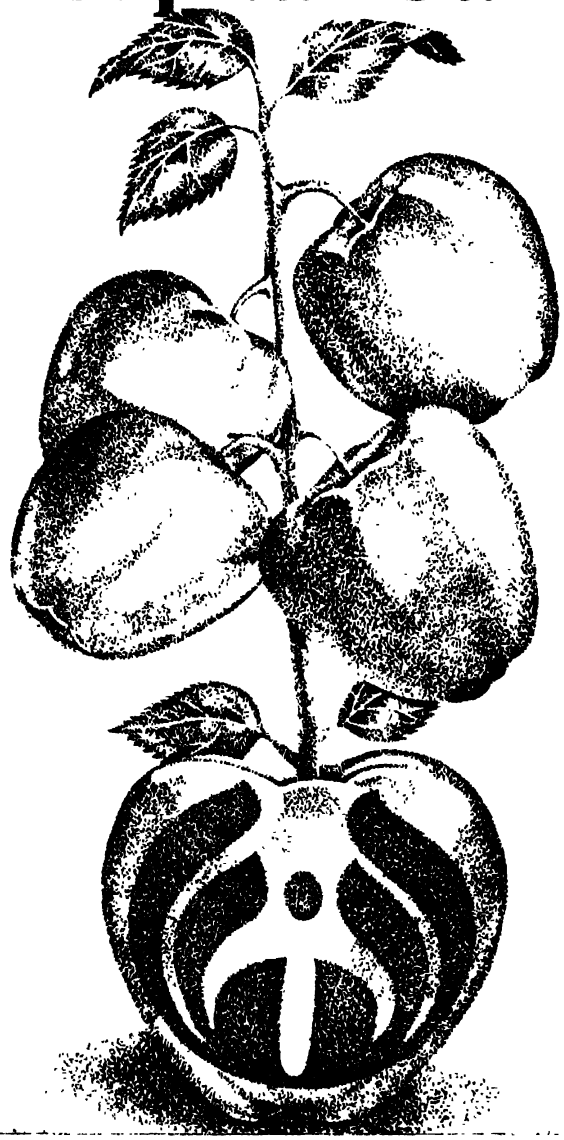
NDDB has demonstrated that the issues of mismanagement of the edible oil sector, tax evasion, adulteration and speculation can no longer be swept under the carpet. The Market Intervention Operation would need at least 15-20 per cent share of the edible oil market to tackle these unhealthy trade practices. In the meantime, one will have to live with the confusing signals that are sent out to the market by certain vested interests.

We are passing through a phase when the oilseed economy is being moved from the parallel economy to the official one. The primary cause of inflation in the country has been attributed to unaccounted money in the parallel economy. How much of that is contributed by the oilseed sector is anybody's guess.

I am intrigued by the statement that somebody has made about my leaving the Dairy Board under physical and mental pressures. While it is true that I had received several threatening calls and the task of market intervention is not an easy one, my decision to opt for voluntary retirement from the NDDB on attaining the age of 50 was to help me concentrate on policy issues rather than operational matters. In any case, the article has brought out that the "oil lobby till today is trying to beat us, says Aneja, still talking as if he is very much with the NDDB team, but for us, there is no going back. Sure, there have been pressures. But we have learnt to live with them". This itself takes the thrust of the statement that I had sought voluntary retirement due to my "mental and physical state". The vested interests, including those in the government, that could have made the above statement are surely in for a surprise.

R.P. Aneja, Institute of Rural Management, Anand (Gujarat)

IDBI Capital Bonds
An attractive instrument for exemption from Capital Gains Tax.



- Available at par throughout the year.
- Exemption from Capital Gains tax under Section 54E of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Exemption from Wealth tax under Section 5(1) (xvie) of the Wealth Tax Act, 1957
- Income tax benefit under Section 80L.
- Interest at 9% p.a. payable half yearly.
- At the investor's option, interest for the full period of 3 years can be paid in advance on discounted basis.
- No deduction of tax at source.
- Outstation cheques accepted and cost of collection will be borne by IDBI.

For further details contact the nearest IDBI office or write to Manager

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF INDIA

IDBI TOWER, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay 400 005.

Sobhagya-B/IDBI-89

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Simla, Shimla, Shame-la



In 1984 Colonel Ochterlony (of Calcutta's Ochterlony Memorial, now Shaheed Minar) was busy finding out the lie of the land between the plains of eastern Punjab, the Shivaliks and the Himalayan ranges upto Tibet. The Gorkhas, who had conquered these territories, had been defeated, their forests were being demolished. Three years later, two Scottish officers surveyed the tract. And four years after their survey, Captain Charles Pratt Kennedy, political agent and garrison officer posted at Sabathu, one of the chains of hill cantonments built in preparation for a war against the Sikhs, trekked uphill and arrived at Simla. He was so charmed by the scenery that he built himself a *pucca*, gabled bungalow named after him. Kennedy House. The news spread to the English community in northern India and families started coming up to Simla to escape the scorching heat of summer in the plains and stayed there till the autumn. By 1830 over 30 houses had been built. The tiny hamlet named Simla after goddess Shyamala Devi grew into *chhoti Vilayat*, little England, anglicised to Simla.

A succession of governors-general while touring northern territories of their newly acquired domains would end up in Simla to spend the summer months. If the Bengal government could move to Darjeeling, Bombay to Poona and Mahabaleshwar, Madras to Ooty, UP to Nainital or Ranikhet, what was wrong with the central government finding a hill resort of its own? So Bentinck, Auckland, Ellenborough, Hardinge and Dalhousie acclimatised the people to the notion that in the summer months the government would be run from the cool heights of Simla. The *fait accompli* was given legal sanction by governor-general John Lawrence, who had served in the Punjab and knew the terrain well. He dismissed suggestions of alternate place and opted for Simla. In 1871, the Punjab government also decided to make Simla its summer capital. The place was well-wooded and had many springs; the inhabitants very docile, their women unusually attractive, being petite, almond-eyed and forthcoming. In due course, a rail line running uphill from Kalka through 103 tunnels was laid to Simla, 7000 feet above sea-level. A wide road had already been laid going through Simla to the Tibetan border.

Simla, designed to be a little bit of England, had rigid laws to keep natives out of bounds of areas inhabited by the Whites. If poorly dressed, they were not allowed on the Mall when *memsahibs* took the evening air on horseback or rickshaws. Indian princes had to have permission to buy or build houses. Some like Cooch Behar and the Nizam were refused permits. For the Whites it was a few hours of work during the mornings, the afternoons and evenings were spent playing polo, tennis, squash or riding. They staged plays, organised fancy dress balls, danced, drank and flirted into the early hours of the morning. It was "red-tape tempered with picnics and adultery" remarked a visitor.



Simla during the Raj: a favourite haunt of the British

Simla's glorious time was during World War II. The apartheid was over. Rich and powerful Indians like Sir Khizr Hayat Tiwana, chief minister of Punjab, flouting his plumed *turra* turban and Sardar Baldev Singh, defence minister, strode ahead of their rickshaws pulled by liveried runners. English governors, commander-in-chiefs, Maharajahs, Rajas and Ranas of hill states could be seen gossiping at Scandal Point. Two famous restaurants, Davicos and Wengers, were packed with Whites and well-to-do Blacks having afternoon tea. The half-a-mile stretch of the Mall was perhaps the best place on India to ogle at opulent Maharanis and Begums decked in their finest jewellery. The whole place was aglitter with well-stocked stores and fragrance of French perfume pervaded the twilight air. No sooner the war ended, the decline of Simla began. Wine shops closed down due to pressure of sustained Congress picketing; one after the other English stores shut shops. Davicos and Wengers went into Indian hands and lost their upper class character. Patisseries were replaced by *halwai* shops, *chaat*, *paan* and *bidi* stalls erupted like rash on the skin of Simla. It degenerated into a vast slum on the Himalayas, dirty enough to make its inhabitants name it Shame-la.

The story of Simla, its rise and decay, has been fully recorded by Pamela Kanwar in her recently published book, *Imperial Simla* (Oxford University Press). It is thoroughly researched and thoroughly readable. Lovers of Simla will enjoy reading it.

MYSORE LAMPS

The Premier Lighting House.

INDOOR LIGHTING
DOMESTIC



MFP-120/140

MTBD-140



MTML-120

DECORATIVE



MTRM-240



MTPP-420

INDUSTRIAL



MTI-140/240
MTIV-140/240



MHBFI-250/400
MSBFI-150/250

OUTDOOR LIGHTING
STREET LIGHTING



MTS-140/240

MVLSI-80/125
MSLI-70

YARD LIGHTING



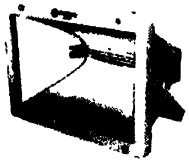


MPLI - 80/125V$_1$

FLOOD LIGHTING

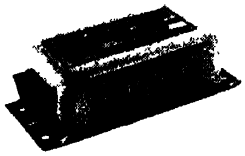


MAF-1
MAF-2



MHFF-500/1000
MHFT/1000

ACCESSORIES



STP, HDP,
HDPC–20/40



FSUC & FS2



MSIG-70
MSIG-150/
250/400

Sobhagya/MLWL/57001/SN

THE MYSORE LAMP WORKS LIMITED
Post Box No. 5551
Malleswaram West, Bangalore - 560 055

MYSORE Lamps
The leading light

LAMPS ■ TUBES ■ LUMINAIRES ■ LIGHTING SYSTEMS

SIGHT AND SOUND



R.K. LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA



■ It is a government by remote control. The controls are not in the hands of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar but in the hands of the Congress(I).

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president*

■ We don't consider the Chandra Shekhar party as Janata Dal (Socialist) but Janata Dal (R—Rajiv Gandhi).

JAIPAL REDDY, *Janata Dal spokesman*

■ Secularism is not a political strategy. It is a basic value.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Prime Minister*

■ Hypocrites cannot be secularists.

V.P. SINGH, *former Prime Minister*

■ Want to know when the Congress began accepting Shourie's writings as the gospel of truth? Ever since he got the Padma Bhushan.

M.J. AKBAR, *Congress(I) spokesman*

■ If Chandra Shekhar—or the new government—fails, it will be Chandra Shekhar's responsibility, one shouldn't go looking for alibis and excuses.

YASHWANT SINHA, *Union finance minister*

■ There are apprehensions that big money, big business and big gangs would be in control of this government and there will be a loot on an unprecedented scale. The whole country will be governed as Haryana was under Chautala.

AJIT SINGH, *former industry minister*

■ What we want is the renovation of the temple (in Ayodhya)...We are against the word 'demolition'.

ASHOK SINGHAL, *VHP general secretary*

■ It is the physical that matters, the mental aspect grows with age...I know, it is mainly keeping myself fit physically that I have been able to get this.

KAPIL DEV, *cricketer, on becoming the second highest wicket taker with Botham*

■ Age is catching up with me, and my face shows of this. But Dilip Kumar recently signed up to play the lead in (Subhash) Ghai's film, and I'm encouraged by this trend.

AMITABH BACHCHAN, *actor*

■ It would be a tragedy if this government does not run its full term but the tragedy would be even bigger if it does.

MAHENDRA SINGH TIKAIT, *BKU president*



VINOD MEHTA

Shoot and scoot gun

Bofors is still a mystery



What, I asked V.P. Singh, would Chandra Shekhar do if over the next few days he discovered the real names behind the AE Services account in Zurich, courtesy the Swiss courts? He asked if the question was on or off-record. Both, I said somewhat optimistically. His reply for the record was the usual mixture of cliches expressed in the fond hope that the new government, keeping in mind public interest, would do nothing to derail or disrupt the enquiries currently in progress. Off-the-record, he entertained no such hope and sketched out exactly what would happen as and when the information came in. Alas, I cannot break a confidence and divulge more. A Janata Dal leader, who was a senior member in the National Front government, put the matter in context: "The whole basis of Congress support to Chandra Shekhar is on the understanding that the investigations will be scuttled. The day Chandra Shekhar stops cooperating with Rajiv on this issue, support will be withdrawn."

To write about the notorious 'shoot and scoot' gun these days is to court the reader's wrath. Five years after the scandal first surfaced, we are no closer to the truth than in 1986 when a Congress spokesman described the Swedish radio revelations on the payment of bribes as, "false, baseless and mischievous". Today, we are all in the throes of Bofors fatigue, a disease whose symptoms are ennui with a touch of cynicism. The prospect of another 'exclusive' expose fills the average citizen with dread rather than expectation since every fresh revelation seems to only complicate the picture and thicken the plot, instead of leading us to the final truth. We know the code names of the accounts, we know in which banks they have been maintained, the offending country appears to be eager to help, we even have vital clues about the identity of the account holders. Yet, we keep going round and round in circles.

Mr V.P. Singh and his band of clumsy sleuths are largely responsible for the prevailing anti-Bofors mood in the country. In fact, a large part of the electorate that voted Janata Dal in the belief that the Swedish armament company and the top echelons of the Congress party were guilty of massive corruption, is today angry and vexed. Small wonder then, that the Congress is reminding the nation that its involvement in the so-called embezzlement was a canard spread by V.P. Singh to discredit the supreme leader and the supreme party. Commissions were no doubt paid, but they had nothing to do with it. It is a claim that sounds increasingly plausible with every passing day.

In moments of candour, Vishwanath Pratap Singh concedes that over-enthusiasm may have affected the investigation. However, he is quick to emphasise the immense difficulties in extracting banking secrets out of the Swiss. "The American and Filipino governments have not been able to get information about Marcos's accounts after three years of combined effort, and we had less than 11 months," he says. That may be true, but one must remember that both in Washington and in Manila, the title of the numbered accounts was never in dispute, merely the ramifications of the deals, the precise sums involved and the mode of transfer to Switzerland had to be established. In our case, we know the sums involved, we know which deal and we know how the money was transferred: only the names are missing. Therefore, the analogy does not exactly fit.

Not only have the official investigations been discredited, the halo around the heads of the Bofors media heroes has lost much of its shine. Arun Shourie, N. Ram, Chitra Subramaniam and the lesser players have to varying degrees fallen from grace. While following legitimate journalistic



"The whole basis of Congress support to Janata Dal (S) is on the understanding that the Bofors investigations will be scuttled. The day **Chandra Shekhar** stops cooperating with **Rajiv** on this issue, support will be withdrawn," says a senior Janata Dal leader

leads and coming up with useful clues, they were also playing their own games that sought to direct the enquiry along the lines that suited their personal-political predelictions. Beside, shielding certain individuals, the media heroes were guilty of manipulating release of collected information available to them. Sometimes, stories were held over for six months, or longer, in order to maximise embarrassment to certain parties. Editors, of course, determine timing, but they also have a responsibility to the public to reveal details connected with bribery and corruption at the highest levels of the administration, not in driblets, but in totality.

Public indifference, therefore, is understandable. Accordingly, when Mr Chandra Shekhar declares that the Bofors scandal should concern only a sub-inspector and not a Prime Minister, the anticipated outrage is minimal. Similarly, the Haryana patriarch's crazy statement that the defeat of the Congress in the general election was not caused by the Bofors scam, but by the stirring example set in his state, causes barely raised eyebrows. Not surprisingly, the developments in the Swiss courts and reactions in Stockholm are relegated to the back pages. Mr V.P. Singh tries gamely to bring Bofors back on to the national agenda, but, increasingly the "biggest and dirtiest fraud since 1947" is being squeezed out by Kashmir, Punjab, Assam, Mandal, Ram Janmabhoomi, not to mention the price of onions and sugar.

Actually, even V.P. Singh has given up on Bofors. I asked a journalist who travelled with the former Prime Minister to Bihar whether the Swedish gun or corruption in high places had been mentioned even in passing in the speeches Mr Singh delivered. The reply was an unambiguous no. In Bombay, Bhiwandi and Pune, the silence persisted. If the person who catapulted into office by the roar of the Swedish howitzer has forgotten his key electoral weapon, can one blame the ordinary citizen for doing likewise?



V.P. Singh and his band of clumsy sleuths are largely responsible for the prevailing anti-Bofors mood in the country

Whatever the deal with Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister has made his intentions clear *vis a vis* Bofors: he is putting the scandal on the backburner. The sacking of the CBI chief, one of the few individuals who pursued the investigations with integrity, skill and diligence, is a clear pointer that this government does not accord a high priority to completing an unfinished enquiry. Presumably the incoming CBI chief will be properly briefed on the subject and will pick his team accordingly.

It will not take long for the Swiss to get the message. Despite their self-confessed eagerness to shed their stereotyped image—chocolates, cuckoo clocks, and crooks—they cannot be enjoying the exposures in the international press regarding Third World slush money salted away in Geneva vaults. If the Swiss get the slightest hint that the Indian government's attitude has changed with respect to the investigation, they will drop it too—or at least they will find legal ways and means to put the ball back in the Indian courts where it will remain.

Because the drama has been drained out of Bofors, should the press, public and politicians forget it too? Simply because no more votes are to be won on this issue, should it cease to exercise our collective memory? Those who control the levers of power are very good at determining which buttons are 'hot' as far as the electorate is concerned; currently, the consensus seems to be that Bofors is 'cold' and therefore worthy of neglect.

The acquisition of the Swedish gun was not just another instance of routine skullduggery. For the last five years, the scandal has been a national obsession. Elections have been won and lost on Bofors, political careers made and destroyed. We cannot just put the enquiry into the pending tray and rely on public amnesia to wipe away its shame. If the charges were nothing more than a slur, then those who spread the lie should be exposed. If there is some basis, justice must be unsparing. Arguments like, "Oh, it is only Rs 100 crore," become irrelevant when put besides the principle of accountability. If we abandon that principle, we join the ranks of Brunei, Burkino Faso and Zaire.

Speculation is rife in Delhi that the Prime Minister has retained the defence portfolio because he wants no one but himself to sift and scrutinise the sensitive material regarding AE Services that should be in the hands of the Indian government within the next 30 days. Whether he uses the received information to blackmail Rajiv or solicit his advice on how, if and when it is to be released, will depend on the nature of the material and Mr Chandra Shekhar's perception of how best it can be used to buttress his own tenuous position.

An overwhelming majority of Indians have been led to believe that Mr Rajiv Gandhi either directly profited from the Bofors commission or actively collaborated in procuring these for the benefit of his friends. The Congress president is only a heartbeat away from a second crack at the prime ministership. It is intolerable (for his sake and ours) that he should continue to run for high office with this unresolved suspicion against his name—a suspicion that will remain until the full truth on Bofors is put before the nation. ●



The halo around the heads of the Bofors media heroes has lost much of its shine. **Arun Shourie, N. Ram, Chitra Subramaniam** and the lesser players have fallen from grace

Editors, owners, readers

Arun Shourie asks: who has the Brahmaastra?



A free press is vital for us today, especially so because other institutions—our legislatures, our courts, for instance—are clogged. It is just as true that the press has done a lot of good. It is the only institution which has scored a victory or two for accountability, for instance. Similarly, there is scarcely an issue which would have become a national issue but for the press having taken it up—we have only to imagine where these issues would have reached had they been left to Doordarshan.

So, a free press is a vital institution and it is exerting itself in the public weal, and on occasion with tenacity and vigour.

But it is a fragile institution. When we look back over the last ten years we see that the "achievements" for which our press often preens itself—in bringing our rulers a bit more within the reach of our people, for instance — we notice that these are in fact the work of a small section of the press. Within that section, it has been the work of a handful. On occasion this handful has had the support of others in that small section: thus, for instance, everyone in the *Express* group worked shoulder to shoulder in the efforts to bring Rajiv's government to account in 1987-89—proprietors, journalists, everyone else. But just as often that very work has had to be done by that handful inspite of the others even within that small section

of the press: thus, for instance, the work of bringing V.P. Singh, Devi Lal and their government to account in 1990 for things they had done and which were even more injurious to our country than those that Rajiv's coterie had done, that work in the same *Express* group had to be done by that handful inspite of others, in fact often in the face of active discouragement by the very associates who had been zealous in ensuring accountability in the previous round.

A precious institution thus, but a fragile one. From where do the pressures come and what may we do to bolster the press against them?

Government

Several governments—in the states and at the Centre—have raised their hand against the press in the last 15 years. In each instance the hand got singned and had to be swiftly withdrawn. The various Press Bills, Rajiv's Defamation Bill are ready examples. The attempts by Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv to squelch specific newspapers were of course much more serious, and they came close to succeeding. But for the sort of facts I have listed elsewhere (*Individuals, Institutions, Processes* Penguin, 1990, pp. 227-239) the government went, the papers survived. And these when we scarcely have any government at all, no paper need fear a government.

But even where fear isn't, greed is. A non-government cannot harm, but it can put many goodies in a newspaper's way. Advertisements, property, sanctions of various kinds—these need not even be for the newspaper business *per se*. Negatives can be just as alluring: investigations which were reaching fruition are dropped, of course after making the paper's management realise how close they were to bearing fruit; cases already filed are not pressed...

Lobbyists

But much more lethal than such overt acts of government in which the apparatus of State is directly used in the incessant lobbying, the devious slander that goes on. Those who happen to be in government at the moment are of course very active in this as they are, almost *ex officio*, the principal targets of writing in the press. And they also have the largest resources to deploy for the purpose: friendly businessmen who are friends of or related to the proprietors, politicians and their local point-men, "intellectuals" whose travel can be facilitated...But the lobbying is not confined to those in government. Someone who feels, for instance, that the ouster of a government which is better disposed to him will bring back a lot which is the thrall of his rival will be just as active. As will the person who is aspiring to be in government, and is therefore eager to establish how useful he can be to, say, the Prime Minister, "Leave that fellow to me. I'll speak to...and make sure that the fellow pipes down..."

This lobbying is skilful. It is incessant. Two circumstances make it in the end lethal.

When the proprietors are consumed by the passion for public affairs, when they keep up with public affairs and with what their paper is writing about them, when they have that *sine qua non*, a sense of purpose, when their opinions are formed by reflection on public issues and by the detailed study of what their papers are writing—when these are the circumstances, the lobbying is not effective. But when their attitude to public affairs is that of the dilettante, when their opinions are formed by the gossip they hear at cocktail parties, when they do not or, worse still, cannot, because of preoccupations or debility, keep up with public affairs and with what the paper is doing, when their social circle consists of other dilettantes rather than of persons dedicated to the public weal, the lobbying is fatal.

Nor is the matter confined to proprietors. A journalist functions in intense interaction with his colleagues and peers. And he will be just as easily deflected and discouraged by what he hears from his peers unless he is suffused with the things mentioned above. Thus, the lobbying even when it does not touch him directly, often does its work by altering the atmosphere in which the journalist functions.

It is the concatenation of persons and interests rather than one person which gets the journalist in the end. There is so much in a society such as ours which cries for reform. The journalist who takes up such issues becomes a lightning rod. More and more persons who would that our affairs be better, as also those who are oppressed by things as they are reach out to him. He takes up one issue after another. And thereby inconveniences and offends one lot after another. These are the very persons who are influential in the state of affairs as it then is—that is why he is writing about them in the first place: they are the principal beneficiaries of arrangements as they are, they are the most



A free press is a fragile institution. Efforts to bring Rajiv's government to account in 1987-89 as also the work of bringing V.P. Singh, Devi Lal and their government to account in 1990 for things they had done and which were even more injurious to our country than those that Rajiv's coterie had done, had to be handled by a small section of the press

visible symbols of things that need to be altered.

Such persons are enmeshed through "interlocking webs of mutual complicity", and so, when you offend one, many get to proprietors and editors. But even if they were completely independent of one another, even if some of them were rivals of others, over the years the journalists's work would have given them common cause as far as he is concerned. It is thus that the proprietors, editors etc., come to hear the same remarks all over the place about that journalist: "There ought to be some limit.. Who does he think he is?...This is nihilism..." Hearing all these round, they themselves begin to see the work being done in their paper through the spectacles contrived by the lobbyists.

Proprietors

Apart from what has been listed above about them in passing, two circumstances relating specifically to proprietors can derail the work.

The pressures and inducements and lobbying are naturally more effective when members of the family which owns the paper are at war with each other, an occurrence which unfortunately is not uncommon in India. Some member or the other in this fractured lot, this faction of the family rather than that, will be amenable to fears or inducements. Often, precisely because one member or part of the family endorses the public-spirited work which the paper is doing, the others will revile it, they will blow up the cost and uncertainties which such work -which they now dub as "heroism"—entails for the group. Governments and lobbyists lose no time at all in locating the persons; and working on them.

The second circumstance is much more pervasive. In a factory the exertions of a works manager ensure smoother functioning, a higher output. The proprietor's satisfaction is unalloyed. But in a newspaper the product— the story in the paper or the article—is a public product. The more consequential it is, the more conspicuous it is, and therefore its author is in the public eye. The proprietor's reaction to such work is therefore often ambivalent. He is gratified by the fact that such work is being done by his paper. But the more such work is published, the more the readers come to identify the paper with the journalists who are doing kind of work. And this many a proprietor cannot stomach.



I remember friends tearing their hair at the falsehoods Mrs Gandhi would spread through AIR during the Emergency. But why not just switch off the set?



When we wrote about Meham it was alleged that we were going after Devi Lal on behalf of V.P. Singh—not because we were for fair electoral practices

Many a proprietor or editor is in any case psychologically insecure. He needs to assure himself every fortnight that he is indeed the boss. Rudeness to employees and subordinates, trampling their initiative, throwing them around provide the reassurance The need intensifies with age, with debility, for then one can see things slipping away. As one cannot fight circumstance, nor age, one flays those around one.

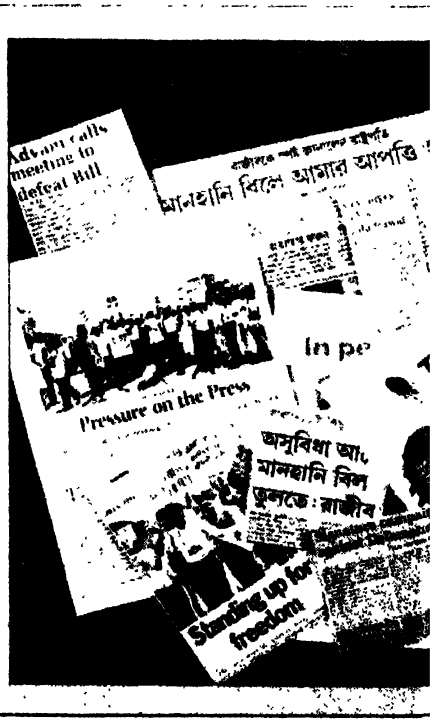
The lobbyists zero in on this a chink: "The people are saying the paper isn't yours any longer", they tell him. "X and Y have taken it over."

The very work in which the proprietor was taking pride therefore becomes anathema, the journalist doing it becomes in his eyes a rival, a usurper, a person who is hogging all the credit while *he* the proprietor, has to bear the costs.

Journalists

When eventually the work has consequences everyone in the press appropriates it. "See the power of a free press", they say. But till that eventuality the work is a reproach to those who are not doing similar work. And they stalk it.

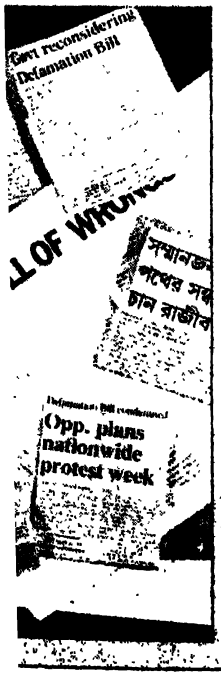
By misrepresentation: How much of this journalists working in the *Indian Express* had to put up with in the last four years! From "They have asked the President to dismiss Rajiv Gandhi" in 1987 when the controversies began, right down to, "He has asked civil servants to revolt" in the final days of V.P. Singh in November 1990 Not one of these assertions





There is scarcely an issue which would have become a national issue but for the press having taken it up—we have only to imagine where these issues would have reached had they been left to Doordarshan

was true—a mere reading of the editorial or article would have given the lie to what was being alleged. "RSS goons used to thrash *Express* journalists"—that on our attempt to recommence publication when we had been locked out by the government and the "trade unionists" it had deployed. The whole sequence was on video. Over fifty pressmen saw the entire, unedited film. Everything was there: the entire sequence, who had beaten whom. Not one corrected the falsehoods which the press itself had pasted on us. And so, in this as in all the other cases, the lie, repeated with Goebbelsian frequency and insistence, did its work.



Several governments have raised their hand against the press in the last 15 years. In each instance the hand got singed and had to be swiftly withdrawn. Rajiv's Defamation Bill is a ready example

By pasting motives: "They are out to destabilise the country..." "It is all a campaign at the behest of Nusli Wadia ." When we wrote on the rigging in Amethi it was alleged that this was just part of our personal vendetta against Rajiv Gandhi, that we were acting on behalf of the Janata Dal. When, along with so many in the press, we wrote about Meham it was alleged that we were acting on behalf of a faction of the Janata Dal, that we were going after Devi Lal on behalf of V.P. Singh. That in both cases we were pursuing the matter not because we were *against* Rajiv in one case and *against* Devi Lal in the other but because we were *for* fair electoral practices in either instance—this was sought to be buried under an avalanche of accusations.

By pasting pejoratives: "His tirade", "his diatribe", "his vituperative abuse..." Even words which should be commendations have been made into dirty words!—"campaigner", "crusader..."

The consequences of such journalism on the work of others in the press are manifest:

- The merits of the issue are obscured by the dust which is kicked up by alleging base motives;
- The cacophony and noise dissipates the effect of the work;
- If the journalist sets to answer these accusations, he is deflected from the work; if he does not the mud, at least some of it, sticks, and makes subsequent work that much more difficult.

There is another consequence which in my experience is even more enervating. Some of us have deafened ourselves: we are therefore not deflected by the pejoratives. But most have not. Therefore most journalists, specially the ones who are taking up work of this kind for the first time, are greatly discouraged by the dust their peers raise. One of the tasks to which I had to most devote my energies as editor of the *Indian Express* was that of sustaining the morale of my younger colleagues in the face of this barrage from other journalists, of sustaining their sense of purpose, of showing them how what was being hurled at them was the inevitable consequence of the work they were doing, of convincing them that standing up to such abuse was itself a part of the work they had to do to redeem our society.

When guests come to dinner what impresses first?

Sushma, have you decided whether the cuisine is going to be Chinese or Continental?

No, I'm first arranging for the ***Bisleri.***

When you're having a party ensure that everything is just right. And nothing impresses more than serving Acqua Minerale Bisleri. It assures your guests that you're serving 100% safe, zero-bacteria water.

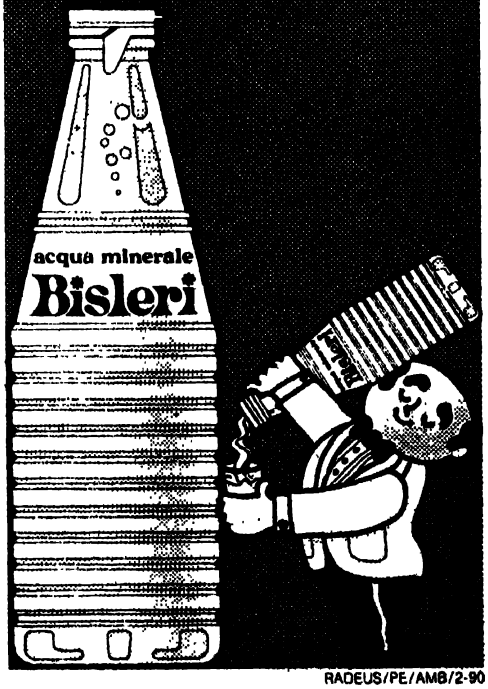
Acqua Minerale Bisleri (AMB) is purified water, passed through multiple filters and treated with the special Italian process of silver sterilization. Silver sterilization inhibits the growth of bacteria with its oligodynamic effect. Yes, AMB is 100% safe, pure drinking water.

Make AMB a family drink habit, particularly for children, and when ill or travelling. To be safest even set ice with AMB. Soon you'll realize that it makes good sense to spend a little on AMB—the safest water on earth

ACQUA MINERALE

Bisleri

Less expensive than you think



RADEUS/PE/AMB/2-90

Readers

The passivity of the reader and his short memory are what gives confidence to the editor or the proprietor to snuff out the conscientious journalist. *"Ghar mein javaan ladkaa bhi martaa hai to gyarvein din ke baad koi yaad nahin karta,"* it was once explained to me, *"Yeh to do* editor *he gayen hain"* ("When even a young lad dies in the family, no one thinks of him after the eleventh day, here it is only two editors who have left".)

I winced, and protested, and argued. But I was proved wrong.

If readers are going to buy newspapers for classified ads, or for their value as *raddi*, those are the things they will get.

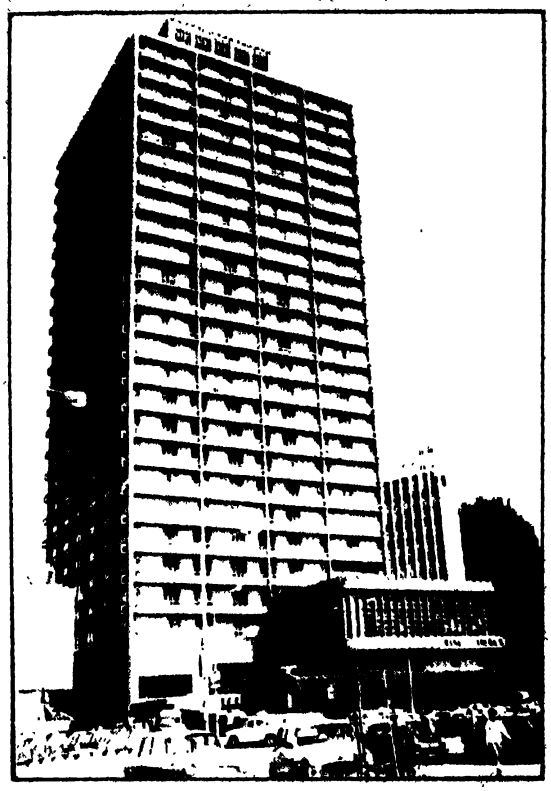
If on the contrary, whenever the paper does something wrong they are going to bombard owners and editors with visits, with letters and telegrams, if they are going to call them to meetings and skin them for the wrong they have done, the falsehood they have spread, or the silence they have kept on a vital issue, proprietors, editors, journalists will think hard before they forsake the public interest.

And the point is not just, "*If* they bombard owners and editors...". They *must*. We noticed how very resourceful and active those affected by good work are in persuading owners and editors. Readers are almost the only ones who can effectively counter these lobbyists. But that requires stirring and making sure one's voice is heard.

The only reason readers are helpless is because they do not bestir themselves thus.

I remember friends tearing their hair at the falsehoods Mrs Gandhi would spread through AIR during the Emergency, that Rajiv would spread through Doordarshan in 1988 and 1989. But why not just switch off the set at news time? In exactly the same way, in the case of the newspaper the *Brahmaastra* is in the hands not of the proprietor or the editor, it is in the hands of readers. They have but to stop buying the paper when it forsakes the public interest. It will not only be disabled from broadcasting what is wrong, it will, I have not the slightest doubt, be swiftly brought to heel.

This is particularly the case with publications that *have* been taking up public causes. Over the years they come to be identified with such causes. Catering to the anti-establishment sentiment in the society becomes, even from a strictly commercial point of view, their particular niche in the market. Readers of such publications can hold them to this character much better than the readers of publications which provide a more diversified fare can, if only they wield the *Brahmaastra* of cancelling their subscriptions the moment the paper forsakes the public weal.



One of the tasks to which I had to devote most of my energies as editor of the Indian Express was sustaining the morale of my younger colleagues, of sustaining their sense of purpose, of showing them how what was being hurled at them was the inevitable consequence of the work they were doing

In conclusion

Proprietors and editors committed to the public weal, secure in their make-up so that they revel in the service journalists and they render together, a press which deals with ideas and arguments on merit and does not go about pasting motives, readers as hawks who will keep the paper on the path of duty, who will counter the incessant chatter of the lobbyists...

Even these few things would go a long way.

But the ultimate guardians can only be two.

Plurality—in the press as in every other sphere. So that if for one reason or another one publication or group will not or cannot continue that kind of work at that moment, others will take up the baton.

And individuals who will persevere with the work, jobs in the press or no jobs—who will see that their task is not just to discharge the specific work that has fallen to their lot, but also to show by their example that there still are in our society persons who will continue that work inspite of such obstacles.

How well our seers have put it:

Praarabhyate na khalu vighnabhayane neechaye
Praarabhya vighnavihataa virmanti madhyaa
Vighnaye punah punrapi pratihanyamaanae
Praarabhya chottam janaa na parityajanti...

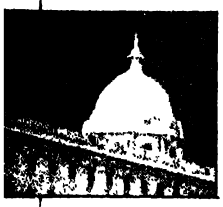
Verily there are three types:
"The lowly who do not commence the task for fear of difficulties
"The middling who abandon it upon encountering difficulties
"And the exalted who, inspite of difficulties upon difficulties, persevere..."

14 November, 1990

INDER MALHOTRA

Russians are starving

But India seems least bothered



Younger readers of this column perhaps know nothing about it and even older ones may have forgotten. But there was a time, almost immediately after Indira Gandhi had become Prime Minister, when large parts of India were on the verge of starvation. The United States then had a surplus of foodgrains, especially wheat, and these stocks were being given, under Public Law 480, at highly concessional terms, to all needy countries, including ours. However, there was a rub.

Lyndon Johnson, the tall and irascible Texan in the White House, was infuriated by India's criticism of his dirty war in Vietnam. He put the wheat supplies to this country on a very tight leash. Each consignment was required to be authorised by him personally, and he delayed the process for as long as possible. Liberal Americans were appalled. Many of them protested. Even his ambassador in New Delhi, Chester Bowles, pointed out to him that Indira Gandhi was not saying anything different from that of U. Thant and the Pope.

All through summer and winter that year, India lived from ship to mouth. With every morsel of American wheat—which, in the end, totalled a whopping ten million tonnes over a 12-month period—we swallowed some humiliation. Indira Gandhi suppressed her rage as best as she could. She rejected the suggestion that India should say no to American wheat ("the ladies and gentlemen who are saying this would not be the ones to starve," she said icily). She also suggested to the Soviet government that it might make a gesture to India by offering whatever quantities of wheat it could spare.



A queue outside Moscow McDonald's: a common sight these days

After a short delay, Moscow came through with 200,000 tonnes of wheat which it offered as a gift, not as a loan. Compared with Indian needs and American supplies, the Russians' offer was no more than chicken-feed. But the Soviet Union reaped a bumper harvest of goodwill in this country. By contrast, the Johnson administration earned only curses.

A quarter of a century on, there has been a sea change in the situation. It is the Soviet Union that is haunted by the spectre of starvation.

During a short visit to Moscow with the then Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, in July I had seen for myself the empty shelves in the Soviet capital's food shops and interminable queues outside McDonald's. A good friend who has lived in the Soviet Union all through his adult life confided that for the first time he had started carrying bread and cheese in his briefcase because he could no longer be sure of getting food even in the best and costliest of restaurants. Even so, I had not thought that the food situation in Russia would turn so bleak as it already has. Neither Mikhail Gorbachev nor Boris Yeltsin nor any other responsible Soviet leader has tried to hide the gravity of the crisis that looms ahead. Unless the outside world helps, Russians might start dying of starvation.

Mercifully, superpower *detente* has seen to it that the Soviet Union would not be left in the lurch. Indeed, its erstwhile foes in the US-led Western alliance are already making massive arrangements to rush life-saving calories to what was only until the other day the "Evil Empire". Interestingly, in the forefront of the West's humanitarian mission is reunified Germany. It transpires that apprehending a sudden Soviet blockade of Berlin, the Federal Republic of Germany had built up a colossal food reserve in the then divided city. This has now come in very handy because of excellent rail and road communications from Berlin to Moscow. Even airlift of food to Soviet cities is being planned.

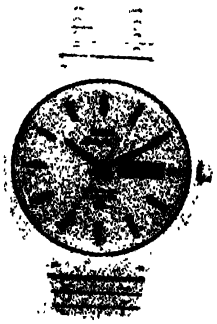
Conspicuously absent from this heart-warming scene, however, is any Indian effort to make even a symbolic gesture to the Soviet Union. It seems that everybody who is anybody in Delhi is too busy to worry about the outside world, at any rate at the time of writing. We talk about the "time-tested Indo-Soviet friendship", but seem unwilling or unable to do anything to help our Russian friends when they are in dire need. ●

TIME
TESTED
TIME
TRUSTED



hmt
WATCHES

WATCHES
TIME KEEPERS TO THE NATION

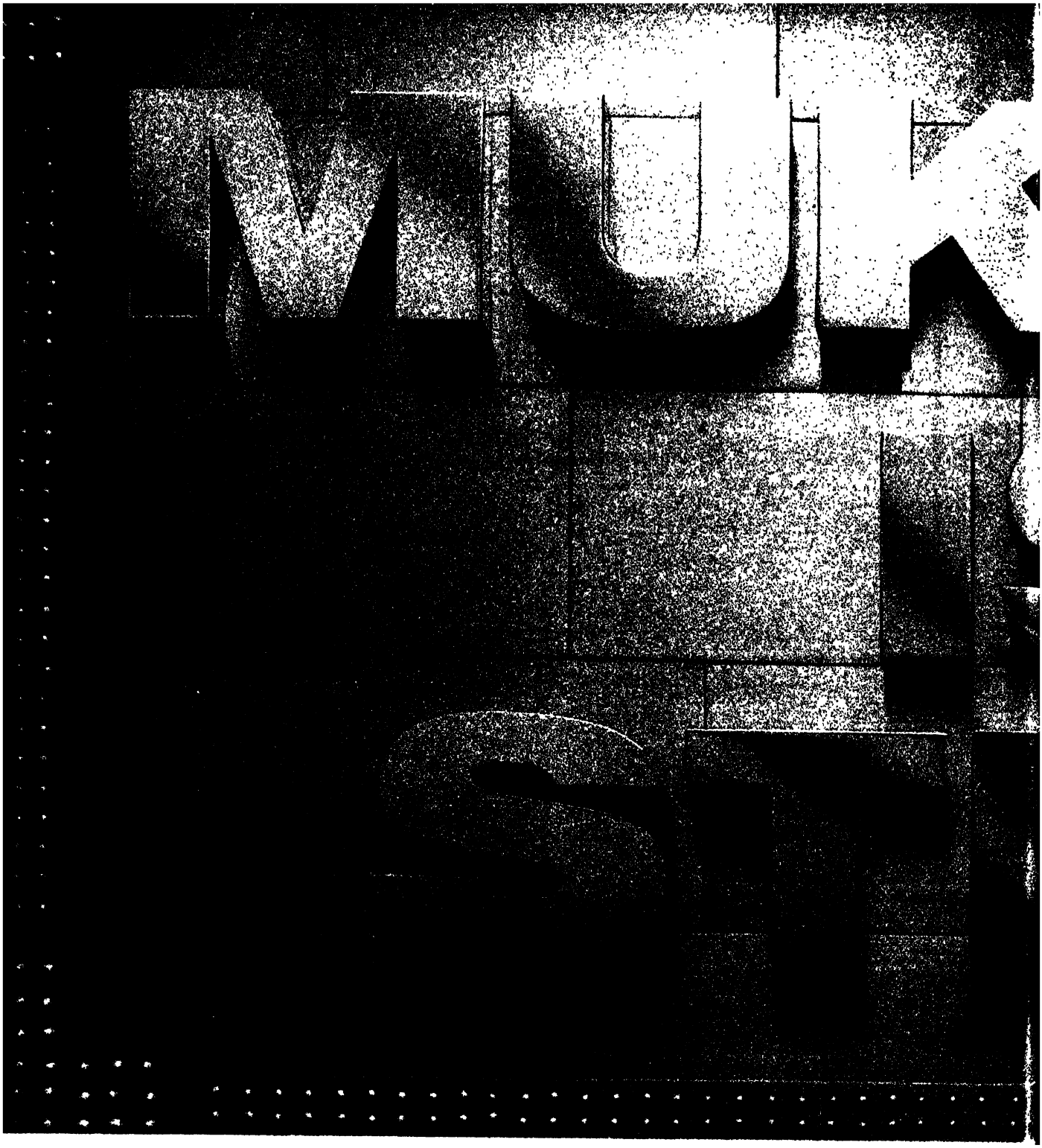








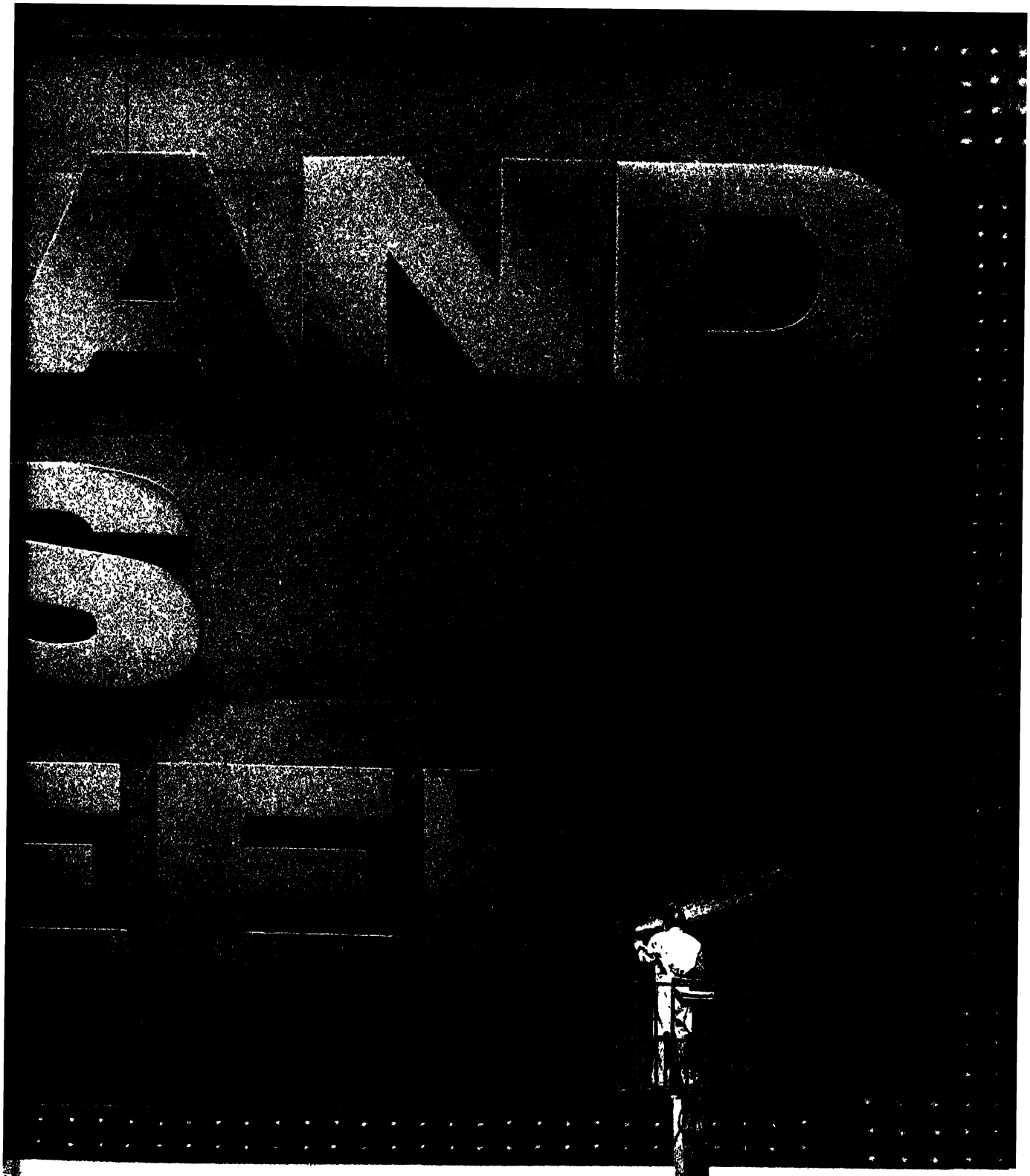
Clanon-BL/HMT/9058



For over five decades, Mukand has been synonymous with steel.

Mukand is India's largest producer of the widest range of stainless and speciality steels; leads in exports of alloy steel castings; designs and builds some of India's biggest, most complex cranes and machines; helps launch her rockets; and undertakes execution of turnkey engineering projects. Making it a multi-product, multi-division, Rs. 500-crore conglomerate.

The commitment of Mukand's people to technology,



innovation, research and development has given them a rare insight into steel and its applications. Mukand knows how to make steel, engineer it and use it effectively.

In 50 years, Mukand has truly become a mastermind in steel.

MUKAND LTD.

(Formerly Mukand Iron & Steel Works Ltd.)


MERAJUDDIN

BLEAK FUTURE

For the ordinary Kashmiri, the 11 months were a dark period in the history of the state

How the Valley was lost

V.P. Singh left Kashmir in a bigger mess

This is the fourth in SUNDAY*'s series on the problems faced by the V.P. Singh government. We started with Bofors, continued with Mandal and then, last week, examined the Raja's handling of Ram Janmabhoomi.*

This issue, **Shiraz Sidhva** *analyses what went wrong in Kashmir.*

Hours after Vishwanath Pratap Singh assumed office as Prime Minister on 2 December last year, he visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The purpose was obviously to make his priorities public: that the Punjab problem was uppermost in his government's scheme of things. It could well have been that way but for the fact that a crisis in another state totally upset the Raja's plans. Even before the V.P. Singh regime could settle down, Kashmir, which was in turmoil all through Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, flared up.

It was indeed an inauspicious beginning for the Raja. The Kashmir terrorists struck barely a week after the new Cabinet was sworn in. On the afternoon of 8 December 1989, guerrillas of the dreaded Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) kidnapped the daughter of home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in Srinagar and demanded the release of five terrorists in exchange for the life of Rubaiya Sayeed. The government came in for sharp criticism for the way it handled the crisis and critics even pointed out that the Raja had made a deal with the terrorists at a time when it was absolutely necessary to come down hard on the militants. From then on, the Valley gradually slipped out from the grip of the VP regime and the problem even brought the country on the brink of a war with Pakistan.

Why did V.P. Singh go so wrong in Kashmir? According to many, the Raja's first mistake was to appoint Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as home minister. Initially, of course, V.P. Singh's decision was hailed as historic, even bold. For, no one before him had the guts to appoint a Muslim to such a crucial post. But soon, the Raja was criticised for having made the wrong choice: the Mufti proved totally ineffective as home minister. And by the time he left, he was labelled the "invisible home minister". And as far as the Kashmir problem was concerned, Mufti was perhaps the wrong man for the job. For, though the home minister came from Kashmir, his image in the state is not too bright. He has no political base and has never won an election from the Valley.

But that did not prevent the Mufti from nurturing ambitions of becoming the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir. And he tried out all means, fair and foul, to achieve that end. But invariably ended up being a pawn in the hands of political wheeler-dealers. Indira Gandhi, for instance, used him to unsettle the National Conference government in Kashmir at a time when the popularity of Farooq Abdullah was at its height. The Kashmiris never forgave Mufti Mohammad for that. "And then suddenly you find that this man is the country's home minister. He led V.P. Singh the wrong way in Kashmir. All the Mufti did was to use his office to build a base in the



MEHMOODDIN

JKLF MILITANTS

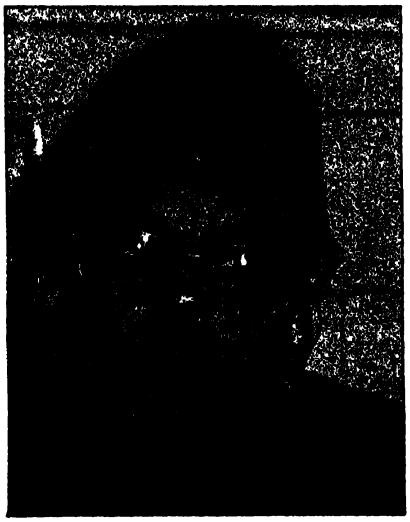
During V.P. Singh's tenure, the extremists had a free run in the Valley. The repressive measures only added to the militants' ranks

state. He didn't even mind bartering away the nation's interests in the bargain," says a senior Janata Dal leader.

The appointment of the Mufti was not the only blunder V.P. Singh made in Kashmir. The Raja's attitude from the very beginning made it clear that he did not have the political will or the courage to take on the might of the JKLF. Take the instance of the Rubaiya Sayeed episode. Throughout the negotiations, the Centre kept insisting that it had given a free hand to the state government to deal with the issue. But Farooq Abdullah, who was then the chief minister, now says that he had been by-passed throughout the dealings. The Centre, he alleges, was calling the shots through the then Cabinet secretary, T.N. Seshan. And Farooq Abdullah is sure that he would have been able to secure the release of Ms Sayeed without making a deal with the terrorists. That, according to Kashmir observers was the turning point in the Valley. It gave the militants the moral courage to go on the rampage.

Soon after, all political processes in the Valley collapsed and the militants took control of the situation. The state administration proved unequal to meet the challenge as thousands of Kashmiris danced on the streets of Srinagar to celebrate the release of the militants. The cries of *azaadi* rent the air and nearly every day, the Indian tricolour was burnt at street-corner meetings. But even then, not many Kashmiris were sympathetic to the JKLF's secessionist cause. But V.P. Singh faltered at this crucial juncture and he allowed himself to be influenced by the three powerful ministers in his Cabinet—Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan. All three were old hands at the art of playing power games in the Valley since Indira Gandhi asked them to oversee Assembly polls in Kashmir in 1983. What's perhaps more important is that all three had a common enemy: Farooq Abdullah, whom they wanted to teach a lesson. And, as soon as they took charge of Kashmir affairs, the troika started building pressure on V.P. Singh to sack Farooq Abdullah.

V.P. SINGH



Every time the Raja was called upon to take a crucial decision on Kashmir, he faltered

Though rumours were rife that the Farooq government would be dismissed, nothing of the sort happened primarily because of the strong objection from senior ministers like Madhu Dandavate, George Fernandes and Inder Gujral, who were all part of the Cabinet committee on Kashmir. For a time it seemed that V.P. Singh had been successfully convinced by them not to take the extreme step, for antagonising Farooq would have disastrous consequences for the state. Arun Nehru, Arif Khan and the Mufti now began to look for other ways to needle Farooq Abdullah.

On 17 January 1990, Farooq Abdullah was called to Delhi to hold consultations with the home minister. After the meeting the Mufti issued a statement saying that the Centre would extend all help to the state government in its fights against terrorism. The home minister also clarified that New Delhi was not in favour of promulgating President's Rule in Kashmir. The next day, however, surprise was in store. The Centre announced that

THE PROTESTS



MERAJUDDIN

Everywhere, people rose in revolt against the excesses perpetrated by the security forces. Kashmir was perhaps lost forever

Jagmohan was being appointed Governor of the state, even though Farooq Abdullah had made it clear that he would step down if such a thing was to happen. And, Farooq had his reasons. A staunch supporter of Arun Nehru, Jagmohan was brought in by Indira Gandhi in 1984 with the sole purpose of dismissing the Abdullah government. The Centre's move shocked Farooq Abdullah, who promptly stepped down. And, Kashmir was left without a popular government.

Farooq Abdullah's exit marked the watershed in the Kashmir problem. And, as it turned out later, it proved to be a costly blunder for V.P. Singh. The new Governor, Jagmohan, was no stranger to Kashmir, but his reputation was that of a political wheeler-dealer. He first achieved notoriety during the Emergency, when as Sanjay Gandhi's hatchet man, he ordered the demolition of the Turkman Gate and cleared the adjoining areas. "Jagmohan had felt that dealing with the Kashmiris would be as easy as demolishing the Turkman Gate," says a senior Janata Dal functionary.

But why did V.P. Singh agree to the appointment of Jagmohan in the first place? After all, he could have easily appointed someone like Naresh Chandra and K.F. Rustomji, if the Raja wanted to send a strict administrator to Kashmir. According to sources close to the former Prime Minister, the Raja at that stage had complete faith in his home minister.

The day Jagmohan arrived in Srinagar, the militants demonstrated their strength by unleashing a wave of violence in the Valley. On 19 January, Farooq Abdullah resigned as chief minister and flew off to London. The next day, Jagmohan dissolved the Assembly and brought Kashmir under Governor's Rule. While the left parties and the Congress(I) strongly condemned the move, V.P. Singh promptly distanced himself from the act by saying that he was not consulted before Jagmohan dissolved the Kashmir Assembly.

JAGMOHAN



PHALS GHOTA

His policy of repression alienated the Kashmiris further. His appointment was perhaps the biggest blunder committed by V.P. Singh

Whatever the truth, Jagmohan now emerged as a dictator. Hundreds of people, most of them innocents, were rounded up by the cops. The militants too struck back. During this period, the Valley witnessed a pitched battle between the JKLF cadres and the security forces.

As pressure began to build on V.P. Singh to remove Jagmohan, the Raja once again hesitated. Even though he had realised within one month of Jagmohan taking over that he had made a big blunder, the Raja did nothing to atone for the mistake. V.P. Singh gave in to the BJP's demand not to sack Jagmohan. And by the time Jagmohan was recalled, the damage had already been done.

Take a look at what Jagmohan had achieved during his five-month tenure. Extremist outfits demanding secession mushroomed in the state. And even those who opposed the militants initially, joined their ranks and started providing shelter to them. The security forces too were pushed to the wall and showed signs of desperation. And the movement for Kashmir's independence, which so long was in the hands of a few extremists, suddenly became popular.

V.P. Singh, however, took the first positive step towards resolving the Kashmir problem even when Jagmohan was the Governor. But ironically enough, the idea was first mooted by the Raja's political rival, the Congress(I). Realising perhaps that his home minister and Jagmohan were messing up the situation in the Valley, Singh decided to appoint a special minister for Kashmir affairs. And the choice fell on George Fernandes.

While the Kashmiris agreed that Fernandes was a "good man", they were clear that the new minister could do little as long as Jagmohan was holding fort. "The appointment of George Fernandes gave conflicting signals to the people of Kashmir—V.P. Singh was wielding both the carrot and the stick simultaneously, and none with any real conviction," says a senior leader from the state. "Fernandes'

conciliatory measures only caused a lot of confusion in the minds of people, and compounded the mess." What was worse, the Kashmir affairs minister soon found that anything he tried to do was hastily undone by the Mufti and Jagmohan. And, in less than a month of his appointment, he was ordered by the Prime Minister to stay away from Kashmir.

Yet again, V.P. Singh failed to take a firm stand on Kashmir. According to a Janata Dal leader, "V.P. Singh received all the wrong inputs; the bureaucracy in the state and at the Centre were still under Rajiv Gandhi's influence, and played a crucial role." State officials who had over the years, won the respect and confidence of the people were hurriedly sidelined: the Mufti continued to be advised by the same set of bureaucrats who advised Rajiv Gandhi on Kashmir. On his part, the Prime Minister was terribly confused about the allocation of responsibilities, which led to unseemly tension between Fernandes and Jagmohan.

And then, after equating the Governor and the Kashmir minister, the Raja decided to sack them both. "It was one of his most irrational acts," admits a source close to the former PM. While Jagmohan had to be withdrawn against the backdrop of the killing of the religious and political leader, Maulvi Farooq, in May, Fernandes was simulataneously asked to make a volte-face. The gang of three still prevailed, while Kashmir burned. And V.P. Singh had no option but to accept the moral responsibility for it.

Not once in his 11 months in power did V.P. Singh visit Kashmir. That could be explained by the fact that it would have proved futile, anyway. Unlike in Punjab, where large political gatherings and meetings are still possible, the situation in Kashmir did not allow for the people to come out of their homes to meet politicians, or for that matter, almost anyone who advocated India's cause. But even as allegations of police excesses poured in, the Prime Minister continued to give the Mufti and Jagmohan a free hand, almost keeping himself away from the crisis.

By April it became evident that Benazir Bhutto's government in Pakistan would do all it could to capitalise on the trouble in Kashmir. There was a strong possibility of another war with Pakistan over Kashmir in the last week of May, but fortunately, the war clouds blew over. But the tension on the border continued, and Jagmohan's claims that he had the "upper hand" were mostly empty. Trained militants continued to infiltrate into the Valley, and there was no sign of Pakistan giving up its support to the separatists. The pro-Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami was gaining ground fast, overshadowing the more moderate JKLF and it seemed less likely that there was any possibility of a dialogue.

If the alienation of the Kashmiris was even more disturbing—the Kashmiri pundits had all fled the Valley. The pundits and Muslims who had for hundreds of years not allowed religion to divide them, began to hate each other. And Jagmohan is to be blamed for this too—he played into the hands of the Muslim fundamentalists. Here too, it is V.P. Singh who has to accept the responsibility and the blame, for not having had the strength to recall Jagmohan. And yet, every now and then, there was talk of starting the political process much to the anger and frustration of the people who knew that all such talk was sheer hypocrisy.

"The problem with VP was that he liked to go into so much of detail on any issue, that he was hardly able to deal with any of the issues," commented a senior Janata Dal minister and a close aide of the former Prime Minister. "He didn't delegate responsibility, and showed no initiative at all to solve the Kashmir problem." Corroborated Lok Sabha MP Saifuddin Soz: "V.P. Singh always listened when you went to him with problems, but he didn't know the art of consulting the right people, and worse, he consulted the wrong people."

The removal of Jagmohan and the appointment of Girish Chandra Saxena, a former RAW chief, was yet another signal to the Kashmiri people that there would be no deviation from the hard line on Kashmir. The Disturbed Areas Act was imposed on the state, which empowered security forces to destroy any place which harboured militants. And while Kashmir burnt—entire settlements and villages were torched with frightening regularity over the last three months—V.P. Singh fiddled. The Mandal Commission agitation was gaining momentum, and Kashmir was all but forgotten. The fact that 1.5 million people were affected by an indefinite strike since 15 September did not seem to bother him at all—it took a new Prime Minister to accede to the demands of the striking employees.

Chandra Shekhar, who had gained significant support in the state when he launched a scathing attack against V.P. Singh's handling of the situation following the killings at the funeral of Maulvi Farooq, became a hero overnight when he resolved the strike. "The mood is hopeful in Kashmir. Things will change for the better," states a senior bureaucrat. "There is strong indication that the Governor's advisers who have played havoc in the state, will go."

"We shall remember these 11 months as the darkest period in our history," says a Kashmiri politician. "It will take a long time for the wounds that VP had inflicted to heal, and it's not just the Kashmiris, but the entire country that will pay the price for it." •

THE TROIKA



(From left) Arif Mohammad Khan, Arun Nehru and the Mufti misled V.P. Singh. All three had their personal interests in Kashmir and they all had a common enemy: Farooq Abdullah

THE REWARD, MY FRIEND, IS NOT IN THE SIZE OF THE ORDER BUT IN THE CHALLENGE OF THE JOB.



Profits, Kirloskar Electric never forgets, are not the primary function of any business. They are a by-product. Go out on a limb for your customers and you not only build technological muscle,the whole country gains confidence to take on more and more challenging jobs And the odd thing is, if you look after the product, the profits take care of themselves.

Take the case of the AC motorised gear units we designed and custom-built from scratch for Laxmi Machine Works (LMW).

LMW are one of India's leading manufacturers of textile machinery. In 1983, they asked us to build AC dual speed motorised gear units for their doffer machines, most of which are exported. So far they had been importing these motors from Bauer of Germany.

Import substitution is one of the biggest bees in our bonnet. But these were not your run-of-the mill motorised gear units. Some of the specs were daunting and the client's expectations very high. Besides, these units had never been made in India.

The tougher the job, the more we want to do it. We got down to business. When we had got the prototype for the motorised gear units ready, we realized that it could be made even more compact. We re-worked on the prototype till its compactness was as close to the imported ones as possible.

But it was the gear cases which posed the biggest problem for us. Being so compact, they demanded maximum accuracies. It was touch and go there for a while but we licked the problem in the end.

Today on an average 400 of these motorised gear units are used by LMW both for export and for the home market on their doffer machines. They save about Rs. 30 lakhs on foreign exchange a year for the country.

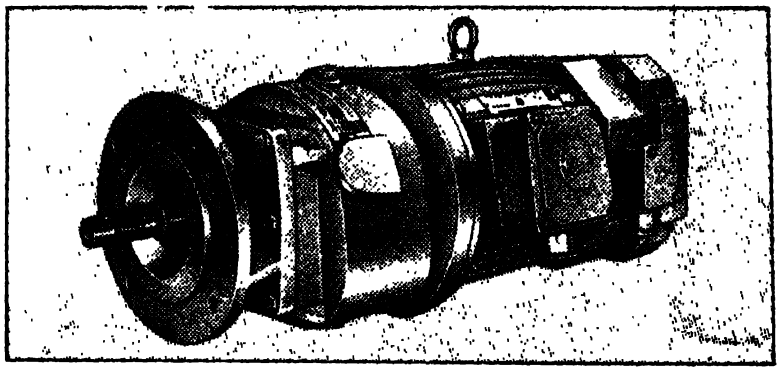
But we didn't stop at that. We designed and custom-built motors for dust-collecting equipment for a sister-concern of LMW called Laxmi Automatic Looms. These motors replaced imported ones and saved another Rs. 30 lakhs in foreign currency.

But Kirloskar Electric is more than the sum of all the firsts it has earned over the years. We are India's leading industrial electrics and electronics company in the private sector. We make some of the finest standard AC and DC drives, transformers, welding equipment and systems, motorised gear units, equipment for defence, electronic control equipment, CNCs, etc. But the one single reason why we are the prime movers in our field is because the centre of gravity at Kirloskar Electric is the customer. Our hi-tech, engineering expertise, superior quality and reliability are all geared to anticipate and respond to his needs.

KIRLOSKAR ELECTRIC CO. LTD.

INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICS AND ELECTRONICS

Regd. Office : Industrial Suburb, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560 010.



When nobody else can do the job, Kirloskar Electric will.

WHO'S IN WHO'S OUT

A guide to Chandra Shekhar's friends and enemies

There is nothing as constant as change. Ask R.P Joshi, the director of the Intelligence Bureau. Ever since former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh and cabinet secretary Vinod Pande (who is Joshi's brother-in-law) chose him to head the bureau, Joshi had only one major political priority: to find out what Chandra Shekhar was up to.

The Intelligence Bureau's (IB) surveillance became so extensive that Shekhar was moved to complain to the press that his telephones were tapped and that bugging devices had been planted at his residence. A car-load of IB agents was always at hand outside Shekhar's South Avenue Lane bungalow to note down the names of those who visited the Janata Dal strongman and each time Shekhar ventured out of his house, an IB Ambassador followed him from a discreet distance. In those last, desperate days of the V.P. Singh raj after Shekhar staked his claim, the bureau redoubled its efforts. The Raja wanted to know what his rival's strength was and it was the IB's job to provide the answers.

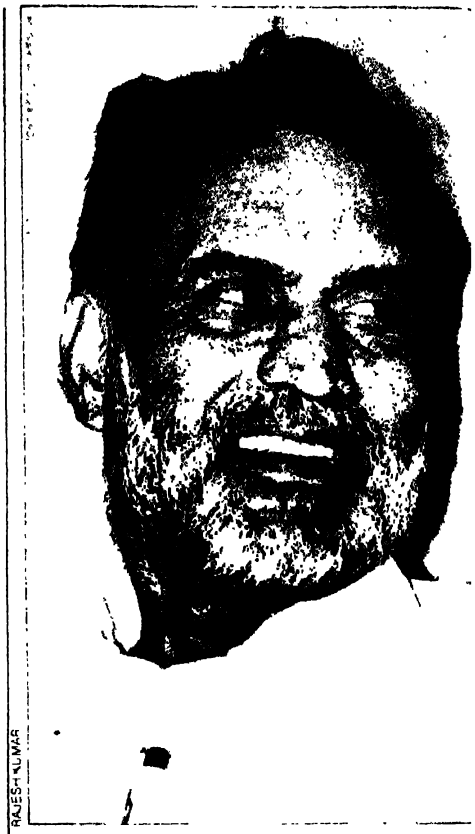
Imagine therefore the chagrin of R.P. Joshi and the rest of the bureau's top echelon when the man who had called the shots for 11 months was removed from office. And Chandra Shekhar, who had been nothing more than a target of surveillance, suddenly became the Prime Minister!

To his credit, Joshi adapted quickly. Shortly after the President called Shekhar to form the government and before he was sworn in, the IB director made a hurried visit to South Avenue Lane. There was a certain poignancy to the meeting. Joshi and Chandra Shekhar have known each other for years, but ever since he became IB chief, Joshi stopped calling on the Janata Dal strongman. But now, he wasted no time in rectifying that error.

Neither man will reveal the details of what took place at that first meeting, but from all accounts, Shekhar was in a forgiving mood. Joshi had expected to be transferred, but was told instead that the new Prime Minister would review his performance before taking any decision. It was not his way to unsheath the long knife and lop off the head of everybody who had any connection with the V.P. Singh regime, Shekhar explained.

Joshi's experience has been typical. Almost from the hour that Chandra Shekhar was sworn in, the bureaucracy has expected a massacre. Apart from the fact that many of those in positions of authority actively worked against Chandra Shekhar and therefore felt they were in for the chop, there is the complex matter of the new Prime Minister's relationships.

As the head of a minority government, he enjoys office at the pleasure of the Congress(I). Rajiv Gandhi has his own list of favourites and hate-objects: to what extent will Shekhar be expected to respect that list? Then, there are the Prime Minister's backers. If V.P. Singh's faction of the Janata Dal is to be believed, then Shekhar is the candidate of Reliance Industries. Does that mean that the corridors of power will be packed with Ambani-men? And what about some of the Prime Minister's less savoury acquaintances? He has never hidden his Chandra Swami connection. Will the middleman-in-saffron now wreak some terrible vengeance on all those who once investigated him?



RAJESH KUMAR

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

It is not his way to unleash the long knife and lop off the head of everybody who had any connection with the V.P. Singh regime, he explains

Moreover, exactly *how* close is Shekhar to the likes of Ambani and Chandra Swami? Will they really call the shots in the new dispensation?

So far, there are no clear answers to most of these questions. Shekhar has never been vindictive: that much is clear. As president of the Janata Party, he readmitted all those (Raj Narain, George Fernandes, etc.) who defected to Charan Singh to bring down the 1977-79 Janata government. More recently, he made up with Subramaniam Swamy, who attacked him viciously in 1983-84. And though Devi Lal conspired with V.P. Singh to cheat him during the leadership election last year, he appears to bear him no ill-will.

But equally, it is clear that he runs an open house, where anybody who has ever befriended him is welcome. Thus, even after he has become Prime Minister, his *kutiya* in South Avenue Lane is packed with the likes of



DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

Will Shekhar allow the corridors of power to be packed with Ambani-men?



CHANDRA SWAMI

Will the middleman-in-saffron now wreak some terrible vengeance on all those who once investigated him?



RAJIV GANDHI

He has his own list of favourites and hate-objects. Will Shekhar be expected to respect it?

Chandra Swami and Suraj Deo Singh, the controversial Dhanbad politician who is often described as a mafia don.

How much sway will these acquaintances have? Will they call the shots or, at the very least, issue instructions in the Prime Minister's name—perhaps without Shekhar's knowledge?

The bureaucracy is still assessing Shekhar. His meeting with Joshi has not passed unnoticed though, to an extent, it is balanced out by his obvious desire to be rid of cabinet secretary Vinod Pande. Shekhar had expected Pande to resign as soon as V.P. Singh lost the vote of confidence and was appalled when the pan-chewing astrologer, who had become India's second most powerful man, showed no intention of relinquishing the chair.

The Prime Minister made it clear to Pande that he wanted his own cabinet secretary and the man who had all but run India for 11 months finally got the message, agreeing to step aside once Shekhar had found a replacement.

But before he decided to fire Pande, the Prime Minister carefully weighed the arguments on both sides. His instincts were to sack as few people as possible. But Pande was a special case. There was little doubt that he had overstepped all bounds of propriety and decorum and behaved more like a politician than a civil servant. During the V.P. Singh era, he had helped draw up the regime's hit-list and actively pursued the Raja's vendettas. Worse still, he had taken on the job of planting obviously false 'news' stories with a coterie of friendly journalists. Many of these stories—including the 'scoop' that the Congress(I) was behind the anti-Mandal agitation—found their way to the front pages of newspapers.

By the end, even his civil service colleagues had lost respect for Pande. There were allegations of cronyism in appointments and the feeling persisted that IAS and IPS officers with Allahabad backgrounds along with those drawn from Pande's own Rajasthan cadre were getting all the promotions.

Even then, Shekhar was inclined to give him a chance, but when Pande showed no real interest in the tasks entrusted to him (among them, the negotiations to end the telecom strike), the Prime Minister decided he had to go.

Now, there is a long list of suitors for the cabinet secretary's post. Nearly everybody of consequence has his own candidate. Subramaniam Swamy has been pushing for T.N. Seshan, the former cabinet secretary, who V.P. Singh sent to the Planning Commission. Devi Lal would prefer S.K. Misra, the agriculture secretary. Misra is also backed by Mulayam Singh Yadav because his wife is a minister in the UP Cabinet. Gujarat chief minister Chimanbhai Patel supports H.K. Khan, his chief secretary, who is also said to be the candidate of Reliance Industries.

All these men stand a chance, but the two biggest favourites are industry secretary A.N. Varma and home secretary Naresh Chandra. Both are non-controversial officers with seniority on their side. So far, Shekhar has not indicated which of the two he prefers, but Chandra is thought to have the edge.

VINOD PANDE

Shekhar was inclined to give him a chance. But when Pande showed no real interest in the tasks entrusted to him, the PM decided he had to go





BHURE LAL

His responsibilities were the VP regime's countless FIRs. But now, he is a figure of no consequence

During V.P. Singh's time, much was made of the downgrading of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The Raja suggested that this demonstrated his commitment to Cabinet government. In fact, all that happened was that power passed to the cabinet secretariat. Vinod Pande ran the government by dealing directly with secretaries while their ministers were busy politicking.

Chandra Shekhar seems determined to ensure that he does not create his own Gopi Arora or Vinod Pande. The new cabinet secretary—whoever he is—will have no extra-constitutional authority and at the PMO, he has been careful to appoint a minister with executive responsibilities so that civil servants do not try and second-guess the Prime Minister.

Kamal Morarka, the Bombay industrialist and long-time Shekhar confidant, will be the most important figure at the PMO, but the secretary to the Prime Minister will continue to wield his traditional clout. Shekhar seems pleased with present incumbent B.G. Deshmukh's performance and may not remove him till his term expires. After that, one of the men who failed to become cabinet secretary will probably get the job.

There will be some other changes at the PMO. Over the last year, Shekhar has launched many attacks on the unfortunate Montek Singh Ahluwalia, the special secretary who functions as economic adviser to the Prime Minister. Despite Ahluwalia's unoubted brilliance, Shekhar sees him as a representative of the World Bank lobby. Since becoming Prime Minister, he has also come around to the view that all Ahluwalia does is run a parallel finance ministry.

All this suggests that whether or not Ahluwalia is sacked, he will no longer make much of a contribution to economic affairs. In any case, his views are at odds with those of S.K. Goyal, Shekhar's economic guru, who drafted that blistering attack on Ajit Singh's industrial policy. It is believed that Ahluwalia was instrumental in drawing up the industrial policy that Goyal and Shekhar took such exception to.

There is much speculation about the fate of two V.P. Singh cronies at the PMO. Prabhat Chaturvedi, an IAS

Chandra Shekhar's durbar

It's always open house at 3 South Avenue Lane

All Indian leaders tend to keep open houses, but Chandra Shekhar seems to carry that proclivity to extremes. At any time in the air-conditioned *kutiya* at 3 South Avenue Lane, you will find politicians, hangers-on, industrialists and journalists, all sitting around the MP from Ballia as he holds court. At times, Shekhar ignores all those assembled, favouring only a chosen few with a nod of recognition and a few words. At others, the gathering is marked with much life and laughter, as the Dal leader calls for *vadas* from the nearby Udipi shop and serves his guests himself. Sometimes, he may be conducting an interview on the phone, when the door opens to admit a dozen youngsters from Ballia. Barefoot—everyone has to leave his shoes outside—they troop in, touch Shekhar's feet and leave without any ceremony.

All of this may seem surreal to the outsider. But for the regulars at 3 South Avenue Lane, it's the usual story.

And you have to say this for Chandra Shekhar, that even after becoming Prime Minister—and despite the ubiquitous presence of





ASHOK VAHIE

R.P. JOSHI

The IB director was discomfited when Shekhar, who had been a target of surveillance, became PM



ARUN JAITLEY

The additional solicitor-general handed in his resignation as soon as the V.P. Singh government fell. And his friends claim that the new regime showed an almost obscene haste in accepting it

officer of the UP cadre, was district magistrate during the Allahabad by-election in 1988 when V.P. Singh was elected to the Lok Sabha. The Raja brought him to the PMO with the rank of director Chaturvedi will either be shifted out now or given some routine responsibility where he has no access to information and can do no damage.

Bhure Lal's case is more interesting. A former army officer, he is not a member of the IAS cadre, but has got all his appointments because of the relationship he shares with the Raja. He was director, enforcement, when V.P. Singh was finance minister and later, became a joint secretary in the PMO. His responsibilities were the regime's countless FIRs and, along with the *Indian Express*' S. Gurumurthy, he helped examine Reliance's affairs.

Lal fully expects to be transferred out and certainly, the Congress(I) would like nothing better. On the other hand, Kamal Morarka gets on with him and may be able to work out some arrangement whereby he serves a few more months at the PMO before his secondment to New Delhi ends and he returns to UP. Either way, he is now a figure of no consequence.

Others at the PMO seem to regard their jobs as secure. Most Prime Ministers end up depending on Ronen Sen's grasp of foreign affairs and Shekhar too seems to get on with this personable, if low-key, IFS officer. Whether he stays or not really depends on the foreign ministry, but certainly, the Prime Minister will make no attempt to shift him.

Ever since Prem Shankar Jha resigned, the post of media adviser to the Prime Minister has remained vacant. (Though, as one of Shekhar's aides jokes, it remained vacant even when Jha occupied it.) Several journalists are lobbying for the job, but current indications are that it will be offered to a civil servant. H.Y. Sharada Prasad, the Sphinx-like former adviser to Indira Gandhi who has since miraculously metamorphosed into a witty columnist, is the obvious choice, but many of the PM's advisers believe that his bureaucratic, south Indian style is at odds with Shekhar's come-one-come-all cow-belt earthiness.

the Special Protection Group—he has tried to keep as open a house as he did before.

With one difference. Earlier, the *kutiya* used to be the haunt of such politicos and Shekhar loyalists as Yashwant Sinha, Harmohan Dhawan, Kamal Morarka, Digvijay Singh and, on his visits to Delhi, Mulayam Singh Yadav. But now, with the Janata Dal(S) government in power, most of these people have been assigned responsibilities which keep them busy all day, leaving a vacuum in the durbar.



SHOOTER

But no, the durbar hasn't been disbanded. Only the faces have changed. Instead of the Dhawans and the Sinhas, we have the likes of Indubhai Patel and Chandra Swami in attendance. And given Shekhar's inability to deny anyone access, it is difficult—even next to impossible—to keep the racketeers out.

The media maintain that given how often unscrupulous elements such as Chandra Swami are seen with Shekhar, he is bound to be influenced by them to some degree. And even if he isn't, being flanked by such people is not the best of images for a Prime Minister to have.

Shekhar's friends say in his defence that his tolerance is almost infinite and that he doesn't keep anyone out. But he will "never tolerate any nonsense or allow anyone to influence his decisions".

That may well have been the case when Shekhar was just an ordinary MP from Ballia. But will the same hold now that he is the Prime Minister of India?

In any bureaucratic reshuffle, the most keenly watched posts are those of the economic secretaries. Already, the lobbying has reached a crescendo in New Delhi with industrialists and politicians all trying to swing the appointments of their choice.

Two factors, however, suggest that there will not be a night of the long knives. Firstly, the economy is in such bad shape that nobody has time to waste in shuffling civil servants around. And secondly, finance minister Yashwant Sinha is a former IAS officer himself and respects his officers too much to play snakes and ladders with their careers.

Contrary to current speculation, the chances are that finance secretary Bimal Jalan will not be moved. For a start, his economic views are not very different from Shekhar's. Moreover, because of the endless jibes about Ambani and other industrialists, the Prime Minister wants men of integrity at the finance ministry. He knows that with Sinha and Jalan running the show, no businessman will be able to influence the workings of the ministry.

In recent weeks, Nitish Sengupta, the former revenue secretary who is a friend of Dhirubhai Ambani's, has been mentioned as a possible finance secretary. Now that it is clear that he won't get the job, there are moves to install him as revenue secretary again. But this time, it is Sengupta who is not keen on the job, arguing that he is too senior for it.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that R.L. Mishra, the current revenue secretary, will go—perhaps he will be reverted to his parent cadre. The current favourite to replace him is S.P Shukla, the commerce secretary. Though Shukla had close links with several key leaders in the last regime, he is a family friend of Sinha's.

A.N. Varma will not be shifted out of the industry ministry unless, of course, he becomes cabinet secretary or gets a promotion. Nor will most of the key officers of the economic ministries be affected. T.N. Pande, director of the Direct Taxes Board, will continue and even George Joseph, the director of enforcement who was brought in by Bhure Lal to keep tabs on the V.P. Singh regime's enemies, will not get a punishment posting—at worst, he'll get another Delhi-based job.

There may be some changes in the customs departments. M.M. Bhatnagar could be appointed the new chairman of the Central Board of Customs

Swami and friends

The godman has switched camps many times, but Shekhar has been a constant

If anything characterises Chandra Swami, it is his tendency to first befriend people and then fall out with them. He began by allying himself with the Rajiv Gandhi camp, forging close ties with such Congressmen as K. Natwar Singh and Romesh Bhandari. But Swami soon realised that Rajiv wasn't likely to make him part of that charmed inner circle. Hence, a quick switchover to the opposing camp, with Swami becoming a charter member of the *Express* lobby.

In his new avatar, Chandra Swami masqueraded as a friend of the Raja's, promised to supply the dirt on Bofors and even came up with a tape of a conversation he'd apparently had with Martin Ardbo, in which the latter had talked about Rajiv's involvement in the howitzer scandal.

But before anything could come of it, Swami decided that the *Express* lobby wasn't likely to emerge victorious in the on-going battle in the political arena. So, he crossed over yet again, this time befriending Gandhi's chum, Captain Satish Sharma. The duo allegedly dreamed up the St Kitts scam, which made headlines in the national press. Soon enough, the Raja and his cohorts—who had only recently been hailing the Ardbo tapes as a scoop—were calling the Swami a fraud, a charlatan and worse.

Through all of this, however,



RAKESH SAHAI

and Excise because of his honest image. And Digvijay Singh, the dynamic new number two to Sinha at the finance ministry, has pledged to clean up such cesspools as Delhi airport customs.

Perhaps the one ministry where there has been a full-scale spring cleaning is the law ministry. This has less to do with the new law minister Subramaniam Swamy's own views than with the general perception that the V.P. Singh regime ran the most politicised law ministry in history.

Of the law officers, only solicitor-general Ashok Desai acquitted himself well, while attorney-general Soli Sorabjee lost much of his credibility during his tenure. By the time he resigned, he was seen as a cipher who gave the ministry a veneer of old world-Parsi respectability, while hard-core political activists actually ran the show on his behalf. His unconscionable persecution of Sarosh Zaiwalla, whose firm his ministry fired when it was handling sensitive cases for India, has muddied his reputation. Zaiwalla's only fault was that he filed Ajitabh Bachchan's libel case against *Dagens Nyheter (DN)*, a Swedish newspaper. Because *DN* had got its libellous information from law ministry officials, Sorabjee treated this as a personal affront and not only sacked Zaiwalla and company, but also refused to pay outstanding bills.

For Sorabjee, his spell in office will mark a sad interlude in an otherwise chequered legal career.

Among the other law officers whose resignations have been accepted are the four additional solicitor-generals: Arun Jaitley, Santosh Hegde, P.K. Goswami and Kapil Sibal. Of them, Sibal was handling Reliance matters, while Hegde was in charge of the



ASHOK VAHIE

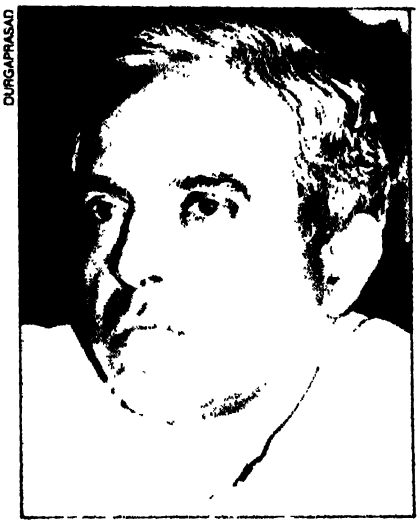


NARESH CHANDRA (left) and A.N. VARMA

They are the favourites for the cabinet secretary's post. So far, Shekhar has not indicated which of the two he prefers



ASHOK VAHIE



DURGAPRASAD

DEVI LAL (left) and SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY

Shekhar has never been vindictive: he has made up with Swamy who attacked him viciously in '83-'84. And though Lal conspired with VP to cheat him, bears the Tau no ill-will

Chandra Swami stuck by one man: Chandra Shekhar. While the pair were never friends, Shekhar was one politician who never denied the Swami access. And, surprisingly enough, the acquaintance never proved embarrassing to Shekhar (of course, there were the usual noises in the press) except on one occasion.

Indubhai Patel, another crony of Shekhar's and a long-time devotee of Chandra Swami, took the then Janata leader (in 1988) to Spain, where the godman introduced Shekhar to Adnan Khashoggi and Michael Hershman. At this meeting, Hershman apparently confided that the Government of India had asked him to investigate several Indian politicians during the time that Fairfax was making headlines in Indian newspapers.

Shekhar put Subramaniam Swamy on the task of attacking the government on that one. But no sooner had the controversy snowballed than Hershman recanted, leading to lots of red faces all around, Shekhar's prominent among them.

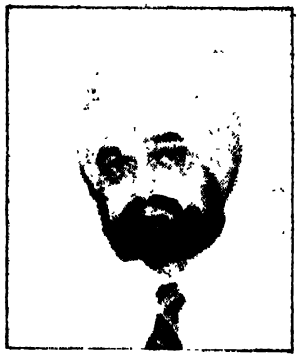
So much for past history.

But Chandra Swami, who'd been in hiding for months now, has suddenly resurfaced in Delhi. And visits Shekhar's durbar at 3 South Avenue Lane fairly regularly.

In that event, will the Government of India continue to persecute the much-maligned godman?

RAKESH SAHAI





S.K. GOYAL (left) and M.S. AHLUWALIA

His views are at odds with those of Goyal, Shekhar's economic guru. And it is unlikely that he will make much of a contribution to economic affairs in future

Larsen & Toubro case.

The key figure in all this is Arun Jaitley, the high-profile BJP activist who came to fame as the lawyer for Arun Nehru, Chandra Swami and the *Indian Express*.

As additional solicitor-general to the Government of India (GOI), Jaitley handled several controversial cases: Bofors, the A320, the HDW submarine, the St Kitts forgery, Ajitabh Bachchan's FERA case, the Devi Lal letters and even Chandra Swami, an old client of his. Since the Congress, according to the conventional wisdom, had something to hide on most of these, it was generally believed that Arun Jaitley was number one on the hit-list of the Shekhar government, in power because of Congress support.

What lent credence to this version was that Jaitley had been claiming to be on the verge of a breakthrough in the Bofors investigation. Judge Dieter Jan-Corrodi had declared in Zurich that bank documents relating to AE Services, one of the front companies in the case, would be transferred to India. The Congress had panicked on being told of this and insisted that it wanted him out. Shekhar had no option but to oblige.

The government, however, had a different story to tell. Jaitley's had been a political appointment and he had merely done the correct thing by resigning as soon as the V.P. Singh government fell. And the new regime had acted properly by accepting his resignation.

There was also some scepticism about the additional solicitor-general's claims of a breakthrough in the investigation. If reports from Zurich are to be believed, the documents the Swiss will hand over identify three foreigners as the entities behind AE Services.

This is open to two interpretations. One, that the Rajiv regime was telling the truth when it insisted that no Indian had got kickbacks on the deal. And two, that all the investigations had thrown up were names of more middlemen.

ASHOK VAIDYA



YASHWANT SINHA

The finance minister is a former IAS officer himself and respects his officers too much to play snakes and ladders with their careers

So, all talk of breakthroughs was slightly suspect.

Jaitley's friends, however, maintained that the government had shown an almost obscene haste in getting rid of him. Two cases had been filed against the government investigation on Bofors, and Jaitley was arguing for the GOI in both. A day before the hearing on one of them, the lawyer was told that his resignation had been accepted by the government. All the other additional solicitor-generals were informed later. So, why the hurry in Jaitley's case?

The government has its own view on the matter. As a source in the PMO says, the Swiss were dealing with the GOI, not with Jaitley as an individual or the *Indian Express* as a corporate body. And they will continue to deal with the government; the fact that Jaitley has lost his job makes no difference to that arrangement.

The government's new appointments also came in for a large measure of criticism. G. Ramaswamy, the new attorney-general, has appeared for Reliance Industries, leading detractors to claim that he is an Ambaniman. A.D. Giri, an advocate at the Allahabad High Court, is an old friend of Chandra Shekhar's. And his appointment as solicitor-general led to charges of cronyism.

New Delhi, on its part, maintained that both these men had impeccable legal credentials. And, in the ultimate analysis, that was all that mattered.

While there are other changes on the anvil, none of them seem

B.G. DESHMUKH

Shekhar seems pleased with the performance of the secretary to the PM and may not remove him till his term expires



likely to come about in a hurry. And an overhaul of the bureaucracy is unlikely going by what Chandra Shekhar told SUNDAY: "India has one of the best bureaucracies in the world. You can't blame civil servants if politicians are not clear what they want."

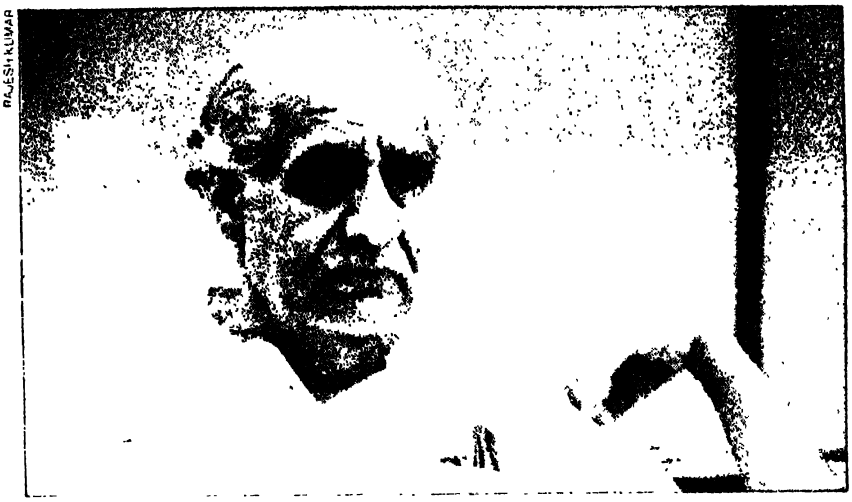
The Prime Minister, then, has an open mind on the subject and has given due indication of how he means to go on with his informal personal interaction with civil servants, even rousing them from sleep at times to relay his instructions.

Contrary to expectations, few decisions have been motivated by personal animus. Though, of course, there have been exceptions to that rule.

Kuldip Nayar, for instance. Nobody is quite certain what Chandra Shekhar has against the former high commissioner to London, but the bearded leader hasn't lost any opportunity to hit out at Nayar. When the controversy about the medical treatment accorded to Justice Sabyasachi Mukherjee was raging, Shekhar got up in Parliament to call Nayar a social climber.

It was clear, given past history, that once Shekhar became Prime Minister, Nayar would have to go. The high commissioner preferred to quit of his own accord, rather than wait to be fired. And his resignation was promptly accepted by the government.

The other to go was S.V.S. Raghavan, the chairman of Bharat Business International Limited (BBIL), the holding company comprising STC (State Trading Corporation) and MMTC (Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation). Even while the Raja's regime was in office, Subramaniam Swamy had made it clear that he suspected Raghavan of having links with VP. Not surprisingly then, as soon as Swamy assumed office as commerce minister, one of the first things he did was fire Raghavan.



RAJESH KUMAR

KULDIP NAYAR

Nobody is sure what Shekhar has against the former high commissioner to London. Rather than wait to be fired, Nayar quit of his own accord

Over the last week—despite the odd decision which seemed vindictive—Chandra Shekhar managed to stabilise his wobbly prime ministership somewhat. The failure to constitute the Cabinet for 11 long days and the allegations of his links with industrialists had done some damage, but Shekhar's image improved, if only marginally, as he grew into his role. His TV appearances impressed most viewers, with the Prime Minister holding forth cogently on the issues before the nation. And the coming together of the Babri Masjid Action Committee and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad at the negotiating table signalled a breakthrough on Ayodhya.



ASHOK VAHIE

KAMAL MORARKA

The Bombay industrialist and longtime Shekhar confidant will be the most important figure at the PMO

One of the reasons for Shekhar's growing public stature was the low expectations people had of their leaders in the present political situation. Nobody had thought much of Shekhar when he became Prime Minister and the man from Ballia built upon his slender advantage to surprise those who had underestimated him.

What helped in this regard was the fact that Shekhar had few illusions about his role in the scheme of things. He knew he was an interim Prime Minister, brought in to cope with a crisis situation. So, there were going to be no witch-hunts and no playing favourites. Instead, Shekhar intended to get on with the task of governance.

Intelligence Bureau director R.P. Joshi realised this during that first meeting with Shekhar, and it was this realisation that guided his behaviour.

This Prime Minister will tend to forgive—he has too much work not to. •

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

The crackdown

The Centre imposes President's Rule in Assam

The inevitable has happened. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) ministry in Assam finally paid the price for its refusal to read the writing on the wall. Hours before midnight on Tuesday, 27 November, and just five weeks away from completing a full term, the Centre dismissed the AGP government and imposed President's Rule in Assam. The Chandra Shekhar regime followed this up with other hard measures: the entire state was declared "disturbed", terrorist outfits like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) were outlawed and the Armed Forces Special Power Act was extended to Assam. The purpose of all this was to restore a semblance of law and order in a state which was virtually held to ransom by the ULFA. At last, the crackdown had begun.

No one in the state was taken unawares by the move, least of all the deposed chief minister Prafulla Mahanta and his Cabinet colleagues. Even when "friendly" V.P. Singh was in power in Delhi, the Centre had repeatedly warned Mahanta to take steps to contain the ULFA menace. But the National Front government never dared to take the extreme measure since the AGP was a constituent of the ruling coalition at the Centre. All that, however, changed with the change of guard in Delhi. Chandra Shekhar proved to be a tough customer and soon after taking over, he summoned Mahanta to Delhi to do some plain speaking.

Back home in Guwahati, Prafulla Mahanta realised that there were two options before his government: either to make a serious bid to confront the ULFA or to face dismissal. The AGP preferred the latter. Perhaps because the ULFA was more of an asset than a liability for the party.

Not that Mahanta did not try to convince Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar that the situation in his state was not all that alarming that it was made out to be. Two other senior AGP members, Bhrigu Phukan and Zoi Nath Sharma, camped in New Delhi for days and even met Congress president Rajiv Gandhi and sought his help. But nothing worked and the Centre stuck to its stand.

On the morning of 28 November, the Governor D.D. Thakur issued a statement outlining the reasons behind the President's decision. "President's Rule has become a necessary evil," said Thakur, "in view of the continued indifference of the elected government towards the protection of lives and properties of the common people." The Governor further clarified that he was "nobody's agent," loyal only to his conscience and the Constitution. Thakur, who was deputy chief minister in Jammu and Kashmir during Farooq Abdullah's reign and is a personal friend of former home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, also pointed out that during the last five-six months, the state administration had collapsed and in many places, terrorists had virtually taken over. But why didn't he recommend central rule before the situation got out of hand? Thakur said that he had advocated President's Rule in Assam long back but the previous government simply sat on the file.

What is significant, however, is that the Governor in his report to the President did not accuse the AGP of cooperating with the ULFA. He clearly gives the party the benefit of doubt. Thakur only listed hard facts in his lengthy report and concluded by saying that the same administration could be made more responsive.



ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

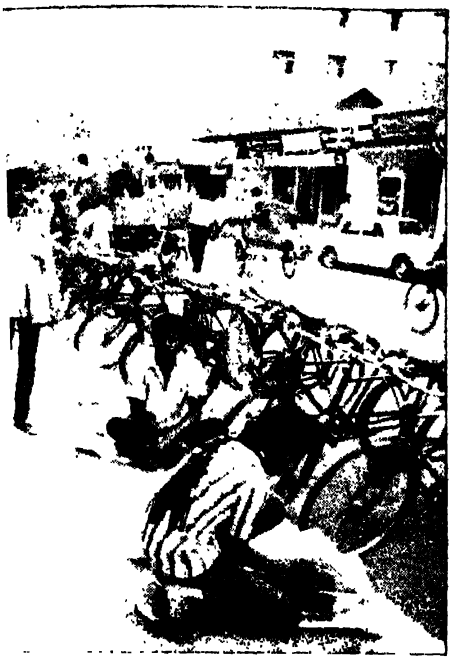
Prafulla Mahanta: can he make a comeback?



ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

BSF men patrolling Fancy Bazar area in Guwahati: tough measures

Whatever be the provocation for the imposition of President's Rule, political parties in the state have reacted to the move in a guarded manner. While the Congress(I) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have publicly welcomed central rule, the ousted chief minister and AGP president Prafulla Mahanta blamed the Congress(I) for the "catastrophe". But the local press and political observers have described the imposition of President's Rule in the state as a creation of the AGP. What is perhaps more significant is that the AGP/AASU bandh call on 30 November in protest against the Centre's act evoked a mixed reaction. While the bandh was successful in the Brahmaputra valley, it was by and large a flop in Upper Assam—stronghold of the ULFA—and the Barak valley. And, even in the Brahmaputra valley areas, the spontaneous and enthusiastic response from the masses were lacking. Significantly, in Dispur, the state secretariat functioned normally because the Sadadau Asom Karmachari Parishad, so long considered a front of the AGP among government employees, kept itself away from the bandh call.





The ULFA guerrillas: on the run?

Most of the political parties which opposed President's Rule in the state did so on "ideological" grounds. Golap Borbora, president of the state Janata Dal, for instance, pointed out that he was personally against central rule anywhere in the country. But he quickly added that in the present instance, the AGP was to be held responsible. The state unit of the CPI(M) too is similarly opposed to central rule in Assam on principle. The party's aged secretary, Nandeswar Talukdar, however, blamed the AGP for providing the Congress-backed central government with an opportunity to interfere in the affairs of Assam. Promode Gogoi of the CPI was worried about the "excessive powers given to the armed forces". And the veteran Congress(S) leader, Sarat Chandra Sinha, wondered what made the AGP leaders surrender the government's authority to the terrorists.

The state units of the Janata Dal, the Congress(S) and to an extent the CPI(M) are clearly in a dilemma. Because, they were largely instrumental in convincing the previous National Front regime that the AGP and the ULFA were in league and it was largely on their report that the former home minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had more or less decided to hold polls in the state under President's Rule.

But the equations changed dramatically with the collapse of the V.P. Singh regime. And the state Congress(I) suddenly found itself in the driver's seat and Hiteswar Saikia, the shrewd APCC chief, is all set to exploit the situation to the hilt.

The Congress(I) may be in an advantageous position right now, but the left parties are not willing to take defeat lying down. And they are not ruling out a sympathy wave in favour of the AGP either. For, even though the initial reaction of the people to President's Rule has been hardly encouraging for Prafulla Mahanta and his party, the leftists think that the situation may change later, especially when the masses are exposed to the army's special powers. The communists, along with their democratic allies, the Janata Dal and the Congress(S), have already worked out a strategy: they have decided to launch a two-pronged attack. One against the AGP for dragging the state to a point of anarchy, and two, against the Congress(I) for its role behind the imposition of President's Rule in the state.

But from the look of things, polls at the moment seem a distant dream. Governor Thakur said that it all depends "on the cooperation of the people. As soon as normalcy returns, I shall return to my constitutional role, read books and listen to music". But Lt. Gen. Brar, the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, and who is supervising army operations against the ULFA, however, was more forthright. "We haven't come here for a fortnight or a month. This is no picnic. We will stay here for some time. More soldiers are coming. We will make our presence felt in all the towns. We will also go into the villages. Our job is not only to flush out terrorists but to instil confidence in the minds of the people. And this requires time," Brar explained.

Ironically enough, the AGP leadership now feels that it is the army which can bail it out from its present woes. How? Simple enough. Already, people are complaining about army and police excesses. And the AGP is planning a series of protests to highlight this aspect. Moreover, the promulgation of President's Rule has given the party a ready issue. It can once again whip up Assamese sentiments against the "colonial designs" of New Delhi.

President's Rule in Assam may have yet another disastrous fall-out. The AGP is totally dependent on the AASU when it comes to building up an agitation. But over the years, there have been serious differences between the AGP and the AASU leadership. Now that both the organisations have a common enemy to fight, they may well bury their differences and launch a combined stir. Moreover, the ULFA, which is bearing the brunt of the army's operations, may now come out openly in support of the AGP. What this means for Assam is anybody's guess. ●

Rabijit Choudhury/Guwahati

Sea is the limit

L. Ramdas finally takes over as the navy chief amid controversy





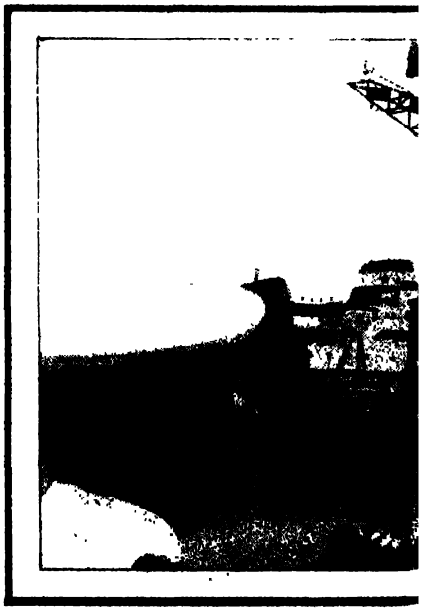
When Admiral Laxminarayan Ramdas took over as Chief of Naval Staff last week, a sordid chapter in the history of the Indian Navy was brought to a close. The battle of succession that preceded the navy chief's induction into New Delhi's South Block was unprecedented in the armed forces, and threatened to politicise military appointments for the first time since Independence. However, the new government was quick to realise that revoking the chief of naval staff-designate's appointment hours before he was scheduled to take over from Admiral J.G. Nadkarni, would only have led to more controversy, and perhaps even spark off a mutiny in the navy. Sources in the Prime Minister's Office admit that the decision to stand by the earlier government's appointment was taken at the highest level.

For the new chief of navy, his ascension meant the end of a battle that raged in the courts and shook the force. The genesis of the tension was simple enough. The chief of the Western Naval Command, Vice-Admiral S. Jain, was being superseded, and decided that he would contest the decision to make Ramdas the navy chief. The aggrieved Vice-Admiral, who was due to retire on 28 February last year, was given a two-year extension in order to broadbase the selection of the navy chief's post. This, according to his supporters in the government, implied that Jain was very likely to be the next chief. After all, the flag officer commanding-in-chief, Vice-Admiral Ramdas, was the junior of the two.

However, things changed dramatically when, some months ago, Rear Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court, sparking off an unusual controversy in the navy. Though the petition was filed to protest against the appointment of Rear Admiral K.K. Kohli bypassing Bhagwat's candidature, the 400-page document (filed by Bhagwat's lawyer-wife Niloufer) contained several personal allegations against the navy's top brass, and even went as far as to establish their alleged connections with foreign powers. Besides, there were also allusions to murky defence deals which Bhagwat claimed he was witness to. However, since most of the deals had been approved by President R. Venkataraman when he was either defence or finance minister, there was no question of examining those. "Did Bhagwat think he could instigate an inquiry against the President?" scoffs a defence ministry source. "The petition was hundred per cent motivated."

Among the officers mentioned by name in Bhagwat's petition were Jain, and the then navy chief, Admiral Nadkarni. Both, alleged the petitioner, had close links with the USA. The petition, significantly, failed to record that the other contender for the top slot, Vice-Admiral Ramdas, had three daughters who were all US green-card holders. Nor did it mention that one of the daughters, Kavitha, was married to Zulfiqar Ahmed, a Pakistani national whose father was allegedly in the Pakistan army. According to navy sources, Ramdas had failed to report the alliance as is customary, when he was designated chief. (It was later established that Kavitha's father-in-law had died twenty years ago and served in the Public Works Department.)

Another incident occurred in August that was seemingly unconnected with the main plot of the mur-



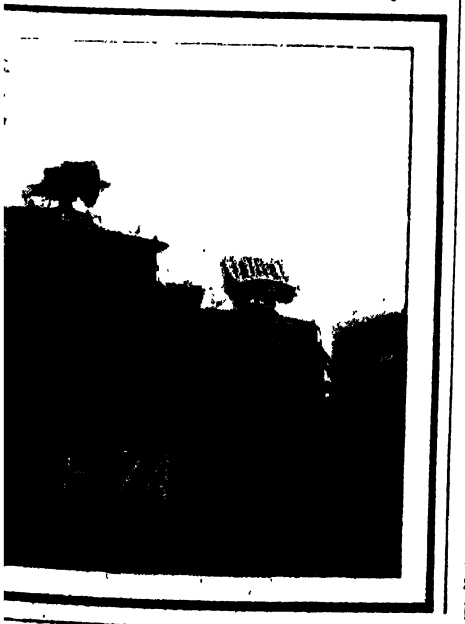




(Left to right) Ramdas, Jain, Nadkarni and Ramanna: the battle of succession that preceded the appointment of the naval chief was unprecedented in the history of the armed forces. **(Below) INS Andaman:** the sinking of the ship was a peace-time disaster and Ramdas was accused of gross negligence

kv goings-on in the navy, but had significant bearing on the Jain-Ramdas tussle. The drowning of the warship INS Andaman on 21 August, when it developed engine trouble during an exercise in the Bay of Bengal, caused a furore; only gross negligence of maintenance or duty could result in a disaster like that during peace time. And Vice-Admiral Ramdas was supervising the exercise, which gave the pro-Jain lobby yet another excuse to attack him.

An inquiry into the episode was instituted, but navy sources are sceptical that the findings will ever see the light of day. It was unusual, say navy sources, to have a naval officer head such an inquiry.



While it became increasingly evident that Rear Admiral Bhagwat's (the officer is known to be a friend of the new Admiral) petition had considerably spoilt Jain's chances, Ramdas had the tacit support of the powers that be. So much so that the succession tussle took on ugly regional overtones, with allegations that the pro-Ramdas officers hailed mostly from the south, and that Ramdas himself enjoyed the support of ex-defence minister, Raja Ramanna, who was also from that region.

Less than 48 hours before the chief of naval staff-designate was scheduled to take over from Admiral J.G. Nadkarni, attempts were being made at the highest levels to revoke his appointment. The chief of the Western Naval Command, Vice-Admiral S. Jain, threw established norms to the winds and spoke personally to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar about his problem when the latter visited Bombay for the "I love Bombay" extravaganza. On 26 November, Vice-Admiral Jain came to the capital and followed up his verbal complaint by filing a written one to the Prime Minister, who is also defence minister. It was feared that the PMO would try to influence the decision of the defence secretary, N.N. Vohra, but no such pressure was used. Ramdas was acquitted of both charges (that he was responsible for the sinking of INS Andaman and that his daughter was married to a Pakistani army officer's son), and the additional allegation that he had changed domicile on three occasions to derive various benefits through land deals from the governments of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The Vice-Admiral, who till the last few hours, was uncertain that he would make the grade, assumed office on 30 November.

Interestingly, the media was so involved in the succession tussle that two Bombay-based journalists, Abhay Mokashi and Madhukar Akodkar, filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court asking for the reversal of the order to designate Ramdas navy chief, and praying that Nadkarni be allowed to continue till "such time as an appropriate and worthy successor" was found. The court dismissed all the three allegations in the petition the same day Admiral Ramdas assumed office with the usual ceremonial pomp and splendour.

One of the most decorated officers of Indian Navy (he was awarded the Vir Chakra after the 1971 war with Pakistan), Admiral Ramdas had perhaps never before undergone the trial of strength as he has in recent days. If for some reason, the government had revoked its decision, say navy sources, "there would have been hell to pay." ●

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

Arms and the man

The activities of a former GDR diplomat generate a controversy

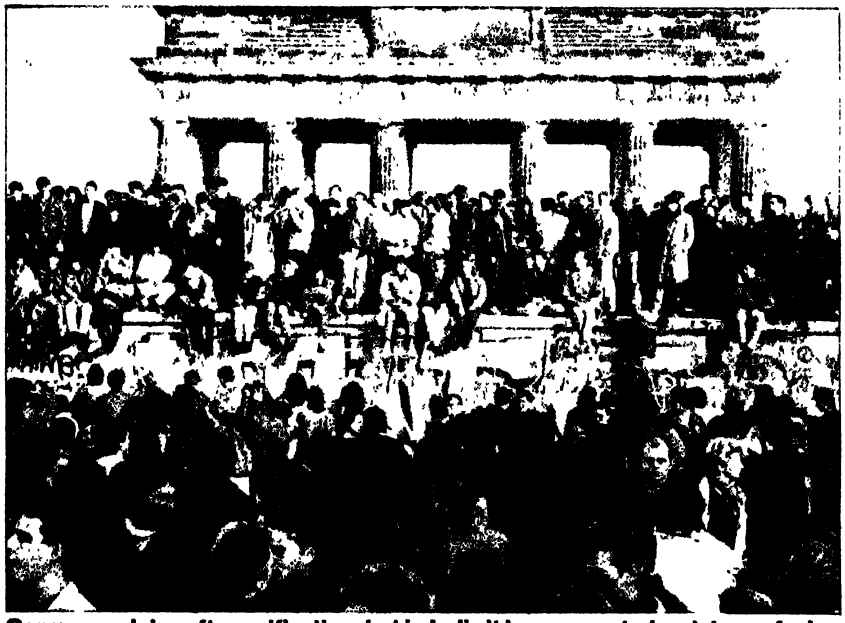
German unification may have been viewed differently in different places—as a threat in the Kremlin, a triumph in Capitol Hill and an irritant in No. 10 Downing Street. In the corridors of New Delhi's South and North Blocks, however, it has generated mainly confusion.

Neither the external affairs nor the finance ministry is very clear about how unification will affect trade agreements that were signed between India and what was formerly the German Democratic Republic (GDR). For instance, much of GDR's exports to India was under the rupee agreement. Will (unified) Germany continue to supply the goods already contracted on the same basis?

A related—but just as important—question concerns the future of GDR-India arms contracts. Will Germany now honour the agreements? What if the sale of certain weapons is in contravention of unified German law (which is essentially that of the former Federal Republic of Germany)?

This question became a concern in Germany about two months ago. And the circumstances which led to it being raised were curious.

A couple of weeks before unification day (3 October), a diplomat of the GDR embassy, Volker Gafert, requested the foreign office in New Delhi for a long-term visa for himself and his family. His letter to the ministry said that he wanted to stay on in his private capacity, as the representative of Ingenieur Technischer Aubenhandel (ITA), allegedly a front organisation for the former GDR government. Gafert's letter of request suggested that, if allowed to stay on in India, he would ensure the completion of nine or so exsisting arms contracts between GDR and India.



Germans rejoice after unification: but in India it has generated mainly confusion

When Konrad Seitz, then ambassador of the FRG embassy, got wind of Gafert's request, he raised an alarm in Bonn. He is said to have briefed his government that Gafert, along with some other GDR officials, was attempting to set up an illegal trade in arms with India. The basis for Seitz's fear was simple. If Gafert had promised to supply the arms that GDR had contracted after unification, then he would probably be doing so in contravention of the law. For the laws in FRG—soon to become those of unified Germany—were extremely stringent about the export of weapons.

The story was soon picked up by the German press, which suggested that the Gafert connection may be used by former East German officials to smuggle arms into India. An article published in the magazine *Der Spiegel* in late October claimed, among other things, that:

- Gafert had promised to fulfil the contracts that GDR had signed for 13,000 machine-guns (4,800 of them being overdue), T-72 tanks and spares for MiG-21 combat aircraft.
- Seitz had briefed the West German government that Gafert was in league with members of Stasi, the East German intelligence service.
- Arms and ammunition belonging to the GDR army are suspected to have been secretly transferred before unification to other Warsaw Pact countries. Could Gafert and his partners be trying to profit from diverting these to India?

Predictably, Gafert denies the charges in the *Der Spiegel* article as "hundred per cent lies". When SUNDAY approached the former East German diplomat at his Vasant Vihar residence, he was visibly nervous and refused to answer questions. "I do not have the authority of my principals (ITA) to speak to the press," he said. A few things, however, are clear. He did approach the foreign office for a long-term visa as ITA's representative and his letter of request, according to one ministry official, did "hint" that he would help to complete outstanding arms contracts. Has the ministry granted his request? "His application is still being processed and no decision has been taken yet," says a senior external affairs ministry official. However, he admits that his interest was aroused by the controversy in Germany and says that a colleague in the Bonn embassy has been informally asked to "find out more".

As for the defence ministry, it is conscious of the controversy in Germany, but claims it has no direct knowledge of Gafert and his reported activities. "I can say categorically that he has not met me or any of my junior colleagues," says a top ministry offi-

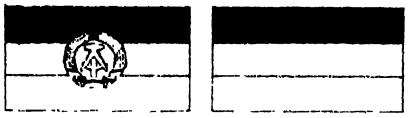
cial. Have any armaments—which were contracted with GDR—arrived in India after the German unification? "We cannot answer this offhand. We will have to check on this," he says

The ministry, however, does admit that there exist a number of contracts with GDR that haven't been completed. And while it seems uncertain about the future of these, it denies rumours in Germany that a large number of modified Kalashnikov light machine-guns were brought to India after unification. "We haven't placed an order for any such gun with GDR," says an official.

The German embassy—which is housed in the old FRG mission in Delhi—also claims that it has no knowledge of what Gafert is up to. Seitz is no longer in India having been recalled, but a senior diplomat told SUNDAY: "As far as the position of the government is concerned, all arms leaving the country after 3 October will have to meet the requirement of law. What happened before unification is of no concern to us."

Some Indian officials believe that the controversy is of little relevance to India—that whether or not a technicality of German law is flouted is the sole concern of that country. Says a defence ministry official: "A lot of planning goes into determining our defence requirements and it is in our interests that all contracts are completed. Otherwise, we will have to go through the lengthy process of finding other sources before meeting our needs."

Will Germany honour the GDR-India arms contracts? What if the sale of certain weapons is in contravention of unified German law, which is essentially that of the former FRG?



GDR FRG

Clearly, there are more questions than answers about what exactly transpired. But with the exposure of Gafert's alleged activities in *Der Spiegel* and the risk of further such stories in Germany—a television programme is currently being planned—it is best that the Indian government clarifies a few matters. Will Gafert get his long-term visa and, if yes, why? Have any arms—contracted with former GDR—arrived in India after unification? And how does it view rumours in Germany that arms are being illegally exported to India with the help of Gafert and his partners?

Understandably, Gafert himself will not throw any light on these questions. But the former diplomat has no doubt that he will be allowed to stay on in a private capacity in India. "Just wait and see," he told SUNDAY with an air of assurance. "My visa request is certain to be granted." As for the crucial aspects of the controversy, he is tight-lipped. "Why bother me with these questions?" he asks. "After all, I am a private and decent man and a very good friend of India's." ●

Mukund Padmanabhan/New Delhi

Take your pick from the finest range of

Racold

OVEN CUM GRILLERS

Have a look at the latest range of Racold oven-cum-grillers. Each of them is perfected to give excellent service for long years. They are so sleek. Easy to operate and clean.

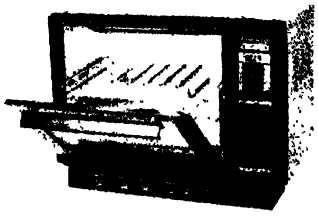
Bake or grill on Racold oven-griller. It is fast and most convenient, without fuss.

You have BOG, Super-Chef and the Mini OTG to choose from. Take your pick today.

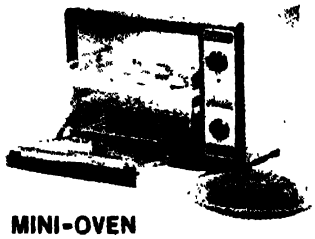
These oven-grillers can also keep food warm.



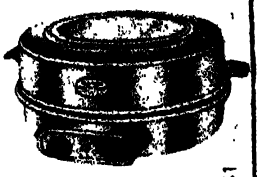
BAKING OVEN-CUM-GRILLER
Fully automatic with insulation on all sides 1000W at the top and 750W elements at the bottom. 3-Heat 4-position switch and thermostat. Adjustable temp. 50° to 300°C



SUPER CHEF
Brass frame inside, Digital display timer, push switches with LED display; 2-Sheathed tubular heaters 1250W each and thermostat.



MINI-OVEN TOASTER-GRILLER
Drop-down front door, Stainless steel frame, 2-sheathed tubular heating elements 600W each and thermostat.

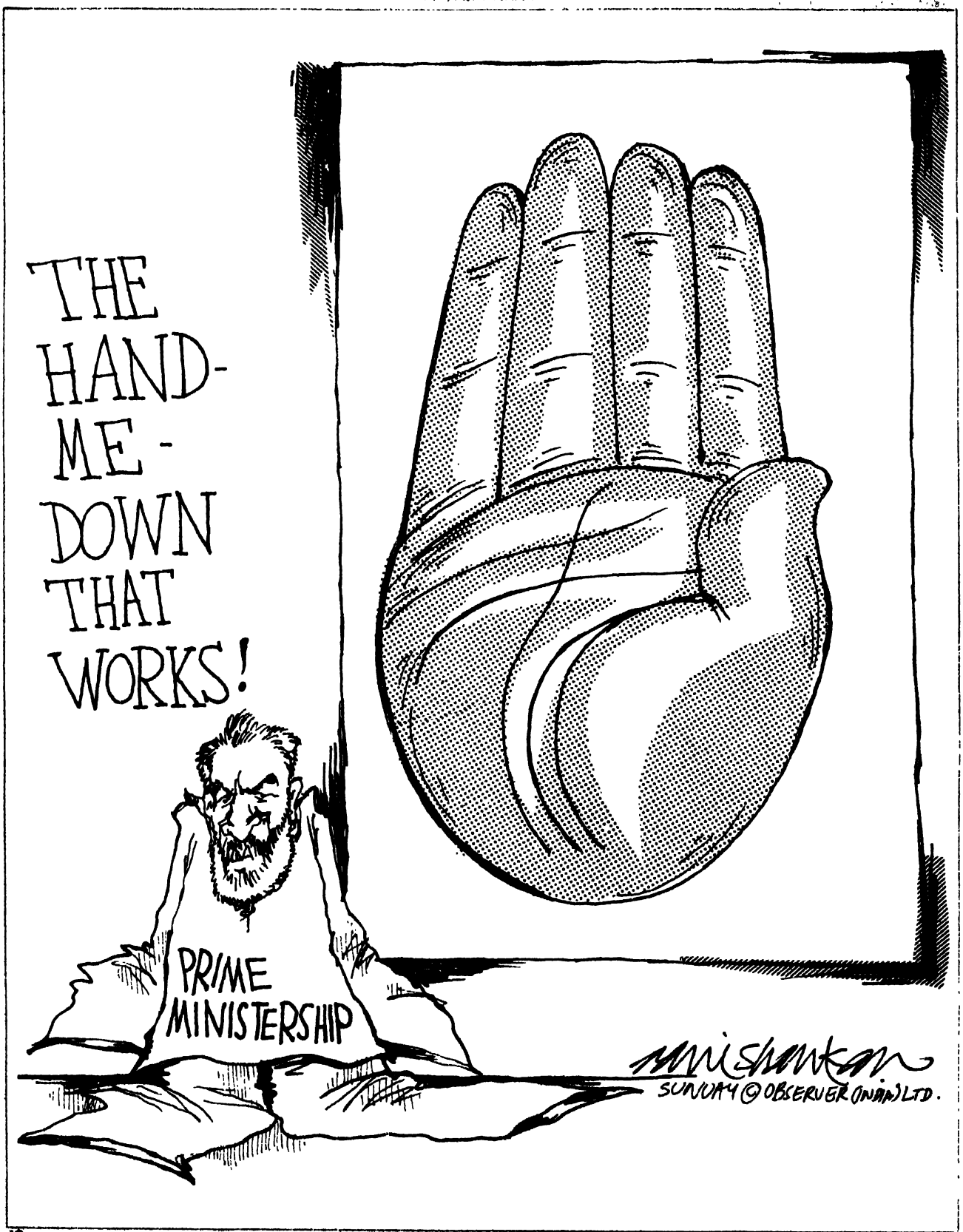


UTILITY ROUND BAKING OVEN
Automatic oven with bright aluminium body with cake pans and moulds.
Temp · 100°C to 200°C

RACOLD APPLIANCES LIMITED
Head Office Bombay Pune Road, Pimpri, Pune 411 018
Bombay 17, Ist Pasta Lane, Colaba, Bombay 400 005
New Delhi "Vandhna", 11, Tolstoy Marg, New Delhi 110 001

ga/1541

RAVI SHANKAR





PERHAPS, THE WARMEST PLACE TO VISIT THIS WINTER.



GENUINE SMILES. SPONTANEOUS WELCOMES. GENEROUS OFFERS OF HOT HILL TEA. AND THE OCCASIONAL SUN SHINING GOLDEN, ATOP SILVER SNOW PEAKS. PUT ALL THESE TOGETHER AND YOU'LL REALISE THAT THE HILLS OF U.P. OFFER YOU AN EXTRA SPECIAL KIND OF WARMTH IN WINTER. THE KIND OF WARMTH YOU'LL NEVER EXPERIENCE IN A CITY AND NOT EVEN DURING YOUR CROWDED, SUMMER, HILLSTATION VACATIONS. SO, THIS WINTER, CHOOSE BETWEEN THE NUMEROUS, CHARMING HILL RESORTS OF U.P. — NAINITAL, RANIKHET, BINSAR, ALMORA, KAUSANI, DHANAULTI, MUSSOORIE, CHAKRATA....AND REMEMBER, THE ROADS ARE WIDE AND OPEN. THE FACILITIES ARE UP-TO-DATE. THE SNOW-CAPPED HILLS ARE WAITING. AND THE WARMTH, TO SAY THE LEAST, IS INVITING.



U.P. TOURISM

3 NAWAL KISHORE ROAD LUCKNOW (U P.) PH: 246205

ALSO AT: AHMEDABAD: PH: 464318, BOMBAY: PH: 215458 CALCUTTA. PH: 207855, CHANDIGARH: PH: 41649 MADRAS: PH: 478726, NEW DELHI: PH: 3322251

Little big men

There is more money in small business than ever before

• *For years, 28 year-old Shyam Biswas lived a squalid life in a south Calcutta slum. His job– which entailed cleaning trucks for a lorry-owner– fetched him a mere Rs 500 a month, hardly enough to support himself and his ailing mother. Then, three years ago, he took the decision that changed his life. Biswas learnt how to drive and borrowed money to purchase a second-hand taxi.*

Today, he lives in his own house, owns a colour TV and VCR and earns - after deducting the amount towards the loan- well over Rs 2,000 a month. Biswas doesn't have children yet, but has decided their futures. "My sons will go to good English-medium schools and choose decent professions. Perhaps, one of them will become a doctor," he says.

• *When Mani left his village in Vedanthangal in Tamil Nadu as a eight-year-old, he never believed he could earn as much as Rs 3,000 a month. He considered the Rs 50 salary that he received as a domestic servant in a Madras household generous. After a few years, however, Mani realised that menial household work would never allow him to live a decent life.*

In January this year, he invested Rs 700 in an iron and began his life as a dhobi. "I save about Rs 1,500 a month," says the 15-year-old with a delighted grin. Already, he has Rs 8,000 stashed away in the bank, is planning on entering into more lucrative 'businesses' and dreams of buying a motorcycle.

• *On the face of it, Dhruv Dayal may appear a lowly chaatwallah. His 'shop' at New Delhi's Shah Jahan Road is a small kiosk and his chaat is doled out to customers under coloured parasols.*

Dayal has found that business has

NITIN TAI



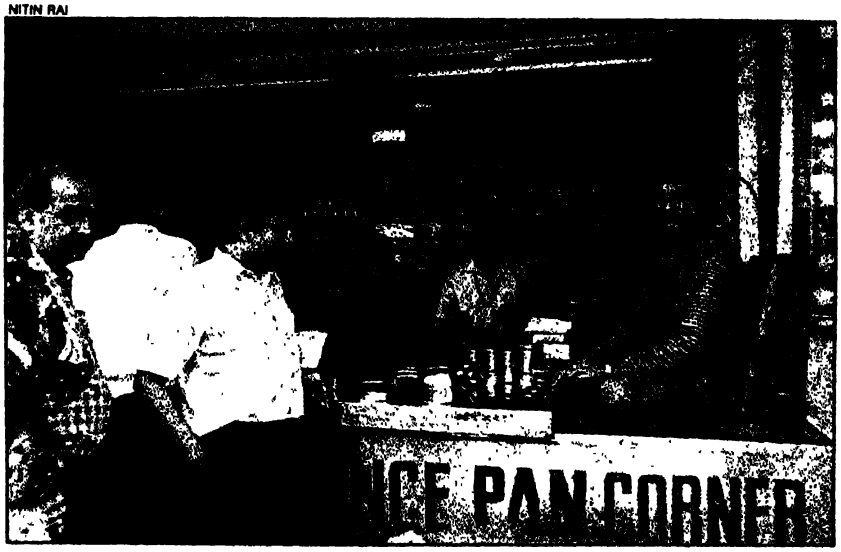


GAUTAM PATOLI

(Clockwise from right) Prince Pan: a household name in Delhi; Mani: already has Rs 8,000 stashed away in the bank; the Shah Jahan Road chaat shop: raking it in; Bombay's New Kulfi Centre: the hottest place for the coolest ice-creams

improved vastly since he set up shop some 45 years ago. By his own admission, he has at least 2,000 customers a day, each of whom spends a minimum of Rs 5. This would mean that his annual turnover is in the region of a staggering Rs 36 lakhs. Dayal, however, is tight-lipped about his earnings. "Some paper had written about me a few years ago and since then, the income-tax authorities have been after me," says the enormously successful chaatwallah. All the same, he is proud that he lives in his own house in Delhi's Gulabi Bagh and that he possesses several cars, which are used to transport his merchandise.

NITIN RAI



RAVI SHANKARAN



For the really successful entrepreneur there are enough profits in small business to make any professional blush



You're a typical member of India's middle class. You reckon you've landed a good job and rake in something between Rs 4,000 and Rs 6,000 a month. Yet, you struggle—after paying the taxman, meeting your children's school fees and coping with the burgeoning costs of essentials—to maintain what you regard as a decent lifestyle. Yes, you have a colour TV, but you will have to save for months before you can lay your hands on that much-awaited VCR. As for the washing machine that your wife has been nagging you about and the holiday you have been planning for the family, these will have to wait for much longer.

Never mind, you're not doing too badly, you reason. But all the same, you are increasingly beset by a feeling of uneasiness. The taxi-driver who took you to work the other day happened to talk about the latest hit Hindi film he had just seen on his *very own* VCR. You have learnt from your wife that the 'family dhobi' has just built himself a house—tiny perhaps but pukka nevertheless—not very far from your own. And as for your favourite chaatwallah, who the kids love visiting at weekends, you've always known that he's been raking it in.

Call them what you will: the self-employed, the small businessmen or the minnows of the service industry. They are the panwallahs, the dhobis, the carpenters, the electricians, the taxi and autorickshaw drivers, etc.—that enormous number of people who comprise the economy's vast service sector.

Little or no economic data are available about them. As a group, it is too large, diverse and scattered to allow detailed statistical study—and exists largely as a subterranean, but sizeable, force in the country's economy. But all the same, the trends clearly indicate that it is doing far better economically than ever before.

Of course, few chaatwallahs make as much as Delhi's Dhruv Dayal. He is one of the best known in the city, enjoys a tremendous reputation for dishing out "superb quality chaat" and has been in the business for a few

I AM PHILIPS. I AM TOMORROW.



Philips audio equipment has brought music alive for millions all over the world.

*Philips Electronics and Electricals Limited is an affiliate of N.V. Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken, The Netherlands.

PHILIPS

In a world where the future looks you in the face, few things are constant except change.

Philips* never forgets this. Yes, Philips gave the world the X-ray tube, the audio cassette, the laser video disc and the compact disc, and brought modern lighting and radio to India — but that was yesterday. Today's Philips is already in the future.



As always, Philips' extraordinary audio technology keeps breaking barriers with its crisp reproduction, incredibly accurate recording and an ever-increasing array of innovative features. Philips professional electronic equipment provides analytical, testing, communication and automation tools for changing R & D and industrial needs. Our components today lie at the heart of the world of electronics. Our lighting technology is so advanced that it sets the standards for others to follow.

And our TVs let you see right into tomorrow. We've given India our best for over 60 years. We'll do it for the next hundred.

FOR YEARS, WE'VE BEEN INVENTING THE FUTURE.

PHILIPS

decades. At the same time, many taxi drivers earn far more than Calcutta's Shyam Biswas. In Delhi and Bombay, cabbies can earn anything between Rs 3,000 and Rs 5,000 a month—invariably tax-free.

But neither could have imagined that he would become as economically well-placed as he is. When the octogenarian Dayal set up shop in the Forties, he might have laughed if told he would be a millionaire someday. And Biswas was convinced he would never outgrow his Calcutta slum till he became a taxi driver. Like many other self-employed 'entrepreneurs' in the service sector, Dayal and Biswas have discovered that small is beautiful.


GAUTAM PATOLE


RAJIB BASU

At the top end of the business, small—as more and more people are discovering—can also be extremely bountiful.

For the really successful, there are enough profits today—whether in tailoring shops, small restaurants, chaat kiosks, dry cleaning stores or video libraries—to make any professional blush. Twenty years ago, it would have been difficult to compile a list of millionaire chaatwallahs, rich tailors or wealthy small restaurant owners. No longer. The key to riches appears to be the very same as that of any other business: hard work, maintenance of quality and entrepreneurial skill.

Take panwallahs, for instance. Pan-growing may have been a multi-crore agro-business for many years, but was there any money at all at the retail end—the lowly pan shop?

There is now and plenty of it, going by the experience of the Bhagwan Das family. Das, a refugee from Pakistan, set up a small kiosk in Delhi's Daryaganj soon after Partition. Today, his grandsons own a chain of Prince Pan shops all over the city—the better-known being the one at Daryaganj and the two at the posh Greater Kailash I market.

Despite their wealth, the Das grandchildren still sit behind the counter, roll pans and sell cigarettes. Their shops also stock popular imported goods, such as Head and Shoulders Shampoo, Kraft cheese and cans of Coke, Pepsi and 7 Up. Says Sagar Sharma, Bhagwan Das' 30-year-old grandson, who mans one of the Greater Kailash shops, "I have at least 1,500 customers every day."

Over the years, Prince Pan has become a household name in Delhi and the Das family is flush with money. Its members are rumoured to be the capital's highest tax-payers, own prime plots of land all over the city and have set up relatives in various other businesses.

As the Das family's experience with pan reveals, there is big money in the most unexpected places. Years ago, Vinod Kumar Tripathi's father quit his badly-paid job at the passport office in Bombay and began hawking *kulfi* off a wooden cart. His only selling point was the ice-cream's recipe, which was evolved by his wife.

It proved a popular formula. Now, Tripathi's sons—Vinod Kumar and his two brothers—own a *kulfi* factory and the enormously successful New Kulfi Centre, one of the hottest places in Bombay for the coolest ice-creams. The brothers do business in places as far-flung as Singapore and Hong Kong, cater to large parties thrown by the rich and the powerful and own a couple of cars. Says Vinod Kumar Tripathi: "My father's struggle has proved that with hard work and discipline even the poor can become rich."

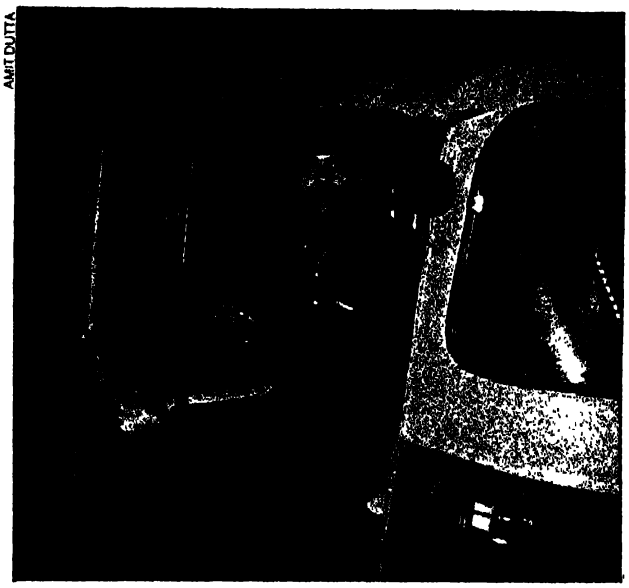
Often, the extent of success depends on the entrepreneur's ability to gauge the customer's needs. Three years ago, Debi Prasad Rao, fresh from a hotel management course in the US, took over the affairs of the family's drab and down-market Anand restaurant—an Udipi-style eatery in central Calcutta. Recently, Rao improved the decor of his restaurant radically, raised the prices on the menu and smartened up the service.

The results were almost immediate. The daily sales trebled to between Rs 6,000 and Rs 7,000 and in its current, improved avatar, the restaurant is attracting more and more people every day. Rao now plans to convert the ground floor of his eatery into a western-style fast food centre aimed at yuppie college students. Says the restaurant owner: "It was the change in decor, in the ambience, which did the trick."

Prince Pan, the New Kulfi Centre and Anand are only three instances of the hundreds of very successful small businesses all over the country. But they prove that small—with the necessary amount of hard work and entrepreneurial ingenuity—can be big in terms of turnover and profits.

While not everybody is this successful, most economists agree that there is a general improvement in the lot of those who comprise the small service sector. The principal reason for this is attributed to the re-





AMIT DUTTA

(From left) Sharad Yadav: drives his own taxi in Bombay; Anand: a change of decor did the trick for this Udipi restaurant; Narayan Das: a bank loan enabled him to earn a decent living

cent growth in income among the middle and lower-middle classes—the target groups of this sector. Says well-known economist Amit Bhaduri, professor at Calcutta's Indian Institute of Management: "The higher the income level, the faster the growth of the service sector. We have seen this happen in the West. This sector is likely to continue to grow with the recent liberalisation moves initiated in this country."

Economist Mihir Kumar Rakshit agrees, but feels that it has also a lot to do with the overall growth in the economy. "Over the past ten years, the economy has grown at a rate of five per cent per annum—a growth mainly concentrated in the metropolises. I think that this growth has now spilled over to the unorganised sector and one of the reasons for the prosperity is this."

Another factor is possibly the better distribution of bank loans. Says Bhaduri: "There has been a change from contract-employment to self-employment of late because of more liberal bank loans. The terms of credit offered now are favourable." Today, it is relatively easy to acquire credit for most small ventures—be it restaurants, medical stores or shops.

One group of people who have benefited tremendously from bank credit is the taxi and autorickshaw drivers. Says Calcutta's 24-year-old Narayan Das, who spent two years in unemployment before securing a loan from the neighbourhood branch of the United Industrial Bank: "I put in Rs 7,000 and the bank readily gave me the rest. It was as simple as that." (Das now makes Rs 2,400 a month after deducting the cost of gas, etc.) Adds Bombay cab driver Sharad Yadav, who bought his taxi for Rs 95,000 a few years ago: "The bank provided 75 per cent of the amount. I'm still paying off the loan, but owning a taxi is far better than driving someone else's—which I did for eight years."

The increased earnings in the service sector are attributed by economists to the recent growth in income among the middle and lower-middle classes

Yet another reason that may have led to the growth and success of the small service sector is the influx of people into the metropolises. Explains Bhaduri: "This leads to a rise in the number of people who are willing to go in for self-employment given the failure of the organised sector to provide enough employment opportunities. It also increases the demand of the service sector as these migrants have to depend on it for their sustenance." Adds professor Sugato Marjit of Calcutta's Presidency College: "People may come to cities in search of employment, but there are certain things that they cannot do without—be it food, pans, cigarettes or whatever. Hence, any rise in the population of the cities causes an increase in such demands."

Whatever the reason, there seems to be many more people making money in the small service sector than there were before. There may be no statistics to support this, few figures to bear this out. But have you ever tried asking your taxi driver, dhobi or chaatwallah how much he earns? •

Nandini Sengupta/ Calcutta with Cyrus Merchant/ Bombay, R. Bhagwan Singh/ Madras and Minu Jain/ New Delhi


Take the world in your stride
dinesh

"Some rationality has to be introduced"

Chandra Shekhar's economic adviser S.K. Goyal on monopolies, liberalisation, multi-national companies and more



"I am not looking for a job." This emphatic remark comes from Surinder Kumar Goyal, the professor of economics who is expected to either formally or informally, act as Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's chief economic adviser.

Goyal, who teaches economics and economic policy at New Delhi's Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), has known Shekhar for over 20 years, and shares similar views. Something, says Goyal, they realised when the duo got together to prepare a report on the role of Indian banking way back in 1965. Expectedly, the report talked about nationalising banks, more or less setting the tone for the Shekhar-Goyal vision for a 'futuristic' India.

Goyal feels that Chandra Shekhar will try and give the Indian economy an anti-monopoly, anti-multinational, free market orientation. "This," says Goyal, "is because of his faith in democratic socialism. He also shares my feeling that the Indian economy cannot be modelled on that of any other country."

Which is probably why he ran down the previous government's industrial policy proposals—though Goyal declines to comment, it is widely believed that Shekhar's critical utterances were penned by him—and is expected to stick to his stand. The thing is, both Goyal and Shekhar firmly believe in what they say, no matter that the tribe of nay-sayers far outnumber subscribers to their world view.

Goyal was born in Moga, Punjab, in 1933. Directly after he completed his PhD programme at the Delhi School of Economics, he went into academia. He taught at Kirori Mal and Desh Bandhu colleges, both in New Delhi, and later, took up several national and international advisory positions. Among them: economic adviser to the Planning Commission, and economic adviser to the government of Iraq between 1974-1976 (this could trigger helpful oil deals with Iraq). He came to the IIPA in 1971 and has remained with the institute. As he has remained loyal to the new PM. "Chandra Shekhar reads and studies ten times more than any politicians," says Goyal, "he has been a regular visitor to our library for years."

Whether Shekhar's reading will now translate into clear-cut and prudent policies remains to be seen. Also, will an old association translate into effective teamwork at the Centre? Goyal himself is reticent about the subject, and says he would much rather stick to academics and continue to guide the PM's economic policies as his friend. "Fortunately," says Goyal, "professors are well paid in this country. Though I cannot say what my precise reaction would be if an offer of joining the PMO or something came along this way."

It is not clear whether Goyal will continue to be Chandra Shekhar's economic spine (many hope he does not). But whatever the case, the professor with strong views is certain to play a major part, even if from the wings.

Goyal spoke to SUNDAY's ***Ritu Sarin*** *in New Delhi last week, discussing subjects of crucial importance to India. Excerpts from the exclusive interview:*

On Chandra Shekhar's economic priorities:

I think there will be a new thrust to economy soon because Chandra Shekhar is worried about the Balance of Payment (position) and the price situation. He will take up these things quickly, along with pressing political problems like Ayodhya and Punjab.

However, if like the last, this government thinks religion is far more important than economic issues then they too will become bogged down. The problem is that you want to establish your leadership which is considered illogical in the modern world. You want to go back to the Ram days when the world is moving towards the moon! This is the poverty of Indian politics.

On how Shekhar can survive:

Let me state one thing right away:

Chandra Shekhar can only survive if he takes radical positions and this goes for his economic policies also. He will not be allowed to stay in this country if he wants to behave like V.P. Singh.

Chandra Shekhar's aim will be to liberate the productive forces from the clutches of the monopolists and the bureaucracy. Only then can you get the system moving. Liberalisation is not what has been practiced but it is, for example, liberating the farmer from the clutches of the *patwari* and the policeman.

So, while I cannot say what exactly the Prime Minister will do in future, I know he would like to do something substantial. Prices still can be checked. And this does not mean prices of luxury goods alone. If the price of colour TV sets go up three times and the price index goes up by 0.1 per cent because of it, I don't think we need to worry about it. We have to be worried about the prices of the commodities which the common man uses.

On what the industrial policy is likely to be:

Chandra Shekhar will try and introduce a self-reliant growth of industries. More than being employment-oriented, the focus of the industrial policy would be on the consumer and the common user.

Liberalisation will continue. It will be similar to many of the things which are desired to be achieved. And it all depends on what your concept of liberalisation is. I think Chandra Shekhar's understanding of liberalisation is very different from Rajiv Gandhi's or V.P. Singh's understanding of it.

As far as I can see, Chandra Shekhar's view could be (based on the various discussions I have had with him) of this nature: that wherever (the) bureaucracy comes in the way of doing something, cut it out. Interface with the public should be as cordial as possible. If you wish to import, ensure that it is required. After having ensured that you need the item badly, don't put 20 clerks at work on the proposals. The process has to be speeded up in the right direction.

On the previous government's failures:

The V.P. Singh government could not prepare the negative and positive lists for foreign investments even in six months! Then what have they achieved? Where are these lists which they claim to have prepared? The word 'list' does not convey anything when the content of the lists is questionable. These have to be generated now and we have to decide in what form we want our industry to be liberalised.

On what liberalisation means:

Liberalisation means promoting competition which implies curbing of monopolies. Therefore, if this government can have the guts the monopolies will have to be told that there cannot be any more price hikes at the cost of the consumer. If you have got a licence to double your capacity, then you must have a five per cent reduction on the prices also.

On the monopoly structure:

India's monopoly is a feudal monopoly. I think the state should be allowed to function as a state because the monopoly today is created by the states. It is a state promoted, protected and financed monopoly. There is no monopoly because of the internal strength of the monopolists.

Take for instance, the Tatas. They started off with steel production, but went into tea and now also petrochemicals. Do you think the Haldia project would have been passed if the state had not given the funds? Or could the Ambanis have come up without the support of the banks? Or the Birlas? 75-80 per cent of the capital of these large industrial houses directly comes from the state.

Some rationality has to be introduced into this structure. Tatas have to be told to identify five areas where they want to work. They can expand and therefore have a product monopoly. But you must cut down the prices and you will not be allowed to have a range right from Lakmé to shipping exports to tea. You have to identify your expertise and get all the help and concessions you want. I am against diversification as an excuse for expansion. The industrialists simply make a company sick, transfer the resources from one to another and expect the consumers to go on paying.

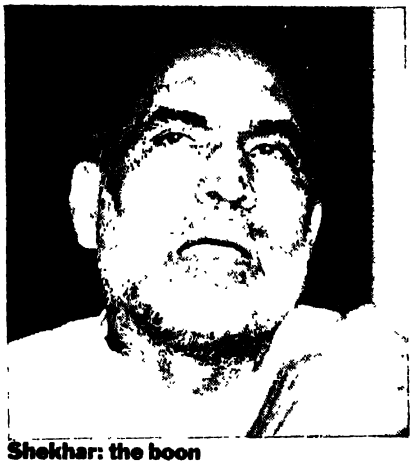
This type of irrational expansion or irresponsible action by the government will never be accepted in the USA or any other country in the West.

On the role of multinational companies:

Members of the V.P. Singh government have said they did not axe projects like Maruti 1000 because it would create bilateral problems. Then why did they want to talk of Bofors? If that was so they should not have touched anything done by the previous government. Then what were they there for?

What about Pepsi? In fact, Pepsi got more clearances during the period V.P. Singh was there than it had got earlier. I cannot understand this type of thing.

In my view multinationals do possess the following: they happen to have lot of capital with them. They are important, dominant constituents of the world economic system. They have rights on the abundance of technology. Then they also have plenty of resource potential in terms of information. Now, if they have all this and you need them you have to decide where you want them to come. But what has



Shekhar: the boon

happened recently is that the multinationals have been deciding which areas *they* want to come in. The proposals need not come from Indians but from foreigners directly to the Foreign Investment Board. This was never the case earlier. This has to be stopped.

Multinationals are like a big giant, like an elephant. But you have to know its strength and weaknesses. In my opinion, multinationals are nothing but traders. We definitely need to have a re-thought about the role of multinationals in consumer products. Why do we need Dettol and a range of foreign cosmetic products? In these areas the local quality can be good and indigenous technology is available.

Instead, we should see if multinationals are prepared to come in the areas of bio-technology, superconductivity, genetic engineering and other such areas. And not simply come, but come, collaborate, and within a year or two we should be free of them. We

should pay them the money but not permit them to control our economy.

On the public sector:

We have created public sector giants like the IDBI (Industrial Development Bank of India), ICICI (Industrial Credit & Investment Corp. of India), IFCI (Industrial Finance Corp. of India), UTI (Unit Trust of India) and LIC (Life Insurance Corp.) but they were created to promote industry in the private sector. So our emphasis is towards furthering of capitalistic development and we should recognise this fact.

The time has come for the definition of public sector to be revised. The labels have to be changed. The public sector must relate to the public and when I say public, I mean 80-90 per cent of the population of this country, either collectively or groupwise.



Singh: the bane



Ambani: the beneficiary?

In my opinion, the public sector has no logic to exist in (the) five-star hotel (segment). There should be one hotel only for entertaining foreign guests and all that. But to have the public sector spreading the Ashok culture is anti-public. And it is not a question of public sector or private sector, it (the five-star culture) should not be allowed at all. This culture is anti-national. Instead, we should have small hotels, *sarais* where you and I can go and stay.

I would like to inform you that among all the hotel properties in Delhi, it is the Ranjit Hotel (run by India Tourism Development Corp's Ashok chain) which has the highest occupancy rates. Not with Ashok Hotel, 80-90 per cent of the occupants stay on company expense in most of the expensive five-star hotels in the country. Was this the purpose of the public sector?

There is a distinction to be drawn between the government sector and the public sector. Today we think anything government is also public. But they are different. If you are going to have a public coffee-house, I will call it more of a public sector. So even our basic concepts are wrong. The clientele of the public sector has to be public. It has to be public, not in ownership but in service

The public sector has to serve national interests, not five or ten per cent of the public. Take Air India: if you need it, then call it government sector, I don't mind. But to call it public sector and then complain about losses and abuse, it is illogical. I am against the culture. It (elitism) is a crime in the public sector in any case, but equally a bad crime to allow it in the private sector. There is no justification for this in a poor country like India.

On the foreign exchange crunch:

I admit there is a crisis, but the question is: how did we create this crisis? Studying the past is important to evolve future policies. You name a commodity internationally—washing machines, video (recorders)—which is not being promoted here. If these are not being manufactured by multinationals, they are being manufactured through foreign collaborations.

Now, heavens will not fall if I am wearing a HMT watch and not a Titan. Is there anything wrong? Let the public sector produce the watches and sell them at Rs 50. At least the consumer will benefit. I respect Chandra Shekhar for the fact that he has already made a policy statement saying that austerity is a strategy. It is operationally necessary for us to have this strategy because through this alone you can cut down your liabilities on the foreign exchange front. You can maintain the trade balance if you cut down your imports first.

Fortunately, we are not in such a bad situation as we were in the post-Independence period. We meet 60 per cent of our requirements on oil. But if you look at one Maruti car, it consumes in a day petrol equal to what a village of 200 families consumes in a year. The last government introduced measures which were ill-conceived and they only created panic. Do you think all the diesel oil buying is genuine? People are hoarding. You see, the psyche of shortages accentuates more problems. Today, by your own actions and gimmicks you have created a psyche of shortages.

On the business-politics nexus:

There are lot of allegations about the role of moneybags in electing Chandra Shekhar but soon, people will know the truth. The so-called puritans and the moralists themselves seem to be pursuing policies which help only the big businesses.

It is the easiest thing to accuse a politician of being an agent of an industrialist without any evidence. All this talk about horse-trading is nonsense and I know certain things from inside. There is no denying that being a public man he (Chandra Shekhar) has met most important people in this country. See for yourself. When did he go abroad? He does not go and most of the MPs do go. What does this mean?

I can tell you that especially, if you are referring to the Ambanis, there is no obligation on Chandra Shekhar whatsoever. The Ambanis will try to create that (impression) or someone else might, but other than having met him once or twice over dinner, they have no links with him.

The proof of the pudding lies in the eating and if Bhagey Govardhan says he got Rs 50 lakhs why did he join back? This is all a creation of the press. You simply can't make an allegation because it looks interesting. No amount of money can alone bring a politician to power. Indira Gandhi was thrown out though there was no shortage of money with the Congress(I). Morarji (Desai) went not because of money. Rajiv came to power not because of money and similarly, Chandra Shekhar has become Prime Minister not because of money. ●

ECONOMY

Time to act

The new government is moving, but is it moving fast enough? And with vision?

Machinations and movement. It is time to forget the first, and concentrate on the second. Because, while wheeling-dealing can give the wet-behind-the-ears government a few extra months of grace, movement is what might ultimately save it.

It is a month since Chandra Shekhar assumed India's control, and almost three weeks since he appointed his coterie of colleagues. (Here, it might be interesting to refer to the *Chambers 20th century Dictionary*, which says the word 'coterie' is originally French, and means "a number of peasants holding land jointly from a lord". Time enough to have read those files—to track what exactly went wrong during the previous administration—and time enough to have formed a course of action to at least try and save India from economic doomsday.

In order to do this, the government has to send out signals which say that it is trying hard to doctor all that is ill. Which includes just about everything from the Gulf crisis, oil and foreign exchange crunch, to policy decisions on imports and the multinational corporate world (very simply: no signals, no investment, no loans and therefore, no money). And also, those areas which are crucial for any country's economic well-being—communications and electricity. The situation:

The Gulf Crisis

Or

'Give us oil and money'

The best thing that could have happened to India has happened: Saddam Hussein has reportedly accepted George Bush's proposal to talk—instead of fight—about Kuwait.

Just in time. "For the US," says a senior Western diplomat in New Delhi, "the way out is to do something quickly. Either go for war or talk." If talks do not work out, say observers, the choice is simple. Fight to curb Hussein, because for one, Hussein is too dangerous to be left alone. And two, for the US, it is cheaper to fight a quick war than house its soldiers in Saudi Arabia for months on end. "In the event of a war," says the diplomat, "oil prices could go way over US$ 40 (Rs 720) a barrel, and that would be very bad for India."

India, along with the world, has its fingers crossed about the success of Iraq-US negotiations. Meanwhile, however, India is taking some precautions of its own. For starters, trying to swing a deal with Iraq whereby the Gulf country pays half the Rs 2,000 crores it owes India for projects fulfilled in oil. The deal has yet to be ratified by the United Nations, which has imposed trade sanctions on Iraq, but the general feeling is that as the oil transfer has to do with past deals, it should go through.

The second precaution, though by default, was to declare President's Rule in Assam last fortnight. This, along with possibly curbing the state's wayward politics and militant groups such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) with army help, should also clear a major domestic oil production bottleneck. Oil India, the Oil & Natural Gas Commission and Indian Oil Corp. can go about their business pumping and distributing petroleum, and try to recoup the hundreds of crores of rupees worth of oil India lost to blockades and agitation in Assam.

However, even if the situation in Iraq and Assam return to normal, India needs money desperately. And the US$ 450 million it expects to get from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is peanuts. According to government officials, private economists and analysts with foreign missions in New Delhi, India needs as much as US$ 5-6 billion (Rs 9,000-10,800 crores) in foreign aid and loans in the next 12 months to tide over its current economic crisis.



George Bush: talk or war?

No amount of fiscal juggling or industrial liberalisation is going to nullify this need. The joke in Delhi's bureaucratic circles is that it is very difficult to find any senior people around, because they are running around all over the world trying to "mobilise resources"—for example, in the US, UK and Japan for money, in South America for oil, and the USSR for both money and oil.

At home, the government is expected to take some stern measures, to shore up finances. To cut expenditure, to reduce excise refunds to the corporate sector—finance ministry officials say that currently, there is anything upto Rs 10,000 crores being refunded, plus there is Rs 6,000 crores or so tied up in litigation—and to severely limit imports.

Ministers and officials are still debating about the best way to achieve these ends. Whatever the case, there is expected to be some heavy duty opposition from the public sector, the private sector and most importantly, from numerous foreign governments. The good thing is that the PM, finance minister Yashwant Sinha, his deputy Digvijay Singh, and finance secretary Bimal Jalan are very hard nuts to crack.

Multinationals

Or

'Tough Luck'

Two examples are good enough to reflect the government's policies on this count: the ubiquitous PepsiCo deal, and the equally visible case of Union Carbide Corp's (UCC) liability





Iraqi soldiers: do they care about India's oil shortages?

in the Bhopal gas-leak/disaster case.

The government's reactions on both issues could send some very disturbing signals to the investing world, particularly the US. Not a very happy portent for India, especially when it has to contend with US pressure *vis a vis* the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and the threat of sanctions under Super 301

Pepsi Foods Pvt. Ltd—and its US-based associate—is very tense about Chandra Shekhar and his men tampering with its Indian presence. While Shekhar has not yet made any pronouncements about throwing Pepsi out, he had made his distaste for the company very plain in his pre-PM days. Shekhar's much-touted economic adviser Surinder Kumar Goyal *(see interview on page 51)* is as leery about Pepsi as he is about any multinational. And India needs money, say government officials, not fizzy drinks or cheese and potato snacks

Pepsi executives have been very quiet ever since Shekhar became PM - the stance seems to be we won't-complain-if-you-don't. Besides, Pepsi seems to be in a spot over its export commitments. Instead of direct exports of vegetable and fruit products as it had undertaken, Pepsi is now looking at the deal more as an export house picking up someone else's goods to export and bring in revenue.

Despite a possible uproar, it is quite likely that Pepsi may be left alone. For one, it is too deeply involved in Punjab's economic life—its agro-processing operation is located in the state. For another, even if it acts as an export house, it will help bring in foreign exchange. This may yet save Pepsi, but a policy word or two will help clear the uncertainty

The Bhopal case is far more clear cut, at least on the face of it. Following in the footsteps of the previous regime, the PM has passed the word around that the US$ 450 million 'settlement' —that UCC offered the government of India in 1989, when Rajiv Gandhi was premier - is to be contested In fact, it has offered attorney-general-in-limbo Soli Sorabjee a *carte blanche* to fight its case.

Whatever the merits of asking for more compensation—especially when the amount already delivered is still sitting pretty, with not a paisa disbursed as aid to victims—this is going to shake up multinational outfits and foreign investors some more. Forget UCC.

This is particularly touchy, and potentially explosive. To put it simply, investors are a little tired of waiting for liberalisation, easing of foreign investment norms, and assurances that India will do away with bureaucratic interference and politically motivated see-sawing. In fact, as former finance minister Madhu Dandavate told SUNDAY last month *(see SUNDAY 25*



Bhopal victims: protesting against the settlement

Whatever the merits of asking for more compensation from Union Carbide, it is going to shake up multinational outfits and foreign investors

November--1 December 1990), contrary to popular belief, no one is exactly queuing up to invest in India.

The US is nervous, the UK and Japan cautious, and the Germans have too much going on at home to bother with piddling amounts in India. The only bit of sustained interest appears to be from the French and the Swedes, who are more or less outclassed in their own continent. Besides, India perhaps presumes too much with multinationals. For instance, India is only *one* staging post in global strategies that these corporations practice, and they can always go elsewhere if India gets tough.

As General Motors (GM) did. The US automobile giant had seriously thought about tying up with Hindustan Motors in India. Only, the deal fell through earlier this year when GM decided it was not worth waiting for the Indian government to make up its mind, and moved to Indonesia. Despite labour costs being higher there.

Others could follow suit. And unless Shekhar moves quickly to step up domestic liberalisation and competition—about which he has done nothing at all, yet—India will be in a bigger mess. Tough luck.

Indian Communications

Or

'Don't call us, we'll call you'

Yes, more exchanges are going electronic. But no, India's "tall success rate", itself an indication of how bad things are, is nowhere near improved. The thing is, communications in India have as much to do with how well one telephone instrument connects with another, as it does with how well the communications minister connects with his bureaucrats and hordes of employees.

When V.P. Singh was around, and K.P. Unnikrishnan held the communications portfolio, it did not connect at all. Almost immediately after assuming office, the portly Unnikrishnan took on a jaunty Sam Pitroda, orchestrated his removal as chief of technology missions and the Centre for Developments of Telematics (C-DoT). Unnikrishnan also helped institute a committee of enquiry—the outcome is not public and may never be—against Pitroda's alleged nepotism, and was busy, goes the grapevine, trying to reverse Pitroda's anti-import stand for India's multi-billion dollar telecom industry.

Unnikrishnan did not survive the machinations which led to the Raja's ouster. Pitroda has. Though he suffered a heart attack last October, underwent a triple by-pass surgery at New Delhi's Escorts Heart Research Centre and is presently recuperating at his Lodi Estate residence.

Pitroda is also connecting pretty well, despite being homebound. He is in touch with his ministry—he is still telecom secretary and chairman of the telecom commission—by telephone, and luminaries, both political and corporate, constantly drop in to enquire about the laid-up telecom whiz's health.

This time round, Pitroda made no mistakes. Unnikrishnan was livid when Pitroda was a few minutes late in welcoming him to Sanchar Bhavan, and never forgave him. Pitroda was unable to welcome the new incumbent, Sanjay Singh, in person, but made sure that he congratulated him via telephone. The two have no grounds for friction, and when Pitroda returns to work in January, they are expected to harmonise pretty well.

Meanwhile, Sanjay's first test has gone off well. He broke the telecom employees' strike that paralysed India for the second time this year. And he is going around telling anyone who will listen that he is going to work very hard, and by the beginning of next year, telecom services will be in top shape, better than ever before.

And mostly, with domestic help. C-DoT has officially taken over the manufacturing of electronic switching systems (telephone exchanges) in Bangalore, a facility that French telecom giant Alcatel had hoped to get. (As it stands, Alcatel will have to be content with one factory it already has, in Mankapur, Uttar Pradesh.) All other multinational telecom operators—Siemens AG of Germany, British Telecom, Ericsson AB of Sweden, and a host of US companies, among others, will simply have to stay with whatever joint ventures they



GAUTAM CHATTERJEE

India's telephone system: hello! Goodbye!



Sanjay Singh



ASHOK VAIHE

Sam Pitroda

The minister (above) and the secretary have to sort things out

have. And future tie-ups will be strictly according to the government's diktat—at least that is what government officials say and industry observers fear. For, India cannot afford imports any longer, unless they come sweetened with very soft credit terms and conditions. For the moment, the homegrown, Sam Pitroda variety of technology is best.

If Sanjay Singh can pull off his boast, and Pitroda delivers all, then India does *not* have to look elsewhere.

Power Problems Or 'Let There Be Light'

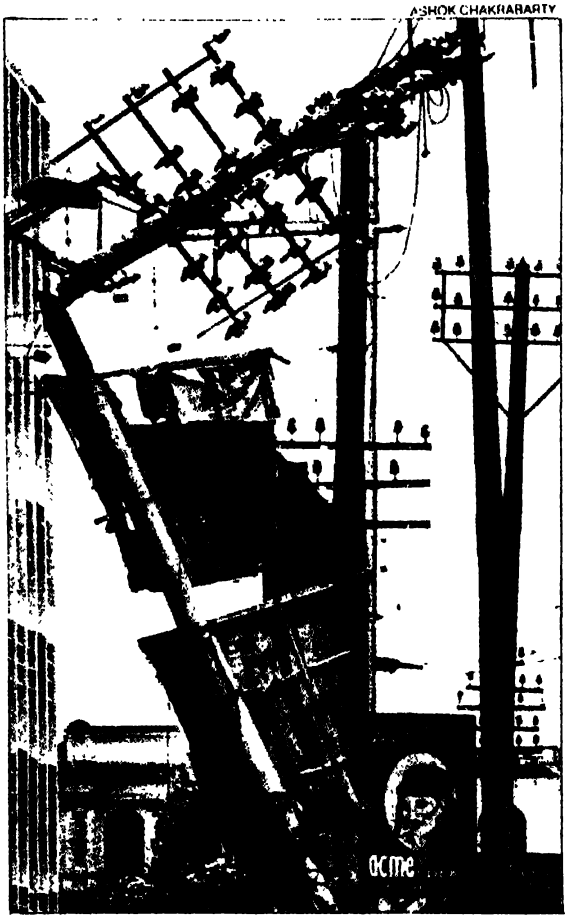
The highest electrified village in the world. Setting up super thermal power plants in record time. Reaching into inaccessible areas for path-breaking work in setting up power lines. 62,210 MW of power generated by public sector utilities alone, trebling the amount of power generated in three decades. Thriving private power companies This is India.

Turbines lying idle. Power being stolen, and one of the highest percentages of electricity loss—almost 22 per cent of what is generated—in the world. Inefficiency. Striking workers. A plant load factor of only 56.4 per cent, which means 43.6 per cent of capacity going to waste. Frequent blackouts. Large swathes of the country lying without power, affecting agriculture, industry and households. This also is India.

A man from Rajasthan who is a heavyweight in Janata Dal(S) politics. Is well-known in his state but little-known in New Delhi. A man who is hounded by womens' rights activists because he uttered words defending the practice of sati, even in modern India. And now, denies having said anything at all. He says he knows very little about electricity, though admittedly, he does know a lot about power. This is Kalyan Singh Kalvi, India's newest Cabinet minister for energy.

Kalvi has a problem on his hands: he has to supply enough electricity to meet the country's galloping demand. He will have to ensure that *some* work gets done towards installing 38,000 MW of power for the as yet stymied Eighth Plan period, between 1990-95. And alongside, deal with a reality that says there may be money enough only for 24,000 MW worth—or Rs 57,000 crores—if that.

ASHOK CHAKRABARTY



Planning for power: back to square one?

ASHOK VAHIE



Kalyan Singh Kalvi



Arif Mohammad Khan

The new minister (above) will have to follow in his predecessors footsteps

Kalvi will also have to follow his predecessor Arif Mohammad Khan's example. Arif, in good sense, kicked off the process of further privatising the power sector. Kalvi will have to concretise it, as much as half the projected figure. He will have to entice entrepreneurs to move in, assuring them that the huge amounts of money they have to invest (an average of Rs 1.5 crores for every MW of generation capacity) will be well spent. He will also have to ensure that public utilities, which have a stranglehold on power distribution, distribute well and sans corruption.

Kalvi has to make sure work gets done towards installing 36,000 MW of power capacity for the Eighth Plan

He will have to clear the Central Electricity Authority's master plan which calls for an increase in capacity, a staggering 1,10,155 MW in the next ten years. He will *have* to. Otherwise, India's engines of growth—industry and agriculture—will be left with very little to work by. Besides, Kalvi will also have to realise that hydro-electric and solar power—in a world that is fast running out fuel to run thermal plants, and frightened of nuclear ones—are perhaps the most economic, safe and long-term alternatives.

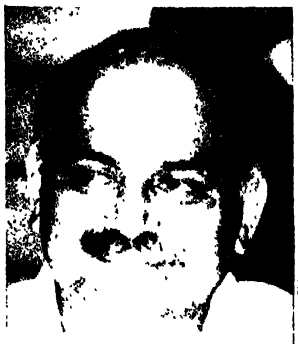
Time there is not much of. For India and Kalvi. He has to move fast, but till now has not done a thing. For God's sake let there be light. ●

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi

■ C/O, Chappie

Perhaps no ministerial appointment has caused more consternation than the bizarre choice of Chaudhary Devi Lal to look after the tourism portfolio. Unusually, the ministry has been clubbed with agriculture. Wags have suggested that this is because Tauji can't tell an **A320 from a tractor.** Others have speculated that Om Prakash Chautala's on-going love affair with Minnie Mouse and the Disneyland that might result from that unnatural union, have led the Chaudhary to take the tourism ministry.

In fact, all the speculation is wide off the mark. Devi Lal is tourism minister only in name.



ASHOK VAIDYA

Mishra: bon voyage(s)

So, who *really* runs the ministry?

Step forward, S.K. 'Chappie' Mishra, agriculture secretary, one-time Bansi Lal acolyte and now Tauji's blue-eyed bureaucrat.

Mishra fancies himself as the father of Indian tourism on the basis of having built several motels on the highways of Haryana. He has been a notoriously unsuccessful boss of ITDC and a fun-loving civil aviation secretary in his time.

While he enjoys working with Tauji in the agriculture ministry, that job severely limits the number of jaunts he can make to the Carlyle Hotel in New York.

Hence, the deeply-felt desire to run the tourism ministry.

The night before the Cabinet expansion, an **anxious Mishra persuaded** Devi Lal to call up Chandra **Shekhar and demand the** tourism portfolio.

And now, it is Carlyle Hotel, here I come!

STOCK QUOTE

"No seriously, who *are* they?"

A prominent Bombay businessman's query about the new council of ministers, at a city cocktail party last week.

■ Only hotels

Nothing else, that's Lalit Suri's assertion. The much-maligned, alleged deal-maker of the Rajiv regime has resurfaced with a hotelier's tag. And a bonafide one at that.

While critics may question Suri's choice as one of the recipients of the 'Hind Rattan' award last month—gifted away by former President Zail Singh— for his outstanding contribution to the Indian hospitality industry, no one can deny Suri the prize he picked up a month earlier.



Suri: no more deals

Holiday Inn Worldwide awarded Suri its Torchbearer Trophy (Suri is chairman and managing director of the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, New Delhi), which is given in recognition of a hotel's good performance and high standards in customer service and profitability, among other things. In July this year, the Crowne Plaza had been designated a 'Superior Hotel' by the international chain. Not bad going—by any standard—for a hotel which is two years old.

As if to stress his new incarnation, Suri has also started a limousine service—with a stretched Cadillac, no less— for those who stay in suites, *a la* the good old US of A. For Suri, joke wags—though admiringly —it's no to Sumitomo, and yes to genuine hoteliering.

■ Livewire living

Videocon, the video, audio and TV company, has accomplished quite a fancy turn with their appliances effort, too. The Rs 400 crore-plus group has declared higher half-yearly results for six months ending September 1990, from the Rs 18.11 crores recorded for the same period last year. Net profit too has jumped, from Rs **2.46 crores for the same** period last year to Rs 6.35 crores this year

The Dhoot family, which runs the set-up, should be happy. They have driven Videocon to near the top of the heap in India's consumer durables/electronics segment, consistently—and easily—drawn in funds from the capital market for expansion, and gained public appreciation. The thing is, they have also drawn flak for reaching for the sky too hastily, through allegedly unfair means. The last, if true, is hardly likely to deter the die-hard entrepreneurs, who are bent on doing an Ambani in the consumer durables field, and feel, say corporate observers, that hugging the fast track is the only way. ●

POLITICIAN OF THE WEEK

Maneka Gandhi

Minister of state for environment and forests



● The lady is back. And now, No Raja, so no fur caps. No **Nilamani Routray**, so no blubbery backtracking. And the greens are all gung-ho about their never-say-no-to-power patron saint. But unlike the last time round, when Maneka was content with existing bureaucrats handling brand new policies, she has ruthlessly shuffled the babus' jobs, as if to make them pay for not resigning from the V.P. bandwagon along with her.

She may also ruthlessly shuffle industrial clearances around, not content with looking after the Delhi zoo. Fortunately for India's industrialists, however, Chandra Shekhar is definitely not like Madhu Dandavate. Simply: Maneka can't dear-uncle the new lot like she did the old one. A battle royale? And another exit?

Promises, promises

What will become of Prasar Bharati now?

The Raja always insisted that, as far as he was concerned, the party manifesto was sacred. And, in accordance with it, the Janata Dal government would give priority to the task of granting autonomy to the electronic media. The Dal even had its time frame all worked out, with deadlines set for every stage of the project. The Prasar Bharati rules were to be framed by 31 October, notification of the rules was to be completed by 14 November, the selection of members of the governing body was to be accomplished by 31 December, the staff was to be inducted by 20 February, and so on.

But, for all that meticulous planning, things went quite disastrously wrong. And even before the Prasar Bharati Bill could be debated in the House, the Raja's regime had lost its credibility as far as its commitment to media autonomy went. With Doordarshan news bulletins devoted to projecting V.P. Singh and his favoured ministers such as Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav, nobody retained much hope about the Prime Minister making good his promise.

The public relations failure, though important enough in itself, was not all. The government couldn't even keep to its self-imposed deadlines. The rules were not framed by 31 October, for one. And when they were, they couldn't be notified without showing them first to the members of the board—which was nowhere near being constituted.

One of P. Upendra's last acts in power was to select Dr Pai Panandiker, director of the Centre for Policy Research in Delhi as the third member of the committee, which will select the Prasar Bharati Board. The other two members of the board, as prescribed by the Prasar Bharati Act, are the chairman of the Press Council and the vice-president of India. But, following the President of India's order that all appointments made after 23 October be reviewed, Chandra Shekhar, who is also information and broadcasting minister, will have to approve Dr Panandiker's name, or suggest a new nominee.

Until then, the constitution of the board will have to wait. Meeting the 31 December deadline seems near impossible.

The Broadcasting Council, comprising the president and ten members, hasn't been constituted either. Ever since the Act was passed, the I&B ministry has been receiving letters from eminent people offering themselves and their various relations for posts on the council, envisaged as a watchdog body. But no progress has been made on this front, because as a bureaucrat says: "The terms of the president and members have yet to be finalised. You can't select a big man until you know what you can offer him."

In fact, the I&B minister of state Subodh Kant Sahay, who doubles as minister of state for home affairs, appears inclined to delay the process even further. Sahay has mentioned in more than one interview that the electronic media should be deployed to fight the home ministry's battles. In that event, it would be in the government's interest to retain control of Doordarshan and Akashvani (All India Radio).

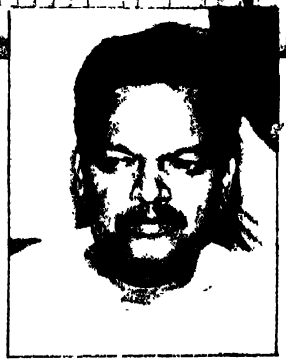
To the considerable mystification of bureaucrats in the I&B ministry, Sahay has already asserted that the Prasar Bharati Bill will be delayed. First, because there was almost no government for a month and second, because the constituting of the newly-notified Indian Broadcasting Service will take time.

Ministry officials dispute this. According to them, both reasons offered by Sahay are bogus. With a bit of hard work, Prasar Bharati could be delivered on schedule, they say. And, in any case, only 20-25 per cent of the work is done before the corporation comes into being. The formulating of regulations can be done later.

But, as is becoming rapidly clear, logistics are not the problem; the lack of political will is. And it seems extremely unlikely that anything much will be done on Prasar Bharati unless the government suddenly has a miraculous change of heart. •

Sevanti Ninan/New Delhi





I&B minister of state, Subodh Kant Sahay, has even mentioned that the electronic media should be deployed to fight the home ministry's battles

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Three wise men

Contrary to what Nikhil Chakravartty, George Verghese and Pran Chopra believed, V.P. Singh was not the answer to the nation's prayers

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint and heard great Argument
About it and about –but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went!
The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam



When I was a mere slip of a lad, young, callow and fresh-faced, I turned like the infant Jesus to the East for Three Wise Men to ride out to me bearing the Gift of the Magi. And lo! They came Nikhil Chakravartty, George Verghese and Pran Chopra. Eagerly I would await the arrival of the diplomatic bag that would bring tidings of their carefully pondered good sense on the Great Affairs of the Day, the perusal of which, I was persuaded, would ensure that every day in every way I would grow better and better and better.

Now, as I slip into the evening or, at any rate, the tea-time of my life, I wonder whether it was wisdom new found that they bore me—or merely a Trojan Horse. For in those difficult days last December when I found myself parting ways with them over their perception of the iniquities of the Rajiv Raj and the dawning glory of their Raja's Raj, it was a problem, I confess –I confess– to cling to what I believed in when those who had taught me—so I thought– everything else I believed in were so cockahoop and so cocksure that my *jehannam* was their *jannat*. To differ with Gush-Gush Tavleen (the Hedda Hopper of Central Hall)—who, after all, merely recounts as considered political comment what she picks up at cocktail parties—I could take. But men of serious mien and beetle brows? Could they be dismissed in so cavalier a fashion? Perish the thought.

And so I have spent much of last week returning to what these three had to say in the heady days when the Man they had made King held out the Great White Promise—"This is the image that is bound to endear him (V.P. Singh) to the millions all over the country even if the smart set in Delhi chooses to be unimpressed." (Nikhil Chakravartty, *The Telegraph*, 31/12/89). As one of the "smart set" so execoriated—even if I don't attend quite the same twee gatherings as Gush-Gush does—the hour, I think, is upon me to eat the bitter bread of repentance—or suggest that others might begin eating theirs!

Of the three, I think it was Pran Chopra who, in his essay in *The Illustrated Weekly Of India* of 31 December 1989, best summed up the thesis the three were propagating –whether in concert or by mere coincidence, let us leave to others to judge.

Pran Chopra's point of departure was "the feeling among Congressmen that they are standing naked in the wilderness". Now, I grant that on his early morning walks in the urban jungle of Vasant Vihar, Pran might indeed have caught a Congressman or two *in flagrante delicto* (for, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, Congressmen—and, indeed, women—are, after all, mere flesh and blood). But if Pran was speaking metaphorically of hordes of Congressias waiting to be led out of the wilderness—clothed in freshly acquired Janata Dal raiments—surely it must be a little disconcerting for him to find that the only Congressmen seeking refuge elsewhere now are those who once thought they'd found the answer to their dreams in Vishwanath Pratap Singh! In the last 12 months in the "wilderness"(shame on you, Pran, for thinking that in a democracy to be in Opposition is to be in the "wilderness") not one Congressia of any significance has left the party. None, it appears, is aware of his nakedness. It remains only for Pran to kindly cover up his shame—it's showing!

Pran Chopra went on to argue that there was "a growing realisation in the Congress that it cannot return to power so long as its helm remains in the



V.P. Singh was the helmsman continuously under challenge. Rajiv Gandhi's helmsmanship never came under challenge from anyone. Where then did Pran Chopra perceive the "move" to oust Rajiv

hands of Rajiv Gandhi ". Curious, isn't it, that those who most ardently wish to assist at the demise of the Congress are also the most ardent in tendering unsolicited advice on how it might best survive? Fortunately for the Congress, in that fetchingly obtuse way it has, Congressmen have a rather less apocalyptic view of impending nemesis. At any rate, no one in the Congress was blessed with the realisation that to Pran Chopra was so self-evident, with the result that it is that self-same helmsman and none other who is returning them to power, even as the frail bark which carries our Three Men in a Boat sinks gently into the special locker that Davy Jones reserves for those who grossly mislead their readers.

Pran's fantasies next led him to perceive "a move in the Congress to change the helmsman". The only helmsman who faced a continuous mutiny (which even his bounty could not forestall!) was the *nakhuda* whose cause Pran Chopra was so passionately championing. From the moment he started scheming to capture the leadership of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party (and, thus, the prime ministership) to the day 11 months later when everyone on board from First Mate to bo'sun banded together to make him walk the plank, VP was the helmsman continuously under challenge. Rajiv Gandhi's helmsmanship never came under challenge from anyone. Where then did Pran perceive the "move" to oust Rajiv that he so confidently asserted last December. In his thoughts - or in his wishes? Or was he committing the cardinal sin permitted to no journalist of repute (Gush-Gush always excepted): to never let the wish father the thought"

This change of helmsman, Pran went on to argue "will spark a desire among large segments both in the Congress and the Janata Dal that the two cousins (oops, Pran, mind your language!) should come together again". Well, it is only the Congress desire never to change its helmsman that is now resulting in vast numbers of VP's camp followers (including our portly cousin, no less!— "cousin me no cousin", William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 1) wondering when he will be permitted to jump ship!

All three—our homegrown Socrates, Plato and Aristotle—were quite taken up with their pet poodle. "Not only," intoned Pran, "are V.P. Singh's values closer to Nehru's than any other contemporary leader, they are closer to Nehru's than any past leader!" Pran, let it be remembered, is the country's senior journalist (he was in Hanoi that September day in 1945 when Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam—that's how far back he goes! To end as a VP groupie: *O tempora! O mores!)*

"Altogether," concluded George Verghese in that engagingly portentous manner he has "the outcome of the general election provides much reason for optimism and hope. It is a harbinger of constructive change and a deeper commitment to democratic norms" (*Indian Express*, 1/12/89). What "democratic norms" might one ask? To which, in the same article, George has given this litmus test: "Confidence must be left to be determined by the House, and must and



Pran Chopra

"Not only are V.P. Singh's values closer to Nehru's than any other contemporary leader, they are closer to Nehru's than any past leader"



George Verghese

"Altogether the outcome of the general election provides much reason for optimism and hope. It is a harbinger of constructive change and a deeper commitment to democratic norms"



Nikhil Chakravartty

"Where Vishwanath Pratap Singh has displayed a rare quality of statesmanship is in his allocation of portfolios. Particularly striking has been his appointment of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as the home minister"



can be demonstrated within 48 or 72 hours at most." Hey, did any of you see George sitting in *dharna* outside VP's soon-to-be-vacated quarters when he eked out his foredoomed end week after week, having the gall to actually ask the President—and not seeking your prior permission either, George—for time till the end of November to buy, browbeat or simply invite to the India International Centre all the supporters that he and his value-based cronies could garner? Democrat, George—or limpet?

Nikhil Chakravartty was even more forthright: "Where Vishwanath Pratap Singh has displayed a rare quality of statesmanship is in his allocation of portfolios. Particularly striking has been his appointment of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as the home minister!" (Cross my heart and hope to die, I haven't made that one up: it's there for all to see, *The Telegraph*, 10/12/89.)

Where then do these Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse wish to lead our country? Away, they are clear, from that terrible thing, "a one-leader, one-focus, undemocratic party of highly centralised and personalised power" (Pran Chopra). Towards, it seems, that Great New Horizon that George has espied: "The country has clearly entered an era of coalition politics...The notion that a coalition or minority government is illegitimate, weak or necessarily unstable is quite unfounded. These myths need to be swiftly dispelled." True—but not, don't you think, George, quite as swiftly as V.P.Singh & Co. were dispelled? Sorry, George, but the fact is that unprincipled marriages of convenience, cemented only by hatred of one man—Rajiv Gandhi—are necessarily unstable, therefore weak—and, therefore, illegitimate. That is why your pious wishes notwithstanding ("What is significant about the new National Front government is that the predictions made so far- -liberally spread by the spokesmen of the Rajiv establishment (ahem, ahem,that's me he's talking about!)—that it would collapse by the sheer weight of contradictions between its two indispensable allies, the BJP and the left, have not come true": Nikhil Chakravartty, *The Telegraph*, 31/12/89) this lot collapsed even more ignominiously than the last lot. Pran Chopra was even funnier: "Their instinct for survival and the memory of their ten years in exile will help to ensure that no member of the triad (NF-BJP-Left Front) acts in a manner which may bring the whole triangle down!"

The fact is that what these three media pundits perceived as the Congress Party's weakness—an undisputed leadership, discipline, and a certain amorphousness in policy that makes Congress policy reflect a wider consensus—is the very strength of the Congress It is not a party that despairs when it is out of office—for it knows that, as it is the natural party of governance, it will return to power sooner rather than later—indeed, much sooner than later. Hundred and five years is a long time to forge an identity. It cannot be blown away with one electoral reverse.



It is only the Congress desire never to change its helmsman that is now resulting in vast numbers of VP's camp followers (including our portly cousin, Arun Nehru, no less) wondering when he will be permitted to jump ship

In sharp contrast, all the groupuscules brought together in the Janata Dal/National Front through sheer opportunism do not represent the "democratic, federal and coalitional" politics that so mesmerise Pran Chopra. It represents only a momentary coming together of transitional interests. They are not in it together because of any sense of common destiny but merely to grab whatever is going. In defeat, they would not hang together even a minute. In victory, they cannot hang together much longer. So, inevitably, as they jockey for power, intrigue against each other, lie, cheat and dissimulate, it becomes swiftly clear that as they cannot hang together, they must hang separately.

If these Three Wise Men, who, in the days before their present political dotage, had done so much to enlarge our understanding of ourselves, were not so blinded by their entirely irrational animus against one man, they would, I am certain, have seen that the V.P. Singhs and Arun Nehrus, the Devi Lals and Chandra Shekhars, the Sharad Yadavs and Ram Vilas Paswans could never have filled "the bulk of the middle stretch of the political spectrum" (Pran Chopra). Or proved the "overt coalition (that) could in some ways be stronger and more stable than the thinly-cemented Janata coalition that took office in 1979" (George Verghese). Or descend to the ultimate shame of Nikhil Chakravartty climaxing a life-time's service to secularism asserting: "There can be no viable prescription for curbing communalism without the active cooperation of the BJP!" (*The Telegraph*, 10/12/89). There was no "new alignment ...to bring the country back to the path of reason and understanding" (Nikhil Chakravartty). "Mr Gandhi" neither was nor is "the rejected leader of a rejected party" (George Verghese). And V.P. Singh's performance never did "release the flux" that Pran Chopra predicted would usher in "a time of creative change and rebuilding".

I have far too much respect for Nikhilda, Pran and George to wish them anything but all the best. But they must learn to distinguish between a truly viable "democratic, federal and coalitional" alternative to the Congress and every ragtag that comes along claiming to be that alternative. There is none in sight. I recognise that half a century is a long time in politics and all those who have been praying for a credible alternative to the Congress are beginning to despair of seeing such an alternative emerge in their life-times. But, as Nikhil Chakravartty so sententiously admonished Rajiv Gandhi last year, perhaps it is time our three long-reigning media Bourbons recognise themselves this year as they asked Rajiv Gandhi to recognise himself last year: "The Bourbon, even when displaced from power by the electorate, seems to be learning nothing and forgetting nothing." ●

The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress Party's position.

Poltergeist or prankster?

All glass objects shatter inexplicably in a Calcutta flat

The day, 18 October, began as any other in the household of Amiya Shankar and Tripti Roy, at Dum Dum, a northern suburb of Calcutta. Until the electric bulb in their one-room tenement suddenly burst into shards. The Roys were considerably shaken, but dismissed the incident as being caused by an electrical disorder of some sort. They changed the bulb, and thought no more of the mishap.

Only for a while, for soon such happenings became a regular occurrence. Over a period of 35 days, as many as 71 bulbs, several lantern chimneys and three tube lights shattered of their own accord. Says Tripti Roy: "Even the glass show case crashed against our bed on several occasions, breaking the glass panes." The concerned couple called in electricians, had the lines checked and even changed the wires. But, that didn't help either.

There was some suggestion that the construction work at the nearby metro rail site could be responsible, with the vibrations set up resulting in the damage. But none of the other houses in the vicinity, or any room in the Roys' building, experienced the problem. So that explanation was rejected as well.

Roy, a staunch Marxist, refused to believe that the incidents could be supernatural. However, much against his grain, he called in an *ojha* (exorcist) to see if his skills would work. They didn't.

Both scientific reasoning and exorcism having failed, those investigating the incidents began looking for other explanations. And the most credible of these revolved around the Roys' 16-year-old son Bubai. The teenager had always been present when glass objects shattered in his house. And nothing untoward had ever happened in his absence. Either, Bubai was up to mischief of some sort, or this was a classic case of the poltergeist phenomenon, in which a "restless soul" acts through the agency of an adolescent to cause varying degrees of mischief.

What gave credence to this version was the fact that the Roys sent away their son to his maternal uncle's house, and refused to let the press meet him. Said the father: "He is in a very disturbed state and we do not want to embarass him further."

SUNDAY, however, managed to track down Bubai at his uncle's house. The mischievously grinning boy wasn't in the least perturbed at being accosted by the media, but his uncle whisked him away almost immediately, saying: "You have found out what you had to from Mr and Mrs Roy. He can have nothing more to add."

According to the locals, however, Bubai wasn't at all disturbed by the supposedly supernatural incidents. Says one of his friends: "He seemed to be having a lot of fun, as if the whole thing was happening at someone else's house."

Such discrepancies abounded. The Roys differed on the dates when the incidents began to occur and when they sent their son away. All of which led Badal Chowdhury, the Roys' landlord, to say disparagingly, while pointing at the crowds gathered outside the building: "It is all a hoax and a complete nuisance."



Amiya Shankar Roy (inset) and the "haunted house"



Both scientific reasoning and exorcism having failed, people began looking for other explanations. And the most credible of these revolved around the Roys' 16-year-old son Bubai

A nuisance it certainly is, agree the Roys. "All kinds of people come into our house to question us about what is happening here."

Nobody, however, is sure about the answer. Were the incidents the work of a teenage prankster? Or, if one goes by Tripti Roy's version of the showcase falling on its own, were they caused by a poltergeist?

If the latter explanation is true, then the Roys have got off pretty lightly. These things can, apparently, turn really nasty at times.●

Avirook Sen/Calcutta

I Love Bombay

The much-awaited extravaganza disappoints

In the end, the "I Love Mumbai" extravaganza turned out to be just another *tamasha*. With over four lakh people crowding the Marine Drive-Chowpatty stretch to watch the action—a fashion show, a Kalyanji-Anandji nite, *dandiya raas*, a rock concert—the security arrangements made by the administration proved less than adequate. And as the crowd became unmanageable, breaking police cordons to have a closer look at the performers, the security forces resorted to stern measures to restore a modicum of control. They succeeded to an extent, but by then the sheriff of Bombay, Nana Chudasama, the prime mover behind the "I Love Mumbai" show, had egg all over his face.

The beginning itself had been less than fortuitous. No sooner had Chudasama and Dr Yusuf Merchant, drug rehabilitation expert, decided on a extravagana to take the anti-drug message to the city, than opposition presented itself. The Shiv Sena took great umbrage to the proposal, with mayor Chaggan Bhujbal maintaining that the show would be no more than a exercise toensure publicity for the sheriff, whom he called a "fraud". Demanding that the post of sheriff be abolished, Bhujbal said disparagingly: "This man (Chudasama) has contested three elections and forfeited his deposit in all of them. The rejection by the public has been total."

Well aware that he couldn't organise such a large affair as the "I Love Bombay" show without the support of the Shiv Sena, Chudasama began working on Bal Thackeray and Bhujbal. To assuage the feelings of the party, the extravaganza was hurriedly renamed "I Love Mumbai" and soon enough the Shiv Sena swung around, with Thackeray and Bhujbal present on the dais along with the sheriff when the show got underway.

While Dr Merchant's "recovering addicts" pounded the sidewalks, approaching business houses and artistes in the hunt for participants and sponsors, Chudasama began working on the Prime Minister (who was scheduled to visit Bombay on 25 November to unveil a bust of the late Y.B. Chavan) to get him to inaugurate the event.

Chandra Shekhar agreed, but criticism of Chudasama continued, with his detractors alleging that the entire exercise was geared towards securing the sheriff a third term in office.

Despite such negative pre-publicity, the show witnessed a record turn-out. From 4.30 pm onwards, the people started pouring in, and in an hour or so every vantage point was occupied. While colourful buntings welcomed Bombayites to the show, helicopters flew overhead, to shower confetti and cards with messages of goodwill on those gathered below.

The front-runner to the "I Love Mumbai" extravaganza, the Ananda and Tanusree Shankar performance at the Rang Bhavan, was warmly received by the audience. But it didn't prepare anyone for what was to follow on the 25th, when shows would be held simultaneoulsy at five venues

Trouble began even as Chandra Shekhar was giving his inaugural



speech at the Marine Drive flyover, with Sharad Pawar, Bal Thackeray, Nana Chudasama, Chaggan Bhujbal and a host of MLAs sharing the dias with him.

Shekhar had arrived late, and the crowd at the Wilson College gymkha-



Despite the negative pre-publicity, the show witnessed a record turnout. Unfortunately, the police couldn't keep the crowd in order



It was made out to be the show of a lifetime. But by the time it ended Nana Chudasama (seen here with various models), the prime mover behind the "I Love Bombay" extravaganza, had egg all over his face

na, where the rock show was scheduled to be held, was threatening to get violent. "S.. the Prime Minister, start the music," some of the youngsters began shouting. And the rest of the crowd appeared to agree with the sentiment.

Backstage, there were further complications. The police insisted on shifting the cars of some of the band members. But the musicians were adamant that their cars should stay, for fear that the restive crowd would destroy them otherwise. Members of the bands, Mirage, 13 AD and Rock Machine told the police: "You shift those vehicles and we don't play."

By this time, the crowd had gone totally out of control, with the police trying to restore order with their lathis.

The Prime Minister finally wound up his speech, in the midst of all the confusion, and Sharad Pawar pulled the trigger on the flare gun. Just then the lights went out: the crowd had unearthed the cables. Only after the fault was remedied could the show get underway.

At Chowpatty beach, the venue of the Kalyanji-Anandji nite, however, the mob had gone totally hysterical. As many as 1,00,000 people had turned out to watch their favourite stars, and they broke down the barricades and fought one another to get a better glimpse of the action. Compere Tabassum could only look on helplessly, and ask the crowd to calm down at periodic intervals. But the mob paid little attention to her pleas and those sitting in the special enclosure fled in terror as it began surging towards the stage.

Soon, chappals were being thrown at the performers, prompting Amjad Khan to declare, a la Gabbar *(Sholay)* Singh, *"Bahut jaan hai tum logon main.* (You people have a lot of energy)." Jackie Shroff, Sonam and several others sang and danced while pandemonium prevailed. Even the pleas of Dilip Kumar were lost in the confusion, though Kalpana Iyer did try to introduce some light humour, picking up one of the chappals and dancing with it for a while.

When the lathi-charges didn't work, the policemen took off their belts and began whipping the hysterical crowd. It was at this point that Amitabh Bachchan arrived after dinner with Chandra Shekhar, Bal Thackeray, Nana Chudasama, Sharad Pawar and others at Raj Bhavan. And all hell broke loose. The police simply gave up; it was only the cordon thrown around the stage that prevented the crowd from injuring the mega-star in its enthusiasm.

The fashion show, with Shymak Davar and Rave among the performers, was as much of a fiasco. When models like Meher Jesia sauntered on stage, bare shoulders, midriffs et al, the crowd went totally—as one viewer put it— "sexerk". The police had to throw around their lathis yet again. Unofficial sources had it that six people were injured in the melee and had to be hospitalised later.

In the midst of all the confusion, members of the All India Youth Federation went around shouting such slogans as "Black money show", while 64 of them courted arrest.

The Marathi programme, with Sunil Gavaskar officiating as chief guest, and the Gujarati folk dance and music show were, perhaps, the only events to go off without incident.

The intial bit of the "I Love Mumbai" extravaganza was featured live on television. But if the show was bad, the coverage was downright disastrous. After showing viewers a brief glimpse of the various shows, the announcer said: "Now that we have taken you to all the other venues, let us get back to Kalyanji Anandji."

Meanwhile, back at the "I Love Mumbai" site, the show continued. The 20x20 feet screens functioned well, until the mob destroyed one and badly damaged the other. Nine electrically-lit floats, each containing an astounding 1,40,000 bulbs started from the base of the Marine Drive flyover and moved towards Wilson College where the rock show was being held. Two hundred brightly-lit boats floated on the Arabian Sea and fireworks arranged by the Moranis were watched by a crowd estimated at 5,00,000.

But in all the confusion, the anti-drug message was lost somewhat. Nobody, however, missed the irony in the show being sponsored by such concerns as manufactured liquor and cigarettes, which are as addictive as drugs, though in slightly less harmful way.

At around quarter to 12, the five venues fell silent, and the crowd, much the worse for wear, went home to sleep it off. Sheriff Nana Chudasama bravely declared that despite the problems and the obvious shortcoming, the extravaganza had gone off well.

And nobody had the heart to contradict him on that one. •

Godfrey Pereira with Gautam Patole/Bombay

Victory at last!

India wins the Chandigarh Test against Sri Lanka amidst controversy

So, India has won a Test match after a drought that lasted 14 matches. At the moment it does not matter who the opponents were—a team from Timbuctoo would fit the bill if it were an accredited Test side. It is true that Sri Lanka is going through a process of rebuilding its own side the one that played at Chandigarh looked both jaded and weak. But the fact remains that India has won its first Test in almost two years.

There will be happy memories for Mohammad Azharuddin, who has played six tests as captain without a victory For Venkatapathy Raju, it will be a match to cherish, as the 20-year-old left arm spinner from Hyderabad bagged the man-of-the-match award. He captured eight wickets in the two innings that Sri Lanka played, in his third Test appearance.



NIKHIL BHATTACHARYA

Tillakaratne bowled by Venkatapathy Raju: spinning India to victory

But much more than the innings and eight runs victory, the match will be marked for the unique achievement of Kapil Dev, who captured his 376th wicket to level with Ian Botham of England. Now he is the second-highest wicket-taker in the world after Sir Richard Hadlee. For an Indian pace bowler to achieve this feat is by itself remarkable. Having done it despite playing half his 110 Tests on the unhelpful wickets of India makes it a far greater feat than Botham's. It is now just a matter of time before he surpasses Botham, but it will take a great deal of fortitude and a generous dose of luck before he gets past Hadlee's 431.

All said and done, however, this was not just a Test match of achievements. The selectors seem to have been unable to shrug off the reasonings and attitudes of former chairman of the committee, Raj Singh. The latter had kept talking about a "team for the Nineties"—even as he left out some youngsters without allowing them to settle down. He used the excuse of inducting youngsters so that old war-horses like Mohinder Amarnath could be eased out.



Kapil Dev (above) captured his 376th wicket to become the second highest wicket-taker in the world

Raj Singh's successors went one step ahead. It is one thing to exclude a senior player altogether from a Test squad. It is quite another to include him, only to keep him in the reserves, so that his only touch with the Test would be an occasional stint as a substitute fielder or a towel man accompanying the drinks trolley!

This is what happened to Arun Lal. The opener from Bengal was kept in the squad presumably to silence the vociferous Cricket Association of Bengal, clamouring for representation in the national side from a champion state. The CAB took it for granted that Lal would automatically be in the playing eleven.

The question of Arun Lal remains intriguing. Azharuddin claims that he can only voice his opinion—it is up to the selectors to pay heed to his advice or ignore it. Legally speaking, he is right. But when a mere comment of the Indian skipper is taken so seriously that the very institution of a "cricket manager" for the squad is abolished, it seems strange that if he insists on the inclusion of a player, the selectors will choose not to listen.

It follows, therefore, that Arun Lal wasn't wanted by *anybody*. And that could include the East Zone representative, Russi Jeejeebhoy, because even if he had wanted Lal in the squad, it didn't show. And Azharuddin queered the pitch further by telling a journalist, that for the Pakistan series, he would insist on regular openers. One would really like to know whether he considers Arun Lal a *regular* opener or not.

The question of age is regularly bandied about, when a player is to be axed. When you can have a Colin Cowdrey recalled at the age of forty, to play a Test, surely Arun Lal is not too old. Blooding in youngsters is alright, but only up to a point. The primary issue is putting the best team on the field—regardless of age.

A related issue was that of Ravi Shastri. The former captain and now almost permanent vice-captain of the Indian team did not get to bowl a single over in the Test against Sri Lanka. The cricket manager on the England tour, Bishan Singh Bedi (axed since), shot off a few comments after the match, which startled players and spectators alike.

He said that Ravi Shastri had refused to bowl, a statement vehemently denied by the player, who wasn't appeased even after Bedi had tried to rephrase the charge by saying that, "If I were in your place, I would have taken the ball from the captain and bowled—after all, this was a spinner's paradise." Ravi Shastri was peeved, to say the least. It was a preposterous charge, not to speak of the insinuation that all was not well among the players. •

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

Weekly fair

Calcutta's Maidan plays host to a mela *every Sunday*

• *Eight-year-old Mukhtar's head is buried deep in the ground, while his body strikes a contrortionist's pose above it. In a couple of minutes his lungs, unable to expell air, will be fit to burst. But by then, it will be Ekhtar's turn to perform the feat. And at the end of the day, the pair will have collected Rs 5—10, more than their parents will by begging.*

• *The balancing beam is a bit of crude effort, but frail Shibu performs his act with due finesse. Tossed on to the first beam, he somersaults before returning to* terra firma, *to the sound of thunderous applause.*

• *Ramdhan places a small tin vessel on the ground. And his faithful dog Moti climbs on it on all fours. The master places another vessel, and yet another, all of which the dog climbs on, without dislodging the pile. A small oil tin and a mobile oil container is added on. And Moti is more than equal to the task.*

You'll find all this and more at the Dharamtalla *ka mela*. Staged on the grounds adjoining the Ochterlony Monument (popularly known as the Shahid Minar), the fair, with its magic shows, amateur circuses and fortune-tellers, attracts hordes of spectators, the odd foreign tourist among them, every Sunday. Only a stone's throw away from Calcutta's five-star hotel, the Oberoi Grand, on the city's busiest throughfare, Chowringhee Road, the *mela* attracts street-performers from all over the country, who display their art before the largely lower middle-class audience, in order to eke out a living of sorts.

But this Apna Utsav is spontaneous: there are no organising committees, no clearances by the ministry of culture, no media blitz or international exposure. Yes, the fair *was* the subject of a documentary, by a group of young filmmakers under the banner of Shape, shown at the Berlin Film Festival a couple of years back. But that came later; the fair itself has been a regular feature at Calcutta's Maidan for as long as anyone can remember, on the performers' initiative alone. Doing the rounds of the city through the week they congregate at the *mela* every Sunday, to perform the same tricks before a larger audience.

Among them are the young boys Ekhtar and Mukhtar (they of the being-buried-alive trick) and Dhanir-am and Phoolmati, the husband-wife team from Banaras, who've performed all over north India. Their daughters Munni and Sharda, are part of the act, dancing gracefully in the manner of Russian ballerinas.

Devi Singh, from a remote hamlet in Rajasthan, has wonder cures on offer. He sits with an assortment of colourful solutions before him and a bottle with a bright-yellow solution in it. According to Singh, it is *magar-mach ki charbi* (crocodile fat), which can, apparently, cure any pain under the sun. All this for Rs 5 only, which you can pay *after* the medicine has done its work.

Among the astrologers and fortune-tellers (some with trained parrots to pull out the magic card), sits B.K. Roy, selling shells from the Andamans. On another corner of the Maidan Ramdhan is regaling audiences with his wonder dog Moti, who jumps though a ring of fire only after his master assures him, *"babu log paisa dega"*

But the earnings vary greatly from one performer to another. While Ramdhan makes about Rs 100 on a good day, others have to make do with half that amount or even less. For, while everyone crowds around to see the tricks being performed, the crowd has a way of melting away quite miraculously when the collection bowl is passed around. And, to make matters worse, a cut (*hafta* in local parlance) has to be given to the police to ensure a trouble-free existence. All in all, the going is not easy.



ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

Ramdhan and his wonder dog Moti



ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

Mukhtar performs before bemused bystanders

It is a high-profile life, though. For, every Sunday, people in great numbers arrive at the *mela*, standing six-deep at places to watch the shows. The audience isn't upmarket, comprising largely rural folk from Bengal and the adjoining state of Bihar, who've arrived in the city, looking for work.

For Subodh Ram, a peon at the Telephone Bhavan, a visit to the fair is tantamount to a trip down memory lane, such *melas* being a regular feature in his village. Harish Kumar Pathak, a schoolteacher, has different motivations. "I prefer this to TV or movies," he says. "This is a live show, with greater entertainment value."

But whatever the reason, the crowds keep coming in every week, to gaze in wonder while the performers go through their repertoire, the sound of their drums audible above the city traffic. •

Sanghamitra Chakraborty/Calcutta



Chandra Shekhar at Male: a great hit

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

He began sedately enough, reading from a prepared text, in his accented English. But, to the surprise of all assembled at the concluding session of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Male (and the delight of Mulayam Singh Yadav), Chandra Shekhar soon set aside his notes, to hold forth in a mixture of Hindi and Urdu.

The extempore effort was a great hit, with delegates, and heads of government, cheering loudly after the Indian Prime Minister was through. Though, Nepali premier K.P. Bhattarai did turn to the King of Bhutan,Jigme Singhe Wangchuck, to ask if he'd understood Shekhar's address.

Only 60 per cent of it, the King confessed, somewhat abashed by his ignorance.

Chuckled Bhattarai: "If I decide to speak in my language, I think Mr Chandra Shekhar will understand 70 per cent of it. I'm not sure about the others."

IN THE NAME OF RAM

First, Uma Bharti's audio-cassette, with its inflammatory rhetoric on the Ayodhya issue, made news. And now, a video-cassette on the same subject, produced by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member, Dr J.K. Jain has become the centre of a controversy.

It was Insaf party chief Syed Shahabuddin, who took the lead in insisting that the cassette, a product of Jain Studios, was meant to incite the "Hindu community and mobilise it for the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya", and should be banned. In a letter to Prime

BACK TO THE PAVILION

For Arun Lal, it was a dream come true. After years spent in the comparative wilderness of domestic cricket, he had been selected to open for India in the solitary Test against Sri Lanka, on the strength of his impressive scores for Bengal.

But, as is usual with Lal, the dream died fast. On the day of the match, while Lal was at work on one of the practice wickets, the selectors, led by Naren Tamhane, inspected the wicket. And decided that in view of its under-prepared nature, an extra bowler was required.



Arun Lal: pipped at the post, again

This meant that a batsman had to go. And so, exit: Arun Lal.

Said a disappointed Lal after being dropped: "I don't know how I'll spend the next few days. I am so disappointed. It was a shock for me because I was sure of playing and hadn't got any hint that I would be dropped."

And, at 35, he can't really count on being selected again.

ON THE HOUSE

She excelled on the *Mathemagic* show and in the dramatised version of *A Father's Letters to His Daughter*, playing the young Indira (Indu) Priyadarshini Nehru.

But now it's back to television for the lovely Shernaz Patel, with an improved version of *Parliament Quiz*. Playing host along with Bhaskar Bhattacharya (formerly of *Alpha Plus*), Patel promises to provide some entertaining fare on prime time.

The way the programme has been devised, it will be more a game show than a quiz. Says Patel: "Because the subject is heavy we have made an effort to have a lot of visual diversions, including dramatisations." The quiz, featur-

Shernaz Patel: back on the small screen



NITIN RAI



Syed Shahabuddin: ban the cassette

Minister Chandra Shekhar, Shahabuddin wrote that the film contained false propaganda about the "martyrdom of 3,75,000 Hindus since 1526", and would further inflame passions in the already surcharged atmosphere.

Dr Jain hasn't responded to the charges as yet. But the situation shows all signs of developing into a battle royal, once the BJP video doc gets his act together.

FRAUD!

The fraud had been detected three years ago. Enquiring about a donation she'd sent earlier to the Missionaries of Charity, a foreign donor discovered that her money hadn't arrived at all. Mother Teresa promptly registered a case with the detective department of Calcutta police.

Investigations revealed that a peon in the postal sorting office at Dum Dum, in cahoots with two nationals of Bangladesh and one of Singapore,was perpetrating the fraud. The money sent to the Mother's organisation eventually found its way to bank accounts in Singapore, opened under false names, and was siphoned off by the crooks.

ASHOK CHAKRABARTY



Mother Teresa: no sign of the money

The case was cracked, but for some reason, the police failed to recover the money due to the Missionaries of Charity. The Mother has approached the officer in charge of the investigations, P.K. Lahiri, yet again.

But it remains to be seen if he can expedite matters.

ing questions on the freedom struggle and Indian politics since 1947, is ready for viewing. And will be on television as soon as the producers find a sponsor.

Any takers?



SUMMIT OF THE DOLLS

When the Berlin Wall came down, Poorna Sonawala, a student at Bombay's Cathedral School, didn't quite realise how important a part the event would play in her life.

For, soon after traffic was restored between the two Germanies, a young East German girl dragged her mother to the West to buy a Barbie doll! Hearing of this, the manufacturers decided to hold a Barbie Summit in New York City, attended by children all over the world.

Leo Mattel Toys Inc. held a world-wide painting and short essay competition to select the representatives from each country. In India, 10,000 schoolgirls participated in the competition. And Poorna Sonawala won the first prize—and the coveted trip to the Big Apple—with a painting of a globe surrounded by children holding hands.

So, Poorna's off to the summit, which will include a conference on world freedom and peace. The participants will also produce a video cassette on the impact children have on events, and send it to leaders all over the world.

Poorna Sonawala: Barbie is best

And, no doubt, Poorna will present a copy to Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. ●

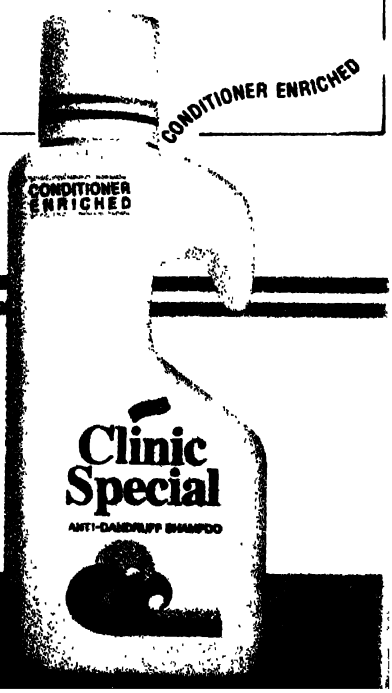


beautiful way to get rid of your dandruff



Most people think that dandruff is just an irritation on the scalp. But it can also affect the way your hair looks. Dandruff makes it dull and lustreless. **New Clinic Special gets rid of your dandruff gently. Gives you great looking hair.** Its new international formulation loosens and lifts out dandruff from the scalp, where it really begins. **And it has a rich, creamy conditioner which leaves your hair soft and shiny.** So you can use it regularly even after your dandruff's gone. Use New Clinic Special to prevent your dandruff from coming back. And to keep your hair looking good.

NEW Clinic Special
ANTI-DANDRUFF SHAMPOO



ODDS AND TRENDS

Exceptions exist

■ Who said employers of private companies are heartless? The grey-headed owner of a firm in Gujarat's Kapadwanj town last week proved that he was of a different stock. Inviting the townfolk to a function the *seth* publicly felicitated an honest clerk who served him for over 50 years.

The huge crowd gathered in the main square was choked with emotion as they watched the obedient employee, Purshottam Patel, being presented a shawl and Kisan Patras worth Rs 10,000 by his master.

May the *seth's* tribe increase.



Water, water, everywhere...

■ For those in the drought-striken areas of Rajasthan, drinking water has always been a priceless commodity. And, to add to their problems, the little water available proves too salty for consumption.

With this problem in mind, the Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI) at Bhavnagar, Gujarat, has come up with a vehicle equipped with scientific apparatus which can transform saline water into salt-free tasty liquid. What is noteworthy is that the project, the first of its kind, employs the process of 'reverse osmosis' which is feasible, both technologically and economically.

The desalination project will reach into the heart of arid areas, converting upto 10,000 litres a day.

With CSMCRI playing a pivotal role in trying to solve the drinking water shortage prevalent in rural areas, the day is not far off when crystal clear saltless water is available in every home.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Sonam



Shilpa Shirodkar

The long stint at the top has left Sridevi unbelievably smug. For, instead of resenting newcomers such as Nagma she goes out of her way to help them.

Of course, Nagma's is a special case. Sridevi has known her ever since she was a kid (Nagma, that is, not Sri), and the southern star had played the lead in her father Chander Sadannah's film *Aulad*. (Nagma insists that Sri never plays a star with those who know her well.)

And, for what it's worth, Sridevi has recommended the newcomer to Saroj Khan for dancing lessons.

We suppose we're in for a repeat of the Rekha-Sridevi relationship, with Sri playing patron saint this time.

And thank God, *she* doesn't have a steady boyfriend whom Nagma could steal.



Sridevi: who's scared of Nagma?

All those who've been wondering who is going to be the replacement for Kimi Katkar, can give their brains a rest. For the answer lies with Mama Katkar, who has decided to transform her latest client (Tina Katkar, for the benefit of ignorant souls, is a dress designer) Rupa Ganguly into a Kimi clone.

Surprisingly enough, the Draupadi of the small screen doesn't seem to mind too much, for she has even hired Bali, Kimi's former secretary to handle her dates, providing for yet another parallel with the *Jumma chumma* girl.

So, the next time you see a buxom Rupa cavorting on the screen, don't be too surprised at the sudden and somewhat miraculous improvement in her physical attributes. Mama Katkar has this obsession with padded dresses—and not just at the shoulders, either.

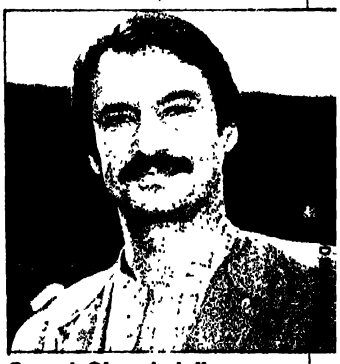
Rupa Ganguly: Kimi clone?

If insider reports are to be believed, Rakesh Roshan has volunteered to complete *Gurudev*, the film Vinod Mehra left unfinished.

If the plan does work out, Kiran Mehra may well find her dream come true. For, Vinod's young widow has vowed that she will see her husband's task through, if it's the last thing she does.

And now that the industry has decided to rally around the Mehras in this hour of grief, it may not be as difficult as when Vinod attempted it.

Guess who's been talking to anyone who listens about his problems with the Enforcement Directorate. No, you're wrong, it isn't Him, but that old side-kick Suresh Oberoi, whom one would never suspect of warranting such attention.



Suresh Oberoi: dollar trouble

Apparently, Oberoi had been part of some entertainment show or the other in the States and had been paid for his pains—and the audience's—by cheque. The bank refused clearance to the actor, so Suresh asked his brother, resident in New York, to try and recover the money. He managed to do just that and sent over the amount to Oberoi in India via the Punjab and Sind bank. The Directorate, however, got wind of the fact and began hassling the actor.

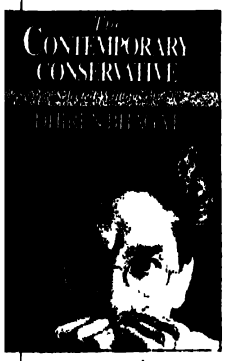
Oberoi insists that he's paid tax on the amount and that he's being needlessly victimised.

But surely it's worth it, if only for the publicity?



THE BHAGAT INTERVIEWS

N.T. Rama Rao, Maneka and Rajiv get the treatment



What made Bhagat's interviews so memorable was the fact that he dared ask questions that nobody else did, provoked his subjects into indiscretion, and then quoted them verbatim to their considerable embarrassment. Predictably, none of the interviewees cared to repeat the experience. But his irreverant style made for a great read.

Dhiren died at 31, crashing his Maruti Gypsy on Delhi's Willingdon Crescent. But some of his best interviews ever done for The Illustrated Weekly Of India *and* The Sunday Observer *with Maneka Gandhi, N.T. Rama Rao and Rajiv Gandhi, have been included in a collection of his writings,* The Contemporary Conservative *(published by Viking). SUNDAY publishes some extracts.*

Maneka Gandhi

Q: After Sanawar you studied at Delhi University, didn't you?
A: Yes, I went to LSR (Lady Shri Ram) where I did political science. I did one year there and then I got married.

Q: What were your political views at that point?
A: Zero.

Q: You didn't learn very much from your doing political science then?
A: No.

Q: So, when you married Sanjay Gandhi, you didn't have very clear political ideas.
A: I had none. I had none. It wasn't a matter of clear or not clear. I just had none. You must remember I was from an army background. Ninety nine point nine per cent of my relatives didn't have the faintest idea what's going on. Then I got married.

Q: Mrs Gandhi now suggests she disapproved of you from the beginning. Were you aware of her disapproval?
A: No. I wasn't aware of it at the time. She was very nice to me. I hardly knew her, you know, because my mother was very strict and she always insisted I was home by 9.30 p.m. So I had dinner with the family and then used to be dropped back. And at dinner, I mean, you hardly, I don't know... In any case, I was very, very young. I wasn't even 18.

Q: Later, in 1975, did you and Sanjay urge her to declare the Emergency?
A: That's not true at all. In fact, it's another, er, it's another silly story. Because I remember when the Emergency was declared, I was on holiday in Kashmir with a friend of mine and I came back much later and I didn't have the faintest idea.

Q: Kashmir seems to have been a very convenient place to go to...
A: I think lots of people in Delhi go there in the summer. Anyway, then I came back...and then I came back...I don't remember when I came back, and I didn't have the faintest idea what was going on and I didn't change my lifestyle or anything, so I still hung around in jeans and went to college and attended college from nine to five. And nobody, it never made any difference to anybody in college, because we were as, in JNU, in my class particularly, as ignorant of what was happening.

Q: Ignorant of the Emergency in JNU!
A: In my class. They had all finished school and they were two years younger to me, they were little, little children, and we talked about German, about how we could wangle scholarships to Germany and... *(Laughs).*

Q: I was at Elphinstone College in Bombay then and I too had just joined college but nobody could talk of anything else but the Emergency...
A: It was something like...For me it

When the Emergency was declared, I was on holiday in Kashmir with a friend... I didn't have the faintest idea



was something like, in the eye of the storm, see nothing. I was the least, you know, being politically unaware, and...I was zero. I wasn't interested at that time. Gradually, yes, it cropped up.

Q: Didn't you think your husband's behaviour during the Emergency was, to say the least, controversial?
A: Controversial? To you. Not controversial to me. Now you're asking what are called, *pointed* questions, you've already made up your mind about what you want to ask, what you want to hear. It's nothing I'm ashamed about, that I have to lie about.

Q: When did you first become aware of politics?
A: You are asking me when I became aware. I became aware when Sanjay was at the receiving end. I felt what was being done to Sanjay was totally unfair.

Q: How would you know if it was unfair? You've said you weren't aware of what was going on during the Emergency so how could you be so sure he was being unfairly blamed?
A: I felt Sanjay was being made the scapegoat for everything. Ultimately, everything came back to Sanjay. The chief ministers shared no blame, the ministers shared no blame, the government shared no blame...all the people in charge were now on the other side accusing Sanjay.. If you remember in those two years he was blamed for everything.

Q: You say that after the '77 elections you began to identify yourself with the politics of Sanjay Gandhi. Did this identification proceed from personal considerations of being his wife or did it proceed from some sort of ideological commitment?
A: Now you're talking *absolute* garbage. Every single thing that happens in life stems from something personal and we try to cloak it in very, very, very heavy terms like 'ideological'...I know everybody in politics is in it because of something personal. Everything you do starts from something personal, not because you're ideological, but because you're interested...



She (Indira Gandhi) was very nice to me. I hardly knew her, you know, because my mother insisted I was home by 9.30 pm

Q: What I want to know is, did your support for Sanjay Gandhi's peculiar politics, stem from some prior ···
A: Look, I don't know what you're trying to manoeuvre in this interview but what I'm saying is at JNU, during the Emergency, I had absolutely no idea. Even after the Emergency, I was concerned with what was happening to Sanjay after the Emergency. So don't go round and round and just come back to, did you support the Emergency or not, because that's basically what you want to ask.

Q: Looking back at it now, do you have any regrets about the Emergency? Do you feel that things should have been done differently?
A: My main regret about the Emergency is that I think Sanjay, well, not Sanjay, I think the government made one very, very crucial mistake: that is, they cut off all feedback to them. I'm sure they weren't monsters sitting there or inhuman people or anything like that. I'm sure if they had the feedback they would have been able to correct anything that was going wrong at a very early stage, if it was going wrong.

Q: You said 'Sanjay, well, not Sanjay, the government': but do you feel it was also Sanjay's mistake to cut off feedback?
A: I'm sure it was a mistake of Sanjay's in the sense that, if he wanted, if he had, if he felt, well, let me see, that, press censorship was unnecessary, he could have done something about it.

Q: Did Sanjay oppose the decision to go in for the '77 elections? Did he think that a mistake?
A: I don't think he had a say one way or another. It was a government decision.

Q: What do you have to say about the following letter you are supposed to have written to your mother: 'I hope uncle Minna dies a gory death, I have run through all my schemes of kidnapping his children, poisoning his wife's food etc., and now I give up'.
A: Yes.

Q: Do you deny you wrote that?



I became aware (of politics) when Sanjay was at the receiving end. I felt what was being done to Sanjay was totally unfair

A: Certainly not *(smirks)*. I never denied that at any stage. You're bringing up something that's been finished one year ago. Of course I had written it. I'd written it when I was 15 and it was a very, very public school, immature letter. And, it was written to my mother who was going through a lot of family problems...And I was in school, I think I was in Xth standard, or the XIth standard. There are so many things everyone writes to their parents in their letters...

Q: Well, I've never written anything of this sort. Don't you think this sort of letter could hound you in later life, when you stand for public office?
A: I don't think so. It's a letter written by a little girl...

Q: I am now going to ask you about a report in a Delhi paper last year. In an article Mohammed Yunus wrote...
A: I'm not going to comment on that at all. Because I just think it's not worth commenting on at all.

Q: You don't think it's worth commenting on at all? Do you think it's all false?
A: Unfortunately you've picked up from the papers all the things that come out as gossip. You haven't picked up a single thing that is factual *(raises her voice)*. No, it's not. You are interested in gossip. I have already said the whole thing seems to have come from a very sick person.

Q: Your father, I gather, during the Emergency...
A: No. You're just interested in gossip. You haven't asked me a single question that I even consider serious. Ask me proper questions. So many interviewers come and they ask me proper questions.

Q: What sort of questions do you consider proper?
A: Just general...questions. I don't know. I'm not going to give you something like that.

Q; OK, I'll ask you a 'proper' question. What do you think of Chandra Shekhar's *padayatra* ?
A: I think it's a good idea.

Q: Would you support him in his attempts to become Prime Minister?
A: Not just on the basis of the *padayatra*.

Q: On the basis of his record of 20 years in politics?
A: Er, I don't know.

Q: When I ask you a 'proper' question, you say you don't know. What sort of questions do you know about? I know very well that you are not going to make a new policy statement of your party in this interview. So what do I ask you about?
A: You're the one asking.

Q: Right. That's why I think it's proper to ask you questions about things that have appeared in the press about your life, to get your views on these events.
A: No. I don't think it's proper at all. Why don't you ask me something that has wider interest?

Q: Well, I think you're a very, young person and I don't think you're in a position to make very important remarks about wider things. You have played a rather limited political role so far.
A: Then tell me Dhiren, why are you here doing the interview at all?

Q: Because you are arguably the most important person of my generation in the country but your importance stems from your strange biography. That's why I am asking you about your life. As you said, everything you do starts from something personal...

The Illustrated Weekly of India
2 October, 1983



From the beginning I have been godly minded...From the age of six I used to recite the *Bal Ramayana*

N. T. Rama Rao

Q: You are dressed as a sanyasi now. But what about your childhood? Can you recall any moral lapses? Did you ever lie or steal? Or were you always saintly?
A: There have been many temptations in my life but I have observed strict discipline. I was tempted once by a short knife and I had taken it. But again I thought, I should not take it without their permission. So then I put it in the original place.

Q: How old were you at the time?
A: I was just twelve years old.

Q: How did you acquire your knowledge of mythology and religion?
A: From the beginning I have been godly minded.

Q: One of the most important roles in your career was the one where you played Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupati. That's when a lot of adulation began...
A: Yes. I was concentrating all the time then. Now you can see also. These days of course on account of all the political...I used to concentrate like this. *(NTR falls silent, stares at the opposite end of the room, transfixed.)* Within five minutes I can outfocus any person.

Q: Outfocus?
A: I can see a blank. I don't see any



When I used to keep concentrate (on the sets) I would say: ready... They used to all pindrop silence

detail. I don't think of any man also *(still staring)*. Opposite I can outfocus you also. I won't see your image. Just you will become a blur. Just outfocussing. You will become a hazy figure. Without any detail.. Without any ear or eye or anything...Now I am slowly getting you also outfocussed.

Q: Where is your concentration?
A: *(Transfixed.)* I am not seeing Mr Parvatala Rao also .Without closing my eyes, I would .

Q: Blank out?
A: Yes *(unwinds, stops staring)*. This is what I did in the *Lord Venkateshwara* film. All the artists tried to close their eyes in meditation. You see also *sadhus* are closing the eyes. Whenever they are doing *tapas* or meditation or concentration they put *padmasana* and sit closing the eyes. I have tried in my life to open the eyes and outfocus anything before me.

Q: When you meditate what do you concentrate on?
A: God.

Q: An abstract God? Or an image in your mind?
A: It is just a light. That is my approach for meditation. As an artist, my dear sir, concentration is very important. *Kala*. It is so pious and so worthy. Last picture of mine, *Bobbilipuli*, when I was shooting the climax I asked the director to close the doors. It was my fortune also they used to love me so much. Anybody comes they used to sit at a distance from me, they never used to smoke before me. They never came with chappals before me. When the climax we are doing I concentrated for one-and-a-half days. The film consists of nearly 3,000 feet above *(goes into a trance)*.

When I used to keep concentrate I would say: ready. They used to shoot. Again I used to concentrate on my next shot, take my mood and say: OK ready please. They used to all pindrop silence.

Q: It is said you can stay awake for stretches of 72 hours...
A: Yes. *Pracharam* at election time, I stayed awake then.

Q: That's unusual enough. But more unusual than that is your ability to sleep. Your friend the actor Gommadi claims that once in Vijaywada you slept for seventy-two hours straight.
A: Ha, ha, ha. Now if I wanted to sleep I could also sleep on this floor.

Q: For 72 hours?
A: Yes. Sleep means sleep.

Q: But that's not human. It's like a bear in hibernation.
A: Eating also. I can't stay back from eating. For forty-one days I stayed back from eating after I became chief minister. And if I want to do it I can eat five times a day even

Q: You became a vegetarian on 14 April this year. What prompted the decision?
A: When I put on this *(points to his* bhagwa bhes) I want to kill down all the emotions and everything.

Q: What were the precise reasons that prompted you to take sanyas?
A: I want to be above want. No self want to me. Nothing can tempt me now. And I can't use my power, which God has given, for any of my individual benefit.

Q: There has been this story about how some astrologer has recommended that you wear a sari at night. Do you wear saris at night?
A: I am very very sorry for the human mind. It is a mean thing to say. Treacherous also. Treacherous. Treacherous.

Q: How is it treacherous, this story? After all, even if it were true that you were wearing a sari at night, so what of it? It's not as if they were alleging corruption.
A: Ha, ha, ha. Our sages they are wearing a sari even, even our Shankaracharya. It is a special style of sari wearing.

Q: So it's hardly a shameful practice...
A: Why night time? If I want to wear it I can wear it in the day time also. I am not a coward. What is there? What is there? It is my taste, my beliefs.

Q: After all you wore a single earring in public despite the jibes in the press that it was a homosexual symbol...
A: Yes. Nobody is empowered to interfere in my private habits.

Q: In press circles much is made of the fact that you have never denied wearing saris.
A: Nobody asked me so far. They have been writing their own fantastic tales. First time you have asked me and I have denied

Q: Which rishi's life would you wish to emulate?
A: The rishis, only Vishwamitra. That is the life *(Laughter)*

Q: I gather there has been some problem with your latest film, the one with the somewhat unwieldy title *Srimad Virat Potuluri Veera Brahmendra Swami Jeevita Chaitra*.
A: It is a picture directed, produced by myself. I have even acted five parts in it. I have acted Ramanuja, I have acted Buddha, acted Vyaman and I have acted Veer Brahman. From age to age so many saints have come and served humanity by their preachings.

Q: Why did the Censor Board cut the film? Was there a political problem?
A: I don't know. Even now it is before the court.

Q: In a film about a saint what sort of scenes could the Censor Board object to?
A: I don't know. That's where I got piqued also. It's not at all a commercial film. It's just as a last picture of



Why night time? If I want to wear it (a sari) I can wear it in the day time also. I am not a coward

mine that I have taken with all my dedication to art and to a great saint who has forecasted everything. Brahman has forecasted everything, like astrology.

Q: I gather the saint Brahman wrote the following line *yadavamundalu rajamelathasu* and this is a richly ambiguous line: either it means that worthless people will come to rule or else that a husbandless widow will. Which meaning have you preferred in your film?
A: *(Smiles)*. It's all right. Let's not go into the details. I think it may affect the living persons.

Q: Was there an objection to the enactment of this prophecy?
A: The dialogue there was objection to was *thera meeda bommale digi vacchi adhikaramunu chelayistharaya*. This is from Swamy Veerabrahman's *Kalagnanam*. It means some images from the screen, that is cinema artistes, will come down and will take the reins and rule the country. And I have put one insertion of Reagan and one of MGR.

Q: What have you got against Sathya Sai Baba? I ask this because in your film, I say your's because it was directed by you, *Kondura Diddina Kapuram* you had the actor Satyanarayana depict a *baba* very like Sathya Sai Baba who turns out to be a fraud. A *baba* with curly hair...
A: No, no, no. There are so many *babas* in the country. I have nothing to do with Sathya Sai Baba. I am not having any prejudice with any person

Q: Are you a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba?
A: No *(firmly)*. I am not devoted to any man.

Q: The day you won the elections you said in an interview: 'I am an admirer (of Mrs Gandhi) since she is a great leader also. Personally I adore her. She is a great leader and I accept her as one.' Why do you adore her? What qualities in her do you find so attractive?
A: She is the befitting daughter for a noble personality whom we adore. And she is acquitting herself.

Q: Befitting daughter—that's not enough. You bestowed great praise on her. Why?
A: Let us jump over that question.

Q: Why?
A: I will answer you later. For you only I will answer, one day.

Q: There seems to be a parallel between your chief ministership in Andhra and Khomeini's rule in Iran. Both of you came in on the wave of popular support. And even today, no matter what the intelligentsia may say, 80 per cent of the people, the masses, have Khomeini firmly in their hearts.
A: Correct.

Q: Likewise in your case. Would you accept this parallel?
A: Yes. My strength is the people.

Q: There is another parallel. Khomeini too came in on a populist banner and before he achieved power he too had entered into an informal alliance with the left wingers, the Mujahideen, quite like your support for the Naxalites in the disturbed areas of Karimnagar, Warangal and Adilabad. But after achieving power he wiped them out.
A: Yes. But first also I have not approved of the Naxalites.

Q: Before we conclude, one last question. Where did you acquire political awareness? From books? Which political theorists do you read?
A: I go my own policy practically. I don't follow anybody. I'm telling to you very frankly: all my policies are my own.

Q: But you were a student of economics once. Everyone reads books as a student. Who were your favourite political authors?
A: Political author practically I can say Karl Marx.

Q: Marx! But he was a materialist. How did that fit in with your world view?
A: Yes, materialism. I am basing myself on that only. I can't depend upon riches. Riches are nothing.

The Illustrated Weekly of India
18 December, 1983

Rajiv Gandhi

Q: What was the first language you spoke? Hindi or English?
A: I don't remember but I think it was Hindi.

When did you start speaking English?
A: *(Long pause)*. I can't remember *(laughs)*. Let me think...I think when I was about five or six. I can't remember before that, maybe we started before that.

Q: With whom did you speak to in English, your grandfather, your mother, which particular person?
A: Well, school. At home we've always spoken Hindi, well Hindustani with spatterings of English thrown in.

Q: What were the children's books you read?
A: Yes, I think we read more children's books, English children's books.

Q: Well, which ones do you remember?
A: *Winnie the Pooh*. Then what was that called, the rabbit...

Q: Brer Rabbit?
A: No, Brer Rabbit was the comic. No

the other one...You know the one I mean. They have just made a film. Beatrix Potter. I've forgotten the names of the books.

Q: When did you first go to Britain?
A: It was 1953 or 1955. I must have been eight or ten.

Q: Did you accompany your mother?
A: Grandfather really. We both, mother and us.

Q: Was this on a state visit?
A: Yes.

Q: What are your memories like?
A: Was it the Coronation in '53? Yes.

Q: Do you remember anything of the Coronation?
A: No, I remember being left out of everything *(laughs.)*

Q: How did you find Cambridge? Trinity is a large, bewildering college. I know people who've cracked up there in the first term because they don't have enough people to talk to...
A: Yes, it is difficult to get to know people there, it is so large.

Q: How did you find your way around?
A: There were a lot of Indians there from school, others that I knew from Delhi, so it helped, not just in Trinity but in Cambridge.

Q: How long were you at Cambridge?
A: Three years. 1962-65.

Q: What degree did you read for?
A: Mechanical Science.

Q: May I ask what class you got?
A: Zero, flunked out.

Q: What do you mean?
A: I didn't get a degree.

Q: You didn't do it or...
A: No, I did it but I didn't get a degree, I didn't do well enough.

Q: What did you spend most of your time doing? I remember a remark which Tariq Ali picked on and made capital of in his book, I think it was a passing remark in an interview Arun Singh gave to *Imprint* 'We were the Beatles generation.' Did you listen to the Beatles at all?
A: *(Smiles)*. Of course we did. Everybody listened to the Beatles in those days.

Q: There is something that happens to most Indians who go abroad for University education. Perhaps for the first time they become aware of India. At home they just take the country for granted, but abroad they begin to see India in a different way: there is a distance, of course, but also the amount of printed matter that is easily available...they begin analysing their own experience of India. Did this happen to you?
A: Yes, it did happen. But I don't know how much depth I went into because being my grandfather's grandson it did put me in an awkward position *vis a vis* India.

Q: Such as? Were you expected to know certain things, to have certain attitudes?
A: Well, on the one side, yes, and simultaneously I was considered to be biased, to be pro-government...

Q: Who were the musicians you listened to?
A: Miles Davis a lot, Coltrane. What's his name?...Stan Getz—but not the new Stan Getz, the older Stan Getz.

Q; What sort of books did you read in those days? I don't mean University books because those you weren't reading...
A: *(Laughs.)* Those we weren't. I've forgotten *(pause)*. The normal rubbishy books, yes.

Q: Marie Seton in one of her last pieces of journalism I think wrote last Christmas in the *Spectator*, among her memories of you in that period, one summer she said you were helping her proof-read...
A: Yes, I did the proof-reading of her book on my grandfather.

Q: She wrote that you said to her that till you had read her book you had not been aware of the role of your family and the Congress party in the Independence struggle...
A: Yes *(laughs)*.

Q: Do you remember anything else of that period? What was it like to be in England then?
A: It was great fun, certainly *(laughs)*.

Q: You moved to Imperial College then. How long did you spend there?
A: I spent less than a year. I went down, I took up flying, then I came to Delhi. While I was in London I started flying.

Q: About the Emergency, I'd like to recall the remarks you made at your first national press conference on 5 July and later in the Rajya Sabha as the Monsoon Session opened. One thing that struck me about the hullabaloo was it seemed the press had got the wrong end of the stick...
A: That was what I thought *(laughs)*.

Q: I thought it was clear but not so clear in the headlines and commentary that when you made your initial remarks they were about the proclamation of the Emergency, not what happened during it. This was the point you reiterated in the Rajya Sabha...
A: You see there are two quite different things. One is having the powers available, to be used when required. I think the powers must be available because there are situations when some powers are required by a government which it must use and this was recognised by the Janata government which was born out of the



Basically people want discipline which is sadly lacking in India today...Discipline is one of the most important things that a country has to have

BONUS DECLARED!

Up again!

Good news for L.I.C. policy holders!

Reversionary Bonus.

The new rates of bonus for the year ended 31·03·90 are

Rs. 66/- per Rs 1,000 sum assured, per annum for Endowment Policies ★

Rs. 82.50 per Rs. 1,000 sum assured per annum for Whole Life Policies ★

These rates represent an increase of **136%** over the last 9 years

Final Additional Bonus.

In addition to the Reversionary Bonus, all policies resulting in claim (either by maturity or death), provided at least 15 years' premiums have been paid, and the policies are in full force as on the date of claim, are eligible for the Final (Additional) Bonus, ranging from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 350/- per Rs 1,000 sum assured.

The rates of the Final (Additional) Bonus for Endowment and Whole Life Policies are given below

No of Years' Premiums Paid	Amount of Final (Additional) Bonus per Rs 1,000/- Sum assured (Rs)	No of Years' Premiums Paid	Amount of Final (Additional) Bonus per Rs 1,000/- Sum assured (Rs)
Less than 15 years	NIL	27 years	158
15 years	50	28 years	172
16 years	56	29 years	186
17 years	62	30 years	200
18 years	68	31 years	215
19 years	74	32 years	230
20 years	80	33 years	245
21 years	90	34 years	260
22 years	100	35 years	275
23 years	110	36 years	290
24 years	120	37 years	305
25 years	130	38 years	320
26 years	144	39 years	335
		40 years and above	350

The rates for Anticipated Endowment Policies are Rs. 25/- for a term of 20 years and Rs. 40/- for a term of 25 years

Life Insurance Corporation of India

34 years in the business of life.

Vogue LIC 103 90

Emergency and was very violently against an Emergency. But when they amended the Constitution they left this bit within, they didn't remove it.

Q: Well, I realise you think the proclamation of the Emergency was valid. What was there with the way the Emergency developed that you didn't care for?
A: A lot of things just went wrong.

Q: What sort of things went wrong?
A: Basically, I think the government lost control of the administration, of what the state governments, of what the other politicians were doing. What it also did was cut off feedback.

Q: Through censorship of the press?
A: Well, censorship, maybe a certain amount of fear psychosis.

Q: Don't you think these sort of things might happen in any Emergency?
A: Only if it goes on for an extended period. If it had finished off in a few months it would have been okay.

Q: Were you at the time in favour of it being lifted early?
A: Well, I was not very much for the proclamation of the Emergency at the beginning. But there was very definite positive fallout in the infrastructure and other sort of development areas during that period. And if it had been withdrawn earlier...

Q: What date do you think, middle of '76?
A: *(Pause)*. Six months would have been enough.

Q: What do you think about the Family planning programme?
A: That went totally out of hand.

Q: That went out of hand later?
A: But there also I don't know how much it went out of hand and how much it was believed to have gone out of hand. It is very difficult to draw a line. But the fact is that propaganda-wise it very definitely went out of hand.

Q: It was widely thought at the time and we were told this later as well that your brother thought it was a mistake calling the elections in '77. What were your views at the time? Did you think it was the right decision?
A: Yes, I think it was the right decision to call the elections. I think the elections should have been held on schedule a year earlier. But if you ask me whether the Congress was going to win or lose I knew the Congress was going to lose.

Q: And you told your mother as much?
A: I told my mother. So did my brother.

Q: What did she think?
A: I don't know what she thought. I don't think she was sure of winning, I mean, that I know.

Q: Coming to corruption in India, would you care to make some sort of comment on the proliferation of corruption in the country, what you think the causes are?
A: *(Pause.)* Well, there is a certain shift in the moral standards which one has to accept with fast development, a change in the social set up. So there are these tensions which do lead to this. But we have not really taken enough steps to correct it.

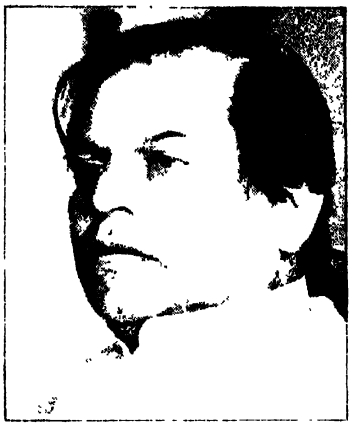
Q: By 'we' do you mean your government or all governments?
A: No, I mean all governments. And I have started taking some now but one has to...the problem that one really faces is.. that are you going to be hard enough to upset the apple cart in trying to straighten things up or are you going to play it a little softer.

Q: There is so much corruption that your own governor has reported back about it to you. How do intend to make an example of cleansing public life?
A: We already have certain systems which are established. Unfortunately, people don't like using them. Also, a lot is said about corruption. For example, Antulay was accused of all sorts of things. The high courts have more or less cleared him, not completely but certainly in certain areas. Now suddenly the people who were accusing him say that the high courts are not reliable. Now who is reliable? You have to rely on somebody to give you an answer. Like Bhajan Lal for example. Now we put a retired judge to look into the charges and he said there was nothing to pursue. Again the newspapers don't want to accept that. Now if they are not going to accept the verdict of judges then we are really in deep trouble. And the fact is that we have got certain institutions, but people are unwilling to use them. In Kerala, for example, I was given a large chargesheet against a minister. I said, why don't you give it to the Lokayukta who's here and who is established? And the Lokayukta is a judge but they don't want to do it. Because they have to give it in as an affidavit and then they are held accountable in case it is wrong.

Q: Don't you think, can't you conceive that the judges might be corrupt?
A: In which case there is no way we can stop it. You have to rely on someone. And so far there has not been a major accusation against the judges or the judicial system of corruption.

The Sunday Observer
13 October, 1985





We put a retired judge to look into the charges (against Bhajan Lal) and he said there was nothing to pursue. The high courts have cleared him (Antulay)... The newspapers don't want to accept that

V. GANGADHAR

Fourth-rate estate?

Too much is being made of the assault on journalists at the swearing-in ceremony

Are Indian journalists, particularly the Delhi-based special correspondents who rub shoulders with the high and the mighty, a special breed? The hue and cry over the 'brutal assault' by Rashtrapati Bhavan security personnel on the media persons who were 'prevented' from covering the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's council of ministers raises some interesting questions:

Did the media persons reach the venue on time? Didn't they know that huge crowds were expected at the ceremony? Did they believe that whatever be the circumstances, the authorities were duty-bound to keep the seats reserved?

While the assault on the media persons is to be condemned, are the complainants as innocent as they are made out to be? Veteran journalist and columnist, Inder Malhotra has this to say on the happenings: "By now, the sordid facts are well-known. It was a section of my own colleagues in the capital's press corps, which, throwing to the winds every norm of decency and decorum, shouted objectionable slogans in the President's presence at a solemn state function. Doubtless, the agitated media persons had grave provocation. For the 'crime' of being late for the function, they had been treated very roughly by securitymen. But for Heaven's sake, whatever the provocation some places and some things ought to be sacred." While condemning the excesses of the security personnel, Malhotra has a word of advice for his colleagues: "Sometimes we too tend to behave as a law unto ourselves. We feel entitled to every privilege but obliged to follow no rule. We ought to remember that the fourth estate has a duty not to reduce itself to a fourth-rate estate."

Sound advice indeed. Some of the slogans shouted by irate journalists make it clear they have short memories. One of the journalists shouted at V.C. Shukla and wanted to know if the infamous Emergency had again been clamped. Doesn't this gentleman remember how the 'free and fearless Indian press' behaved during the Emergency? And when one of the newly sworn-in ministers promised an inquiry into the happenings, another journalist derisively wondered if it would be similar to the Bofors inquiry. Well, we all know how the press reacted to the Bofors scandal!

The same kind of drama was enacted (with a less disastrous climax) when the Prime Minister visited Bombay on 25 November. Reporters and photographers, who had gathered uninvited at the Raj Bhavan where the Prime Minister was having dinner with some of the city's 'intellectuals', became restless and began blocking the road when the dinner invitees started trickling out. Finally, through some VVVIP influence, the angry press was allowed into the Raj Bhavan where they protested against the police high-handedness to the chief minister, who pointed out that the press was usually not allowed when VVVIPs were staying at the Raj Bhavan. Finally, Chandra Shekhar came out to meet the press and this was the result of the question-answer session:

Enforcing a common civil code -- He had not applied his mind to the issue.

Ayodhya kar seva *on 6 December* -- The issue was being dealt with.

Bomb explosion at V.P. Singh's





Veteran journalist **Inder Malhotra** says: "For the 'crime' of being late for the function, they (journalists) had been treated very roughly by securitymen"

meeting—Violence must be condemned.

Stability of his government—No one is in a position to say what would happen in the future (He should have sung '*Que sera...que sera...*).

Cabinet expansion—He had not thought about it.

Maharashtra Janata Dal (S)—The problems would be sorted out.

Big deal, eh! Was it worth making all that fuss about not being admitted to Raj Bhavan?

Out of touch

How elitist is our English press! Vir Sanghvi in SUNDAY faults Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's obsession about poverty particularly in the 1990's, as being an unhealthy preoccupation with the ideas of a bygone era. "His critics believe that he clings to the rhetoric of the socialist 1950's: a distrust of multinationals, a hatred of consumer goods, a misunderstanding of the role of market and childlike faith in the value of the public sector. At a time when the socialist world is busy reconstructing itself, such an attitude seems to be hopelessly out of time with the times."

It makes one wonder as to what kind of a world some of our journalists are living in! Don't they open their eyes and observe what is around them? 1950's or 1990's, poverty is the major issue in this wretched country. The gap between the rich and the poor is also steadily widening. The rhetoric of the socialist 1950's, which is aimed at bridging this gulf, has equal relevance today. As for multinationals, no one objects if they introduce the latest technology in India. But they have been allowed to manufacture and market an increasing variety of luxury consumer goods.

Thank Heavens the poor in India are unable to read what is written about them in the elitist English press. Otherwise, we may well have a class war in the society. On a sillier level, columnist Shobha De suggests that Chandra Shekhar engage an 'elocution teacher' to help him pronounce the word 'law' because he persists in saying 'la'. So along with planning experts, technological wizards, let's have a Prof. Henry Higgins at the Prime Minister's office.

Exceptions to the rule

Surprisingly, two veteran political pundits have said things about Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. K.R. Malkani, the RSS-intellectual was in jail along with Chandra Shekhar during the Emergency and came to know him well. He feels that Chandra Shekhar who had risen from the ranks without being a raja or a rani's son could make a good Prime Minister. Chandra Shekhar is for the upliftment of the poor without being a Mandaliser. He has consistently supported Nepal's struggle for democracy. Malkani predicts that Chandra Shekhar can be expected to be more practical and less devious than V.P. Singh and also pats him on the back for defending the BJP positions—on principle. Chandra Shekhar had said that the BJP was right in walking out of the last meeting of the National Integration Council after the V.P. Singh government had deliberately leaked out a misleading interpretation of the BJP's position on the locus *standi* of courts in the Ayodhya issue.





Columnist **Shobha Dé** even suggests that **Chandra Shekhar** engage an 'elocution teacher' to help him pronounce 'law' because he persists in saying 'la'

Girilal Jain *(Sunday Mail)* who, these days, toes a stronger BJP line than even men like Malkani, offers an interesting study of the Chandra Shekhar-Mulayam Singh alliance. Of course, they have come together only because of their shared antipathy for V.P. Singh, Jain points out.

The Prime Minister has followed the Acharya Narendra Dava-JP kind of socialism: Both the Acharya and JP had strong Hindu roots. The former wrote exhaustively on Hinduism and the latter, while taking up the cause of morality in public life in the 1970's, leaned heavily on the RSS philosophy which he came to respect. On the other hand, Mulayam's mentor, Ram Manohar Lohia, was in every sense the opposite of the kind and gentle JP, revelling in harsh and often abusive denigration of those with whom he chose to disagree. Jain argues that it was the Lohia factor which drove JP out of politics during a crucial period in the history of the country.

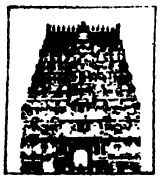
Democracy is alive

While there is no shortage of doomsday oracles, veteran political observer Ajit Bhattacharjea *(Sunday Indian Express)*, finds nothing unusual, undemocratic and unstable in the present political situation. The Lok Sabha debate on the motion of confidence in the Chandra Shekhar ministry, according to him, was an elevating experience with almost every speaker expressing faith in the Constitution. "Parliamentary decorum was observed with minor lapses despite the unique significance of the situation. I do not recall a major crisis handled better before in terms of constitutional and parliamentary procedure. Contrary to the pessimism exuded by several commentators, domestic and foreign (and those who swear by the *Economist*) democracy is alive in India, and capable of coping with political crises that would splinter many other countries or lead to military rule!"

Now, that is what I call cheerful optimism. Do I hear Nikhil Chakravartty gnashing his teeth? ●

...n the edge

Karunanidhi makes a frantic bid to cling on to power



TAMIL NADU

The DMK government was shocked. Trouble was expected, but surely not so fast. Chandra Shekhar had hardly settled himself in the prime ministerial chair when he threatened to impose Central control over Tamil Nadu, apparently because the law and order situation in the state was deplorable. Jolted into action, the Tamil Nadu police swooped into a Tamil Tigers' hideout in the early hours of 30 November, seized one revolver, some kerosene and some medicine, and arrested 11 militants.

The charges against chief minister M. Karunanidhi were not new. Time and again, he had been accused of sheltering the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). And this time he was charged with threatening the state's peace by not restraining the LTTE at all, especially along the state's southern coastline. Added to this was the zero performance of the DMK in the last Lok Sabha polls, the food crunch and the trouble brewing over cheap liquor.

With friend V.P. Singh's exit, Karunanidhi is in a tight spot, especially since the the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance is up in arms against him. The BJP too is against him and is pressing for a White Paper, which Karunanidhi had promised earlier, on the activities of the Eelam militants in the state. Only the left parties seem to be siding with him. Undoubtedly, the LTTE issue poses the greatest threat to his government. And the charges have been coming from unexpected quarters.

On 15 November, the naval chief designate, vice-admiral Ramdas, announced to the media that in the last three or four months, the Navy apprehended about 100 Sri Lankan Tamils engaged in smuggling and gunrunning across the Palk Straits, but were let off by the state government. The state should take definite steps to flush them out, he said, but the administration was singularly uninterested in taking any steps.



Karunanidhi: in a tight spot

The accusations were splashed on the front pages of most local dailies. And Karunanidhi got busy denying them. "It is now the turn of a naval officer," he wailed, "to join the chorus of politicians who have been on this smear campaign against us." He also explained that of the 100-odd Lankan Tamils handed over to the police by the navy, 58 were proved to be genuine refugees and sent off to camps, while the remaining 42 were found to be crew, and allowed to return to Sri Lanka. Besides, they were certainly not smuggling arms—only rice, onions, chillies, kerosene, petrol and Lankan currency had been seized from them.

The defence went on. The central agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Navy were present in the coordination meetings held by the state government. How come they never complained there, the chief minister wondered. Finally Karunanidhi sent off revenue minister K. Manoharan to personally convince Chandra Shekhar that the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu was far better than in some other states—for example Andhra Pradesh, where the Naxalites were going on the rampage almost every day. Besides, if the LTTE posed a problem today, it was because the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi regimes had funded it earlier, the DMK pointed out. And even as the AIADMK raised the alarm over the LTTE's activities in Tamil Nadu , it was printing posters of Tiger hero Prabhakaran, and endorsing his demand for a separate state.

Manoharan did his job well. He even called on "old-friend" Devi Lal, now comfortably back in the deputy PM's chair. Probably reminding the Tau of the good old times when he had flown to Madras within hours of being sworn in, last year, to be the chief guest at Karunanidhi's daughter's wedding. And, of course, the huge crowds at the farmers' rallies organised by the DMK for the Tau.

"But would Devi Lal be willing to stake his post, which was restored to him thanks to Rajiv, just to protect Karunanidhi?" asked an AIADMK official. The Opposition is busy reminding people that in 1980, when the ruling AIADMK had secured only

two seats in the parliamentary elections, the Congress government at the Centre, then siding with the DMK, had dismissed the AIADMK government in Tamil Nadu. The same logic would ask for the dismissal of the DMK government since the DMK had failed to secure a single seat in the last Lok Sabha elections.

So, although the PM has assured that he would not act against the state government "under pressure" from outside quarters, Karunanidhi is hardly assured.

With reason. Recently there was the embarrassing charge by Lankan defence minister Ranjan Wijeratne, that the LTTE was ferrying across at least ten boatloads of arms and ammunition from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka every day. Besides, there have been reports that barely a couple of weeks ago, the Tigers ferried six Maruti Omni vans across to Sri Lanka from Thanjavore. Then there was the embarrassing episode of a national news agency being asked to withdraw news on LTTE arms smuggling. The Rameswaram correspondent of the United News Agency (UNI) had reported that some LTTE men, carrying heavy weapons, had arrived in motor-boats. An alarmed state home secretary, R. Nagarajan, immediately had UNI withdraw the news. Thus the Rameswaram despatch had a quiet burial.

Yet another example of the government throttling the media if it threatened the peace of the LTTE was the transfer of S. Samudram, news editor of Doordarshan. Regarded by the CM as an anti-LTTE man, Samudram earned Karunanidhi's wrath when he refused the CM's request to black-out the report on the LTTE's massacre of Muslims from the news bulletin. A livid Karunanidhi allegedly complained to the then information and broadcasting minister P. Upendra, and Samudram's transfer to All India Radio came through recently.

So, Karunanidhi prepares for his Delhi trip on 3 December, apparently for the National Front presidium, but presumably also for a talk with the PM, as a last-ditch effort to save his seat.

And in view of the present disheartening developments, the CM has published an emotionally charged poem in his party organ, *Murasoli*, on 22 November, significantly titled *Nilaiyatrathu*. It means 'impermanence'. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Crossing swords

Chandra Shekhar wields the stick, while militants brandish the gun



PUNJAB

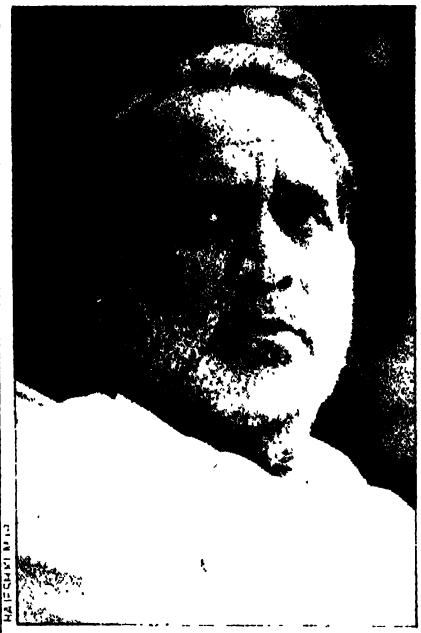
Chandra Shekhar has decided to act tough in Punjab. This was evident from the swoopdown on top Akali leaders in Chandigarh and other parts of the state, just before the scheduled all-party meeting at Anandpur Sahib on 25 November. The government also banned the meeting. It was a well-planned operation: among those who were detained by the police were Simranjeet Singh Mann, Gurbachan Singh Tohra, Prakash Singh Badal and Tota Singh.

Nonetheless, a somewhat truncated conclave of Akali leaders was held in Anandpur Sahib, despite the ban order. Most Sikh organisations protested against the ban, but the government stood firm. According to an official spokesman, the ban had been imposed, as the government had information that the Anandpur Sahib meeting had been convened "with a definite intention of announcing a subversive programme of action intended to create disruption, disorder and a situation of confrontation with the government so as to encourage the secessionist forces..."

Though Mann and his colleagues had also been detained by the V.P. Singh regime, there was a difference this time. Mann had been arrested earlier for defying prohibitory orders and participating in a march towards the Golden Temple. But that was after V.P. Singh gave him a long rope in trying to play the Mann card to win peace in Punjab. But Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar is keen on showing that he is following a diametrically opposite policy. However, the clampdown negated the possibilities of the various Akali factions coming together and isolating the militants. And though the leaders were released after four days of incarceration, a near total *bandh* was witnessed in Punjab.

In the meantime, the killings in the state have gone up to a frightening level—averaging 25 a day since the middle of this year. Significantly, more Sikhs are being killed these days than earlier. And many of them are being liquidated for being suspected informers.

On 24 November, the security forces in the state received a major setback when Harjit Singh, the superintendent of police (SP) of Tarn Taran was killed in a mine blast. Harjit Singh had spearheaded many successful operations in Tarn Taran and had figured on the hit-list of the militants for some time. His killing marked the beginning of a new pattern in the crime scenario in the state. The mine which had been dug beneath the highway close to the SP's house was detonated by remote-control, killing Harjit Singh and his three security guards instantly.



Chandra Shekhar:muscle flexing

In fact, Harjit Singh's death changes the complexion of VIP security in the country. Immediately after the incident, a high-level body reviewed security arrangements in Delhi. Officials present at the meeting even contemplated the requisitioning of anti-mine tanks for the Prime Minister and director general of Punjab police since even Harjit Singh's bullet-proof jeep had been easily blown up by an explosive. •

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

...d Jesus wept

Mystery shrouds the brutal murder of two nuns



MAHARASHTRA

It was like any other day. On 15 November Sister Veronica Sylvia (42) and Sister Priya (32), two nuns who lived at Sneha Sadan, in Mistry Apartments, off Jogeshwari East Highway in Bombay, set out on their usual work. While Sister Sylvia left in the morning to teach at the Infant Jesus Primary School, about 300 metres from the apartment, Sister Priya left for her sewing classes at Mahakali Caves Road.

The nuns had other responsibilities too. They looked after 25-odd street children who came to Sneha Sadan to be taught and fed. For the two sisters, the day ended just as all other days. At around 9 pm, they bade good-night to eight boys who slept in a hall adjacent to their room and retired for the day.

Next morning, the boys awoke at 7 am. But to their surprise they found that the nuns were not yet up and ready. So they went and knocked on the door of the room in which the Sisters slept. There was no response.

Something was clearly amiss. One of the boys went round the house and peeped through the windows and what he saw made him blanch from shock. Sister Priya was sprawled in a pool of blood and near her lay Sister Sylvia.

The boy ran to inform Father Juze D'Souza, the parish priest and principal of the Infant Jesus school. The priest rushed to the house, looked through the windows and saw the ghastly sight. Later, he had the door opened and entered what he describes as a "butcher's shop". By this time the word had spread and other members of the clergy had arrived. "I have never in all my days, seen anything like this," says Father Juze. "It was a nightmare. There was blood everywhere, the place smelt of something forbidden, something dangerous."

When the police arrived the members of the church were in a sullen mood. They refused to let the cops inside till a lady doctor and women police personnel arrived. The stabbings, the police later said, could have taken place any time between 10 pm the previous night and 7 am on 16 November.

The bodies were handed over to the church authorities after the post-mortem had been done, and on 17 November the two nuns were laid to rest. The Christian community was shocked and outraged. Nearly 7,000 people turned up at the funeral and many were visibly angry. "If this were to have happened to a Hindu or a Muslim there would have been hell to pay," said a bitter Father Juze.



KAMAL VASAN

The nuns before the burial: murder most foul

On 18 November, Christians were in for a bigger shock. *The Times of India, Indian Express, Samnaa, Nav Bharat Times* and a host of other publications carried reports, which, according to a local priest, were like "a knife through the Christian soul". The reports stated that the two nuns were used to "frequent sexual intercourse" and one of them had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. The stories were apparently based on a leaked report of the post-mortem.

There was a howl of indignation from the Christian community, and Cardinal Simon Pimenta denounced the reports, while the police denied that there was any truth in them. Suddenly the murders were not important anymore. Sleazy stories about the nuns' supposed licentiousness took over and attributed the murders to a lover's jealousy.

Dr Pritam Phatnani, honorary professor of forensic medicine at Tilak Medical College, in Sion, Bombay, who was initially requested by the joint commissioner, crime branch, Arvind Inamdar, to help out with the case says, "I don't know how this leak happened. That is for the police to find out. But what I can say is that somebody jumped the gun. A firm conclusion can only be reached after the full text of the report has been read. The language of post-mortem reports is such that things can easily be pulled out of context, and this leads to many twists and turns." Inamdar himself appears bewildered by the leak. Later, police sources stated that an officer had been transferred "and pushed upstairs elsewhere". Inamdar, however, still maintains that the search is on to find out who planted the story.

Meanwhile, the police picked up three suspects who, sources aver, had nothing to do with the murders. The "breakthrough" that the police promised was still to materialise. The post-mortem report will now come from the State Forensic Science Laboratory at Kalina, where the genital swabs of the murdered nuns were taken.

The motive behind the crime still remains unclear. Testifies Father D'Souza: "House number four and six where the nuns were staying fell under the parish of Infant Jesus, of which I am the priest. Like everyone else, I do not know why the two nuns were murdered. There have been no servants, so the 'sacking' theory does not apply. There is no property problem, because the property belongs to the Sneha Trust. And let me assure you there is nothing to rob here. There could be a man who was frequently seeing one of the Sisters. This could be a link. I think the police is following this lead. But whatever the truth is, it must be told."

One of the boys living in Sneha Sadan has something interesting to tell. Raj Kumar is not sure, but he feels that there could be a connection between what he had seen and the crime. "At 4 o'clock in the afternoon (15 November)," he says, "I saw a man following Sister Priya. I was going to play when I noticed him. The grounds here are big and there are many trees and bushes, and Sister Priya did not see him. He was not a heavily built man. He was wearing a bush shirt and had light eyes, like a cat. He also had a moustache. I watched him for some time and went to play. How was I to know that the two Sisters would be murdered that night?"

Says Inamdar: "Right now there are a lot of wild rumours. The police will get the man or men who did this. It is a matter of time." But people such as Father Placid Fonesca, director of Sneha Sadan, and Father Thomas Cano of Saint Thomas' Church in Goregaon, Bombay, seem to have no faith in the police. "It is going to be a difficult case to solve," asserts Cano, and adds, somewhat dejectedly, "It is all in the hands of the Lord."

And he makes no bones about his bitterness. "The time has come for a re-evaluation. If it had been any other community, the press would not have dared to print all those stories. It is time we woke up to our weakness," he says. ●

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

Killer fever

Dengue reappears with a vengeance in Calcutta



WEST BENGAL

On the pages of the 'death register', a slim bound volume at the paediatric ward of the Calcutta Medical College Hospital, are printed the words "peon book". The "peon book" tells the daily story of tragedies, including the 18 deaths since the middle of September, deaths which could have been avoided if the state government and the Calcutta Corporation had reacted quickly when the news of a dengue outbreak first trickled in.

Instead, the authorities chose to turn a Nelson's eye to the problem dismissing the dengue outbreak as a non-issue. "People are creating a fear psychosis. Everything is under control; everything is being done," said Subodh De, mayor-in-council, health, of the corporation as the death toll began to rise and severely handicapped doctors fought to save young lives. The state authorities today insist that the death toll is only 12, while 18 young children have died at only one hospital. "Many dengue cases have been wrongly diagnosed as encephalitis, while many other children have died without treatment," a young doctor at the Calcutta Medical College said. "The death toll stands at 17," Dr Manish Chakraborty, the leading virologist at the Tropical School of Medicine told SUNDAY on 28 November.

From the grimy, congested houses in central Calcutta were reported the first cases of dengue, a disease spread by the Aedus Aegyptus mosquito, in September. "The disease has spread to the equally congested areas of north Calcutta and to the southern fringes of the city like Jadavpur and Behala and the adjoining districts of Howrah and Hooghly," said Dr Chakraborty. Most of the children who have died were suffering from dengue haemorrhage fever (DHF), a particularly virulent form of dengue. "The patients suffer from high fever, suffer severe body-aches and you see rashes all over their bodies. And they vomit blood, not much, just a few drops perhaps," says Dr Pranab Bhowmick, a well-known paediatrician.

But the Calcutta Corporation's promise to eradicate mosquitoes remains only a promise, as garbage piles up all over the city and sanitation systems are on the edge of collapse.

After ravaging the city in the early Sixties, when 700 people—mostly children—had died, dengue had disappeared for nearly 20 years, returning briefly in 1983 when parts of east Calcutta were affected. But in 1987, four leading scientists stressed the "need for careful surveillance because of a possible threat of dengue haemorrhagic fever as experienced in Indonesia..." The article was published in a leading medical journal, but the authorities did not heed the warning. Today, as young children continue to die, the Calcutta Corporation has finally begun "an education programme" and has started spraying insecticide in fits and starts. Though state youth Congress(I) workers complained about the state of affairs to the Governor, Dr Nurul Hasan, and the Congress(I) municipal party and dissident CPI(M) leaders are up in arms, there is no immediate improvement And the deaths of children (those between the ages of three and six are most vulnerable) may only increase. ●

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta



Blood samples being tested for Dengue: the toll is rising

...orok parleys

The government's education policy trips the tribals



TRIPURA

Their mother-tongue is driving them to despair. The tribals of Tripura, who are being reduced to a demographic nonentity by a slow but incessant flow of non-tribals from Bangladesh across the border, are beginning to realise that Kokborok—a language spoken by eight major tribes in the state—is impeding their development.

The problem lies not so much with the language itself as with the government's education policy. Way back in 1978, when the Left Front wrested power in the state, the new government made Kokborok the medium of instruction in all primary schools in the tribal-dominated areas. The move, in the face of it, was unassailable and certainly populist. It enabled tribal children to study in their own mother-tongue and opened up possibilities of raising the literacy level.

But therein lay a catch. The left regime did not care to introduce a link language that could help the students continue their studies at the secondary level, where the medium of instruction was Bengali or English. It took a few years for the incongruity to really show up. And when it did, the tribals hoped that the Congress(I)-TUJS alliance, which elbowed out the Left Front in February 1988, would correct the anomaly.

But things have only gone from bad to worse. According to the Tribal Students Federation (TSF), about 40 to 45 thousand tribal students, unable to cope with the abrupt change in the medium of instruction, have dropped out of school so far. The tribals are badly outnumbered in the field of education—just as they are in most other spheres—and this high dropout rate makes them feel sceptical about the system itself.

What is more shocking is the manner in which the tribal schools are run. The TSF, which has about 50,000 students under its fold, complains that the teachers running these institutions are grossly underqualified. Many of them lack secondary-level education, the TSF leaders point out, and say that residential schools in the Autonomous District Council areas are on the verge of collapse.

Members of the Jana Sanghati Parishad (JSP), an organisation of scholars and social activists, corroborate the TSF charges. According to a JSP functionary, the Congress(I)-TUJS alliance, headed by Sudhir Ranjan Mazumdar, bought peace with the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) by promising to rehabilitate the militants by offering many of them jobs as teachers in Kokborok schools. The outcrop of this accord was that many TNV activists, who could barely boast of having primary education, were inducted as teachers.

The TSF also resents the use of the Bengali script for Kokborok and advocates the use of the Roman script instead. The Bengali script was, obviously, chosen to promote communal integration and ward off Christian missionary influences that are associated with the Roman script. Today, however, the younger tribals insist that the Bengali script does not match the phonetic nuances of the Kokborok language and are demanding the formation of an expert committee to settle the controversy.



Tripura tribals: in a limbo

What really irks the tribals is their abysmal success rate. According to M.L. Kolor, the TSF vice-president, only about five per cent of the tribal

A train to Bangladesh

A new broad-gauge line is opened between India and her neighbour

It was an event tinged with nostalgia. A train from India to Bangladesh—the first since Independence—steamed out of Singhabad, in Malda (north Bengal), towards Rohanpur across the border on 24 November. The 60-wagon goods train, carrying ballast and stone chips for the Bangladesh Railways, brought back memories of pre-Partition days when trains ran freely between these stations without having to cross an international border. Today, that boundary remains an inviolable reality, but the broad-gauge line, restored at the cost of Rs 5 crores by the government of India, has brought the two countries closer.

The Singhabad-Rohanpur railway link is not the only one of its kind between India and Bangladesh. There are two other broad-gauge links between the two countries under the Eastern Railway, and the Northern Frontier Railway. However, this is the first time that a train actually went into to Bangladesh from India after more than four decades.

One important reason behind the restoration of the railway after so many years is that the Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON) has bagged a part contract in the $600 million Jamuna bridge project in Sirajunj in Bangladesh. The project requires huge quantities of stone chips and ballast, which can now be supplied by India, since the major stone quarries in eastern India are located close to the Bangladesh border and are well-connected by railways.



students pass the Madhyamik examination and, those who do, fail to compete with the non-tribals. And in a state where there are few job opportunities outside the government sector, the tribals are finding themselves being increasingly marginalised due to lack of adequate qualification. So, what they are now demanding is a scientific language policy and not political patronage. ●

Anish Gupta/Agartala

Life after Hailakandi

The communal spectre haunts the Barak Valley



ASSAM

Prafulla Mahanta had refused to learn, and in the end he paid the price. When Hailakandi town in south Assam succumbed to communal violence, all that the former chief minister did was to send a Cabinet minister and rush five platoons of armed police to tackle the situation. The virtual nonchalance with which Mahanta faced the communal challenge was wholly in keeping with the casualness that marked his approach to the ULFA menace, and his detractors in New Delhi fully exploited this weakness of his to extend President's Rule in Assam. In fact, besides the activities of the ULFA, the Hailakandi clashes, which broke out on 17 November and claimed 15 lives, also influenced the Centre's decision favouring a spell of President's Rule in the state.

That Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was worried about the developments at Hailakandi was evident from the fact that he summoned the director of the Intelligence Bureau for a midnight briefing on 17 November. The clashes figured again in the crucial high-level meeting at the PM's Race Course Road office where the fate of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) government and possibilities of holding Assembly elections on schedule were finally sealed.

The imposition of President's Rule has not, however, driven the fear out of the people's mind. The question now being asked is whether the new dispensation will be able to cement the fractured relations between the two communities. The distrust and the feeling of acrimony between them have become so acute that even responsible citizens are unable to shrug off the sense of suspicion. Even the administration seems to be affected by the communal divide, with police and other officials being split along communal lines.

The residents of the town and the adjoining rural areas where the trouble had spread are appalled by the partisan stand the police and district officials had taken. Hindu officers had, in some cases, scuttled police action in Hindu-strongholds and Muslim officers did likewise when it came to taking action against offenders belonging to that community. Equally disturbing is the fact that the *adivasi* tea garden workers also became embroiled in the conflict.

People feel that the situation would have remained under control had the government imposed curfew on 17 November itself when the first spell of clashes rocked Hailakandi. Instead, the government chose to wait till the next day. The army was called out on 18 November, but was actually deployed 24 hours later. Says Nurul Huda, district secretary of the CPI(M): "This lackadaisical approach to the situation by the district authorities appeared intriguing.

And if the administration had indeed sunk to such depths, will President's Rule make a difference in Hailakandi? ●

Santanu Ghosh/Silchar

Earlier attempts by the Government of Bangladesh to import boulders and stone chips by barges from Malaysia had proved too costly and cumbersome. Says Ashoke Sengupta, adviser to the Indian Railways, "We hope that we will get the contract for supplying materials for the construction work of the river bridge and for that we now require the shortest railway link between the two countries."

The inaugural run, on 24 November, from Singhabad, was an occasion for celebration. Villagers from neighbouring villages turned out in large numbers to witness the historic flag-off and slogans of India-Bangladesh friendship rent the air. The train, loaded with ballast from Bakudi, reached Singhabad around 11 am. And five hours later, it left for Rohanpur, driven by the two locomasters from Bangladesh.

The train was received by M. Abdullah, the divisional railway manager of the Paksey division of Bangladesh Railways, and was greeted with slogans like "*Bharat-Bangla moitri amar rahe* (Long live India-Bangla friendship)". Abdullah even went as far as to say that it won't be long before passenger trains start operating between the two countries. And surely, people on both sides of the border look forward to that momentous day. ●

Tamal Sengupta/Singhabad and Malda

The inauguration of the rail link: opening new vistas



BEGINNING 9 DECEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

...S (21 March—20 April)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. An unfavourable period for businessmen to make fresh investments. There may be problems in the office, but do not lose your cool. Journalists may get a raise.

Good dates: 9, 12 and 15
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: South

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



Swimmers and athletes will be successful. Professionals should avoid strenuous exercises. Do not mix business with pleasure. Those in service should deal tactfully with their subordinates. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 14
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



A very hectic week lies ahead of you. Make all the changes that you had planned while the going is good. A perfect period for businessmen to launch new ventures. Risky deals may turn out to be profitable.

Good dates: 10, 11 and 13
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: South-West

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



An unfavourable week is in store for you. You are likely to run out of money but your friends will be helpful. A close relative may fall ill. However, your children will be a source of joy for you.

Good dates: 12, 13 and 15
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: North

LEO (21 July—20 August)



An unfavourable week for professionals. Exercise tact and patience in all your dealings. Businessmen, however, may do well. Be on the guard against deceit. Your friends will be helpful.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 12
Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: East

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



A favourable week for you. The financial front looks bright, and your debts will be settled. Businessmen should avoid fresh investments. Romance is in the offing and problems with your partner will be resolved.

Good dates: 10, 12 and 14
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: North-west

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



A favourable week for businessman and speculators. You can go ahead with fresh investments and acquire new stocks. You may make new friends but maintain some distance from them.

Good dates: 11, 13 and 15
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: West

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



A good week for most of you. Professionals can go ahead with their plans and they might be successful. The financial front will pose problems and you may have to go for loans. Travelling is on the cards for you.

Good dates: 12, 14 and 15
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: East

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



An ideal week for socialising. Parties and picnics will keep you busy. Intellectuals and artists will be successful. You will be praised by your colleagues. This is a good time to make changes.

Good dates: 9, 11 and 13
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: West

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



A favourable week for most of you. At home, your children will be a source of joy to you. You are likely to run out of funds and may have to borrow. An ideal week for romance. But avoid marriage plans.

Good dates: 10, 13 and 14
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: South

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



Financially, this may not be a good week for you. You may not be able to clear loans. A letter may bring good tidings. A favourable week for romance. Your children will do well in their studies.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 134
Lucky numbers: 5, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: North

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



A favourable week for most of you. Scientists and doctors might do well. Minor problems are likely to bother you, but they will soon tide over. A short holiday may improve your health.

Good dates: 13, 14 and 15
Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—ARIES

The Aries man is far too dynamic and willing to take up challenges for the Scorpio woman is taking. She is farsighted and prefers security, and would like her partner to be more steady in his professional life. This difference in attitudes might lead to trouble.

Man of the people

Kamal Morarka, minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), perhaps, best qualifies for the man of the people tag.

Unlike the Raja, who made much of refusing security and then made the residents of Delhi wait endlessly at busy intersections while his motorcade got right of way, Morarka went through with his expressed intention.

Soon after the Bombay-based industrialist was sworn in, assorted guards wielding sten guns landed up at his Teen Murti Lane residence. An appalled Morarka asked them to please leave: when he needed security he would ask for it.

The securitymen, however, refused to budge, saying that they were there on



Kamal Morarka: no to security

orders, and couldn't leave until instructed to do so by their superiors.

A couple of phone calls later, the minister of state was rid of them. How long this state of affairs will last in, however, anyone's guess.

The man who came to dinner

You have to hand it to Shatrughan Sinha. Nothing fazes the man. Last week, the Governor of Maharashtra hosted a formal sit-down dinner for the Prime Minister. Bombay's elite (J.R.D. Tata, etc.) attended and were told to leave their wives behind because the Governor wanted a small gathering.

Hardly had the guests found their seats (there were place cards in front of each plate) when there was a commotion at the door.

Enter, Shatrughan Sinha followed by two producer *chamchas*. "Hello yaar!" he shouted to obviously embarrassed friends who were already seated before making his way to the Prime Minister's chair.

A surprised Chandra Shekhar looked up, only to be enveloped in a bear hug by a beaming Sinha. "*Main aapko milne aaya hoon* (I have come to meet you)," he explained somewhat unnecessarily, adding, "*Chalo yahen hi khaana kha leten hain* (Come lets eat here)."

The discomfited Raj Bhavan staff wondered where to seat the booming

HEARD AT 1 TEEN MURTI

The only party that hasn't refused Arun Nehru entry yet is the BJP. Hence all this nonsense about the Hindu psyche.

A VP LOYALIST REFERRING TO NEHRU'S PRO-HINDU STATEMENTS



Shatrughan: gatecrashing, Sinha style

Sinha: as he had not been invited there was no place card for him.

There was more to come. "*Arrey, Pehlaj, tu bhi aaja* (Pehlaj, you come over as well)," he yelled out to one of his *chamchas* while the other needed no further invitation. The Governor's staff now had to find three places for three uninvited guests. Finally, they were seated near the ADCs.

Eventually, it dawned on Shatru that, perhaps, this was not an impromptu film party. "There are invitations, or what?" he asked another guest. On being told that, yes, there were, he demanded sceptically, "show me the card, then!"

Only after the situation became clear to him that Sinha realised that he had committed a slight breach of protocol. But seeing as dinner was already being served and he was quite hungry, he decided to stay on.

CHECK-LIST

Chandra Shekhar's chief minister friends

- **Bhairon Singh Shekhawat:** An old friend of Shekhar's, Shekhawat is indebted to him for organising defections and saving his government. The Prime Minister is now calling in a favour, asking the Rajasthan chief minister to mediate in the Ayodhya dispute to get the VHP leaders to agree on a compromise.

- **Sharad Pawar:** The Maharashtra chief minister was the first to host a lunch to felicitate the new Prime Minister. And when Chandra Shekhar went to Bombay soon after being sworn in, Pawar was at his side throughout, making his closeness to the PM clear. But the CM may find his equation with Shekhar suffering now that he seems to have incurred the wrath of the Ambanis.

- **Mulayam Singh:** It was the UP chief minister's support that enabled Chandra Shekhar to rustle up sufficient numbers to beat the provisions of the Anti-defection Act. Shekhar did his bit for Mulayam by arranging for Congress support, when Yadav's ministry faced defeat on a motion of confidence in the House. Shekhar was even willing to offer the CM the home portfolio at the Centre, but Yadav chose to remain in UP.

- **Chimanbhai Patel:** Coordinated matters between 10 Janpath and 3 South Avenue Lane in the run-up to the change of government. Shekhar was properly grateful and consulted the Gujarat chief minister closely on the formation of the Cabinet.

Piracy on high seas

The saga of Dr J.K. Jain's video-cassette on Ayodhya *(see Spotlight on page 68)* gets curiouser and curiouser. Apparently the BJP member had produced a record number of cassettes, hoping to sell them for a steep Rs 180 and raking it in.

But, unfortunately for the video doctor, Madan Lal Khurana took care of that one. Khurana, an old enemy of Jain's, set his son up to sabotaging the doctor's project.



Dr J.K. Jain: losing out to M.L. Khurana

Khurana junior, who owns a video-cassette shop in Palika Bazar, made hundreds of pirated copies of the Ayodhya film, selling them for a measly Rs 70, each.

And effectively cut into Jain's profits

Meham and the media

The Prime Minister may have fought shy of appointing Kalyan Singh Kalvi minister in charge of women's welfare. But, if appearances are anything to go, we may soon see Om Prakash Chautala functioning as the official party spokesman.

At present S.P. Malviya is performing the task of briefing the press. But now that he's also petroleum minister, the arrangement has begun to seem less than perfect. After all, it doesn't look too good if a Union minister addresses assorted hacks on party affairs every other evening.

Hence, the search for a new spokesman.

Enter, Om Prakash Chautala. No sooner had the victor of Meham realised that the post was up for grabs, that he began attending every press briefing called by the party. Chautala would sit by Malviya's side as he answered the queries directed at him, slipping in his two-bit worth whenever the opportunity presented itself.

HEARD IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE OFFICE

If your initials are SS you can't stay away from Chandra Shekhar. First, it was Subramaniam Swamy and now it is Sanjay Singh.

A WEARY SENIOR BUREAUCRAT



S.P. Malviya: making way

One evening, however, the Chaudhary's eldest son got more than lucky. Malviya failed to arrive for the briefing, and Chautala held court in his inimitable style.

His performance couldn't have failed to impress, for the current gossip in political circles is that Chautala will soon be appointed official party spokesman.

Much to the consternation of the Delhi press corps, no doubt.

BAROMETER

All the AICC(I) general secretaries—how they rate

Balram Jhakar: Is the only Jat leader of consequence left in the Congress. Hence the importance accorded to him by the high command. Jhakar is making the most of his new-found prominence, hanging out at 10 Janpath most of the time.

Mahavir Prasad: After messing up in Karnataka, Prasad finds himself consigned to the dog house. Though the bonsai version of N.D. Tiwari is consulted on those states ostensibly in his charge, the party leader has frozen him out of all else.

H.K.L. Bhagat: Has been placed in charge of the Congress Working Committee and the party's parliamentary board. Visits Rajiv Gandhi at least thrice on an average day, and is sent for press briefings (instead of Gadgil and M.J. Akbar) whenever an important announcement has to be made.

C.K. Jaffer Sharief: Though officially in charge of UP affairs, Sharief hasn't visited the state more than twice in the last six months. Party leaders of Uttar Pradesh have complained to Rajiv about the general secretary's unavailability, and the fact that he spends all his time in Bangalore, nursing his constituency.

The Raja vs Advani

The fight between the Janata Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party continues. This time, the prize is the coveted post of leader of the Opposition.

With the Congress out of the way, both V.P. Singh and L.K. Advani have begun lobbying to be appointed to the post. The Raja asked Speaker Rabi Ray to treat his party and the communists as one block in the House. VP would thus qualify as leader of the single largest party, and could be appointed as leader of the Opposition. The former Prime Minister was convinced that, given his good equations with Ray, he would be able to swing this one.

But the BJP wasn't resting idle either. The chief whip of the party, Laxmi Narain Pande, wrote a letter to Ray arguing Advani's case. But the Speaker went off to Bhubaneswar, without responding to the BJP's request.

Pande then approached the secretary-general of the Lok Sabha, K.C. Rastogi, asking that the leader of the single largest party (BJP) be appointed to the post, forthwith. Rastogi countered that everything was up to the Prime Minister, whoever he approved of would get the nod.

The Raja, then doesn't appear to be in with a chance.



To check hair loss and dandruff, don't use anything else except Keo-Karpin Hair Vitalizer.

I use it. It really works!"

Use Keo-Karpin Hair Vitalizer regularly each morning an hour before bath. And before going to bed. Massage it well into the scalp with fingertips. Your hair will stay healthy and beautiful.

Keo-Karpin Hair Vitalizer contains :

- Keratin : The essential constituent of hair (1)
- Biotin : Prevents excessive hair loss (2)
- Panthenol : Revitalizes damaged hair (3)
- Nicotinic Acid : Enhances absorption of the drug (4)
- Resorcinol : Checks dandruff (5)
- Hialkyl : Prevents scalp infection (5)

Reference : (1) Windholz, M., Merck Index, 10th ed p. 760, 1983 (2) Sentel, E., Drugs & Cosmetic Industry, p. 121, 34, 1977 (3) Driscol, W.R., Drugs & Cosmetic Industry, p. 116, 42, 1975 (4) Krantz, J.C. et al, Pharm Principles of Medical Practice p 956, 1965 (5) Wade, A., Martindale, Ext. Pharmaco. p. 502, 32, 1982

The proven scientific way to prevent hair loss and dandruff.

* It is not a toilet preparation.



TSA-C/DM/HV/390

Dey's®

Dey's Medical Care you can trust



Wills Filter set the filter trend in cigarettes long years ago. Today it's still the finest. In taste, in satisfaction. Hand-picked virginia tobaccos married to an efficient filter make it so. Millions of smokers have discovered it, then stayed with it.



WILLS
FILTER

Filter and tobacco perfectly matched

A BRAND OWNED BY ITC LTD. MADE IN INDIA

STATUTORY WARNING
CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

HTA 3987

ASSAM: CRACKDOWN ON ULFA

SUNDAY

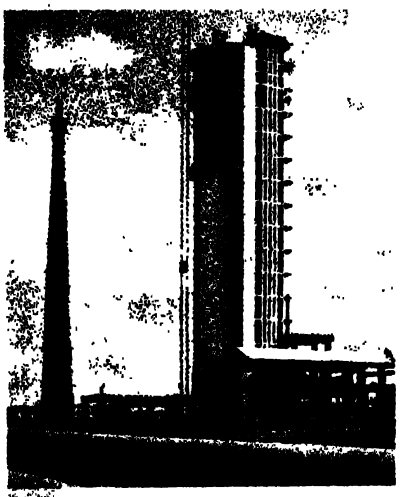
MANDIR OR MOSQUE?

Can the Ayodhya dispute ever be resolved?



JUST 8 MONTHS TO GO !

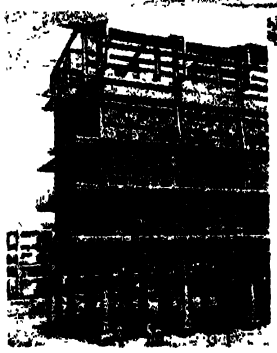




NAGARJUNA FERTILIZERS TO GO ON STREAM IN AUGUST 1991.

Project site at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh humming with activity. Major items of equipment arrived · under erection. ■ Most of the civil works completed – prili tower, DM plant building, process plants, 120m high chimney, control room, workshop, offices, compressor houses for urea and ammonia, and laboratories. ■ State grid power available. Captive power generation provided for uninterrupted operation and maintaining high production levels. ■ Rs. 785 crore Nagarjuna plant racing to go on stream in August 1991 – seeking to establish a record for project completion of a plant of this size.





NFCL

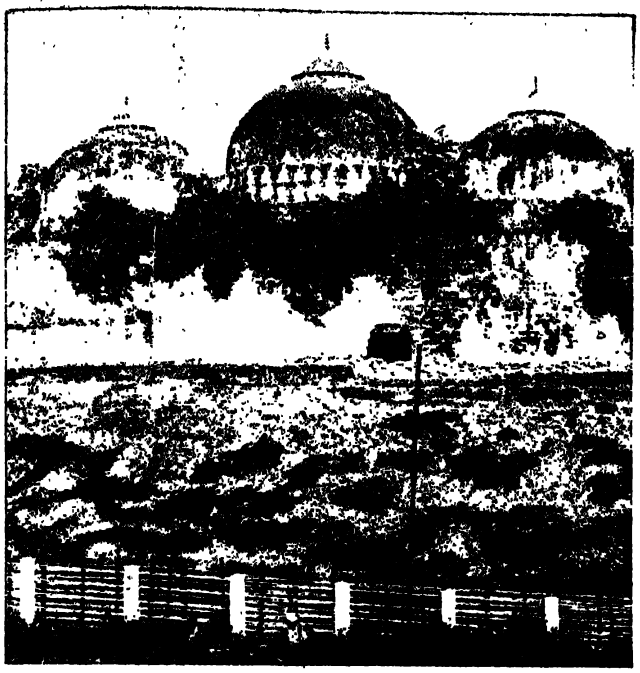
Nagarjuna Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited

Nagarjuna Hills, Hyderabad

Imageads/NFCL/corp-M (254)

CONTENTS

SUNDAY
VOLUME 17 ISSUE 49 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
16—22 DECEMBER 1990



28
COVER STORY
Mandir or mosque?
Can the Ayodhya dispute ever be resolved?

12
BOFORS
Over to Jordan
The mystery of AE Services gets even murkier.



22
PROFILE
Citizen Goenka
Love, hate and love in five phases.

43
EDUCATION
Learn on loan
Harvard University initiates a debt for education programme.

48
BUSINESS/FEATURE
Stay away
Lakshadweep islanders develop tourist phobia.

67
FESTIVAL
Slender pickings
There wasn't much for the lovers of Indian cinema at the London Film Festival.

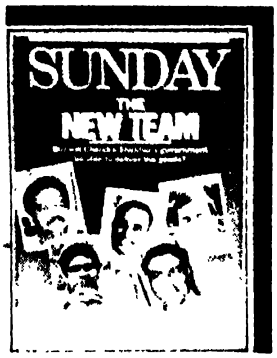
70
PERSONALITY
It's all in the mind
There's no such thing as a sex tonic, says Dr Prakash Kothari.



76
BOOK EXTRACT
Death of a PM
Ritu Sarin reconstructs the assassination of Indira Gandhi. An extract from a significant new book.

LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
MEDIA MUSINGS 10
CONTROVERSY 15
Fourteen-day wonder
DE JURE 16
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 19
SOUTH BLOCK 26
SPOTLIGHT 45
MANI-TALK 58
KHAAS BAAT 74
SPORTS 75
The centenary mess
NEWS 82
THIS INDIA 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura: 20 paise. North-eastern states. 30 paise



All the Prime Minister's men

The Prime Minister is a new hand at governance (*The new team*, 25 November—1 December). Chandra Shekhar's Cabinet is made up of the old and the new. Either way, the ministers know little about administration and less about politics.

It is unlikely that Chandra Shekhar will be able to formulate any policy without consulting Rajiv Gandhi.

Merely ousting a leader and then assuming the chair without any commitment to the country does not necessarily assure the nation of a good government. It would be better if Chandra Shekhar makes political survival his first priority. The next step would be to serve the people with the help of the Congress(I).

Nandadulal Roy Chowdhury, Kharagpur (West Bengal)

■ How successful the Shekhar government will be at governing will be proved through its actions. Chandra Shekhar has to keep in mind the myriad problems facing the nation.

It wasn't the best of beginnings, for Shekhar took 11 days to form the ministry. But now, he has to get down to the task of governance. One can only hope for the best.

B.N. Bose, Dum Dum (West Bengal)

■ It would have been better for Chandra Shekhar if he had given ministerial berths to members of parties that are allied with the Congress(I). These smaller parties have an abundance of qualified people, something which cannot be said for the Janata Dal(S).

At this stage, the formation of a consensus government seems a good idea in order to further the national interest.

Arvind Kumar Padhee, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)

■ The credibility of the new ministry comes into question. Chandra Shekhar has taken an unusually long time to constitute his ministry. Several vital portfolios are still in the hands of the Prime Minister himself

Chandra Shekhar as well as his Cabinet colleagues are new entrants in the field. A fair chance should be given to the new government. It is hoped that they will be able to solve the country's many problems. Just give them a chance.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ Shekhar took all of 11 days to form the Cabinet. And after this delay, the team that was formed was not at all inspiring. But now, Shekhar has no more excuses, the problems he has been talking about for so long have to be tackled right away.

S. Ahmed, Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh)

Tough times ahead

The special report (*Mulayam survives*, 25 November—1 December) has rightly pointed out that it was largely due to Mulayam's efforts that Chandra Shekhar could effect a formal split in the Janata Dal and become the Prime Minister. Now, the chief minister of UP has to modify his policies on Mandal and *masjid* in order to save his position. Though Mulayam has won the confidence motion with a comfortable majority, he will not find the going easy with N.D. Tiwari of the Congress(I) waiting in the wings.

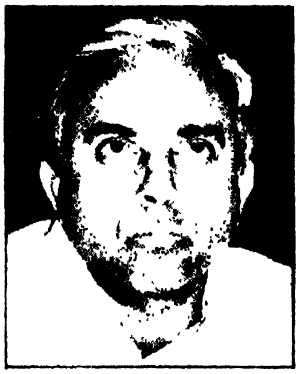
D. Dutta, Calcutta (West Bengal)

(Clockwise from top left) Devi Lal, Yashwant Sinha, Subramaniam Swamy and V.C. Shukla: Cabinet kingpins











Mulayam Singh Yadav: standing by Shekhar

Justice and caste

The story of 'ripper' Chandran was shocking (*Reprieve for a ripper*, 11—17 November). The killer should not be spared and he deserves the death sentence. The murderer is being spared just because he is a Harijan. It seems the lives of the victims are of minor importance. Even more so, because certain killers are of a certain caste. So much for justice.

Anshuka Gulati, New Delhi

■ The report was simply shocking. The very fact that a murderer has not been sent to the gallows is not only an appalling piece of news, but it beats all sense of logic. Did Dr Ambedkar, at any stage, mention that a criminal should be let off the hook on grounds of his caste? So far, we have been hearing about just reservations, but now it seems that reservation will extend to other areas as well.

N.B. Naik, Hubli (Karnataka)

Divine endorsements

Khushwant Singh is a public figure who is truly secular. He can afford to laugh at our religious and political leaders (*Hunting the guru*, 25 November—1 December). Nowhere in the world are the names of gods and goddesses used in vain. In India,



Khushwant Singh: truly secular

however, the names of religious figures are used in advertisements and what not.

It is questionable whether the names of religious figures add to the value of a product.

Ananda Sen, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)

Will Shekhar last?

In the analysis (*The options*, 25 November—1 December), several possible scenarios were drawn up regarding the future of the present government at the Centre.

I predict that Chandra Shekhar will break the Congress(I) and that he will remain in power until the winter of 1994. He will eventually make a reappearance, but this time with V.P. Singh as his political ally.

Bhupendra Visham, Nainital (Uttar Pradesh)

Mid-term polls?

The cover story (*The making of the Prime Minister*, 18—24 November) hits the nail right on the head. The emergence of Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister bodes ill for democracy in India. V.P. Singh has been replaced by a person who is a political opportunist. The major casualty is the concept of value-based politics. The elevation of Chandra Shekhar to the prime ministership establishes that rot and decay has entered Indian politics.

What Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal have done for narrow political gains and selfish interests is shameful. The present set-up at the Centre does not make for cohesive policies or a stable government.

The only way out is a mid-term poll. The victor in such an election will at least have political legitimacy

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)



Benazir Bhutto: out in the cold

All in the family

The MD seat scandal in Karnataka and the indictment of R.K. Hegde and his son by the Dayal Commission (*The family way*, 11—17 November) reveal the state of affairs prevalent in our society. It is essential that any scope for manipulating admission to professional and academic courses should be eliminated.

A. Jacob Sahayam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)

Chandra Shekhar: are his days in office numbered?



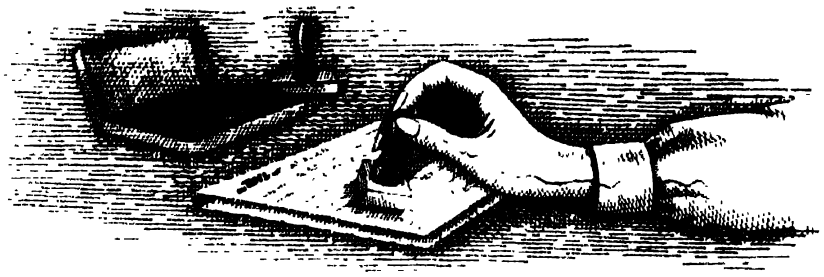
A defeat for democracy

The special report (*Benazir bites the dust*, 4—10 November) proves one thing: 11 years of Zia-rule had gone deeper into the hearts of Pakistanis than 11 months of the movement for the restoration of democracy, led by ousted Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The defeat of Benazir's Pakistan People's Party in the recent elections marks the end of democracy in that country. Besides, this will again give an impetus to Muslim fundamentalism and establish the supremacy of the army.

The low turnout of voters on election day and the alleged mass rigging resorted to by the ruling Islamic Jamhooree Ittehad went against Benazir. But what perhaps really sealed Benazir's fate was the fact that she doesn't come from the Punjab province, which alone sends as many as 115 members to a House of 207 seats.

Lakshman Sharma, Rourkela (Orissa)

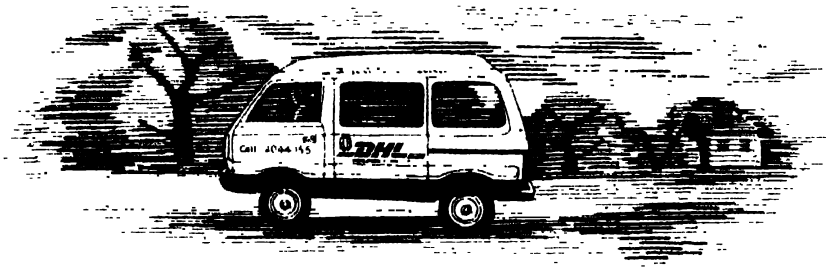
The name of the inventor of Petrosol (High on gas, SUNDAY, *2—8 December, 1990) is Swapan Kumar Sen, not Das. The error is regretted.*



FROM EASY CUSTOMS CLEARANCE.



TO PROMPT DESPATCH,



TO RAPID TRANSIT AND DELIVERY.



WE TAKE IT DOOR-TO-DOOR EVERYTIME.

STILL THINK WE'RE JUST A COURIER COMPANY?

RAKA-3150:C:90

21 years ago, we pioneered the air express industry. Since then, through a network spanning over 180 countries, we've become the fastest, most reliable way of delivering packages and documents worldwide. We offer you one door-to-door service, one all-inclusive invoice, and one truly global network. You can depend on the dedication of over 20,000 professionals, supported by over 7,000 vehicles and aircraft. So if you have any packages and documents that need to be in safe hands from beginning to end, call us for an immediate pick-up.

We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories.

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS®

DHL. THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFREIGHT LIMITED.



R.K. LAXMAN *THE TIMES OF INDIA*



We did a reasonably good job. I said in my first speech to the nation that if the government is the power, it would be wielded on behalf of the poor, and we have basically done that.

V.P. SINGH, *former Prime Minister*

It has been our consistent stand that we would like to come back only with the backing of the people's clear mandate, not by manoeuvres or intrigue.

V.N. GADGIL, *AICC(I) general secretary*

India is not a *mandir* or *masjid* which can be put together stone by stone, but a vision that has endured 5000 years and 11 months of V.P. Singh's rule.

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR, *principal aide to Rajiv Gandhi*

Politicians are villains. We are bad, but you (the Indian people) are equally bad.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN, *Insaaf party chief*

We have to teach the Muslims the new definition of *kaafir* (infidels).

ASHOK SINGHAL, *VHP general secretary*

I never thought I would become Prime Minister, specially not at this time. And the dream of my life cannot be fulfilled by just becoming Prime Minister.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Prime Minister*

There are very few terrorists who have a commitment to the ideology of Khalistan. They are there due to pressure from Pakistan.

VEERENDRA VERMA, *Governor of Punjab*

It doesn't really matter how long you last. It's better to last three months and do the job you are supposed to. I don't think the length of a government is relevant.

KAMAL MORARKA, *minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office*

The (Bihar) ministry is as large as the family of Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav.

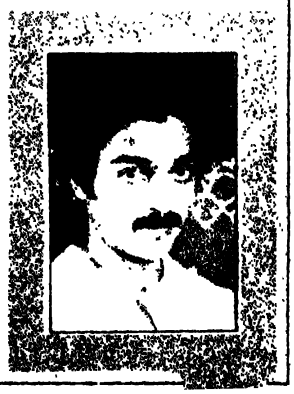
A dissident Janata Dal MLA

The whole of Karnataka knows why I was removed. The biggest liquor king in the state found me inconvenient. And got me out.

VEERENDRA PATIL, *former Karnataka chief minister*

Humour is a very serious business, as is comedy. What an artiste fears most is to be taken for a clown off screen.

KAMAL AHASAN, *actor*



VINOD MEHTA

Majority in security

Hindus have nothing to fear but the myths about themselves



I have often wondered why someone like Arun Shourie, who otherwise is the most companionable of human beings, should become insensitive and intemperate when discussing faiths other than his own. In his writings and lectures on the subject, there seems to be a compelling need to portray Islam, Christianity, Sikhism as narrow, cruel, close to fanatic; and Hinduism as generous, all-embracing, close to perfect. One sometimes feels he is playing a variation of a child's game: my religion is better than yours.

Can there be a connection between the drive to prove Hindu spiritual superiority and the crusade to erect a Ram temple at Ayodhya by destroying a mosque? Girilal Jain recently berated Westernised liberals for refusing to take account of the "civilisational conflict" that has characterised Hindu-Muslim relations and which is at the heart of the impulse animating the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign. Civilisational conflict? If you contemplate the idea, visions of two cultures, two philosophies, two riddles to existence, locked in bloody, unyielding struggle dance before the mind's eye. One does not have to be a JNU scholar to accept that, yes, such a conflict did and does exist, and that Islam in purely military terms always emerged victorious from it. The hated invader sneaking in through the Khyber Pass conquered while the invaded accomodated, adjusted and absorbed. To put it crudely, the Hindus fought and lost, fought and lost. Defeat being the sole constant in the endeavour. By insisting that the Babri Masjid be physically demolished are the vanquished trying to win at least one battle?

Islam first entered India in 711 AD when the Ummayad, governor of Iraq, launched a punitive expedition of 6,000 Syrian horses and an equal number of Iraqi camels against the rajas of Sind. The leader of that expedition offered only one option to the locals: convert or perish. In 997, Mahmud of Ghazni began his raids into the Punjab plains "zealously smashing countless Hindu temples, which he viewed with Islamic iconoclastic fervour as abominations to Allah, and looting India's cities of as many jewels, spices and women as he and his hordes of Turkish cavalry could carry back across the Afghan passes". (Stanley Wolpert: *A New History of India.*)

According to Wolpert, in 1025 the Hindu inhabitants of Somnath stood "calmly" watching the advance of Ghazni's army towards their temple city's walls, confident that Shiva, whose "miraculous" iron *lingam* hung suspended within a magnetic field inside Somnath's "womb-house", would protect his worshippers from harm. Some chroniclers maintain that 50,000 Hindus were slain on just that day. In the town of Kanauj alone Ghazni is reported to have razed 10,000 temples. "It is not difficult to appreciate the legacy of bitter Hindu-Muslim antipathy left by raids that may have taken one per cent of that toll," adds Wolpert.

Convert or perish, then, was the stark message of successive Muslim dynasties for the next 800 years. Although outnumbered, the invaders exploited better deployment of cavalry and the mounted cross-bow to quell resistance. While Hindu kingdoms flourished sporadically, Ghazni onwards, the Muslim in India was unmistakably, the ruler and to be a Muslim was to belong to the ruling class. The British also relied on the sword to promote their faith but simultaneously subtler methods were used to win the hearts and minds of the non-believers. As one missionary noted, Hindus were less interested in Biblical instruction and spiritual food and more in free rice. Thus, in the Hindu psyche, conversion to Islam was a matter of life or death, while embracing Christianity was a matter of



History is immutable. The sins of Ghazni, Babar, Aurangzeb cannot be visited on their heirs living in Delhi. If Hindu India sets out to settle scores, beginning with the temple at Ayodhya, then the nation is heading towards disintegration

free rice and gainful employment.

Alas, the advent of British rule did not substantially alter the traditional equation between the governor and the governed. The English showed a distinct partiality for the "erect and straight-forward" Mussalman, while the "slippery and inscrutable" Hindoo was distrusted. Even someone like E.M. Forster who wrote with rare sympathy and understanding about an ancient civilisation besieged by corrupt imperialism, was never at ease with Hindus—a discomfiture that resulted in the only caricature in *A Passage To India*: Godbole.

Freedom and sovereignty should have heralded the birth of a changed relationship between the feuding faiths, but it was not to be. "Mother India" was vivisected amid rivers of blood on the basis of religion, and even in the aftermath, Hindus continued to nurse their feeling of inferiority; a sense that even in their own country they were disadvantaged. A new evil called secularism arrived, courtesy a conspiracy hatched by rootless Hindus, atheists and leftist idealogues, and once again Muslims were upgraded in the name of "composite culture" and "unity in diversity". Thus the unequal relationship was perpetuated. Minorities Commission, Article 370, resistance to a uniform civil code, Meenakshipuram-type conversions





ASHOK MAZUMDAR

Despite the shrill warnings of L.K. Advani, Hindu elan is intact. It is based on self confidence born out of numbers and a shrewd assessment of intrinsic worth

with monies from Saudi Arabia, Iran-style fundamentalism were living proof that despite a Constitution that promised equality to all religions, some were more equal than others.

Behind all the talk of civilisational conflict and "minorityism" lies a more potent grievance. Free Hindus in a Hindu-dominated India have been unable to avenge a thousand years of humiliation at the hands of Muslims it is no coincidence that the champions of the Ram temple use words like "shame", "insult" "honour", "pride", to buttress their claims. And they are enraged that the secular consensus forbids even a symbolic victory at Ayodhya to those who have seldom known victory.

I may have encapsulated history rather glibly, I may have got the nuances wrong, but I have done justice to the BJP-VHP notion of injury. The stakes are too high for genteel euphemisms. One reason why the secular majority in their country is full of self-doubt, questioning the very basis of Indian nationhood, is our reluctance to address the psychological dimension of a religious revival whose appeal and durability can no longer be ignored.

Fortunately, the Hindu rage, the Hindu sense of impotence has left a substantial section of the community unimpressed. History is immutable. What has happened has happened. The sins of Ghazni, Babar, Aurangzeb cannot be visited on their heirs living in Old Delhi. If Hindu India sets out to settle scores, beginning with the temple at Ayodhya, then the nation is heading towards speedy disintegration.

Make no mistake, despite all the propaganda purveyed through audio cassettes, Hindu rule in India is total and absolute. They are the unchallenged masters of the nation's political, economic and military might. No Muslim industrialist figures in the top 40 business houses in the country. The defence forces hardly have any Muslim representation; in the civil services, the para-military forces, in the judiciary, much the same picture prevails. For the next century at least, no Muslim can aspire to the highest elective office, not even deputy prime ministership. Hindus dominate not only because they constitute over 80 per cent of the population, but because they have securely in their grasp all the instruments that help rule a sovereign state. So, who is oppressed and who is the oppressor?

Moreover, the much sought after reversal of rules has in fact taken place. Muslims in India have been reduced to second-class citizens, not through deliberate design but on account of their lack of interest in education and high commerce. In terms of status today, the rulers of yesteryears are on par with scheduled castes and tribes. Whatever their rate of multiplication (another mischievous fabrication) they are never going to be a threat to those who have the commanding heights of the state firmly in their hands.

Despite the shrill warnings of Mr Advani and Ashok Singhal, Hindu elan is intact. It is based on self-confidence born out of numbers and a shrewd assessment of intrinsic worth. The real and only danger for the Hindus is if they fall prey to the fictions spread by the new proponents of Ram—that Hindus in their own country are 'slaves', that they are powerless to assert their will in a land they technically own. The Hindu 'mission' to correct the indignities of history is a creation of a fevered and dangerous imagination which insists on living out the past at the cost of the future. Hindus have nothing to fear but the myths fostered by Hindus about themselves.●

V. GANGADHAR

What's the difference?

The new-look Illustrated Weekly of India *disappoints*

It is a bit difficult to write about the 'new-look' *Illustrated Weekly of India*. How much of a new look anyway? The 16-page broadsheet pullout issued with the main magazine could be following the Churchillian dictum, 'This is not the end. This is not the beginning of the end. This is just the end of the beginning.'

We had been anticipating an entire broadsheet version of the *Weekly* with lots of colour and topicality. To be frank, the step by step transformation left me cold. Most of us would like to watch a gorgeously costumed, bewitchingly bejewelled Madhuri Dixit on the screen but not a version at different stages of her make-up and costuming!


THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA

Rajiv plumped for Devi as PM

Arrest of Calcutta Sikhs backfires on cops



The Weekly's transformation was to make it more topical. Here, the new avatar fails badly. The paper has nothing new to say

The broadsheet had its plus points. The layout, for the most part, in keeping with the *Weekly*-under-Pritish Nandy tradition, is excellent. On the front page sketches are used imaginatively. Every page has photographs, sketches and interesting titbits tucked under 'Briefings'.

The *Weekly*'s transformation, we were told, was to make it more topical. Here, the new avatar fails badly. The lead story on Rajiv Gandhi plumping for Devi Lal as Prime Minister is dated, speculative and weak. The inside pages are not much better. There is a startling absence of hard news and topicality. Chautala and Disneyland, Punjab, Karnataka politics, Shekhar on Mandal or the ULFA....the paper has nothing new to say.

Also, most articles continue to be academic and plain dull, in fact almost like those which appear in the *Weekly*. (Vandana Shiva discussing the validity of the West's claim to more stringent intellectual property laws at the international level !!!) And why have the 'Private Eye' and 'Deep Throat' snippets, when they appear in the magazine too?

The edit page has a stimulating piece by Pritish Nandy on the probable success of Chandra Shekhar, despite a hostile press. The arts section offers a lot of variety. But horror of horrors, can you visualise a weekend paper without any sports news? A really bad miss.

To sum up. The 'eventually' approach has not cut much ice. If a new look *Weekly* is promised to the readers, it should be given at one go and not in bits and pieces. After all, which other newspaper chain has the facilities, the personnel and the infrastructure as the Times Group? The present two-in-one publication, with the broadsheet made to look the poor cousin (with no colour at all), fails to make an impact.

Best in the business

New Delhi's premier daily, *The Hindustan Times*, may not be a very readable newspaper, but its legal correspondent, Krishan Mahajan, is one of the best in the business. His despatches on major Supreme Court and High Court rulings, bar vs bench controversies and allied legal issues can be understood and appreciated even by an average newspaper reader. Mahajan's profiles of legal luminaries are always interesting. Take the recent one on our new attorney-general, Ganesha Iyer Ramaswamy. Do you know that his family has been in legal professions for three generations and he is a devotee of Lord Ganesha with one of the finest collections of Ganesha idols! Add to this, Ramaswamy's fondness for vodka, cigars, his 20,000-volume personal library of *bhajans* and a concern for the poor. Thank you, Mr Mahajan, for simplifying complicated legal issues and bringing them to the level of the average newspaper reader.

Football passion

Everyone knows that football and Calcutta are made for each other. Naturally the centenary of the famed Mohun Bagan Athletic Club is a major sporting event and I enjoyed reading *The Telegraph*'s eight-page, colour supplement on the event. Former player Pradip Chaudhary writes on the honour and glory of playing for Mohun Bagan. "Politics could be my profession but my first love has always been Mohun Bagan," declares Jatin Chakraborty, the stormy petrel of Bengal politics, who once did a Scarlet Pimpernal act during his days in the Opposition when there was an arrest warrant for him, just to watch an important East Bengal vs Mohun Bagan match. Jatinda's passion for the Club was so pronounced that on the few occasions when he visited the hated rival East Bengal Club's ground, he was greeted with boos and shouts of "Traitor Jatin, go back"!

One of the greatest obsessions of the 300-year-old city were the Mohun Bagan vs East Bengal matches for which overnight queues formed at the grounds defying even heavy rains. The advent of TV, however, has robbed

Calcutta soccer of much of its charm, argues Patik Guha It is nothing to being actually present on the scene of action, and because of TV, there are no longer the overnight queues.

Shattering misconceptions

Those who are familiar with the fondness of *Times of India*'s Swaminathan S Anklesaria Iver for long names, would have expected his column in the *Sunday Times of India* to be headlined, "Swaminathan S Anklasaria Aiyarnomics". But he calls it only 'Swaminomics' (It is rumoured that the paper will soon have other columns like 'Prafulvironment' by Praful Bidwai, 'Arvindosophy' by Arvind N Das and so on)

In ja recent piece 'Politics and Reliance', Aivar shatters misconceptions about share prices, particularly of Ambani's Reliance For instance, during Pranab Mukherjee's (an Ambani favourite) tenure as finance minister, the price of the Reliance share was quite modest It touched a record high in mid-1986 when V P Singh was the finance minister The price crashed after VP's exit from the Cabinet but moved up steadily after Singh was voted back to power So what is the gist of Swaminomics? As for share prices, political influence does matter, but less than what people think. Corporate performances and the stock market climate matter more ●





Jatin Chakraborty, once did a Scarlet Pimpernel act during his days in the Opposition, when there was an arrest warrant for him, just to watch an important East Bengal vs Mohun Bagan match

Available By Post (Inland)

INDIA'S LARGEST SELLING WEEKLY IN ENGLISH

SUNDAY

Rs 310 for a year (52 issues);
Rs 610 for 2 years (104 issues)
An annual saving of Rs 54
on the newsstand price

Postage free
Address your order to :
The Circulation Manager (U)
Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd.
Calcutta-700 001
Please draw your demand draft/cheque in favour of :
Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd.,
Calcutta

Over to Jordan

The mystery of AE Services gets even murkier

It is a breakthrough of the most unusual kind. The decision by the Swiss government to hand over the bank papers pertaining to AE Services is regarded by former Prime Minister V.P. Singh as a vindication of his government's stand on Bofors. But at the same time, the Congress(I) is treating the decision as proving that the Rajiv regime had been right all along!

Why should this be so?

The facts about AE Services are simple enough.

- The company was one of three agents paid commissions by Bofors for help in securing the India deal.
- What made AE Services unusual was that it was hired in November 1985, a month after Rajiv Gandhi told Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme that India would not deal with agents. Moreover, the firm was guaranteed its commission only if the deal was signed within a four-month time-frame. (It was.)
- Because AE Services entered the picture so late, it is widely assumed that the payment was a payoff. (How else could the firm guarantee a time-frame for clinching a contract unless it represented somebody of consequence?)
- While the two other Bofors front companies (Pitco/Moresco and Svenska) are faceless, AE Services has two identifiable figures at its head. Of them, Major R.A. (Bob) Wilson lives in Surrey, England, and has even given an interview to SUNDAY. The other, Myles Stott, is more elusive but is known to be a British accountant who lives in Switzerland.
- Wilson told SUNDAY (and the CBI) that AE Services did no work in India before its contract was terminated. He stuck to the story that the payment was a winding-up charge, claimed he hadn't been to India for years and suggested that AE Services was owned by Arab interests.

The V.P. Singh regime's investigators believed that Svenska was owned by Win Chadha and Pitco by the Hindujas (both deny the allegations) but were convinced that AE Services was the link to the Rajiv regime. Stott and Wilson, they felt were frontmen.

While the investigators met with little success in the Swiss Canton of Geneve where the interests behind Pitco succeeded in getting the Letter Rogatory rejected, they have fared better in the Zurich Canton. It is here (at the Nordfinanz Bank) that Bofors deposited the payments meant for AE Services and the Indian government asked the Swiss to hand over the papers pertaining to the account

AE Services fought a rearguard action against the Letter Rogatory but were handicapped in two ways. First of all, the company itself had been wound up shortly after the Bofors scandal broke, and the Swiss refused to hear appeals from a company that had no existence. Secondly, the interests behind AE Services were unwilling to be identified and so the appeal was filed in the names of Stott and Wilson. The Swiss judge ruled that as these were not the owners of the company, he would not recognise their *locus standi*.

In the end, AE Services appears to have given up. After it lost the first round of appeals, it did not follow the classic spoiler's course of going to Berne and appealing against the transfer of documents to India. The appeal would probably have been rejected but at least it would have caused a small delay Instead, AE Services accepted its fate with remarkable equanimity.

Why was this?

The answer may be in the bank papers. According to leaks from the Swiss to Chitra Subramaniam, *The Statesman* journalist who scooped the story, the Nordfinanz Bank account was opened by Stott who was the sole signatory. But Stott made it clear to the bank that he was not the beneficiary of the account (ie, the owner of AE Services). Asked who this beneficiary was, he replied: "Mubar Melikian, Jordan."

If Subramaniam is right, then all that the documents will reveal is that a Jordanian called Mubar Melikian received part of the Bofors payoffs.

This makes it easy for both V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi to claim victory. The V.P. Singh regime had promised to reveal the names of the beneficiaries of the Bofors payoffs. The victory in Switzerland delivers at least on one-third of that pledge (though we still don't have the papers for Svenska or Pitco/Moresco.)

On the other hand, the official position of the Rajiv Gandhi regime (endorsed by the tame Joint Parliamentary Committee on Bofors) was that no Indian had received any money from Bofors. If a Jordanian called Mubar Melikian is shown to be the interest behind AE Services, then it strengthens that position. As far as the Congress(I) is concerned, this is vindication at last: clearly Melikian's deal with Bofors was part of some global arrangement that had nothing to do with India. Who knows, it might even have been the "industrial espionage" that Rajiv Gandhi told SUNDAY in 1988 was perhaps the service provided to Bofors by its agents!

Both positions are equally valid. But they are also equally hollow.

V.P. Singh's position is fraudulent because he didn't just promise to get the names of the beneficiaries: he suggested that the Congress or its





The Swiss government's decision to hand over papers pertaining to AE Services makes it easy for both Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh to claim victory. The Bofors gun: pointing towards Jordan

leaders had got the money and that his government would prove it. If the best he can manage is the name of some Jordanian who nobody has ever heard of, then all his rhetoric about "*Bofors ka dalal*" stands disproved.

Equally, that Stott told Nordfinanz that he was acting for Melikian does not exonerate Rajiv. The money was transferred from AE Services' account to another one just *five days* after it got there. If Melikian was really the owner, this would not have been necessary. Clearly, Melikian was as much a frontman as Stott or Wilson and not the ultimate beneficiary.

So, by getting hold of the AE/Nordfinanz papers, the investigators have just peeled one layer off the Bofors affair. There is no breakthrough. And there is no clean chit for Rajiv either.

So who *does* own AE Services? The answer seems much more difficult to find than anybody had realised. AE Services is owned by CIAOU Anstalt, a Liechtenstein-registered company. This, in turn, is owned by a Hong Kong company called Division Beneficiaries Accrediteurs.

None of these is a real company. SUNDAY traced AE Services to 139, The High Street, Guildford in England—the address at which it claimed it had its office. There was *no* office—the address is of a solicitors' firm which acts as a post box for AE Services. Similarly, CIAOU Anstalt has *no* offices in Liechtenstein, its affairs are looked after by a lawyer called Karlheinz Ritter, who looks after hundreds of such letter-box companies. And Division Beneficiaries, in turn, has only a post-box arrangement at 1501, Hutchinson House in Hong Kong.

Mubar Melikian may not even exist! (Nubar is a common enough name in Jordan. Mubar is most unusual). And even if he does, he is probably just another frontman—the Swiss have no address for him

This is as far as the trail goes, so far. It is entirely possible that Division Beneficiaries will be owned by a fourth company registered in a fourth country!

Obviously, whoever set up AE Services was determined not to be caught. Even if one were to trace the ownership through the three countries we know about (UK, Liechtenstein and Hong Kong) with three more Letter Rogatories, no name would emerge; only new corporate entities.

V.P. Singh's investigators believed, somewhat naively, that a mere examination of the AE Services account would throw up the name of the ultimate beneficiary because Swiss banks always ask accountants and lawyers who set up accounts who they are really acting for. This is true but there is no real obligation on the accountant or lawyer to tell the truth. Until 1987, a signatory merely had to give the bank a name (in an extreme case, even 'John Smith' would do). Now, a photocopy of the first four pages of the beneficiary's passport is required but when the Bofors accounts were set up, this was not the case. So Mubar Melikian may not even exist! (Nubar is a common enough name in Jordan. Mubar is most unusual). And even if he does, he is probably just another frontman—the Swiss have no address for him!

Nevertheless, the Nordfinanz documents throw up some interesting details. Of the $7.34 million paid by Bofors, $7 million were transferred to the account of a new letter-box company called Colbar **Investments** at the Union Bank of Switzerland in Geneve. (The Indian investigators now have the option of sending a new Letter Rogatory to the Geneve Canton to open that account up.)

The rest of the money went to three interesting places:

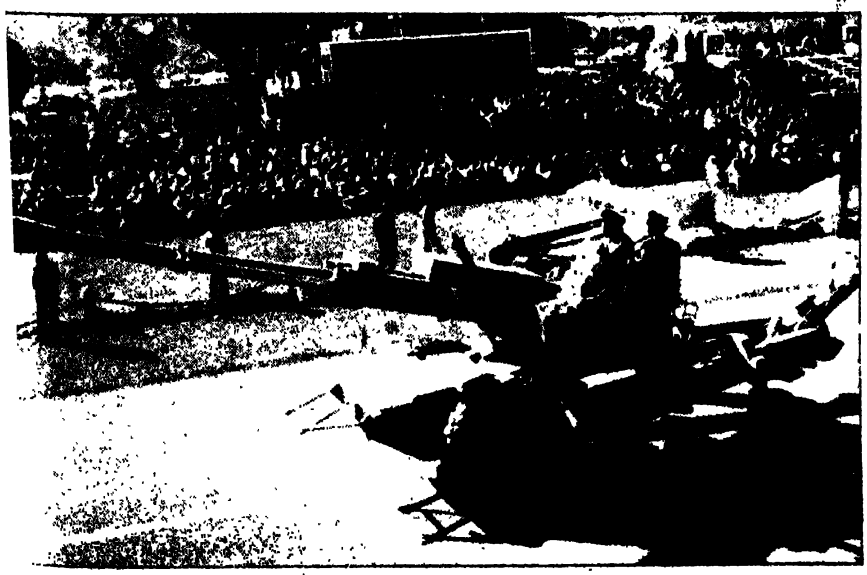
- $123,900 to CIAOU Anstalt, AE's holding company,
- $60,400.47 to Mayo Associates, Stott's company,
- $1,476.79 to zug, Kwan Wong Tan U. Fong, Hong Kong.

The pattern of payments suggests that whoever set up the front companies in Liechtenstein and Hong Kong paid service charges to those who managed them for him from his Bofors payoff. And the payment to Mayo Associates was Stott's fee for having handled the Swiss accounts. The fact that payments were worked out to the last cent suggests that these were service fees calculated either on a percentage basis or in some other currency (which is why they don't translate in round numbers when converted to dollars.)

Does this mean that the entire charade of front companies was set up only to receive the Bofors payments? Or was AE Services just one of the fronts owned by CIAOU and Division Beneficiaries to receive kickbacks on Indian deals?

It is beginning to seem that we will never know. ●

Vir Sanghvi



Diplomat vs diplomat

Harassment of officials threatens to mar Indo-Pak relations

Little men are posing a big problem in Indo-Pak relations. Even as Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar announced to the nation that his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, had telephoned him following their talks in the Maldives and that an "atmosphere of trust" had to be built up between the two countries, an incident in Islamabad threatened to foul up any initiative the two leaders may have taken.

On 26 November, the wife of an attache of the Indian high commission in Islamabad was forcibly abducted by two plain-clothes intelligence men while she was going to the market at five in the evening. A rag doused with chloroform was used to muffle her screams for help, and she was taken to an unknown destination where four men, including one in police uniform, interrogated her. She was left at her residence two hours later, after being asked to sign a statement.

In two other separate incidents in the city, the wife of a defence attache was harassed and intimidated on her way home, though she was accompanied by a colleague of her husband's. And in Karachi, intelligence officials barged into a school and burst open the satchel and snackbox of a four-year child of an Indian diplomat, and questioned the school principal.





The summit-level assurances of Chandra Shekhar and Nawaz Sharif notwithstanding, relations between India and Pakistan are unlikely to improve

At the best of times, diplomats and their family members have to tolerate the irritating presence of a 'tail'—usually an intelligence official on a two-wheeler or in a car—who blatantly follows them around. But wives and children of diplomats had never before been picked up and held, as in the recent incidents. Indian journalists visiting Pakistan get quite accustomed to being followed, and are often stopped and interrogated as well. Some months ago, five Pakistani journalists were jailed for a few hours following their visit to the home of an Indian diplomat. It was a warning in no uncertain terms that the establishment did not take kindly to social contact between Indian diplomats and local journalists.

The Indian high commission has lodged a strongly-worded protest against the continuous harassment of family members of its mission staff by Pakistani intelligence agencies. Though the Pakistani foreign office has promised an inquiry into the incidents, Indian diplomats in Pakistan say it is unlikely that the harassment will stop. Pakistani intelligence agencies, especially the military-controlled ISI (Inter Services Intelligence), are a law unto themselves, and no amount of complaining is going to make any difference.

Indian diplomats and journalists are not the only ones harassed; in the past, Pakistani intelligence men have remorselessly trailed Opposition members as well. In a much publicised incident, the present interior minister, Choudhary Sujat Hussain (he was then in the Opposition), had locked up intelligence officials in his house, after being followed on his way home from the National Assembly. He had then rushed back to the House to register his protest.

But Pakistani diplomats in New Delhi were taken aback when intelligence men here decided to settle scores. Never before had there been such overt retaliation, and the Pakistanis in the capital say that they never experienced such intimidation before. Calling it "a concerted siege on Pakistani diplomats", the high commission alleged that five of their officials were subjected to dangerously close car-chases, obstruction, and indecent and vulgar treatment on 29 November and again on 30 November in an obviously concerted move to harass, provoke and intimidate them and to disrupt the functioning of the high commission".

According to the complaint the cars of the dilomats were followed closely by Indian cars, with upto 8 people in them, almost throwing the Pakistanis off the road and colliding with them. The Pakistanis allege that abuses were hurled at them, and their telephones were dead when they got home.

In another incident on 30 November, the wife of a diplomat was abused on her way to the market by burly plain-clothes men, and despite complaints to the ministry of external affairs, the intimidation continued.

"Peace initiatives will never get off the ground if lower-level officials are allowed to behave in this way," says an external affairs ministry official. The Pakistani diplomats agree. It remains to be seen whether the two foreign offices are able to sort out these petty problems, which could be a major obstacle in the improvement of Indo-Pak relations, whatever be the initiatives at the top. •

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi

Fourteen-day wonder

National Institute of Design chairperson Jaya Jaitley gets the sack

It was one of those minor controversies the fledgling Chandra Shekhar government could have done well without. Textile designer and craft historian, Jaya Jaitley (also well-known for her closeness to the V.P. Singh government) was appointed chairperson of the prestigious National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad and then summarily dismissed less than a fortnight later, without ever having visited the institute.

While the dismissal was perhaps, inevitable, what was significant was the timing—the notification from the industry ministry appointing Jaitley as chairperson of NID was sent on 8 November (Jaitly received it by post on 10 November) And, the termination notice was sent on 24 November, exactly a day after the new Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar returned from the SAARC summit in the Maldives.

What followed were endless charges and counter charges. Jaitley, who has been design and marketing consultant for Gurjari, the UP Export Corporation and the Central Cottage industries, alleged that her professional qualifications had been overlooked and dashed off an angry letter to the Prime Minister declaring, "You have recently told your political followers that there are 150 bodies available for you to appoint them as chairperson. Have you thought of what could happen if those bodies, however autonomous, started raising controversies about not being consulted and feeling that the designated chairperson was not experienced or 'eminent enough'?

And, if for Jaitley, the timing of the termination was significant, for the 'NID lobby' what was equally significant was the timing of the appointment by the then industry minister, Ajit Singh—the appointment was made on 8 November, a day after the V.P. Singh government had lost the vote of confidence in Parliament thus reducing Ajit Singh to just a caretaker minister. To compound the error of making such a hasty appointment was the fact that the NID lobby had not been consulted at all. Moreover, they alleged that their list of probables for the post—which had been lying vacant since UGC chairperson, Prof Yashpal's term expired in June—had not been considered.

Officials in the industry ministry admitted that Singh had directly appointed Jaitley but insisted that it was nothing out of the ordinary. "There is no formalised procedure for such appointments. In the past, names for this post or for the chairperson of the Khadi Commission used to trickle down from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The other way, of course, is to write to the various concerned ministries like culture or to appoint someone on the basis of personal knowledge," an official in the ministry said. Defending his ministry's decision, he said, "Such a decision does strike people as unusual, particularly when you are so used to the PMO just handing you a list of names."

According to him, the decision to appoint Jaitley as chairperson of NID had been taken on 31 October and the announcement would have been made then as well but for—the inevitable—bureaucratic delays. Besides, there was the additional problem of filling vacancies in the institute's governing body, whose term had expired in March/April this year.

Speculation still abounds, long after the incident is over. The task of forgiving and forgetting is going to take a long time considering the 13 days of unpleasant talk and veiled threats that preceded the termination notification. When Jaitley wrote to the executive director of the NID, Vikas Satwalkar, informing him of her decision to visit Ahmedabad what she got in return was a terse four line reply which made no attempt to conceal the hostility, "I would once again like to reiterate that a visit to Ahmedabad would be imprudent and embarrassing at this juncture." Taken aback by this attitude, Jaitly decided to adopt a similar stubborn stance. "I did not withdraw despite the unsavoury controversy because my appointment was definitely not a political decision. Withdrawing would have made my 20 years of work redundant."

Amid all this fuss, termed by many as a storm in a tea cup, a former official of the industry ministry has the last word, "The funny thing is that both the appointment and the termination are perfectly valid and legal. The minister was in the right to appoint somebody he thought fit for the job and the NID rules provide for somebody being replaced without any reason, without, of course, saying it in so many words." So much for the law. •



Officials in the industry ministry admitted that **Ajit Singh** (left) had directly appointed **Jaya Jaitley** (centre), but insisted it was nothing out of the ordinary. And her termination notice was sent exactly a day after **Chandra Shekhar** (right) returned from the SAARC summit

Minu Jain/New Delhi

MAHESH JETHMALANI

The pretender

Chandra Shekhar has spent more time on politicking and intrigue than addressing himself to the problems of the nation



An influential section of the English press in India who only yesterday was singing Mr V.P. Singh's paeans in its columns—in hindsight, less out of conviction than in an endeavour to extract patronage from his regime for its indomitable efforts—has revealed itself to be adept at fast adjusting to the new political realities. In its new avatar, this section has anointed itself as the conscience-keeper of the Indian press and gratuitously tenders lofty sermons to its less-enlightened brethren. To cite one example, it has been exhorting the press to give Mr Chandra Shekhar and his Cabinet a chance. Else, it warns, the press will be perceived as "incorrigible wreckers", more concerned with its own power base than with nation-building.

Let us assume that Mr V.P. Singh received his just deserts when the press virtually hounded him out of office and Mr Chandra Shekhar abandoned him for the love of power. Let us ignore the fact that Mr Chandra Shekhar is an usurper of power and a pretender to the throne of Delhi; his coalition government being at odds with the national mandate of 1989 and bereft of any popular legitimacy. Let us also condone the reticence of Mr Chandra Shekhar's new apologists in expressing their real intent and camouflaging it to exhort the press to respond favourably to the "national need". Even then, does Mr Chandra Shekhar's record, after two weeks in office, entitle him to the support of the press and indeed, of the nation?

Consider Mr Chandra Shekhar's first act as Prime Minister—that of constituting his Cabinet. It took him all of 11 days to announce the formation of this all-important institution. During that time, the nation, in its most troubled times, had no government. But it is not the time *per se* expended in the formation of his Cabinet that must perturb the nation. In the absence of any explanation for the delay, there is an irresistible inference that the time was consumed in petty political bickering between the various political constituents, as also the band of stragglers that constitutes his government. This, again, is not significant in itself but for the fact that it reveals the tone and style of the government that we can expect. It indicates that Mr Chandra Shekhar is going to spend far more time on politicking and intrigue than on addressing himself to the burning problems of the nation.

If the manner of the constitution of his Cabinet cannot but cause consternation, its composition must fill one with dismay. Surely, Mr Chandra Shekhar's apologists do not themselves believe that the burdens of defence, home, information & broadcasting, in addition to the onerous responsibilities of Prime Minister and chief arbitrator of political bickering, can all be efficiently shouldered by one man, no matter how strong and broad his shoulders be? Or, is this an admission that Mr Chandra Shekhar could not find enough men of standing amongst his colleagues? In the latter case, Mr Chandra Shekhar has either done no justice to his colleagues, or alternatively, even less justice to the nation.

Then there is the question of the moral track record of at least some of his ministerial colleagues. Even ignor-



ing the fact that their fundamental qualifications stem from the fact that they are party-splitters, there is much cause for trepidation. The highest law officer in the country; the law and justice minister, has no legal qualifications; on the contrary, his notions of law appear to be a bit quaint, judging from the manner in which he obtained bank loans from the Vijaya Bank, as reported by the weekly, *Current*, on the front page of one of its recent issues. Perhaps, it is his ideological flexibility that has earned him his job, for there are few people in the country who can abandon the RSS and become unabashed admirers of Syed Shahabuddin.

A unique ministerial position has been carved out for Mr Kamal Morarka - that of minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office. Mr Morarka has several investigations pertaining to economic offences pending against him. His appointment will, no doubt, give fresh heart to many of my clients facing similar charges. Mr V.C. Shukla adorns the external affairs ministry, to, no doubt, propagate abroad what he so effectively propagated in India during the Emergency. Though Dr Sanjay Singh has undoubtedly displayed in his career a unique penchant for communications, his appointment could at least have been stalled till he was cleared of all pending charges against him.

Contrast all this with the expeditious formation of Mr V.P. Singh's Cabinet and the unassailable credentials of its members. If Mr Chandra Shekhar's approach to his Cabinet has been less than inspiring, such bureaucratic changes as he has hitherto initiated cannot but cause the nation to forfeit any trust he or his media apologists may have expected it to repose in him. The first target of a shake-up has been the law-enforcing agencies, and such changes as have been effected are singularly ominous. At a time when the Bofors investigation is entering its final and vital stage, Mr Chandra Shekhar has chosen to replace Mr Rajendra Shekhar—who so ably spearheaded the Bofors investigation as chief of the CBI. The resignation of Mr Arun Jaitley from his post as the additional solicitor-general, in keeping with the norms expected of law officers on the ascension to power of a new government, was speedily accepted by the law minister. Mr Jaitley, it may be remembered, was an integral part of the team that investigated Bofors.



Unlike **Mr V.P. Singh** who has gone on record to state that his greatest mistake was not holding elections in Punjab during his tenure, Chandra Shekhar has only reduced chances of a solution in the state

If one adds to these facts the statement of Mr Chandra Shekhar, that the Bofors investigation was the job of a sub-inspector (remember that the investigation requires an intricate inquiry into as secretive a foreign jurisdiction as Switzerland) plus, the imminent appointment of Mr G. Ramaswamy, the all-purpose trouble-shooter of the Congress party, as attorney-general of India, we have a coherent picture of what the present regime intends for the Bofors investigation. Clearly, the suspected consideration for Congress support is being paid by Mr Chandra Shekhar in unmistakable instalments.

This brings us to the question of Mr Chandra Shekhar's policy initiatives on the burning questions facing the country, and for which his media supporters state their claim for press and national support in the ultimate analysis. On the political front, there has been no initiative whatsoever taken on the problem of the exodus of Hindus from Kashmir and the presence of militants in that state. Indeed, there is not even a sign of any initiative in this direction. The 6 December deadline of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad looms large while Mr Chandra Shekhar and his coalition partner, the Congress, speak in discordant voices. While the Congress has passed a resolution to permit *kar seva* on the *shilaniyas* site, Mr Subodh Kant Sahay, the minister of state for home, has been categorical



Mr Rajiv Gandhi, was only half right when he justified his support to **Mr Chandra Shekhar** by stating that the latter had been in the Congress at one time. The truth of the matter is that Mr Chandra Shekhar has always been and still is a Congressman at heart

in stating that there can be no question of *kar seva* on the *shilaniyas* site since that site is a disputed area.

On Punjab, like Mr V.P. Singh, Mr Chandra Shekhar has waxed eloquent on the need for a healing touch in that state. Unlike Mr V.P. Singh, however, who has gone on record to state that his greatest mistake was not holding elections in Punjab during his tenure, Mr Chandra Shekhar has further reduced chances of a solution in Pubjab by assuring those who administer President's Rule in that state of more weapons and larger police and paramilitary forces, as also by the arrest on 24 November of the only two recognisable leaders in that state—Simranjeet Singh Mann and the moderate Prakash Singh Badal—for a non-violent protest movement.

In Assam, his government has taken the Draconian step of imposing President's Rule on the pretext of violence and instability in that state, though there is reason to believe that the motive was merely to oust the incumbent AGP government. Attempts are afoot, now, to topple Mr Karunanidhi's DMK government in Tamil Nadu. The policy of greater centralisation and the refusal to live with Opposition governments in the states is a well-known Congress one. It is alien to an anti-Congress political strain which believes in greater decentralisation, and is not unwilling to let state governments make a success for themselves. The Opposition recognises that President's Rule must be imposed only in extreme circumstances and frequent and unwarranted recourse to it is tantamount to a negation of popular mandates at the Assembly level. The Congress has always made nonsense of the underlying principle of our political structure: unity in diversity. As Prime Minister, Mr Chandra Shekhar has revealed that, in reality, he is cast in the same mould.

On the economic front, there has been even less intitiative. The promised economic package to control inflation has not been forthcoming while prices continue to soar. Nor has a discernible attempt been made to grapple with the problems posed by coffers empty of foreign exchange and soaring foreign debt. Mr Chandra Shekhar has expressed his hostility, in a public statement, to the new industrial policy announced by the previous government. Yet, we have no clue as to what his own industrial policy is. From his public statement, it is evident that he is a fervent protagonist of the licensing system and a staunch opponent of foreign investment. His predilections in economic policy must warm the cockles of the economic *status quo* which consists of manipulative business houses perpetuating their vested interests by cornering licences and evading the provisions of the Monopolies & Restrictive Trade Practices Act and by subverting a pliant and corruptible bureaucracy. On employment and social justice, he has advocated a diluted form of the Mandal Report but in the absence of any crystallisation of thought, his views do not merit comment. If the keynote of Mr V.P. Singh's government in the economic sphere was "Growth with Equity", through the medium of a liberal industrial policy combined with the implementation of the Mandal Report, Mr Chandra Shekhar has indicated a preference for the out-moded and passe economic model inherited from earlier years which has resulted only in stagnation and aggravated inequality.

Mr Rajiv Gandhi was only half right when he justified his support to Mr Chandra Shekhar by stating that the latter had been in the Congress at one time. The truth of the matter is that Mr Chandra Shekhar has always been and still is a Congressman at heart. As an ambitious young Turk, he obviously realised that the Congress, with its dynastic culture, was no place within which to fulfil his prime ministerial ambitions. His strategy to become a focal point of Congressmen disenchanted by their own leadership has been repeatedly frustrated by the pusillanimity and reluctance of such Congressmen to leave their parent fold. Now, thanks to Mr V.P. Singh, Mr Chandra Shekhar has fulfilled his lifetime's ambition. It is the former's personal integrity and political cunning that more than any other individual or institution has both exposed the Congress culture and shaken its electoral base.

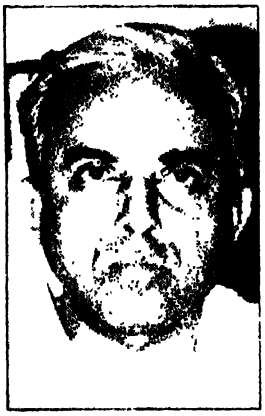
The media exhortations of Mr Chandra Shekhar's supporters should accordingly fool no one. The acceptance of Mr Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister by the Congress is a desperate stop-gap measure by the Congress to prevent its base from being divided between a more progressive V.P. Singh and a more status quoist BJP, and to accordingly prevent its own extinction. Mr Chandra Shekhar's media supporters should hardly expect those who want to see a final end to years of Congress misrule and who yearn for change, to rally to a cause that was conceived in political immorality and which will only prolong the existence of a parasitical and decadent *status quo*. •



Though **Dr Sanjay Singh** has undoubtedly displayed a unique penchant for communications, his appointment could have been stalled till he was cleared of all pending charges against him



Mr Kamal Morarka, minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office, has several investigations pertaining to economic offences pending against him



Dr Subramaniam Swamy, the law and justice minister, has no legal qualifications; on the contrary, his notions of law appear to be a little quaint

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Zakir and his Jamia



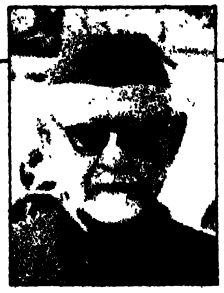
If you drive along the Delhi-Mathura road towards Agra and turn sharp left towards the river Yamuna, near where the lines of houses end, you go along a dual highway with many new buildings on either side: a complex of apartments on the right known as Zakir Bagh named after Zakir Husain, the first Muslim President of the republic; the high-rise Surya Sofitel on your left. Further along the road is a brand new heart hospital, Escorts. And facing it, the Holy Family Hospital. Then, follow a succession of formidable speed-breakers which make you crawl along into the campus of the Jamia Milliah Islamia created by Zakir Husain and his band of dedicated colleagues who gave all they had to make it into a university. Alongside the main campus building there is a mound on which its founding father, Zakir Husain, is buried.

Zakir Husain's life-story is also the story of the Jamia. He was the third of the seven sons of Fida Husain and Nazneen of Qaimganj (district Farrukhabad, UP). They were Bangash Pathans whose ancestors had migrated to India in the early years of the 18th century. While most Pathans sought careers in the army, Zakir's branch of the Bangash were *madah akhoons* (big teachers). They also came under the influence of Sufi Karam Ali Shah and a Hindu saint, Bans Bihari. Teaching and religious tolerance were legacies inherited by Zakir Husain. For some years, the family lived in Hyderabad, but after the death of his father in 1907, the rest moved back to Qaimganj where they owned ancestral property. Begam Nazneen died four years later leaving Zakir, then aged 14, and his brothers orphans.

The brothers went to the Islamia High School in Etawah where Zakir made his mark as a scholar and orator. While in the eighth class, he spelt out his ideas on the purpose of education which reveal his early maturity.

In 1913, he joined the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, to study science and economics. He continued to excel in his studies, invariably standing first in his class. And in debating. When studying for his MA degree in economics, he took up part-time teaching in junior classes. It was in Aligarh that he took a clear decision to throw in his lot with the nationalist forces against the sectarian views that prevailed. When some offensive references were made about Gandhiji, he quit his post, his stipend and Aligarh. By then, his potential for leadership had been spotted and he was offered the post of *naib tehsildar* to keep him on the government side. Before he could make a decision, his friend K.A. Hamied persuaded him to go to Germany for further studies.

Zakir was an immediate success in Germany. The tall, sinewy, bearded Pathan with a golden voice spouting idealism became the undisputed leader of the Indian community. Though always short of cash, he published *Ghalib* and a booklet on Gandhi. Amongst the many who fell to his charms was Gerda Philipsborn, a German Jewish girl from an upper middle class family. There is little doubt that the two got emotionally involved with each other. They were constant companions during the three years Zakir was in Germany. Some years later, after Zakir had married and become a father, Gerda followed him to Delhi where she died in 1943 and was buried by Muslim rites in Jamia. The romance of Apa Jan, as Gerda came to be known was the subject of a novel, *Aatish-e-Khaamosh* by Saliha Abid Hussain. Apparently, Begum Zakir took her husband's affair with Gerda in her stride. She was an unsophisticated Pathani not interested in anything outside her home.



Zakir Husain, the first Muslim President of the republic, was instrumental in establishing Jamia Milliah as a famous seat of learning

Jamia had first been set up in Aligarh in 1920. It was then shifted to Karol Bagh with barely 80 students and teachers. But such was the dedication with which the teachers had been fired by Mahatma Gandhi that they refused to take more than a pittance. Zakir who was elected *shaikhul jamia* agreed to a salary of Rs 80 per month. In 1938, Jamia acquired land near the Yamuna. There was no money to build. Gandhiji made an appeal for funds; Zakir went out with his begging bowl and got grants from the Nizam and some Hindu industrialists.

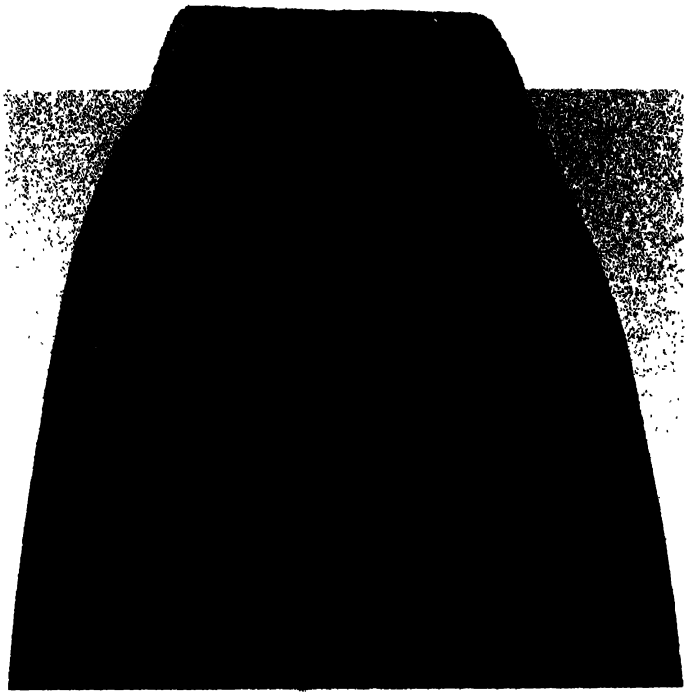
Zakir's faith in the future of Jamia sustained him through the lean years. He was not a particularly devout Muslim but did pray at least once a day, read the *Quran* and fasted during Ramadan. But he also encouraged painting, music and staging plays, all of which were frowned upon by the *maulanas*. He committed the institution to carrying out Gandhiji's scheme of basic education and helped in the drafting of its proposals.

By the time India became independent, Jamia was well-established as a rival of the Aligarh Muslim University. In the communal massacres that followed the Partition, Zakir was almost murdered while travelling by train through Jalandhar and Ludhiana. In 1951, he was unanimously elected vice-chancellor of Aligarh University for six years and was member of the Indian delegation to UNESCO. Then a member of its executive board. In 1957, he was nominated by Pandit Nehru as Governor of Bihar; in 1962, made vice-president and finally, President of the republic in 1967. He died in office on 3rd May, 1969 and two days later was buried in the Jamia. ●

TILL TODAY, THIS INSPIRED PIECE OF DESIGN HAS REQUIRED NO IMPROVEMENTS.



NEITHER HAS THIS.



The other day, the man from Continental Aktiengesellschaft was here.

Stern, hawk-eyed and very German, he earns his living solely by designing car tyres for Mercedes Benz.

He took one long look (a full six hours by our watch) at the R-90 and, uncharacteristically, broke into a grin.

The R-90 had come through with flying colours.

There wasn't one air bubble in evidence, not a single hairline crack. The contours were perfect. The sipes even more so.

The square-shouldered design gave the R-90 a distinct air of confidence, of quiet strength. The grooves, set deep, promised a stronger grip at high speeds over rain-swept highways and dusty, winding country roads.

When, finally, the man from Continental test-drove on the R-90, what did he have to say?

You're right. He said exactly what lakhs of car-owners have always believed about the R-90.

"It's a miracle!"

R90 EXECUTIVE
Car Tyre

A MIRACLE OF DESIGN.

Modi Tyres

Citizen Goenka

Love, hate and love in five phases

This may seem hard to believe, but there is a pattern to Ramnath Goenka's actions. His relationship with Rajiv Gandhi seems set to follow almost exactly the same course as his relationship with Indira Gandhi.

The Indira relationship first. Goenka claims that he made her Prime Minister. The way he tells it, he chartered a plane to fly from Madras to Delhi when Lal Bahadur Shastri died. On the flight was Kamaraj, then the virtual head of a Syndicate of Congress bosses. They discussed possible successors to Shastri and then, just as the plane was landing, Goenka suggested Indira. Kamaraj, he says, looked at him significantly. "Say nothing more about this," he warned. A few days later, the Syndicate made Mrs Gandhi Prime Minister and nobody was more delighted than Goenka.

This was **Phase One (Love and Pride)** in the relationship. Then, Mrs Gandhi fell out with the Syndicate, split the Congress and declared that she'd moved to the left. Goenka treated this as betrayal and his papers began to attack her.

This was **Phase Two (Betrayal and Anger)** in the relationship.

Goenka's opposition did not harm Indira Gandhi, who won by a landslide in 1971 and then again, in the Assembly elections in 1972. But finally, events caught up with her and she declared the Emergency in 1975. While most of the press suffered during that period, the regime's ire was reserved for Goenka and the *Indian Express* group.

This was **Phase Three (Fight to the Finish).**

As it turned out, Goenka won that battle. Mrs Gandhi lost the 1977 election and the new Janata government was beholden to Goenka. The *Indian Express* became the mouthpiece of the regime and a crusading editor called Arun Shourie was hired to spur on the ministers and further expose the evilness of Indira Gandhi.

This was **Phase Four (Press Baron Exults).**

But soon, it was clear that Janata would collapse. Indira Gandhi, who Goenka and Shourie buried every day on their front page, was about to be resurrected. Perhaps, Goenka hadn't won his fight to the finish after all. Now, he began to have doubts. After Mrs Gandhi returned to office, these crystallised. He fired Shourie, resumed calling her "Devi" and cosied up to power again.

This was **Phase Five (Friends Again).**

NOW, CONSIDER the parallels with his relationship with Rajiv Gandhi.

There was first the **Love and Pride Phase** when Rajiv was elected. The old boy quietly forgot his objections to dynastic rule and was wheeled on before Jack Anderson's TV camera to tell an audience of bemused Americans that he would now die a happy man because India was safe in Rajiv's hands.

Then came **Phase Two (Betrayal and Anger).** Rajiv refused to act against Dhirubhai Ambani, even though Goenka claims he had been assured he would. The *Express* turned against the Prime Minister.

It may be a coincidence, but Arun Shourie had been rehired just before **Phase Three (Fight to the Finish)** began. The *Express* used all its might to get rid of Rajiv, while the government retaliated with raids, law suits and other forms of persecution.

Once again, Goenka appeared to have won. Rajiv lost the 1989 election, the *Express* took the credit and the newly-elected Janata Dal ministry treated the paper with deference. It was the old **Phase Four (Press Baron Exults)** all over again.

And now, it looks as though we are into **Phase Five (Friends Again).** The Janata Dal has split, its government has collapsed and the new Prime Minister owes his seat to Rajiv Gandhi. Clearly, Goenka hadn't really won his fight to the finish. And so, Arun Shourie has been fired for the second time, the paper has toned down its opposition to Rajiv and yes, the proprietor is having doubts again.

Who knows? He might be cosying up to Rajiv soon

THERE IS, however, one major difference this time around. Eleven years after the fall of the Janata government, Goenka is no longer the sprightly, old man he used to be. His health is failing, he is out of things for hours on end and has only the odd lucid moment.

To be fair, he has been like this since 1987 and though his doctors keep saying how ill he is, he has managed to wage war on Dhirubhai Ambani during that period without his health really getting in the way.

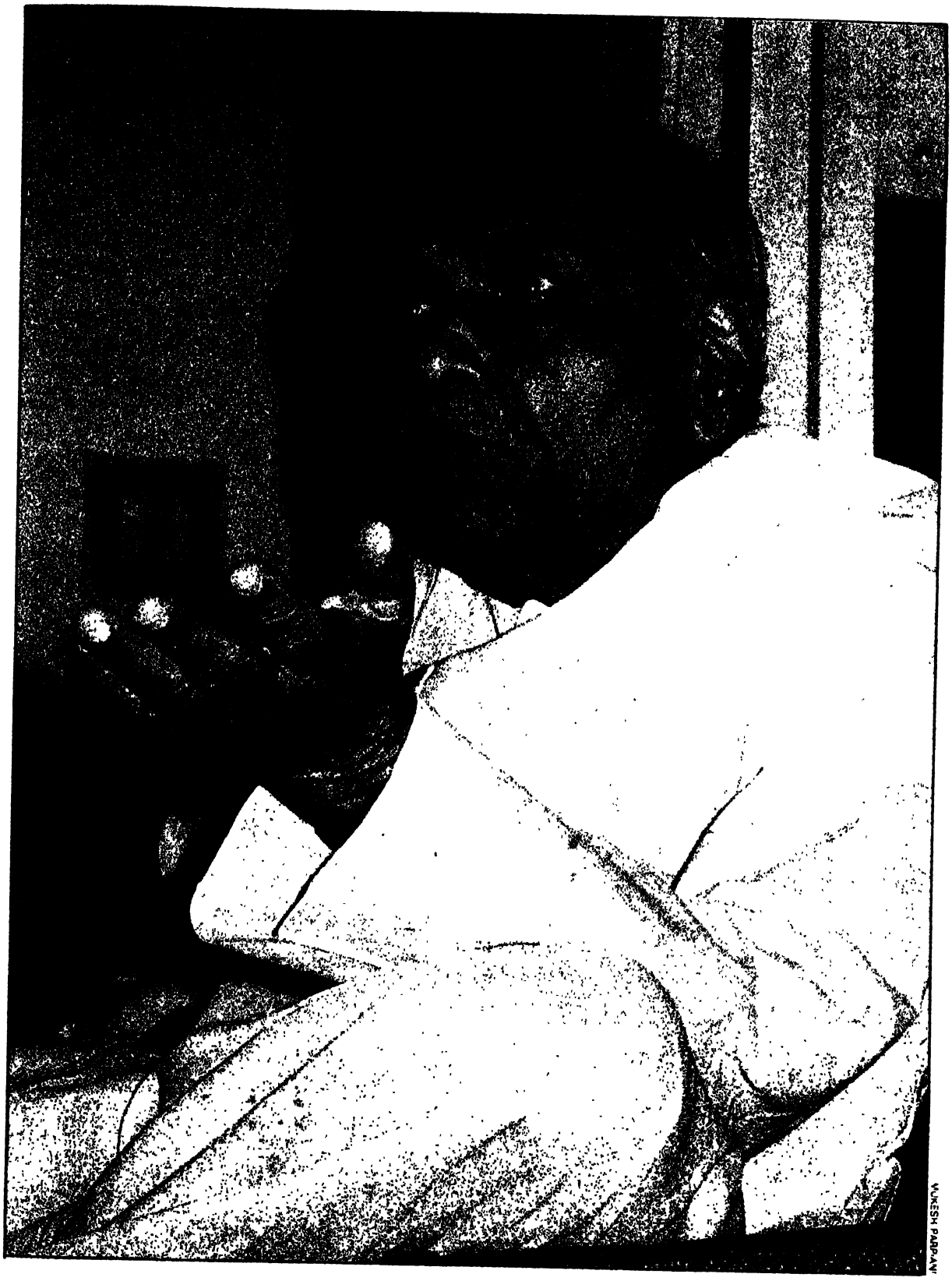
Indeed, sceptics allege that his illness is an excuse. He can "forget" things deliberately and then say that his mind isn't what it used to be. He can fire editors (Arun Shourie, last month) while claiming to their faces he has nothing against them.

Certainly, he has got away with everything because of his ill-health. In 1987, just after he had hired Shourie, he gave SUNDAY an interview. Then, a few weeks later, he promptly denied having done any such thing. The charitable explanation for such lapses is that he is gaga much of the time.

Perhaps he is. But even in that condition, he makes a formidable opponent and a good friend. (Ask Rajiv Gandhi or Nusli Wadia.) Each time his detractors write him off and claim that effective control of his empire has passed on to accountants and editors, the old man rises from his slumber and seizes control.

For all his shifts of stance, his selective memory and his amoral approach to public affairs, he remains a true original. In the twilight of his life, he dwarfs other proprietors and never ceases to shock or surprise.

And for all we know, perhaps this time, he will depart from the script, rewrite **Phase Five** and *not* make up with Rajiv! •



VIJKESH PARPANI

I AM PHILIPS. I AM TOMORROW.



Philips technology is dramatically changing the way people look at television today.

*Philips Electronics and Electricals Limited is an affiliate of N.V. Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken, The Netherlands.

An innovative past is no guarantee for a successful future in a world that's moving fast into tomorrow. Philips* never forgets this. Yes, Philips gave the world the X-ray tube, the audio cassette, the laser video disc and the compact disc, and brought modern lighting and radio to India — but that was yesterday. Today's Philips is already in the future. As always. Philips TVs let you see right into tomorrow. One look at them and you'll see Philips is the world No. 1 — supplying a full ten percent of the world's colour TVs. Our professional electronics equipment provides analytical, testing, communication and automation tools for changing R&D and industrial needs. Our components lie at the heart of most of today's electronics. Our lighting technology is so advanced that it sets the standards for others to follow. And our extra-ordinary audio equipment breaks barriers in sound. We've given India our best for over 60 years. We'll do it for the next hundred.

FOR YEARS, WE'VE BEEN INVENTING THE FUTURE.

PHILIPS

INDER MALHOTRA

No politics, please

The armed forces should be left alone



How times change! What has been done to the navy of this country in recent weeks and months is far worse than the blows that had been delivered to the cohesion, morale, discipline and image of the army during the heyday of the late Krishna Menon, followed, alas, by the military debacle in the Himalayas in 1962. The country was up in arms against the then minister for defence and even against the Nehru government well before the Chinese struck. This time, however, there has hardly been even a whimper of protest, although the navy has been shaken practically to its very roots.



ASHOK VAJHE

Admiral L. Ramdas is mercifully in the saddle as the naval chief, despite disgraceful last-minute attempts by the Chandra Shekhar government to reverse the decision

To understand what has really hit this proud service it is necessary not to be misled into believing that what we have gone through is merely a more than usually nasty and malodorous battle for succession to the top naval job. The extravagantly bitter struggle did take place. But it descended to hitherto unplumbed depths primarily because it reflected a deeper malaise. This can be diagnosed only if we realise clearly that the succession strife got inextricably intermixed with what can only be called *l'affaire* Bhagwat, or the questionable denial to the utterly outstanding Rear Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat of the prized and prestigious command of the western fleet into which is packed the Indian Navy's biggest punch.

At the time this happened, Bhagwat was Chief of Staff of the Western Naval Command where his boss was Vice-Admiral "Tony" Jain who has since lost the war of succession to equally brilliant but slightly junior Admiral L. Ramdas, now mercifully in the saddle as the naval chief despite totally disgraceful last-minute attempts by the Chandra Shekhar government to reverse the decision duly signed by the President and solemnly announced by the V.P. Singh government.

Since the issue of appointment of the western fleet commander is *sub judice*—Bhagwat has gone to Bombay High Court alleging that he was done down because of "manipulations" by Admiral Nadkarni, the outgoing naval chief, and Tony Jain—it is not proper to discuss the merits of the issue in dispute. But it is both permissible and pertinent to pinpoint the casual manner in which the V.P. Singh government handled the whole question and the terrible impact that the Bhagwat affair and subsequent developments have had on the service.

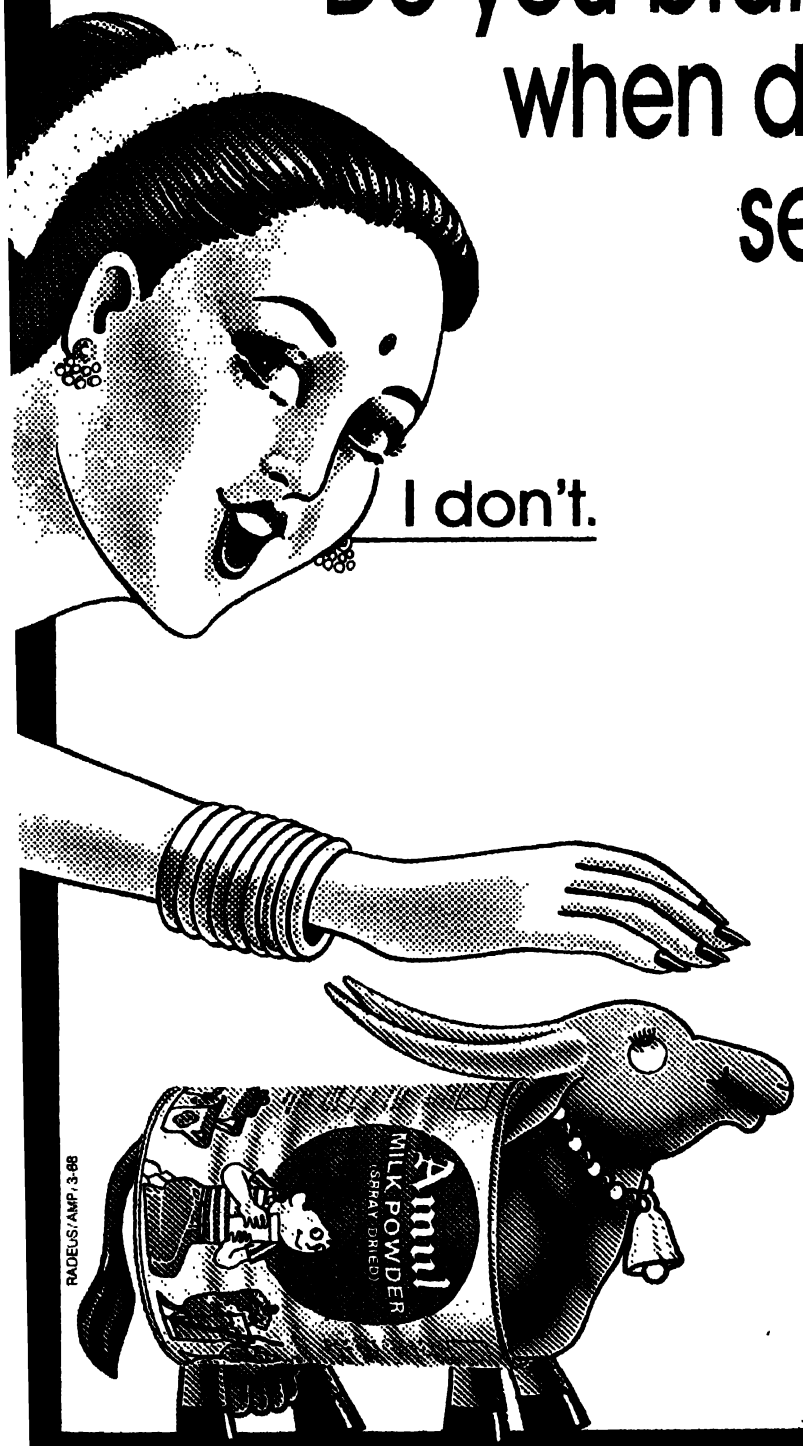
Before going to court, Bhagwat had filed, through proper channels, a statutory complaint and asked for a meeting with the defence minister (then, as now, the Prime Minister himself), which is every aggrieved officer's right. But the poor rear admiral did not even get a reply, leave alone an audience with the defence minister. As he went to court, the navy officer corps got polarised into two antagonistic sections. One said that Bhagwat must not be given any quarter because he had no business to reveal the navy's dirty business in a court of law. But the other section says no less vehemently that the injustice done to Bhagwat was so egregious that the matter had to be brought into open so that gerrymandering and favouritism was exposed once and for all.

Bad enough in itself, the situation became much worse when the increasingly embittered polarisation embraced also the race between Jain and Ramdas. What eventually clinched the issue against Jain was Bhagwat's charge, in his writ petition, backed by some documentary evidence, that Nadkarni and Jain had gone to the extent of "tampering" the record.

After losing the battle, Jain bided his time until the VP government fell and that of Chandra Shekhar took over. And then began what is unquestionably the most disgraceful act in the sordid drama. Politicos around Chandra Shekhar, powerful business lobbies and busybodies of all sorts persuaded the new government to reopen the issue. That this unpardonable folly was finally avoided does not detract from the enormity of what was attempted.

The government needs to be told that almost all other institutions of the Indian Republic have been politicised, perverted and often paralysed. The armed forces should, in heaven's name, be left alone. •

Do you blame the milk when dahi doesn't set properly?



Most housewives blame the milk when dahi doesn't set properly. They fault the consistency or the quality. Use Amul Milk Powder to be sure of the same consistency of milk — the same high quality — day after day.

With Amul Milk Powder you have pure, rich, creamy milk, mixed and ready in minutes. Good to drink, good for tea and coffee, dahi, lassi, kheer, custard, rasgollas, cake...

Amul
MILK POWDER

It's like having a dairy in your home

RADEUS/AMP/3-88

Marketed by: Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd., Anand 388 001

AFTER THE STORM

Can the Ayodhya dispute be resolved? Despite scepticism, a few encouraging signs



As 30th October drew to a close, it appeared as if the fires of Ram would continue to rage for a long time. Despite the heavy security provided by the Uttar Pradesh government, the *kar sevaks* had managed to storm the disputed structure and plant a saffron flag atop the dome of the Babri Masjid. While police firing resulted in some casualties in the temple town, communal violence erupted all over the country in an inevitable fall-out of the incidents at Ayodhya. With leaders of both communities adopting an intransigent stand on the *mandir/masjid* controversy, it seemed unlikely that the fractious issue would be resolved in the foreseeable future.

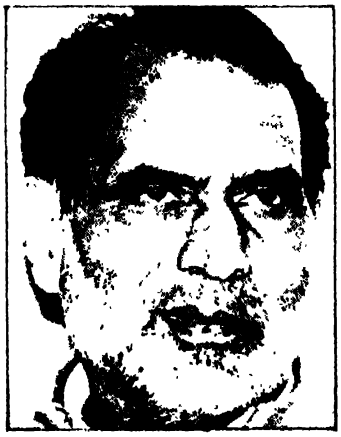
But only a month later, such pessimism appeared totally misplaced. On 1 December, 20 days after he'd been sworn in as Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar managed to get representatives of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) to the negotiating table. And though the meeting ended inconclusively, the two parties agreeing to meet again on the 4th, it was seen as a major breakthrough for the fledgling Janata Dal(S) government.

Even before Shekhar had got the nod from President R Venkataraman, his camp-followers had confided in all who would listen that only their leader could solve the Ram Janmabhoomi Babri Masjid controversy to everyone's satisfaction. "I don't know of any other leader who can have lunch with Nanaji Deshmukh and then go out for dinner with Syed Shahabuddin," said one confidant. And this goodwill, it was presumed, would help the bearded leader from Ballia to get the contending parties to see reason.

Those who had regarded such talk as idle hype were soon proved wrong. Not only did the influential Shia leader, Ali Mian, call up a minister of the Shekhar government to confess that he was hopeful that things would work out, but even the VHP and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appeared to have modified their stand in the hope that an agreement might be reached.

And finally, when the VHP redefined *kar seva* as a non-violent *satyagraha* to be conducted at the Janmasthan until *makar sankranti* (14 January), the scenario appeared to become even more hopeful.

Sure enough, 6 December saw a sea change in the attitude of the Hindu leadership. Gone was the intent to provoke trouble by affecting forcible entry into the disputed area. In its place was a chastened VHP, exhorting its *kar sevaks* to court arrest peacefully and taking particular pains to ex-



CHANDRA SHEKHAR

In a major breakthrough, he managed to bring the VHP and the BMAC to the negotiating table



RAJIV GANDHI

The Congress' attitude to the Babri Masjid dispute is more positive than it has been in a long time



JAGDISH YADAV



SATYAGRAHA

Given the potential for large-scale violence, it went off better than most people had envisaged and only sporadic incidents of violence were reported on 6 December

clude such lumpen elements as the Shiv Sainiks from its ranks.

When the day passed off with only sporadic incidents of violence reported, it seemed reasonable to assume that the worst was over as far as the Ayodhya dispute went. And from now on, things could only get better.

All the major players were in attendance when the meeting between the VHP and the BMAC got under way at the Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi. There were Mulayam Singh Yadav, the UP chief minister, who'd made the preservation of the mosque something of a prestige issue; Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the Rajasthan chief minister, in his capacity as Shekhar's conduit to the Hindu leadership; Maharashtra CM Sharad Pawar, the Congress(I) representative; and minister of state for home Subodh Kant Sahay, acting for the Union government.

The VHP leaders, including Vishnu Hari Dalmia, S.C. Dixit, Acharya Giriraj Kishore and Moropant Pingle, refused to call off the proposed *kar seva* on 6 December. The BMAC, represented by S.S. Owaisi, Javed Habib, Mohammad Afzal, J.A. Gilani and M.A. Siddiqui, for its part, reiterated that the disputed structure belonged to the Muslims. But while neither party softened its stand publicly, insiders maintained that it was now only a matter of time.

The Congress(I)'s attitude too was more positive than it had been in a long time. In a significant departure from his earlier none-of-this-concerns-us-except-as-grist-for-criticism stand, Rajiv Gandhi wrote to the Prime Minister suggesting a formula by which the Ayodhya dispute could be resolved. According to the Congress president, the best way out lay in instituting a commission of enquiry, comprising five sitting judges of the Supreme Court, to be selected by the Chief Justice of India. This commission would determine whether the Babri Masjid stood over the site of a temple. (Once it arrived at a decision, legislation could be passed to the effect that no other place of worship would ever change hands.)

This body would have the right to summon witnesses, examine reports and commission studies to arrive at a conclusion within a period of three months. If the appointment of such a commission created legal problems, Rajiv suggested that the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court be enlarged by an ordinance.

While Shekhar agreed that Gandhi had made "several good suggestions", the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) welcomed the new initiative. (Rajiv had apparently had a three-hour secret meeting with Syed Shahabuddin before announcing the formula.) But both the VHP and the BJP refused to consider it as the momentum of their movement would be lost if the matter was referred to a commission. And also, it couldn't be guaranteed that the decision would go in favour of the Hindus.

But the Hindu leadership had managed to snatch a victory of sorts: the building of the temple itself was not in dispute any longer. Wrote Rajiv: "The main question is not whether a temple should be constructed but where precisely the temple should be located."

Surprisingly enough, even such a hardliner as Mulayam Singh Yadav swung around to this point of view. On 6 December, while the *kar sevaks* offered peaceful *satyagraha* at Ayodhya, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister announced at a function in Lucknow that he was ready to construct a grand Sri Ram Janmabhoomi temple if that would solve the vexed *mandir/masjid* issue. And though Yadav didn't go as far as Chandra


RAKESH SAHAI

CHANDRA SWAMI

He is convinced that a temple should be built at the site of the sanctum sanctorum after demolishing the mosque and said so during his trip to Ayodhya

Swami did on his expedition to the temple city, insisting that the temple be constructed on the *garbha griha* (sanctum sanctorum), he didn't specify the site either.

At the 4 December meeting, however, everyone had decided to fall back on archaeology, tactfully skirting the contentious topic of the VHP-sponsored *kar seva*. Minister of state Subodh Kant Sahay asked the contending parties to submit documentary and other evidence to substantiate their case by 22 December. This would then be made available to the other side and, after a thorough study, the BMAC and the VHP would meet again on 10 January to discuss the issue.

The reasoning obviously was that if the Rajiv formula had been accepted by then, the evidence would be made over to a commission of enquiry, which would come to a decision on the matter in three months. And, as per the agreement arrived at earlier, both parties would abide by it.

The BJP, however, had other ideas. Party general secretary K.L. Sharma wrote to the Prime Minister asking that the 'Gandhi (the Mahatma) formula' be followed to resolve the Ayodhya dispute. According to Sharma, in an article in the *Harijan Sevak* dated 27 July, 1937, the Mahatma had written: "Hindu religious places which have been taken over by the Muslims should be handed over to Hindus voluntarily...it will strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity."

Sound of the sannyasins

An audio-cassette, inciting Hindus to adopt a more militant stand, raises a controversy

A lifetime spent in delivering *pravachans* (sermons) to the faithful has honed Uma Bharti's oratorical skills. And her rabble-rousing style is now a part of *sangh parivar* legend. So, nobody was very surprised when an audio-cassette comprising Bharti's rabid views on the Ayodhya issue began doing the rounds in the capital. Large meetings of devotees were organised in parks and at street corners, where the cassette was played to incite Hindus into adopting more militant stands. And with time, the cassette made its way into smaller towns and villages of north India as well, having a far greater impact on the unsophisticated audiences in these parts.


MITAN RAI

UMA BHARTI

When she visited Ayodhya to lend moral support to the volunteers, she realised how much of an impact 'her' cassette had had on the Hindu mind

As the message of hate the cassette contained made its way into every Hindu home, the media were unequivocal in condemning the sannyasin.

Bharti, for her part, insisted that the press, as usual, had got it all wrong. The voice which spewed out such inflammatory rubbish didn't belong to her. Yes, some snippets of her recent public speeches had been included in the cassette, but it was Sadhavi Rithambra, a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) functionary, who'd held forth for the most part.

Further enquiry, however, showed that Gandhiji had written no such article and a very embarrassed BJP gave the idea a quick burial.

The VHP-BJP combine insisted on going ahead with the *satyagraha* though. A worried Chandra Shekhar summoned an all-party meeting, of the Congress, the Janata Dal and the communists, to discuss how best to deal with the situation. A joint appeal was issued, asking the Hindu leaders to call off their plan. But to no avail.

Finally, a compromise was worked out. The Prime Minister promised that the security forces would exercise full restraint and the VHP gave an undertaking that the *satyagraha* would be non-violent.



MULAYAM SINGH YADAV

He recently announced that he was ready to construct a Ram temple—a victory for the Hindu leadership—but did not specify its site

Nevertheless, on the eve of 6 December, an uneasy calm enveloped Ayodhya. Anticipating trouble, the security forces had all but taken over the town, setting up fortified barriers in the bylanes leading to the temple. According to the commissioner, Faizabad, Madhukar Gupta, 60-odd companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the National Security Guard (NSG) had been deployed in the district. But Vinay Katiyar, the all-India convenor of the Bajrang Dal, was unfazed by all the *bandobust*. "Tomorrow is the day we will crush Mulayam Singh's arrogance to little pieces," he declared, "and we'll do this in the face of *lathis*, bullets or arrests."

But never mind the bluster; the VHP was as keen as the administration to ensure that no trouble ensued. Identity badges were issued to all the *kar sevaks* assembled near the temple built in the memory of Deoraha Baba. "We don't want members of enemy political parties joining us to create trouble and then blaming us," explained one functionary.

The first group to court arrest comprised women activists from Rajasthan, including many whose relatives were killed on 30 October. They set out after an elaborate puja, cheered on by the local residents. Said Kusum, a school-teacher from Jaipur: "We will court arrest if they don't kill us on the way. This is our sacrifice for Ram and we are not afraid."

Soon, the second batch of *kar sevaks*, women members from Delhi, entered the vicinity of the Hanuman Garhi temple, and cries of *"Bachcha bachcha Ram ka, Janmabhoomi ke kaam ka,"* rent the air.

Bajrang Dal volunteers sneaked into the temple area before the programme got under way, and at a signal from their leaders, chanted and shouted slogans, squatting at the feet of the guards, their breath heavily laced with *bhang*. The scuffle with the security forces was prolonged as the youths posed for the national and international press assembled at the site. BJP leader Uma Bharti was present to impart moral courage to the volunteers, though she declined to give them the benefit of her oratorical



DR J.K. JAIN

His inflammatory video-cassette on Ayodhya is officially banned

of 90 minutes, the tape comprising a well-edited version of her speech at a rally in Jagadri, Haryana. But since Bharti was the better-known of the two sannyasins, the cassette had been publicised as containing the BJP leader's speech, though no credits appeared on the cover.

The saffron-clad Bharti related her version to anyone who cared to listen—members of Parliament, BJP workers, friends and well-wishers—but the charge stuck. And, if insider reports were anything to go by, the sannyasin was hauled up by BJP president L.K. Advani for compromising the party in this manner. Bharti presented her defence to Advani as well, who advised her to issue an official denial. But VHP pressure ensured that Bharti and Advani maintained a discreet silence on this one, while the administration banned the cassette in Delhi.

But the tape was playing to record audiences in Ayodhya all along. And when the shorn sannyasin visited the town to lend moral support to the *kar sevaks*, she realised just how much of an impact her alleged speech had made on the Hindu mind.

It wasn't long before Bharti made an abrupt about-turn, accepting congratulations for her "brilliant performance" in the most gracious manner possible. And then, going on to present her admirers with a repeat at her public meetings. With rather predictable consequences: soon after her address at a rally in Ganj-Dundwara in Etah district, communal violence broke out, leaving ten dead.

To be fair to the sannyasin, however, she isn't the only one stirring up matters in this way. Along with her audio-cassette, a Dr J.K. Jain-produced video-cassette on Ayodhya is also flying off the racks. Despite the ostensible ban, both cassettes are available at various shops in Palika Bazar, a central market in New Delhi.

And, more tellingly, at the BJP party office.

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi



ASHOK SINGHAL

The reins of the movement have passed out of the hands of *mahants* and *sants* to the VHP, in the person of, Ashok Singhal

skills. The activists were taken through a dusty field and then packed into buses which would take them to jails all over the state or drop them off at Faizabad.

Vinay Katiyar, however, was triumphant at the end of the entire exercise. "We have performed *kar seva*," he announced grandly, referring to the fact that the authorities had allowed one activist at a time into the sanctum sanctorum. Katiyar insisted that those who entered the *garba grtha* had scraped off bits of the plaster from the mosque. "If that is not *kar seva*, what is?" he asked defiantly.

But such bravado notwithstanding, the VHP had all too clearly given up the idea of taking over the disputed area by force.

But even as journalists and security personnel had decided to call it a day, trouble erupted near the Hanuman Garhi chowk. Apparently, a Muslim youth slipped into the area and tried to stab a priest, Hari Ram Das. The crowd soon got in on the act and attempted to lynch the boy. But the police intervened to arrest him and whisked him away from trouble. The Hindu mob, beside itself at being prevented from meting out the most primitive form of justice, gheraoed the Ayodhya police station. Ranted a sadhu: "We will see that the Muslims pay for this. They won't get away with it."

Sure enough, by the evening, at least eight shops and five houses be-

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

FIRST ROUND

15 January, 1885: A suit is filed in the court of the sub-judge, Faizabad, by Raghubar Das, a *mahant* of the Janmasthan, asking permission to build a temple on the outer enclosure of the disputed structure.

24 February, 1885: The appeal is dismissed on the ground that the temple site is too close to the existing *masjid*. But the sub-judge agrees that the property in question belongs to the *mahant*.

17 March, 1886: District judge Col J.E.A. Chambier dismisses a similar appeal by Das. He also reverses the earlier decision, which had that the property belonged to the *mahant*.

25 March, 1886: Das appeals to the judicial commissioner of Oudh, W. Young, asking him to controvert the court order, which said that the *masjid* had been built by Emperor Babar.

1 November, 1886: Young dismisses the appeal.

SECOND ROUND

March 1934: Communal riots break out and Hindus damage a part of the wall surrounding the mosque and the domes. The *masjid* is rebuilt by the government.

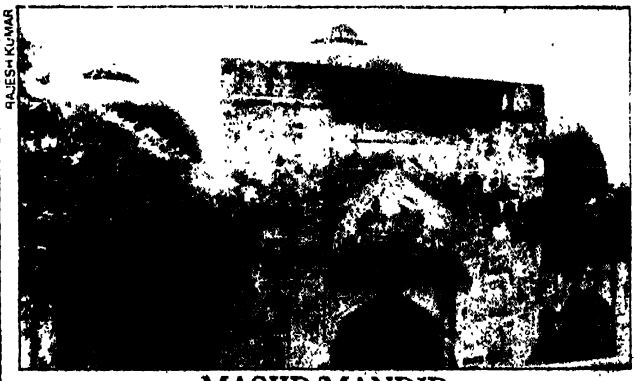
1936: The commissioner of waqfs conducts an enquiry and announces that the *masjid* was built by Babar, a Sunni Muslim.

20 February, 1944: These findings are published in the official waqf gazette. Litigation ensues between the Shia Central Board of Waqf and the Sunni Central Board of Waqf in Faizabad.

23 March, 1946: The civil judge, S.A. Ahsan, rules that available evidence shows that the mosque was used by members of both sects.

22 December, 1949: A deity is installed inside the *masjid*, allegedly by some Hindus. A large crowd gathers outside to witness this miracle and attempts to break in. The lock is broken, but the police manage to keep the people out.

A stronger lock is put in and police presence is strengthened. District magistrate K.K. Nayar



RAJESH KUMAR

MASJID/MANDIR

There is reason to hope that the worst is over as far as the Ayodhya dispute goes. And from now on, things will only get better

longing to the minority community had been completely gutted. Even the security forces appeared to have been infected by the communal virus, refusing to alert the fire brigade: "We have no water. Let them burn."

Mohammad Yunus Siddiqui, the chairman of the BMAC, spoke for his entire community when he said: "The situation has turned so communal that we can no longer trust the police to protect us." In fact, of the 5,000-odd Muslims in Ayodhya, many had either fled their homes or, at least, sent their women and children away.

But given the potential for large-scale violence, it had to be admitted that the *satyagraha* went off better than most people had envisaged. Uma Bharti maintained that the restrained behaviour of the security forces was only due to Chandra Shekhar's "*imaandari*". Also, said the BJP leader, "The *kar sevaks* behaved in an exemplary manner. If they wanted to take to the path of violence, they would not have spared anyone after the shameful events of 30 October and 2 November. When they came here, they did not know whether they would live or die."



VINAY KATIYAR

"We have performed *kar seva*," he announced grandly and claimed that those who entered the *garba griha* had scraped off plaster from the mosque

The VHP's moderate stand did not go down too well with its activists, though. On the second day of the *satyagraha*, of the 2,000-odd activists expected to turn up to court arrest, only about 700 did. The rest stayed away to protest the scaling down of the agitation. Said Satya Prakash Tiwari, a *kar sevak* from Ferozepur



KAR SEVAKS

Though the VHP was keen to ensure that no trouble ensued, scuffles between the *sevaks* and the security forces were inevitable

refuses to remove the idols on the grounds that widespread rioting will result.

5 January, 1950: Priya Dutt Ram, chairman, municipal board, Faizabad and Ayodhya, takes charge of the property as the receiver appointed by the government.

16 January, 1950: Gopal Singh Visharad files a suit in the court of the civil judge, Faizabad, for entitlement to offer prayers at the shrines installed in the structure. An interim injunction is granted.

The district magistrate, Faizabad, asks for a modification of the order because if unrestricted puja is allowed it will amount to only one party exercising its rights.

24 April, 1950: The Uttar Pradesh government deposes before the civil court, Faizabad, to the effect that the disputed structure is a *masjid* and the idols were "wrongly put inside".

The issue of ownership of the property is, however, sub judice *to* this day.

THIRD ROUND

18 December, 1985: Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders ask the district magistrate, Faizabad, to remove the locks outside the structure as this does not have legal sanction and seek *darshan*.

26 January, 1986: Umesh Chandra Pandey, an Ayodhya lawyer, moves an application before the *sardar munsif* asking that restrictions on puja be removed.

28 January, 1986: The *munsif* refuses to pass the order.

31 January, 1986: Pandey files a similar appeal before the district judge, Faizabad.

1 February, 1986: The judge, K.M. Pandey, allows the appeal and issues an order to the effect that the locks be opened and no restrictions placed on the performance of puja.

Within 40 minutes of the judgement, the locks are opened by the city magistrate.

From then on, the controversy has escalated with every passing year until the flashpoint was finally reached on 30 October, 1990, with the storming of the mosque by the VHP's *kar sevaks*.



SADHU SAMAJ

Represented by the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, it is not keen on maintaining a militant stand now that there is no doubt about temple construction

district. "My brother was killed on 2 November. The wounds inflicted on us by Mulayam Singh Yadav are still sore and festering. We have come to break the shrine, not offer *satyagraha*." The VHP hurriedly rounded up some others to save face, but the rift in the ranks was all too evident by then.

Differences between the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, represented by the *mahants* and *sants* of Ayodhya, and the VHP also deepened. The president of the Samiti, Mahant Avaidyanath, and its vice-president, Nritya Gopal Das, had been feeling for a while that the reins of the movement has passed out of their hands, with the VHP and the Bajrang Dal taking over, in the persons of Ashok Singhal and Vinay Katiyar. The religious leaders had been kept out of the 1 and 4 December deliberations, further increasing their suspicions of the VHP.

It was in this context that the meetings between the members of the Samiti, including Mahant Avaidyanath and Nritya Gopal Das, and the Prime Minister on the evening of 3 December assumed importance. Said Avaidyanath: "I told him (Chandra Shekhar) that things had gone too far to suspend our agitation altogether. But I assured him that our movement would be peaceful...we are giving him time to find a solution." Nritya Gopal Das agreed: "Those who are angry can go to Kashmir and Punjab to express their sentiments. We are not responsible for any show of violence here. If our activists keep doing this sort of thing, they will provoke action from the police. And if they keep getting killed, we will lose popular support."

The arrival of controversial godman Chandra Swami only served to further spoil relations between the Samiti and the VHP. While Vinay Katiyar told SUNDAY, "See how these celebrities are descending on Ayodhya after the success of our movement," such *mahants* as Ram Chander Das Paramhans took the Swami around, sitting by his side while he addressed assembled journalists.

Denying that he was in Ayodhya as Shekhar's emissary, Chandra Swami admitted, however, that he'd go back and report to the PM once his visit was over. For his part, said the godman, he was convinced that a temple should be built over the site of the *garba griha* after the mosque had been demolished.

Such militancy translated itself into attacks on Muslims on Ayodhya's streets. The most heinous of these took place when a Muslim youth was dragged into Maniram Chhaoni, a temple owned by Nritya Gopal Das, and set ablaze after being doused in kerosene. The VHP spokesman, however, insisted that the charred body discovered in the streets belonged to a sadhu who'd immolated himself.

Unfortunately, there weren't many takers for this version.

Despite such incidents and the communal violence in Aligarh and Hyderabad, the government remained hopeful about an amicable solution to the *mandir/masjid* issue. Sources in the administration had it that the VHP wasn't backtracking of its own accord, but on instructions from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Said a senior functionary: "The RSS are fascists all right. But fascism is only

THE ALL-PARTY MEET

The PM promised that the security forces would exercise restraint and VHP gave its word that the *satyagraha* would be non-violent





another word for militant nationalism. The Sangh may want to arouse Hindu ire, but they will never stand for the unity and integrity of the country being threatened."

According to this version, the RSS hadn't counted on the situation deteriorating so much that the Indian nation itself was threatened with disintegration. And when it was presented with such an eventuality, the Sangh leadership decided to scale down the movement so that some sort of a compromise could be worked out with the minority community.



The *sadhu samaj*, represented by the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, also wasn't too keen on maintaining a militant stand. The agitation for the Ram Janmabhoomi had ensured that there wasn't any doubt about the temple construction any longer. The Shekhar government, the Congress(I) and even Mulayam Singh Yadav were agreed that a *mandir* had to be put up; only the actual site was in dispute. And the *mandir* was all that the *mahants* of Ayodhya wanted. It didn't make the slightest difference to them whether the VHP constructed it or the Union government.

That's where Chandra Swami came in. The godman had evidently been assigned the task of presenting the government's case to the *sadhus* and *mahants* of Ayodhya and weaning them away from the VHP. And if the presence of Paramhans in the Swami's vicinity was anything to go by, he had achieved a tangible measure of success in that endeavour.

Left to itself the VHP would have persisted with its militant stand, but faced with isolation (both the RSS and the *sadhu samaj* wanted to tone down their stand), it had little option but to fall in line. Also, a section of the organisation was only too aware that if its *kar sevaks* continued to be killed in police firing and communal violence, it was bound to lose the support of the Hindu masses.

It was only the BJP which stood to gain if the agitation continued to generate white heat. For, a Hindu wave translated into votes for the party and if the movement for the temple dragged on till the next polls, the BJP was bound to benefit tremendously. If, on the other hand, the dispute was resolved amicably and a temple constructed for the Hindus, the party, which depended on a one-point programme (the building of the Ram *mandir*), would lose its *raison d'etre*.

THE MUSLIM LEADERSHIP

It has softened its stand perceptibly in the face of Hindu intransigence. The Muslims, say some, have been shaken by the show of Hindu power

To make matters worse for the BJP, the Muslim leadership too softened its stand perceptibly in the face of Hindu intransigence, maintaining that if archaeological evidence proved that the Babri Masjid had been built on a temple, the minority community would give up its claims to the structure. The Muslims, went one argument, had been shaken by the show of Hindu power and were looking for a honourable way out. And this was as good an escape route as any.

It will take months and every bit of the Prime Minister's much-acclaimed skill at working out a compromise, however, before the tangled web woven over years can be unravelled. But given the circumstances, the government initiative was the best Shekhar could have done.

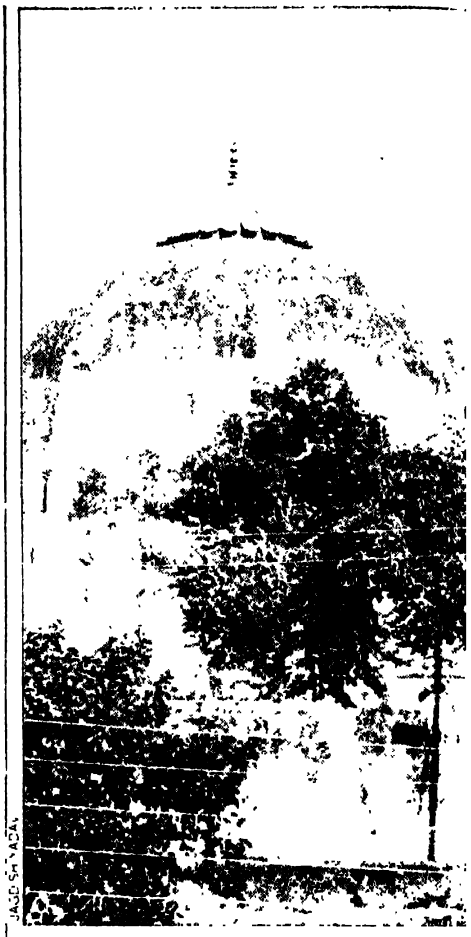
At the very least, it signalled a beginning of the end to the *mandir/masjid* issue. And as hectic negotiations continued behind closed doors, one could only hope that the solution wouldn't leave too many people unhappy.

Not even the best optimist expected anything more than that. ●

Seema Goswami with Rajiv Shukla and Minu Jain/New Delhi and Shiraz Sidhva and Radhika Ramaseshan/Ayodhya

MANDIR OR MASJID?

Historians and archaeologists can't seem to make up their minds



Temple or mosque? As the question became the centre-point around which national politics revolved, historians and archaeologists were called in to decide the issue to everyone's satisfaction. And with Muslim leaders maintaining that they would give up their claims to the disputed structure if it was conclusively proved that it had been a Ram temple, the focus of the debate shifted from the political to the historical aspect.

But it was S.P. Gupta's assertion which stirred up matters. The former director of the Allahabad museum published the findings of the team which he'd been a part of—headed by the former director-general of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), B.B. Lal, which had conducted excavations at the site during 1975-80. Gupta maintained that the team had come to the conclusion that the Babri Masjid had been built atop a Ram temple.

Apparently, regular excavations at the site revealed a series of square pillar bases of burnt brick and two floors separated by a thick layer of debris. The team, comprising scholars, historians and archaeologists, collected pieces of Islamic glazed ware with a white base and blue floral paintings, which can be securely dated as being in use until the 15th century.

On the basis of such evidence, Gupta arrived at the following conclusions:

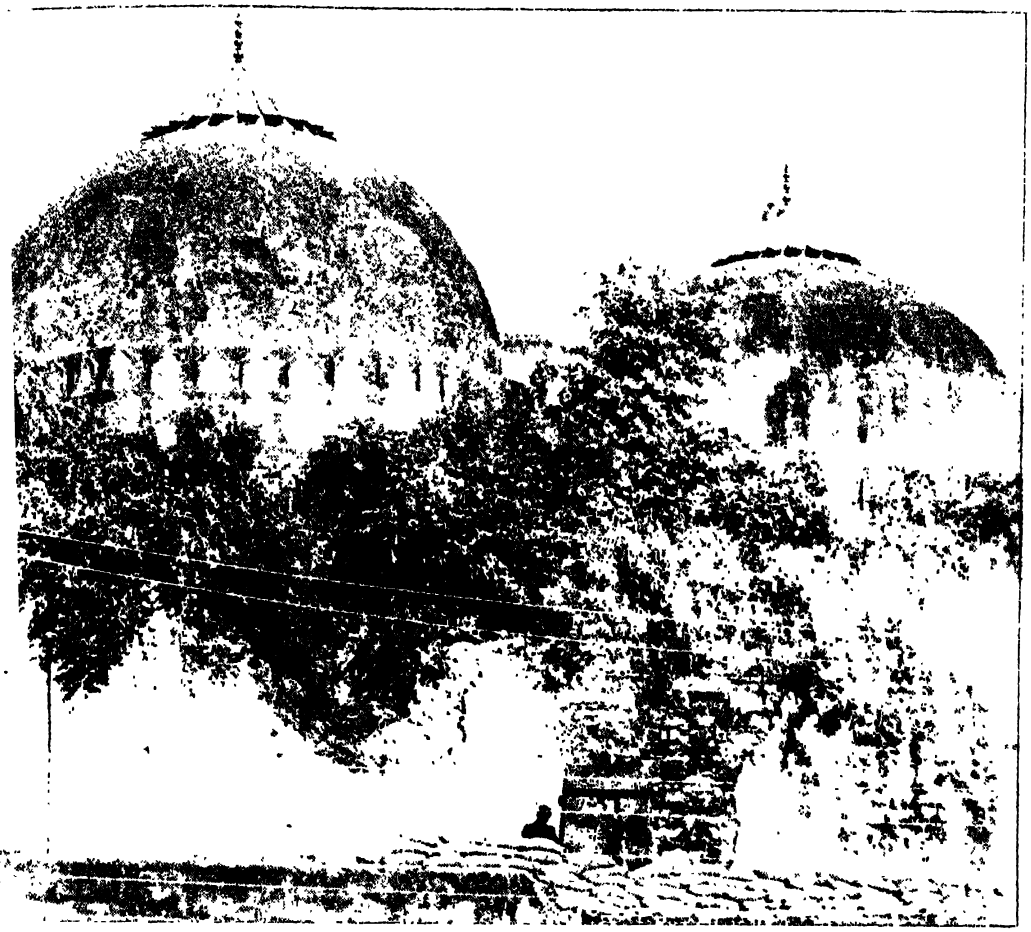
- A pillared structure was built at the site in the 11th century.
- The floor of the structure was laid twice.
- The structure existed until the 15th century, going by the existence of the Islamic glazed ware.
- Schistose, the blackstone of which the pillars are made, was used to carve "hundreds" of temple images in the past.
- The carvings on the pillars are primarily Hindu: floral designs of garlands, the lotus, and such semi-divine images as that of *yakshas*, *devkanyas* (nymphs), a *dvarpal* (doorkeeper) with a *trishul* (trident) in one hand, the *purna ghata* (sacred water vessel), etc.
- These carvings are in the late Pratihar or Gahadval style, "exclusively recorded in temple architecture", establishing that the temple was built in the 11th century.
- At least four central pillars existing in the *masjid* show identical carvings.
- There are several large rectangular stone pieces in the wall of the mosque, otherwise built of lime and mortar, proving that the debris of the temple was used to build the *masjid*.
- Two Persian inscriptions inside the *masjid* say that it was built by Mir Baqi, on the orders of Babar in Hijra 935, ie 1528 AD.

A reading of the *Babarnama* proves that the Mughal emperor camped at the confluence of the Saryu and Sidra rivers around this period. So, it is likely that Babar may have had a Ram temple demolished and built a mosque in its place.

This conclusion, backed by such archaeologists as K.V. Sundarajan of the ASI, was hotly contested by several other historians. Said Harbans Mukhia of the Jawaharlal Nehru University: "This is a gross misconstruction of a completely false argument." According to Mukhia and such scholars as Dr Romila Thapar, K.N. Pannikkar and Sarvapalli Gopal, brick pillar bases do not in themselves indicate the presence of a temple. They could just as easily have held up "a brick structure with arches which may have been a hall adjoining the mosque".

The historians, in a joint statement, also shot down the suggestion that the carvings on the site were exclusive to temple architecture. According to Mukhia, the carvings were equally characteristic of the secular derivative Pala art, the Shaivite range of carvings and Buddhist architecture. "Gupta wants to club these together as representing just one art form," he says.

It is far more likely, say scholars, that the structure that existed on the site was Buddhist. The Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang had recorded that Ayodhya was a major pilgrimage centre for Buddhists with several monasteries and *stupas* in existence. And in



The Babri Masjid was built atop a Ram temple, says a team of archaeologists which conducted excavations at the disputed site. No, say other scholars, the structure that existed was Buddhist

1860, a British observer named Carnegie wrote of the columns of the Babri Masjid: "These are of strong, close-grained, dark slate-coloured or black stone called by the natives *kasoti* and carved with different devices. To my thinking, they strongly resemble Buddhist pillars that I have seen in Banaras and elsewhere."

Gyanendra Pande of Delhi University agrees: "It is likely that the site was a Buddhist one as the entire Uttar Pradesh area was Buddhist."

Archaeological evidence being open to varying interpretations, the answer to the question '*mandir* or *masjid*?' has of necessity become a matter of faith rather than historical evidence. To confuse matters further, while Valmiki's *Ramayan* describes Ayodhya as a major urban centre, archaeological findings point to a very rudimentary civilisation at the site, which doesn't extend beyond the 7th century BC. The son of Dashrath, however, is supposed to have been born in the *tretayug*, thousands of years before *kalyug*, which began in 3102 BC. Asks Mukhia: "So, how do you fit in our Lord Ram?"

Also, Ram became a major deity only around the 13th and 14th centuries AD, with the rise of the Ramanandi sect. And, since there wasn't any evidence of a Ram temple before that, it is extremely unlikely that it was pulled down to make way for the Babri Masjid. Anyway, argues Gyanendra Pande, to identify events which date back 7,000-8,000 years is ludicrous: "Georgraphy, like history, functions here as a metaphor. Reducing this geography to actual sites only makes nonsense of it."

While historians agree that Babar visited Ayodhya, they deny the possibility of his having demolished a Ram tempie. Says Mukhia: "If he had destroyed a temple of such high order, he was bound to have made a hyperbolic statement about it in his memoirs. But he doesn't refer to it at all, though he does mention visiting Ayodhya." Besides, none of the 50-odd medieval historians whose works survive mentions the destruction of a temple around this time.

Even Tulsidas, who wrote the *Ramcharitamanas* in the 16th century, has not referred to the episode, which should have occurred during his lifetime. Asks Mukhia: "What kind of strange logic dictates that you destroy a temple of this order and then keep absolutely silent about it?"

In fact, the first reference to the fact that the Babri Masjid stands on Ram's birthplace comes in 1822 in a court affidavit in Faizabad. A minor Muslim official has noted: "The Babri Masjid stands at the place of Ram's birth, who was the son of Dashrath...this is adjacent to the kitchen of Sita, who was the wife of Ram."

But to prove this point, one way or the other, says a senior official of the human resource development ministry, "We will have to dig up the Babri Masjid. What we have now is only tangential evidence."

And in the absence of any conclusive evidence, the arguments are likely to continue, marked by acrimony and increased fundamentalism. •

Minu Jain/New Delhi

Role reversal

Now it's V.P. Singh who wants Sanjay Singh prosecuted

Politics is a funny business. In 1987, when the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Sanjay Singh for the murder of badminton player Syed Modi, it was Vishwanath Pratap Singh who cried 'victimisation'. By 1990, when the time came to frame charges, CBI officials claimed that the Raja's government was not keen on pursuing the case. And when sessions judge O.P. Pradhan decided three months ago that there was no evidence to link Sanjay Singh to the murder, many wondered if the changed political climate had dampened the prosecution's enthusiasm. This charge was denied by Ram Jethmalani, Sanjay's lawyer, and V.P. Singh seemed set to induct him into the Cabinet.

But now as 1990 draws to a close, nearly everything has changed. Sanjay Singh has forsaken both the Raja and Ram Jethmalani and crossed over to Chandra Shekhar's side. He has got his ministership but the government he is part of owes its very existence to the same Congress(I) that was once accused of victimising him.

And the final irony is that it is now V.P. Singh who wants the case against him re-opened and is accusing the government of hushing the matter up to obstruct justice!



The final irony is that it is now V.P. Singh who wants the case against Sanjay Singh re-opened and is accusing the government of hushing the matter up to obstruct justice

The Syed Modi case is back in the news because the CBI has three months to appeal against Pradhan's order and that period expires on 14 December, 1990 (before this issue of SUNDAY appears, but after we go to press). The V.P. Singh regime took no decisions for two months and it was widely assumed that there would be no appeal.

Then, Sanjay Singh switched sides, V.P. Singh fell, Shekhar took over and Sanjay became communications minister. The CBI forwarded the file to the new government. The Prime Minister, in turn, sent it to the law ministry. Attorney General Soli Sorabjee, a V.P. Singh appointee, had not been asked for his opinion by the Raja but if he was surprised to be consulted by Shekhar, he did not show it. Instead, he returned the file with the recommendation that the government appeal against Pradhan's order.

This recommendation was leaked to the press, giving rise to speculation that Sanjay Singh would be asked to resign till the appeal was heard.

In fact, the position is considerably more complicated. For a start, Sorabjee had already submitted his resignation when the file was given to him. He called Dr P. Rao, the law secretary, and asked whether it would be proper for him to give advice in the matter.

"It was only when the law secretary got back to me and told me that the government was keen to have my opinion," says Sorabjee, "that I examined the order of discharge of Sanjay Singh. I examined the case and on the 26th of November replied that it was fit for the government to go in appeal."

But is the government bound to accept the outgoing Attorney General's advice? That is far from clear and the case has now been referred to G. Ramaswamy, Sorabjee's successor.

Even if Ramaswamy accepts his predecessor's recommendation, it does not follow that Sanjay Singh will necessarily resign. His supporters in government argue that as long as there is no court verdict against him—and a significant decision in his favour—it is not incumbent on him to resign. He can continue as communications minister while the case is being heard.

Singh's friends offer precedents: A.R. Antulay, who remained chief minister while the cement case was being heard and Arjun Singh, who did not resign though a petition in the Churhat Lottery case was being heard.

The trouble with the precedents is that these were all private prosecutions. It is extremely unusual for a man to be a minister of the same government that is trying him for conspiracy to murder.

As far as V.P. Singh and his supporters are concerned, the Sanjay Singh issue is an acid test for Chandra Shekhar. Will he simply ignore Sorabjee's recommendation and let the 90-day deadline elapse? Will he decide to okay the appeal and let Singh continue as a minister despite that?

The Congress(I) is at least as interested. Nobody at 10 Janpath has forgiven Sanjay Singh for his infamous remark after one of Modi's alleged murderers implicated him in his confession: "Give me Rajiv Gandhi for two hours and I will make him confess to Indira Gandhi's assassination."

There is also pressure from the likes of Satish Sharma, who has been charged with complicity in the election-day shooting of Sanjay Singh last year. Sanjay has met Sharma and other friends of Rajiv Gandhi's to persuade them to let bygones be bygones but nobody is in a forgiving mood.

For all this, the Congress has made no official statement on the affair. When Rajiv Gandhi failed to turn up for the swearing-in of Shekhar's Cabinet, Congress spokesman V N. Gadgil denied that this had anything to do with Sanjay Singh's inclusion in the ministry. But Gadgil concedes that the Congress was not in favour of Singh's appointment.

All of this leaves Sanjay with few friends. Within the Chandra Shekhar camp, he is regarded as an opportunist and interloper and has no real power base there (though he is friendly with Kamal Morarka and Jayant Malhoutra). He was brought to the Janata Dal (S) by Mulayam Singh Yadav but it is by no means clear that Yadav—who has only recently made up with Singh—will stand by him in this crisis.

Singh's best hope lies in Chandra Shekhar's own stubborness. The Prime Minister has a reputation for standing by his men even when they are accused of crime (ie. Suraj Deo Singh and Chandra Swami) and is unlikely to throw Sanjay to the wolves now.

Already, the Prime Minister's men are saying that they will stand by Sanjay Singh despite the pressure from the Congress(I). And should V.P. Singh's supporters attempt to raise the issue during the forthcoming parliamentary session then they will ask why the Raja did nothing for two months after the sessions court judgement. If the matter was so pressing, then surely he could have asked the CBI to appeal.

For his part, Sanjay Singh is keeping his mouth shut. He is busy with telecommunications affairs at Sanchar Bhavan and refuses to comment on the case on which his political career depends. "I want no favours or political protection," he told SUNDAY, adding, "I want everything to be settled through the normal legal procedure." ●

Rajiv Shukla with Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

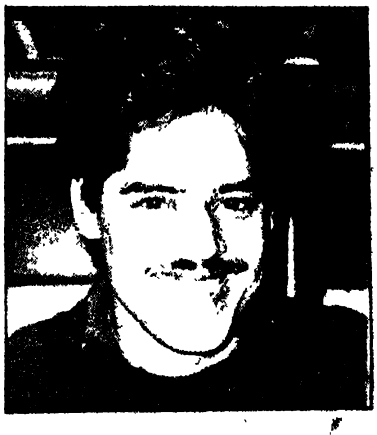
The evidence against Sanjay Singh

Just telephone calls

The way Sanjay Singh and his lawyers tell it, the CBI's case consisted of trying to prove that Singh was having an affair with Ameeta Modi. This, they say, is not evidence of murder. A jealous husband might kill his wife's lover. But why should the lover kill the husband?

The CBI does not agree. It maintains that it has enough evidence to substantiate its charge of murder. The sessions court in Lucknow ruled that there was enough evidence to charge Akhilesh Singh, a mafia-type, with the murder. The CBI claims that Akhilesh had no motive but there is proof that he was acting at Sanjay's behest.

Syed Modi: victim of a conspiracy?



Much of the evidence consists of telephone records. On both 16 and 17 July, 1987, Sanjay Singh booked calls, first to Ameeta Modi in Bombay and then to Akhilesh Singh in Rae Bareli. On the 18th, he called Ameeta again just before she left for Lucknow. Then, Akhilesh arrived in Lucknow and Singh left town.

According to the CBI, the killing was scheduled for the 22nd but the hit-men lost their nerve. On 25 July, Singh booked four calls to Akhilesh to find out what had gone wrong. (None of the calls matured.)

On the 27th, Modi was to leave for Delhi to accept the Arjuna Award but according to the CBI, Ameeta feigned sickness, got herself admitted to hospital and made him cancel the trip. Consequently, he was able to attend badminton practice on the 28th, and she had an excuse for not accompanying him.

As he came out of the stadium, he was shot dead.

Ritu Sarin



PAVEL RAHMAN

THE ARMY

Ershad had hoped that the military would bail him out. But he was mistaken



PAVEL RAHMAN

THE CRACKDOWN

Fall of a dictator

A popular movement ousts Bangladesh's President H.M.Ershad

Dictators never step down gracefully. They have to be pushed out. And that is exactly the way the Bangladeshis got rid of their country's longest surviving dictator, President (ex-General) Hussain Mohammed Ershad. On 6 December, Ershad, who till the last moment had been desperately trying to buy time, finally quit after countrywide protests and the admonitory stance of key foreign allies made it more than clear that his continuance would spell disaster.

Ershad stepped down, lifted the state of Emergency he had clamped down on the country, and announced that the Chief Justice of the Bangladesh High Court, Shahabuddin Ahmed, would look after the government till elections were held. Ahmed was duly sworn in as vice-president and acting head of state, while Ershad and his cronies slipped away to the security of their palatial residences.

It was also announced that parliamentary elections would be held within 90 days. The Opposition was delighted. They had got everything they wanted. Ershad had stepped down; so had the previous vice-president Mouded Ahmed; and the Opposition's choice for vice-president, Chief Justice Ahmed, had got the top job as the head of a neutral caretaker government. The pro-democracy wave sweeping across the world had certainly not left Bangladesh untouched.

Although in the end everything went like clockwork for the Opposition, things had looked very grim initially. Ershad had, in the beginning, shown no inclination to concede the Opposition demands. He had been in power for nine long years and it seemed a little silly to expect him to step down without a fuss. What he had not counted on this time was the determination of almost every section of Bangladeshis. Virtually everyone wanted him out.

On 10 October this year, when the latest round of anti-Ershad protests shook the country, Ershad perhaps believed that the army will once again bail him out. Pitted against him were three Opposition groups: the 8-party alliance led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed's Awami League; the 7-party combine dominated by Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP); and the 5-party grouping called the Shramik-Krishak Samajbadi Dal. This time, the powerful fundamentalist organisation, the Jamaat-e-Islam, too had called for Ershad's ouster. But the alliances had many problems amongst themselves and were not above bickerings and mudslinging.

Ershad perhaps hoped that a combination of military force and subtle machinations would see him through. But the agitation that began on 10 October this year was unlike anything the country had seen for a long time. Work stoppages, road blocks, rallies and rampaging by violent mobs paralysed the country. For once, the masses seemed invincible and unstoppable.

Ershad reacted by condemning the violence and pointing out how much harm the agitation was doing to the country. He said that in the first six days of the agitation alone, the country had suffered a loss of at least 50 million US dollars. He then tried to wean the students away from the agitation by releasing one of their key leaders. The move, however, backfired. For, the student leader, who had been released, tried to take control of Dhaka University by force. Together with a few armed men, this student ended up killing one student and one doctor of Dhaka Medical College. This incident only fuelled the agitation further.

Before this, the ex-President had



Pushed to a corner, the security forces and the army went on the offensive, often brutally



What Ershad had not counted on was the determination of the Bangladeshis. Virtually everyone wanted him out

FREEDOM AT LAST

tried another trick. On 19 November, at a public meeting held at the Tongi industrial district, he said that a neighbouring country that did not like his policies was instigating the Opposition with a view to undermine the independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh. To make sure that nobody misunderstood him, Ershad went on to say, "This neighbouring country did not like our decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.." He added that the present trend of anarchy and destructiveness introduced by the Opposition parties had begun only after Bangladesh had decided to send troops to the Gulf.

The message was clear. Only India had criticised the decision of Bangladesh and Pakistan to send troops to Saudi Arabia. India, therefore, was the dastardly enemy, manipulating the Opposition parties in Bangladesh with the aim of controlling that country's decision-making process.

Ershad had gone too far. The first to react was India. An Indian external affairs ministry spokesman declared that if Ershad had meant India was behind the agitation, then the Indian authorities would be compelled to take a 'strong attitude' towards Bangladesh. The attempt to link India with Bangladesh's internal problems, the spokesman added, would only strain relations between the two countries

Other allies of Bangladesh too were not amused at what was happening But the worst was yet to come. Their attitude got really tough after a desperate Ershad announced a state of Emergency in the country on 27 November. On that day, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed and former foreign minister in the Awami League government, Dr Kamal Hossain, were placed under house arrest.

That night, Ershad made an unscheduled statement over the country's state-controlled television and radio networks, announcing the imposition of Emergency. He said that such a step was necessary to preserve national security and to save the economy



H.M. ERSHAD

It was a strange exit by a man who was in power for nine years. But Ershad never had any pretensions about his unpopularity

from the current wave of violent, destructive politics. Under the Emergency, Ershad banned all indoor and outdoor political activities, suspended civil rights, imposed controls on all means of communication and imposed curfew in the capital Dhaka, and also in Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. All educational institutions were declared closed for a month.

If Ershad had thought that a no-nonsense approach would draw the sting out of the current agitation, he was sadly mistaken. All doctors in the country had stopped work and they said that no patient would be treated until Ershad resigned Teachers of several universities expressed solidarity with the movement by resigning ***en masse***. **And all over the country,** Opposition leaders, workers, students and professionals took to the street in open defiance of the Emergency and the curfew orders. Pushed to a corner, the government-controlled security forces and the army opened fire on uncontrollable mobs at several places, leaving over 100 people dead and several hundred injured.

Foreign observers, especially the generous allies of the Bangladesh government,were appalled. A United States state department spokesman, Richard Boucher, declared that the imposition of Emergency in Bangladesh would not solve anything and warned Americans not to travel to that country. The American response signalled the beginning of the end for Ershad.

Japan, which is the biggest aid donor to Bangladesh, on 1 December

expressed its concern at the growing violence which by that time had engulfed almost the entire country. The government of Japan, just like the Americans, felt that the Emergency was no solution and that normal constitutional processes needed to be restored immediately.

In a last, desperate bid to buy time and perhaps wriggle out of the prevailing blind alley, Ershad announced on 4 December that he was prepared to step down. But there was a catch. He would step down only 15 days before the national elections and only at that time would he hand over power to a neutral caretaker vice-president. The Emergency, he said would be lifted on 16 December - the Bangladesh Independence day - but the existing Parliament, which the Opposition claimed to be a fraud, would continue till the appointment of a new vice-president.

Realising that the Opposition would not exactly howl in delight over this announcement, Ershad offered several sops. He said that the press censorship in force would be lifted with immediate effect, that the state-owned media would give adequate coverage to the Opposition, that the election commission would be reconstituted in consultation with all Opposition parties, and that the Opposition would be invited to discussions. He ended his speech by disclosing that the former US President, Jimmy Carter, had agreed to act as observer in the Bangladesh elections.

But this was clearly an attempt to buy time. For, Ershad wanted the parliamentary polls to be held only on March next year and the presidential poll sometime between mid-May and mid-October 1991. This clearly was not acceptable. Sheikh Hasina Wajed reacted by saying that Ershad's proposals were highly ambiguous and did not reflect the people's aspiration. "Our demand is his immediate resignation," she said.



THE OPPOSITION

Sheikh Hasina (left) and Begum Khaleda (right) finally proved too much for Ershad. And he stepped down

In short, the proposal satisfied nobody. The press did not return to work, the Opposition leadership did not let up on their attacks on the government and the people on the streets refused to withdraw their agitation. Ershad's time was up. Finally, just when people were digging for a long, bitter campaign, Ershad suddenly decided to quit. On 6 December, he appointed Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed vice-president, and handed in his resignation and disappeared. Nobody quite knows where he has gone. A strange, abrupt exit by a man who has held absolute power for nine years. But then not so strange considering that Ershad is no fool. He might have ruled for almost a decade but clearly he had never had any pretensions about being Bangladesh's most popular person.●

Alamgir Hossain/Dhaka

BE A
SKIING CHAMPION

If you are keen on Skiing... and want to acquire the skills quickly, get in touch with us. We'll help you become a perfect skiier – in no time.



15 DAYS Certificate Courses

10th to 24th January.
27th to 10th February.
13th to 27th February.
2nd to 16th March.
19th March to 2nd April.

7 DAYS Non-Certificate Courses

10th to 16th January.
19th to 25th January.
27th Jan. to 3rd February
6th to 12th February.
15th to 21st February.
23rd Feb. to 1st March.
4th to 10th March.
13th to 20th March.
22nd to 28th March.

Start right :
Join the professional Himachal Tourism Skiing Course at Narkanda
65 Kms from Shimla

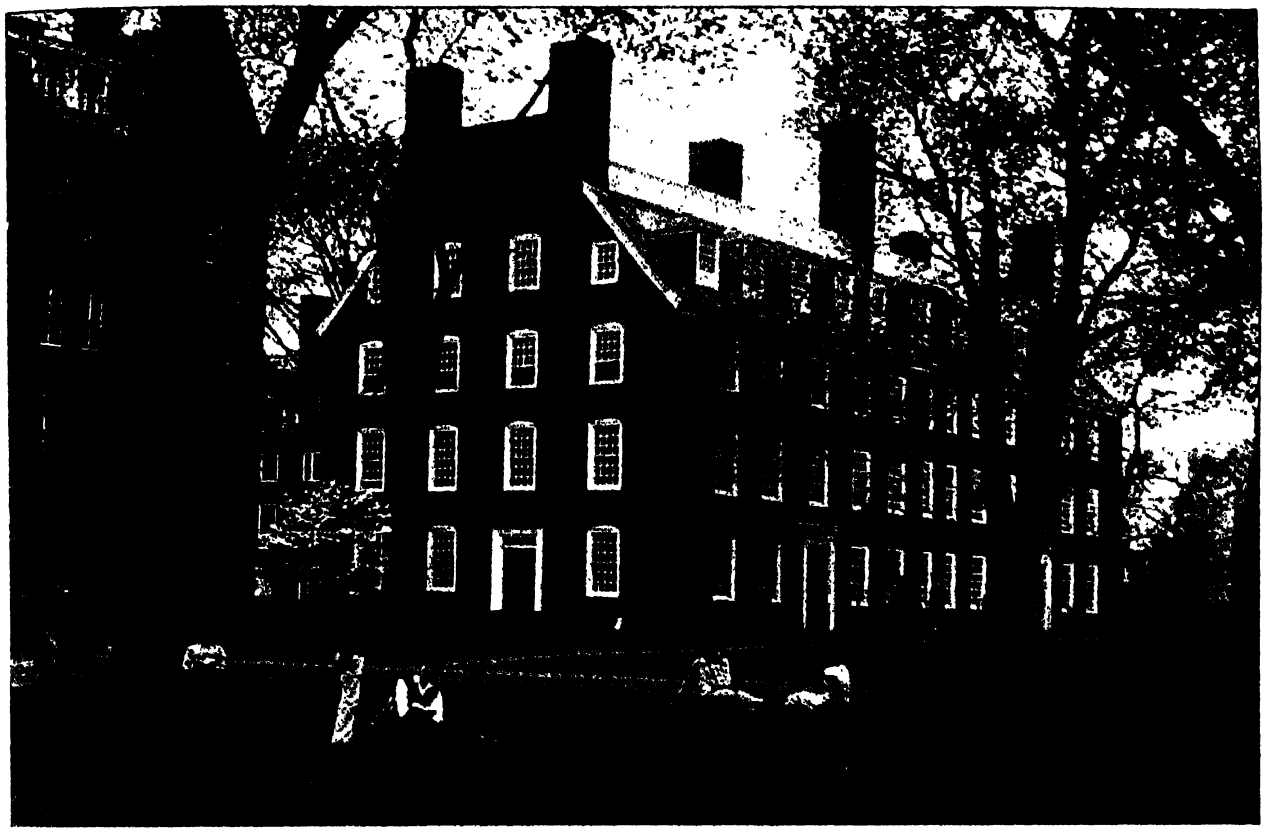
The fees for 15 days & 7 days courses are Rs. 2500/- & 1200/- per person respectively. These fees include board & lodging and provision of skiing equipment to the participants.

For further details, contact:
H P. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD
Ritz Annexe, Shimla-171 001
Phones : 3294, 5071, 78277

THE DIRECTOR TOURISM
Himachal Pradesh, Daizy Bank Estate,
Shimla-171 001, Phones : 3346, 3136, 4492

HIMACHAL TOURISM

Compacta



Learn on loan

Harvard University initiates a debt for education programme

Students and scholars from India with a yen for being at Harvard University can look forward to the possibility of greater funding to fulfil this aspiration. In a proposal submitted to the finance ministry last month, Harvard has suggested a permanent fund to finance Indian students to this prestigious university.

Harvard's proposal to India follows its recent success in a "debt-for-education" swap with Ecuador. Harvard bought $5 million worth of Ecuador's foreign debt on the secondary debt market for $750,000—foreign banks sell the near-useless Ecuadoran government IOUs at a markdown—and then donated this debt back to the Ecuadoran government in exchange for $2.5 million in Ecuadoran domestic bonds that will be used to fund Ecuadoran students to Harvard. Finalised in July, the deal is one of the rare positive notes in the history of Third World debt. Ecuador reduces its foreign debt by $5 million, while more than 70 Ecuadoran students will receive full or partial fellowships to Harvard over the next decade. The debt-swap sets up a permanent core fund that will yield roughly $150,000 per year in perpetuity.

A similar debt-swap is unlikely for India, given the country's strong-standing in the international financial markets. Indian debt is traded at roughly 98 cents to the dollar, only two cents off the face value, while Ecuadoran debt is sold at 15 cents to the dollar. But another possibility, according to Nancy Pyle of the Harvard Institute for International Development, is that a foreign bank donates a portion of the debt owed by India to set up a fund to finance Indian students. Pyle says Harvard has made several alternative suggestions to the Indian government. "We are proceeding from the assumption that the Ecuadoran model is not relevant to India's case," says Pyle. "But we're using that success as an excuse to enter into a conversation with the Indian government about the issue and to see whether there are other financial mechanisms or opportunities that we might explore together." Pyle says she is unable to discuss other financing suggestions made in the Harvard proposal as the university has not yet had discussions with the Indian government.

A clause that would require Indian students who use these funds to guarantee that they will return to India after their course of study, is likely to make the Harvard proposal particularly attractive to the Indian government, given the growing concern that India is losing its most-educated students to the US. Students who stay on in the

TANK UP. AND BREEZE PAST THE NEXT FORTY.



It's no exaggeration, but a full tank of the Hero Honda will clock over 800 km. And at a fair average of a petrol pump every 20 km, it's a virtual fill-it-and-forget-it ride. That's 80 km per litre ! And no other bike can match it. Period.

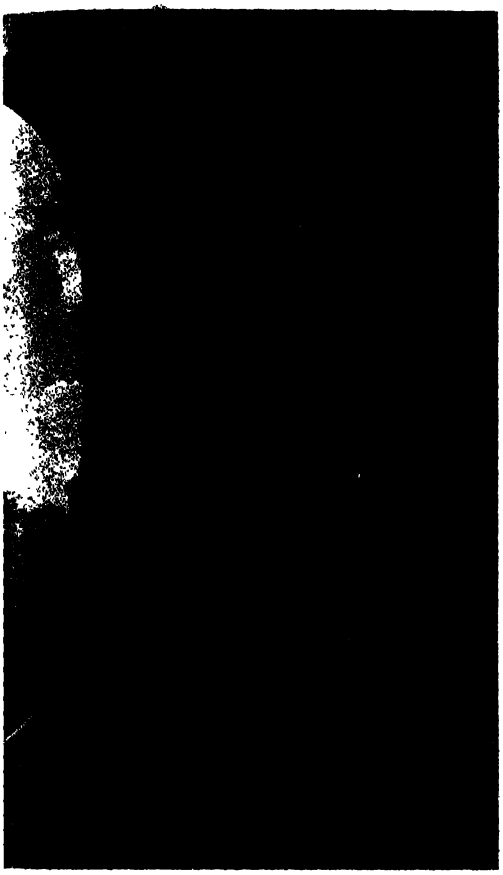
A good thing going. Honda's technical leadership is evident in the Hero Honda CD 100's 4-stroke engine. Complete fuel combustion ensures the phenomenal 80 km/litre* fuel-efficiency. Plus trouble-free service and pollution-free exhaust.

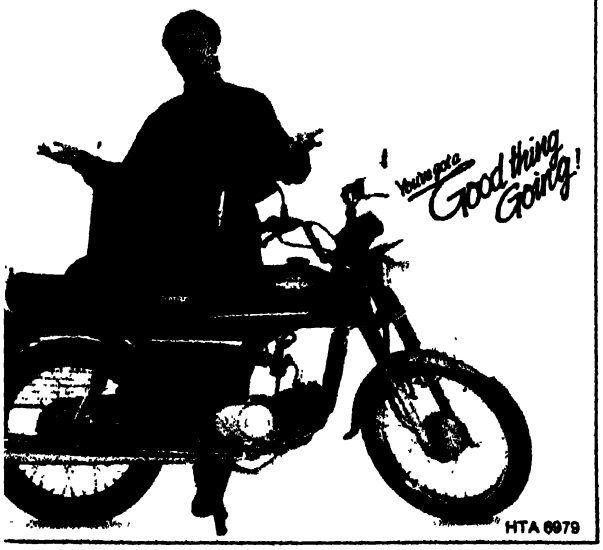
Our favourite performance figure, though, is over 4,00,000 happy owners. Who make the Hero Honda CD 100 India's largest-selling 100cc bike.

STRETCH · THAT · LITRE. SAVE PETROL.

*At 40 kmph/130 kg.

HERO HONDA





US after their course of study will have to pay back to the fund the amount given to them, says Pyle.

The Harvard proposal comes at a time when US educators have increasingly begun to emphasise the importance of foreign study and diversity in US schools and colleges. Several other universities are currently negotiating debt-for-education agreements similar to the Harvard-Ecuador one, primarily with debt-affected Latin American and African countries. "There is a growing interest at US universities to internationalise them and get a two-way flow of scholars," says Margaret Fahs, director of the Debt for Development Coalition in Washington D.C. Funds have always been the primary constraint, says Fahs, and the debt-education swaps are a way "to greatly leverage limited resources and in a minor way to do something about a very negative situation".



Pyle at Harvard says that the university's proposal came after 22 Indian students accepted by Harvard last year could not join because they lacked funds. Harvard wants to see a fund established, large enough to finance roughly this number of applicants. "Harvard simply does not have enough within its own coffers to go around, so we must find other means of financing students," says Pyle. Harvard's proposed fund would be used for Indian students from less-affluent backgrounds, says Pyle. Currently, Indian students at Harvard either pay their way or receive funding from graduate departments of the university. Harvard was unable to provide exact figures because the graduate departments function independently of the main undergraduate Harvard-Radcliffe college.

As with all good things, there is likely to be a long period of anticipation before the Harvard proposal becomes a reality for students in India. The agreement with Ecuador took three years of negotiating, discussions and meetings. But Harvard, for all its bookish otherworldliness, has a curious ability to get things done. The pen mightier than the sword? •

Siddharth Dube/Cambridge, Massachusetts

THEY DESERVE BETTER

No, India deserves better.

That was the conclusion reached after two hours of cut and thrust at the annual *Telegraph* debate on the motion: India has the politicians it deserves.

But not before the galaxy of celebrity speakers: film star Amitabh Bachchan, former civil aviation minister Arif Mohammad Khan, principal aide to Rajiv Gandhi and SUNDAY columnist Mani Shankar Aiyar, former external affairs minister Inder Kumar Gujral, *The Times Of India* editor Dileep Padgaonkar, BJP MP Jaswant Singh, Congress(I) MP Jayanthi Natarajan and Insaaf party chief Syed Shahabuddin had held the crowd at the Netaji Indoor Stadium in Calcutta enthralled, with moderator Justice Umesh Chandra Banerjee ensuring that things didn't get too out of hand.

The irrepressible Mani Shankar Aiyar, however, managed to have his say, attacking all his rivals at the debate (and some who were on his side as well!) and in national politics. Justice Banerjee cautioned Aiyar for his personal attacks against Jaswant Singh, but only after the event.

Mani's vitriolic speech, though, did have Arif Mohammad Khan observing a trifle plaintively that this was the first time he'd seen a speaker attacking those on his side of the floor!

While Gujral and Padgaonkar preferred a slightly low-key approach, relying on cogent arguments instead, Syed Shahabuddin was at his fiery best. "We are bad, but you are equally bad," he informed the audience, which came in for some flak from Jaswant Singh as well: "You want democracy, but you don't want to pay for it." Jayanthi Natarajan, however, directed her attack at the press, which, she said, was more interested in her clothes and love life than her statements on India's nuclear policy.

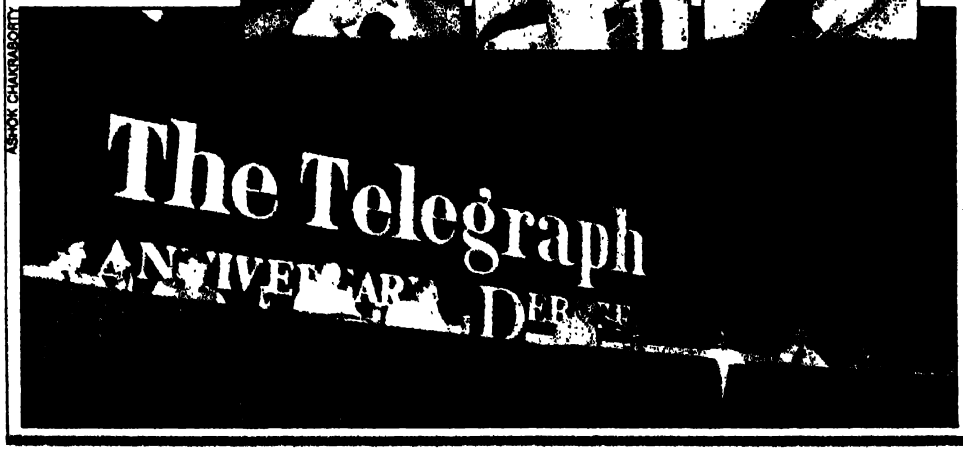
But it was the last speaker who stole the show. Amitabh Bachchan had only to say "Mr Chairman" in that famous baritone for the audience to break into spontaneous applause. And by the time he was through with relating the story of his ill-fated foray into politics, he had them eating out of his hands.

And even if he hadn't been—as he claimed—as good a politician as the country deserved, nobody was complaining.

Amitabh Bachchan | Jayanthi Natarajan | Syed Shahabuddin



ASHOK CHAKRABORTY



ASHOK CHAKRABORTY

The annual *Telegraph* debate: it went down well with the audience



SARDARNI AUR SARDARNI

Her rough-and-ready, if slightly controversial (remember the lawyers' stir in the capital) methods of enforcing the rule of the law have al-



Amrita Singh: playing supercop Kiran Bedi (above on screen

ways kept supercop Kiran Bedi, now deputy inspector general, Mizoram, in the news.

And now the IPS officer who made a fetish of carting off illegally parked cars—hence the acronym Crane Bedi—will soon find her life being depicted on celluloid.

Playing Bedi will be that other hefty Sardarni, Amrita Singh, for once landed with a role right up her street.

Shooting of the proposed film is scheduled to begin in December, and if it progresses as rapidly as Ms Bedi did against those Akali demonstrators years ago, it should be ready for viewing pretty soon.

SONDEEP SHANKAR



Giani Zail Singh: no English, please

ANGREZI HATAO

What do former President of India, Giani Zail Singh and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav have in common?

They're both simple, unassuming sorts on the surface and scheming politicians beneath the homespun *khadi*. True.

But you've missed something: their anti-English bias.

Yes, even the venerable Giani shares Mulayam Singh's prejudices against the language the British left behind. And in a gesture of solidarity with the anti-English brigade, the former President took time off to join those agitating outside the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) office on Shah Jahan Road, for the abolition of the English language test, which forms part of all examinations conducted by the body.

It's unlikely that the UPSC will take much note of the Giani's *dharna*. But it's as good a stunt as any to keep in the news.

Right, Mulayam Singh?

BOY WONDER

He doesn't know how to title his works. But six-year-old S. Rajesh has managed to paint over 500 pieces, some of which were on display at a one-boy exhibition held at Venkatappa Art Gallery in Bangalore recently.

Rajesh's canvases hung low so that children could view them just as easily, drew praise from laymen and critics alike. While some labelled Rajesh's "world vision" spontaneous, vibrant, dynamic and enlightening, others said that his paintings offered a look at "contemporary events through the eyes of a child".

According to the child prodigy's father, J.M.S. Mani, himself an art teacher: "Rajesh started painting when he was four. All I did was supply materials. Other than that he does everything on his own."

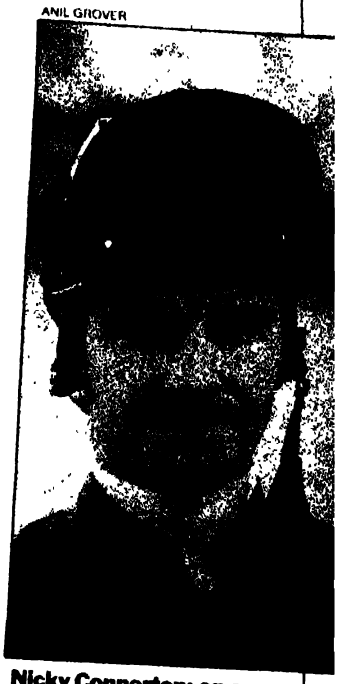
And does it well, too, for his canvases sell for anything between Rs 1000-4000.

Rajesh, however, is unaffected by all this success, preferring to watch the world from behind his mother's *pallav*. And it's only a bar of chocolate which can lure him out of his favourite hiding place.



S. Rajesh and his painting: drawing praise from laymen and critics

ANIL GROVER



Nicky Connorton: on a winning spree

RIDE TO WIN

For Nicky Connorton, it was a memorable first day at the Royal Calcutta Turf Club this racing season. The English jockey ended the day with a brilliant hattrick, winning on Kabuki, Sentouki and Hokaido.

But of the three triumphs, the one on Kabuki was the most significant. For, with that Connorton won the first classic race of the season in the city: the Cruickshank Calcutta 1000 Guineas.

Connorton seems to be making a habit of this: he'd won the 1000 Guineas last year as well riding Wind Song in a hard-run race.

And, no doubt, he's looking forward to repeating the feat next year. ●



TOURISM

Stay away

Lakshadweep islanders develop tourist phobia. But the government has other plans

Even if Rajiv Gandhi had not spent a few idyllic days there in 1987, the Lakshadweep islands would have emerged as prime tourism real estate. Sooner or later.

Thirty-six unspoilt coral islands an hour's flying time west of Cochin. Swaying palms, brilliant white sand beaches, and a calm sea that could tell the spectrum a thing or two about blues and greens. Ideal for snorkelling, wind-surfing and sailing. By any reckoning, a tourism heaven.

And over past three years, increasing numbers of foreign and well-heeled Indian tourists have made the pilgrimage, many paying as much as Rs 3,000 a day for the pleasure.

Only, the islanders would opt for tourism later—or never.

Says C.N. Kunjibee, secretary of Mahila Sangham, the women's welfare group in the archipelago: "All these years, the people of the islands have been contented with their lot. We don't want tourism to swamp us, I don't want my grandchildren to become hippies and drug addicts."

"Lakshadweep will shortly become another Goa or Kovalam (a beach resort near Trivandrum)," adds Kunji Koya Thangal, general secretary of Lakshadweep's Muslim League unit. "Our boys are now secretly going to Bangaram (the island which Rajiv and his friends immortalised) to watch (tourists) nude sun-bathing, and they are also likely to be influenced by alcohol and drugs." No, says Thangal, emphatically, "we definitely do not want tourism in these islands.

which has been peaceful all these years".

There is substance behind the tourist phobia, on three counts. One, Lakshadweep is the only place in India which has a hundred per cent Muslim population, and people are conservative, simple and low-key. Two, they are plagued by visions of how Goa, for instance, has seen its society changed completely, pandering to tourists. And three, the image of tourists: for the locals, tourists are those who smoke pot, make love on the beach, and walk around with brown sugar in their swimming gear, at least when they condescend to wear them.

Tourist haters are now planning to launch an agitation to ban their moneyed visitors from entering the islands.

But the Lakshadweep administration has other ideas. It wants to bring in more tourists, and develop more tourist sites.

"We have four lakh square km of sea around us which abounds in extremely rich marine resources," says S.P. Agarwal, an Indian Administrative Services officer and Lakshadweep's top bureaucrat, who rules from Kavaratty, the union territory's capital. "But these are yet to be exploited by locals as it is a question of involving mainlanders with trawlers (for many islanders, the less they have to do with the Indian mainland, the better). We cannot have heavy industry as the density of population is the third highest in the country." Sixteen of Lakshadweep's 36 islands are uninhabited, and the rest cram 45,000 people in a land area the size of a few city blocks. "I feel," says Agarwal, "tourism is the future of the island."

And there is hardly any chance of ruining the way of life for islanders, says Agarwal. The 3,000 or so tourists who visited the islands last year—95 per cent of them foreigners—are restricted to two islands, Bangaram *(see box)* and Kadmat. And foreigners can only visit Bangaram. The Lakshadweep administration—through its offices in Cochin- screens every visitor to the chain, and only then issues permits. Visitors to Kadmat- Bangaram is the only exception—are expected to be teetotallers and conform to local social norms.

RENCHY ABRAHAM



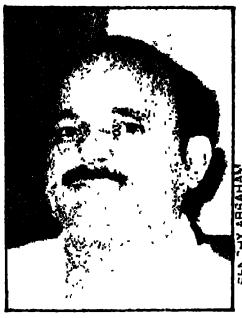
Tourists at a beach resort: to stay or go away?

Tourists may visit Lakshadweep singly, or can buy package tours—both expensive and strictly controlled. In addition, international tour operators are a little wary of the island, because the only way to get there is by ship or air—through Vayudoot's notoriously infrequent flights—from Cochin. Besides, says Agarwal, "We are trying to see that there is no mingling between the locals and the tourists...we want to keep Lakshadweep as it is, so there is no question of supporting mass tourism." Which should also help preserve the archipelago's fragile ecosystem. Says Agarwal: "We don't want outsiders removing any coral from our islands."

But bring in revenue, instead. Lakshdweep survives on coconut produce, sparse agriculture and tuna fishing. Most of what is needed is imported from Cochin, against coconut products and tuna exports. Bringing in tourists—all foreigners have to pay in dollars—could help augment the island group's shaky economy.

There may not be any other way. "Tourism is the only industry which can survive in Lakshadweep without creating any environmental pollution," says P.K. Kasali, assistant general manager of SPORTS, a company which promotes tourism in the islands. "In the coming years it will employ more people from the islands." Adds Kunji Koya, the former Amir, or administrator, of Kadmat island: "Tourism has woken up the island. We don't care whether the tourists drink in private, as long as they bring prosperity to the islands."

Prosperity, say officials and locals, that could be modelled on the Maldives, a not-too-distant neighbour. "Recently I was in the Maldives," says Agarwal, "where tourism is the only industry. The islands and the topography are very similar to Lakshadweep. There also the locals are Muslims, but they don't directly come into contact with the tourists who are only allowed to stay in (clearly demarcated) island resorts." Controlled tourism works there, he says, and the planeloads of tourists who go there every day from Colombo or Trivandrum is example enough. "What nature has given to Lakshadweep," says Agar-



RENCHY ABRAHAM

S.P. Agarwal

Lakshadweep's administrator

"We are trying to see that there is no mingling between the locals and the tourists"



RENCHY ABRAHAM

Kunji Koya

Former Amir of Kadmat

"We don't care whether tourists drink in private, as long as they bring prosperity to the islands"



RENCHY ABRAHAM

C.N. Kunjibee

Secretary, Mahila Sangham

"We don't want tourism to swamp us. I don't want my grandchildren to become hippies and drug addicts"

Rest and recreation

Bangaram island's exclusive resort offers both, for a price

Rajiv Gandhi chose Bangaram with care, when he planned his 'whale' rescue holiday with friends and Italian relatives three years ago. It is the only Lakshadweep island which foreigners are allowed to visit, and one can drink there. It is also mind-numbingly beautiful.

And it has Casino's Bangaram Island Resort, the destination of all foreign and many Indian tourists. 30 thatch-roof huts facing the sea, elegant cane and wood furniture, a style that most exclusive beach resorts in this part of the world favour. Plus, a private, 120 acre beach and clear, tranquil lagoons. Perfect for scuba diving, snorkelling or watching marine flora and fauna through glass-bottomed boats. No telephones, newspapers, television sets or room service.

"The resort is the perfect place to get away from it all," says Jane Davis, a London-based travel agent. "Reaching here itself is an adventure for the foreigners (a leisurely ride from Agatti in a converted fishing boat)."

All for a price. A hut sells for US $ 170 (over Rs 3,000) for a couple. One reason for the sky-high rates, besides exclusiveness, is that the resort has to bring in everything but coconut and fish. But it is doing so well, says Jose Dominic, who runs the resort, that the place is booked solid till March next year. And the resort's turnover for 1990-91, he says, is expected to be Rs 1.25 crores, double last year's figures.

A change from when the Travel Corp. of India ran the resort for two years before Rajiv's visit. The resort went into the red, and finally in 1988, Dominic, a 39-year-old Cochin-based chartered accountant who runs the Casino group of hotels, took it over.

Dominic plans to preserve Bangaram's exclusivity, and its pristine nature. "When you go snorkelling in Male (Maldive's capital)," he says, "you will find beer bottles and tins on the ocean bed. We do not want that to happen here."

What about allegations that Bangaram is corrupting locals? "The locals from Agatti come here to pluck coconuts that belong to them," says Dominic. "We don't offer them drinks and so on. We are ready to pluck the coconuts for them and deliver it to their islands, free of cost." He employs locals at the resort, says Dominic, and cannot think of any there to study in future.

wal, "is much better."

To capitalise on this gift, the administration is planning to invite global tenders to set up resorts in the uninhabited Suheli Valiakara and Suheli Cheriakara islands. It is also thinking of inviting UB Air—non resident Indian industrialist Vijay Mallya's air taxi service—from Cochin to Agatti, the archipelago's sole airport, and extending the runway to accomodate large aircraft. Plus, buying speed boats for faster transit between Agatti and the resort islands.

No thank you, say tourism's critics. "Why should the government corrupt our unhurried lifestyle with the introduction of tourism?" Asks a senior Lakshadweep administrator, who declines to be indentified. "The government should have invested more money on seafood-based industries," which, he says, is in a trough with incomes plummeting.





Bangaram island resort: pricey, exclusive isolation

"There is a positive side to tourism," retorts Agarwal. "A 100 people have got employment. More young men in the islands want to go after tourism. It is the only way we can offer employment for the locals." And how about the 'moral' corruption of youngsters, who are drawn by nude sun-bathers? "The locals have no business," says Agarwal, "to go to Bangaram and watch the foreigners." ●

Sreedhar Pillay/Kavaratty, Kadmat and Bangaram

ROSCO DE SOUSA EREMITA

COMPANIES/PROJECTS

Wind up, wind down



Goans are upset about Thapar-Du Pont's proposed nylon project in the state, the government indifferent and Du Pont, very tired

The Rs 1,725 crore L.M. Thapar Group—India's sixth largest industrial house—and E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co, a US$ 35 billion (Rs 63,000 crore)—chemicals behemoth from Delaware, US, want to spin nylon yarn in Goa. Many Goans, however, feel that *they* are being spun a yarn, pushed into a corner by big business interests, their fertile land is being taken away for the project, and their environment is about to be doomed.

The Rs 250 crore project for the manufacture of Nylon 6,6 fibre, for use in manufacturing aircraft, truck and high performance car tyres, is a venture—called Thapar Du Pont Ltd (TDL)—between Ballarpur Industries Ltd, the Thapar Group's flagship company, Du Pont Far East Inc.—India, and the Economic Development Corp. of Goa (EDCG). The Goans are fighting it, and the Thapar-Du Pont combine is trying to use everything it can to see that the project goes through.

As of now, the people have the upper hand, and they are organising protests through organisations such as the Anti-Nylon 6,6 Committee. These protest groups received a boost last month when a committee to look into the project, appointed by the Goa Legislative Assembly recommended that TDL be asked to wind up in Goa. "The entire project smacks of fraud," says A.N. Naik, chairman of the committee. "True, Goans have unemployment problems, but it's really not worth having such industries." He adds: "I personally am against this project. Setting up such industries would be detrimental to the Goans."

For starters, say the project's critics, the way land has been acquired for the venture is questionable. In March 1989, 222 acres of *communidade* or collectively held land in Kerim, the place in Ponda district where the Nylon 6,6 plant is to be located, was handed over to the Goa Daman & Diu Industrial Development Corp. Thanks to former chief minister Pratap Singh Rane's interest in the project, say critics. (Rane lost his seat in January this year.) Then, in early 1990, the state government passed around a notification to Kerim residents that 308 acres of *communidade* land was to be acquired. The residents objected straightaway.

Especially as they felt the plant would use outmoded, and perhaps environmentally dangerous, machinery. People in Kerim say that TDL plans to use a plant manufactured in 1939, and cite TDL's own Capital Goods Approval application dated 26 September 1988 to the Government of India to prove their point. The plant,

says the application, is "refurbished and modified from time to time and it is impossible to quantify the age of the equipment".

So why go in for an old plant, question critics, and a technology that the world has more or less dumped for Kevlar, a fibre that Du Pont has produced in the US since 1973? Kevlar is used for making bullet-proof vests and radial car tyres, and most Westren nations have switched to Kevlar. True, they say, Nylon 6,6—which is not manufactured in India—is superior to Nylon 6, the fibre that Indian tyre-makers currently use, but why not set up a modern Kevlar plant instead? (The domestic Nylon 6 lobby is dead against the Thapar-Du Pont project, but that is another story). Along with India, Turkey, Egypt, Singapore and Indonesia, among other countries, have been identified as potential locations for transfer of Du Pont's Nylon 6,6 technology. "Indonesia is watching the way Goa is going," says Bonnie Menezes, an anti-Nylon 6,6 activist. "We have to take the lead and give Du Pont a nice kick here."

The anti-TDL lobby in Goa is set against the project on another count: they are scared that Kerim might witness a Bhopal-like situation if the 'old' machinery cracks up. What is more scary, they say, is the fact that Du Pont's liability in the case of an industrial accident is practically zero.

In February 1988, the EDCG passed a resolution empowering Ballarpur Industries to draw up an agreement with Du Pont. In this agreement, a section in its Article 5 (on Warranty and Liability) states:

- "TDL shall hold Du Pont and its representatives or assignees harmless from any claims made in the Republic of India against any representative of Du Pont or its assignees alleging bodily harm or death sustained as a direct result of, or in direct connection with the performance of this agreement."
- "Du Pont shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever to TDL or to any third party for any loss or damage caused to person or property, including the members of the public as well as to person or property of any employees of TDL directly or indirectly caused by an act or omission of TDL or its servant or agent and TDL shall indemnify Du Pont against the said liability."
- "Du Pont shall not be liable under any circumstances whatsoever to any third parties including members of the public on any account whatsoever due to any accident at the plant or any act or ommission of TDL...Any claim (etc) made by any third party against Du Pont shall be defended by TDL at its cost and expense..."
- Further arbitration between TDL and Du Pont is to be held in London. The arbitration clause states: "The arbitrators shall apply the laws of UK and such rules of international law as may be applicable."

Du Pont drew up the agreement, say TDL critics, because it was wary of the way Union Carbide Corp. got into a legal soup after poisonous methyl isocyanate gas leaked out from its Indian associate's Bhopal plant, and killed more than 3,000 people on 3-4 December, 1984. Union Carbide finally shelled out US $ 450 million in damages last year to the Indian government, but could be in for more trouble if the Chandra Shekhar government hardens its stand against multinational corporations. Du Pont, they say, wants to take precautions against a Union Carbide-like situation, and hence the minimum indemnity agreement. Besides, Du Pont has also tied in arbitration in the UK, so there is very little chance of the case shifting to India, the way it happened with Union Carbide.

TDL, for its part, is fighting back With as much logic as the Goans can muster. First, say TDL executives, the land designated for the project, which Kerim residents claim to be fertile, is in fact classified—officially—as grade 'E' land, the lowest category of degraded land in India.

On 19 and 20 June this year, TDL organised meetings in Goa and Bombay between company executives and environmentalists, an effort helped along by New Delhi-based Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage. And attended by the top brass: Eugene F. Kreuzberger, president of Du Pont Far East Inc—India, Gautam Thapar, vice-president, fibres, with Ballarpur Industries, a Du Pont environmental expert flown down from the US, and P.K. Shetye, chief development officer with EDCG. TDL also called in officials from the Bombay Environmental Action Group, the Goa Foundation and the Goa Research Institute for Development. The outcome: TDL should prepare an "environmental impact assessment study". TDL agreed, and also offered that environmentalists were free to monitor the working of its plant when it began operations.

TDL is confident about the project's positive environmental impact. Company executives say that the project has already received No Objection Certificates from the Central Board for the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution and the Goa State Pollution Control Board. Besides, say Du Pont executives, that



ASHOK VAHIE

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

The Prime Minister will have to move quickly, and either approve or junk the TDL project



RAJESH KUMAR

L.M. THAPAR

The industrialist is in a spot. The Goans are against his Nylon 6,6 plant and partner Du Pont is tired of waiting

the two chemicals used as raw material for making Nylon 6,6—adipic acid and hexamethylene diamine—are "non-toxic, non-volatile, non-carcinogenic and non-mutagenic". Du Pont claims that adipic acid is a food-grade chemical, used for making aspirin and sweets. In addition, they say, TDL will follow emission regulations according to either Indian or US laws, whichever are more stringent.

"Du Pont is by no means free of environmental problems," says E.S. Woolard Jr, chairman of E.I. Du Pont, "and we don't want to paint a false picture of the company as an ecological nirvana." A way out is to find substitutes to now-proven harmful chemicals, reducing harmful emissions, and so on. Du Pont is the world's largest manufacturer of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which affects the ozone layer, but the company has undertaken to quit the CFC business—worth US$ 750 million (Rs 1,350 crores) a year's business by the end of the decade, or sooner if it can develop substitutes. With this sort of a corporate philosophy, say company executives, it is hardly likely that the company will dump dangerous chemicals on an unsuspecting public in Goa. Or all India, for that matter - Du Pont supplies Baroda-based Indian Petrochemicals Corp. Ltd with acrylic staple fibre technology.

Du Pont's defence, however, is unlikely to satisfy Goans. The criticism is that multinational companies are keen to impress people on their home ground with environmental awareness, but when it comes to the Third World, anything goes. The anti-Nylon 6,6 groups and the residents of Kerim plan to go right on agitating, and TDL may have an extended scrap, logic notwithstanding, on its hands.

But the location of the site is not TDL's most pressing problem, however much people such as activist Menezes talk about giving Du Pont a "nice kick", or legislator Naik talk of the project being "detrimental". The problem lies in New Delhi, because even after almost eight years of pushing, the project has not taken off. The Thapar's have a new technology—and the Rs 1.5 crores they have already spent on it—at stake, and Du Pont an increased presence in India.

TDL had hoped to get a final okay during the V.P. Singh government's rule, but the regime's industry minister Ajit Singh, raised questions about the price of raw materials to be imported and the outgo of foreign exchange. According to TDL's shopping list—mentioned in its September 1988 application—was: Rs 28.51 crores to Du Pont for importing machinery, Rs 233.85 crores for importing raw materials, Rs 4.13 crores for know-how, Rs 17.57 crores as royalty and Rs 2.79 crores as expenses to house and take care of Du Pont overseas technicians.

TDL has undertaken a 25 per cent export commitment, which is likely to fetch India Rs 94 crores in foreign exchange. But Singh objected, say ministry officials, on grounds that the foreign exchange outflow was far too much, and that the market for Nylon 6,6 is expected to drop—worldwide - as Kevlar becomes more acceptable than Nylon 6,6. So how, goes the wisdom, can TDL ensure that it will be able to export a quarter of its production, almost 3,000 tonnes a year?

Government watchers in New Delhi say that while the previous administration may have had valid objections — such as perennial payments for raw materials, technicians, etc.—about the TDL project, they were a little too hasty in ignoring the import substitution angle, which could lead to projected foreign exchange savings of Rs 375 crores. Also, that the Raja's regime treated the Thapar-Du Pont venture shabbily so that it could get the best deal out of the proposal, *a la* Pepsi. Push Du Pont into a corner and the mega-company, in its greed to expand in India, will do anything it can to save its interests.

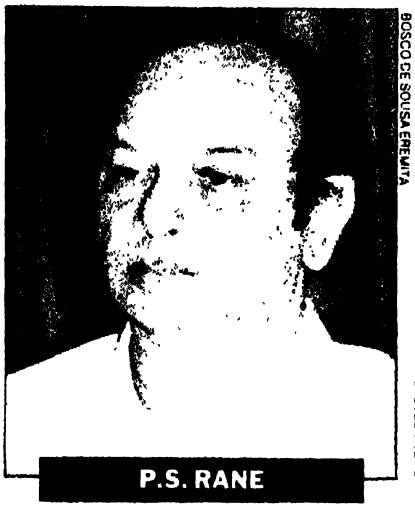
All that it did was turn the Nylon 6,6 project into bit of a *cause celebre* affair, in much the same way Pepsi went last year. The thing is, the Pepsi project has been approved and its soft drinks and snack foods have hit Indian shops. The TDL project has barely moved beyond acquiring land. The US government is looking at the stalled project as yet another example of India's "restrictive trade practices" and it is quite likely that if the project is not cleared soon, it will be used by US trade officials as a bit of ammunition in its Super 301 threat.

The US ambassador to India, William Clark Jr, made a trip to Goa in July, and appealed to the state government to hurry with project clearances. Perhaps, His Excellency may now make a representation to the new government, but given Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's economic beliefs, the impasse may never clear up.

With one possible consequence. "If the government takes any longer to make up its mind," says a senior economist with a Western embassy in New Delhi, "Du Pont may pack up and leave. Nobody wants to wait around that long." He adds: "If the deal falls through, then it will send out the wrong signals about India's investment climate."

The Thapar Group will not like that. And the government, certainly. But Kerim will probably open a few demijohns of the area's best feni to celebrate the event. ●

Bosco De Sousa Eremita/Panaji



BOSCO DE SOUSA EREMITA

P.S. RANE

The former chief minister rushed state clearances through as fast as he could, bulldozing through public opinion



DURGA PRASAD

L.P. BARBOSA

Rane's successor, who resigned last week, had to contend with both Rane's legacy and growing popular dissent

■ Return of the Raid Raj?

The arrest of Abhey Oswal has led some businessmen to conclude that Reliance's very special brand of black magic is back in action at North Block.

But parallels with Orkay chairman Kapal Mehra's arrest in the heyday of the Raid Raj are far-fetched. It turns out that the decision to charge Oswal was taken



Abhey Oswal: big deal?

by the V.P. Singh government. He was, originally, to have been arrested during Diwali but this was deferred for a few weeks.

The indications are that the Oswal case is an exception: there will be a full-scale crackdown on economic offenders

■ Eat less, work more

At least one ministry is taking the government's austerity drive seriously, the finance ministry. Deputy minister Digvijay Singh has pared expenses to the bone. One instance: when the workmen came to instal a metal name-plate outside his office, he insisted on wood because it was cheaper!

Meanwhile, the ministry has also clamped down on entertaining. Under the new regulations, nobody may serve snacks to visitors, not even finance minister Yashwant Sinha. An exception can only be made if an important foreign delegation is visiting.

The flip-side of all this austerity is that a certain human element has finally entered the Stalinist enclave at North Block. Digvijay Singh summoned those in charge of the cesspool of Delhi airport customs and berated them for harassing passengers. His argument: customs officers were supposed to watch out for smugglers, not shake down every hapless traveller who had one bottle of whiskey extra or brought back a calculator for his son.

Singh's reasoning didn't please the customs officers—at Delhi airport, even the assistant collectors are reluctant to help harassed passengers—or appeal to their greed but seeing that he is the boss, they changed their attitudes.

Bonafide passengers arriving at Delhi airport, now have less reason to fear.



Digvijay Singh: stomping down sleaze

STOCK QUOTE

"Does this government really expect NRIs to invest in India after what local rivals did to Swraj Paul and Manu Chhabria?"

A non-resident Indian businessman, at the Maharajah Lounge, Sahar International Airport, Bombay

PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK

Manmohan Singh



●The appointment of Manmohan Singh as the chief economic adviser to the Prime Minister is one that economists will welcome. At present, the regime's economists fall into broadly two categories. There are those who are closely identified with a particular line (Deepak Nayyar and S.K. Goyal) and there are those who economists regard as essentially civil servants (ie, Bimal Jalan). The economist's economists (Shankar Acharya and Montek Singh Ahluwalia) are thought to lack any real influence while those in the first two categories dominate. That balance may now alter with Singh's appointment. He has been chief economic adviser, Reserve Bank of India governor and deputy chairman of the Planning Commission (when Rajiv Gandhi called the Commission "jokers") in his time and is regarded as the best Indian economist of his generation. He has no ideological line, eschews a bureaucratic approach and likes quick results. With a Brezhnevite as PM, thank God there is a good economist on hand to pull him into the 1990s!

■ Kisses all around

An update on our item of last month about Dr Surinder Kapur. Yes, he has left Bharat Gears and no longer works for Raunaq Singh, his father-in-law. And yes, he has shifted out of Bombay and now lives in New Delhi from where he looks after his flourishing Sona Steerings.

Nonetheless, our item may have given the entirely erroneous impression that having branched out on his own, Kapur has broken family ties with his father-in-law.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The family relationship endures and once they shifted to Delhi, Kapur and his wife Rani moved in with her brother while they waited for their house to get ready.



Surinder Kapoor: family first

Kapur's ties with his in-laws remained as close, harmonious and loving as they were before he left Bharat Gears.

We are sorry if our item gave the impression that this was not the case. ●

Justice delayed

The Bar takes on the Bench at the Calcutta High Court

The country's judicial system faced an unusual situation. For nine days the process of justice remained jammed in the 128-year-old Calcutta High Court as a quarrel between the Bar and the Bench led to an unprecedented stalemate.

It was the death of a senior lawyer, a member of the Bar Association, that led to the trouble. The lawyers called a condolence meeting on 26 November and resolved not to attend court that day as a mark of respect to their departed colleague, who had been in practice since 1948. The judges were informed about the decision and everything seemed in order.

But the Bench took no heed of the notice served by the lawyers. The judges, under instructions from the Chief Justice, P.D. Desai, held court and dismissed as many as 410 pending cases, as the lawyers of the litigants failed to appear. And this created a procedural impasse that took the state's legal community by complete surprise.

What was to happen to the dismissed cases that fell through for no real failing of the litigants? The Bench refused to restore them and the Bar insisted that they be resumed and also demanded an apology from the Chief Justice for having taken, what the lawyers felt was, an extraordinary step that humiliated the members of the Bar. The lawyers were aware of the fact that if they failed to get the cases reinstated, the community would suffer an irreparable loss of face.

While the Chief Justice refused to yield, the lawyers argued that the practice of observing "full court," (stoppage of all judicial procedings) on the death of an advocate is a long-established practice. Bidyut Kiran Mukherjee, secretary of the Bar Association told SUNDAY:" A notice was duly circulated to all concerned with a request not to sit in court or plead any case on that day." He also added that Justice Desai had allowed "full court" on earlier occasions.

During the next few days, the restoration of the cases became the focal point of the controversy as repeated discussions between the Bar and the Bench failed to end the deadlock. The Bar Association secretary was of the opinion that the cases could be resumed *suo motto*, ie, by verbal mention by the advocate on record But the Chief Justice would have none of it.

As days passed, and a solution proved elusive, the judiciary began to earn a bad name. With 1.5 lakh cases already pending in the High Court, the work stoppage evoked cynical remarks from the public. While some flayed the judges for turning the controversy into a pointless prestige issue, others denounced the lawyers' attempts to prolong cases by taking a day off every time a colleague died.



Agitation in the Bar Association: voices of protest

Even a section of the judges seemed to disapprove of the episode's farcical overtones. Justice Dilip Basu went on hunger strike, protesting against the goings-on and demanding an early settlement. Justice Basu, however, called off his protest on his doctor's advice, and on the request of his colleagues and senior members of the Bar.

On 3 December, 22,000 lawyers in the state went on a token strike in support of the High Court advocates and work in all the 72 courts in West Bengal came to a standstill. This tough stand jolted the legal community out of its complacency and parleys between the Bar and the Bench began in real earnest the next day, when a face-saving formula was arrived at.

The Bench agreed to re-accommodate the dismissed cases and guaranteed that their original serial would be maintained. The Bar, for its part, dropped their demand that the Chief Justice apologise for refusing to meet the lawyers on 26 November, when they had gone to explain their position. Justice Desai said that he could not do so as he was busy holding a meeting with the other judges on the situation that had arisen. "We consider this explanation a kind of apology," commented the association president, Arun Prakash Chatterjee, and the dispute seemed amicably settled.

But Justice Desai had driven home the point that "full courts" in a country where the backlog of cases was increasing everyday would not be entertained, and the Bar realised that it was time the custom was changed. It was decided in a meeting that the existing practice would be reviewed and amended to suit all concerned. But by then nine days had been lost, and justice delayed is, in a sense, justice denied. •

Sangeeta Chakravarty/Calcutta

Carnage and chaos

As large-scale communal violence rocks Hyderabad, chief minister Chenna Reddy comes under threat



It is a city which has for long been communally sensitive—prone to sporadic riots and clashes. But rarely—if ever—has Hyderabad been blighted by the frenzied and maniacal violence that consumed it last week.

In the four days between 6 and 9 December, Hindu-Muslim clashes accounted for a staggering 75 lives (the unofficial toll was suspected to be over 100). Many of the dead were women and children, knifed by orgiastic mobs who broke into their homes. And as in most communal clashes, the bulk of the victims were poor—hawkers, pavement dwellers, rickshaw-pullers and so on.

The story of what led to the carnage remains somewhat cloudy, but it began on 6 December—the day the *kar sevaks* marched on Ayodhya—with a clash over a trivial matter. Two men—one a follower of the Majlis Ittehadul Musalmeen (MIM) leader S.S. Owaisi and the other an aide of a Congress MP—were involved in a land dispute, which led to the killing of the latter. On the following day, two stabbing incidents took place in the Muslim-dominated area of the old city and from then on, Hyderabad was in the grip of a savage communal frenzy. The police were unable to prevent the rioting as the death toll mounted every day. And by the time the five-member Congress(I) fact-finding team from Delhi had arrived in the state capital, the army had been called in to end the madness.

The state police were clearly ill-equipped to deal with the situation. Accusations were rife that the state police stood by and watched while areas in the old city burned. When chief minister Chenna Reddy visited Osmania Hospital, where the injured were admitted, he was confronted by an angry mob which charged that the police had failed in their duty. As for the police, it claimed—as did many of Chenna Reddy's detractors—it was hamstrung by political interference. The present police commissioner, Bhaskara Rao, is the fifth since the Congress(I) assumed power last December and there have been frequent allegations that members of Chenna Reddy's family were playing politics with the state police force. Said a senior police officer: "What can you expect when politicians treat us this way?"

Chief minister Chenna Reddy visits riot victims: many were children

The complete breakdown of the law and order machinery provided a handle for Reddy's detractors within the Congress to demand his resignation. Among the first to condemn the chief minister was dissident heavyweight P. Janardhan Reddy, who demanded that the chief minister step down for having "utterly failed" to maintain the peace. "Stabbings have become the order of the day and the inhabitants of the old city have become panic-stricken," he told a hurriedly-convened press conference. "I don't know who is in charge of the home portfolio," he smirked, after accusing the chief minister's son, Shashidar Reddy, and Congress MP M.M. Hashim of interfering in police affairs. Janardhan Reddy has a sizeable following in the legislatures and by some accounts, enjoys the loyalty of some 60 MLAs and ten MPs.

The pro-Chenna Reddy legislators responded by handing over a petition to Union minister of state for home, Subodh Kant Sahay—who rushed from Delhi to Hyderabad—which, among other things, hailed the steps taken by the chief minister to maintain law and order. They also alleged—somewhat unconvincingly—that the Congress dissidents were behind the violence.

But Chenna Reddy was clearly at the receiving end. And by the time his Cabinet had decided to hand over the job of keeping the peace to the army (which was empowered to shoot at sight), the air was thick with rumours that he was about to be sacked by the party high command. Perhaps in anticipation of this, minister for animal husbandry Srinivasulu Reddy handed in his resignation after failing to persuade the chief minister to do likewise. "There is a total breakdown of law and order in the Telengana area and Hyderabad. I cannot be a partner and a party to the sins that are being committed by you," he told Chenna Reddy.

Two state MLAs joined Srinivasulu Reddy in demanding the chief minister's ouster and a host of state leaders—including PCC(I) president V. Hanumantha Rao, who submitted his own report to the Congress high command on the violence—began jockeying for a change of leadership. Chenna Reddy, however, assumed an unworried air. He told his Cabinet that he had apprised party president Rajiv Gandhi of the violence and claimed that there was a "hidden hand" behind it.

Chenna Reddy's handling of the situation also came in for savage criticism from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Desam president N.T. Rama Rao saw in the carnage a lesson about the merit of TDP rule. He claimed, with some justification, that communal violence was at its lowest during the seven years his party was in power. "But in the last 11 months of Congress rule, there have been over a hundred killings in the state. Now there is no protection even for children and women," the former chief minister said.

The BJP—which was accused by some Congressmen of being responsible for the happenings—joined in the demand for Chenna Reddy's sacking.



Chenna Reddy

Under attack from Congress dissidents and the Opposition



Srinivasalu Reddy

A dramatic resignation and a bid for the chief ministership



Balram Jakhar

Sent to do Rajiv Gandhi's dirty work for him?

The party called a *bandh* in Telengana: "We are protesting against this violence and ineffective state administration," said BJP general secretary Bandaru Dattatreya. He also contested Congress spokesman M.J. Akbar's charge that the BJP was behind the carnage. "Look at the list of the dead and injured and you will know who was responsible," he said. The contention was that as most of the victims were Hindu, the violence was wreaked by the Muslims, particularly those owing allegiance to the MIM.

The visit of the five-member Congress team from Delhi headed by Balram Jakhar hardened suspicions that Chenna Reddy may be asked to go. The team—whose other members were Mohsina Kidwai, P. Chidambaram, Janardhan Poojary and M.J. Akbar—met with party dissidents, who complained about Chenna Reddy's mishandling of the situation.

One rumour was that the delegation was sent with the sole purpose of forcing Chenna Reddy—who, it is well known, is at odds with Rajiv Gandhi and the party high command—to quit. If Rajiv didn't come down to Hyderabad himself, it was only to avoid the bad press he received for asking Karnataka's Veerendra Patil to go, said those who subscribed to this view. Said a state Congress functionary: "Jakhar has been sent to do Rajiv Gandhi's job by him."

However, many disagreed with this thesis. Sources close to the Congress team say that, after conducting enquiries, it has decided that the carnage was, in large measure, a Muslim backlash—a fall-out of the *satyagraha* to perform *kar seva* in Ayodhya. The group, it is said, felt that the BJP did its bit to add to the conflagration. Says a senior state Congress member: "Chenna Reddy will not be asked to go. Not for this, anyway."

As SUNDAY went to press, it was difficult to predict the chief minister's fate. For most people in Hyderabad, however, the political fall-out of the violence was of far less consequence than the events themselves. With the army now patrolling the old city, which has been placed under an indefinite curfew, there is the hope that the city will limp slowly to peace. But at the same time, the anger and hatred that the clashes have generated are still strong.

Already, hundreds of families have moved out of their homes in the old city for safer areas in Secunderabad. "I will have to think long and hard before I go back to my house again," said one 'refugee'. "But even if I do, I will never feel easy about living there again." ●

R. Bhagwan Singh/Hyderabad

Operation Bungle

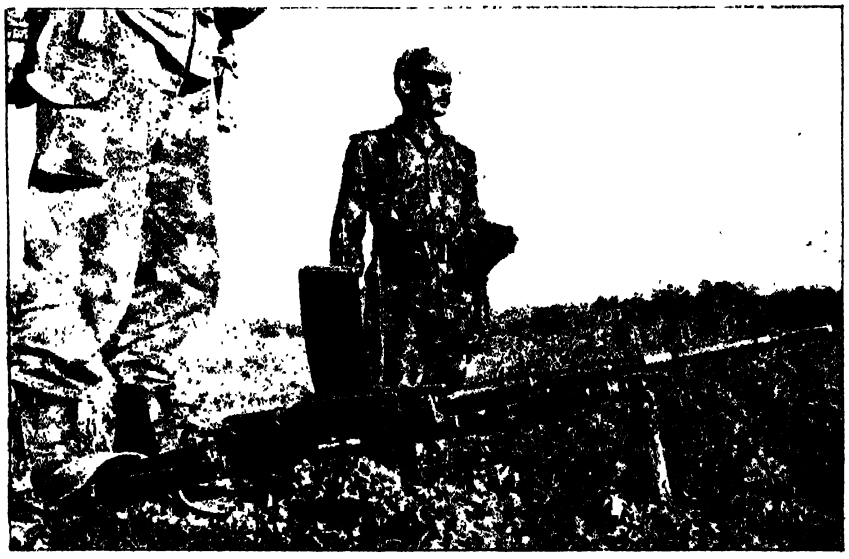
The army offensive against the ULFA in Assam is a flop

The flight from Guwahati to the Indian Air Force's Chabua base in Upper Assam takes around 60 minutes. Another hour's drive through tea gardens and the oil town of Digboi will take you to Lakhipathar, a densely forested tract which leads to the Kachin hills of Burma through Arunachal Pradesh. These days, the entire route from Chabua to Lakhipathar is lined with army trucks, with sten gun-toting jawans ready for action. This is the territory of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a committed band of Assamese militants who are determined to liberate the state from the "clutches of colonial Delhi". And deep within the jungles is the "war headquarters" of the dreaded terrorist outfit, which the army has taken control of since 30 November.

Operation Bajrang. That's the code name for what is undoubtedly one of the biggest army operations within the country in recent times. Around 30,000 army personnel, including three mountain divisions which had done duty in Sri Lanka, fanned out in six districts of Upper Assam in the last week of November to flush out and apprehend guerrillas of the outlawed ULFA. But within a week of the crackdown, the results were demoralising. At least for the army. True, a number of ULFA camps, including its war headquarters, were demolished and its guerrillas were on the run. But that was about all. The army failed to apprehend a single hardcore ULFA activist, leave alone lay its hands on the top leadership. And the big guns of the terrorist outfit seemed to have disappeared overnight. Seven days into the operations and people were already talking of how the ULFA had made a fool of the army.

The army, of course, is not to be entirely blamed for the poor show. The decision to call in the troops was taken by the Chandra Shekhar government at a very late stage. As Lt Gen. Baljit Singh, the chief of staff, Eastern Command, who is currently supervising the counter-insurgency operations against the ULFA explained: "All such army actions have to be backed by solid intelligence, which was clearly lacking in this case." More important, the army was clearly unacquainted with the terrain. The thick jungles provided an excellent ground for the ULFA guerrillas to take on the army. Most of them, of course, fired at the jawans from behind dense foliage and literally melted into the forest once they were spotted.

It was really a daunting task for the men in uniform. The army offensive began on the morning of 28 November, hours after President's Rule was imposed in Assam. The army's first target was perhaps the most difficult: the ULFA's "war control cell" located within the Lakhipathar forest area. The jungles are thick, with narrow dirt tracks criss-crossing the area. Armed with automatics, helicopters and armoured personnel carriers, the army tried to take the ULFA men by surprise. But a few yards into the forest and the jawans realised that they were up against a formidable enemy. The narrow mud road leading to the ULFA camp was heavily mined and the army was constantly being fired upon from within. But the troops held out and after a couple of hours, its fire-power proved too much for the opposition. One by one, the army captured five camps – a major breakthrough considering that the guerrillas operated mostly from these bases. But much to the dismay of the forces, most of the top ULFA leaders had fled by then, leaving the camps only to a couple of guards. But more important perhaps is the fact that in the seven days of uninterrupted army operations, not a single sophisticated weapon was recovered. The arms and



Keeping vigil: troops in Lakhipathar



After the assault: armymen inside a ULFA c

the equipment that the army seized from the ULFA's "war control cell" would put any insurgent gang to shame: a couple of double barrel guns, a few air pistols and some crude mines made out of iron pipes stuffed with explosives. The goods recovered from the Lakhipathar camps were more interesting: an Onida TV, a Funai VCP, saline bottles, a huge quantity of medicines that included paracetamol tablets and a variety of tonics, stationery, quilts, mosquito nets and a guitar. Among the books recovered were Cheiro's *Palmistry*, Banerjee's *Good English* and Mao Tse Tung's *Collection of Poems*. The army also stumbled on a mass grave—people reportedly executed by the ULFA.

The documents seized from the ULFA camps were more enlightening. While one contained names of fresh recruits, another was a manual of the Burma-based Kachin Independence Army (KIA) on the art of guerrilla warfare. But from the army's point of view, a note from the ULFA commander-in-chief, Paresh Baruah, was of utmost importance: the circular asked all ULFA volunteers to vacate their camps by 19 November, thereby confirming the rumour that the guerrillas were tipped off about the army action well in advance.

Everything pointed to an intelligence leak. Though the ULFA is said to have a good network of spies who keep it informed about all possible moves against it, the army operation must have been planned with utmost secrecy. Even the state police were not taken into confidence. Thus, the only people who had knowledge of the impending operation were the military top brass, the home ministry and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) ministers. In fact, sources at the Centre indicated that Prafulla Mahanta, the former chief minister of the state, was briefed about the crackdown during his trips to New Delhi last month. Is it possible that someone in the AGP warned the ULFA about the military action?



Brutal end: mass graves at Lakhipathar

Critics of the AGP pointed out that such a possibility was not just a speculation—it was a truth borne out by concrete evidence. Take for instance the location of the ULFA's headquarters at Lakhipathar. The camps were hardly seven kms from Digboi, Assam's oil town, and just a km away from a forest range office. It is thus impossible that the local administration was unaware of the ULFA's activities. Moreover, it has been more or less established by now that several AGP heavyweights were hand-in-glove with the ULFA militants. Just before President's Rule was imposed, a deputy superintendent of police posted in Upper Assam sent a secret note to his superior in Guwahati informing him that the AGP was preparing to recruit ULFA activists for the polls. The letter also specified that the ULFA "would not allow any other political party except the AGP to campaign" for the elections. Argued Hiteswar Saikia, the Assam Pradesh Congress chief, "It is no longer a secret that the AGP is in league with the ULFA. The local administration, particularly in Upper Assam, too, was infiltrated by the militants. ULFA activists used to operate from government offices after sunset." Agreed senior officer of the army who wished anonymity: "This is a major problem we faced. There was very little time for the forces to gather its own information. And we did not rely on the state apparatus because it was full of ULFA sympathisers."

There was yet another major hurdle for the military. There are scores of villages around the jungle, inhabited mostly by tribesmen. When the army started its combing operations, most of the ULFA activists buried their arms, threw away their battle fatigue





Working out strategies: Governor D.D. Thakur being briefed by senior officers



Says Lt. Gen. Baljit Singh, chief of staff, Eastern Command, "The army was clearly handicapped by a lack of intelligence report on the activities of the ULFA"

and mingled with the villagers. And since the ULFA enjoys a lot of goodwill in rural Assam, no one indentified them when the army came. Admitted Lt. Gen. Baljit Singh: "It is unlikely that most of the ULFA men have fled to Burma. They may have crossed over to the neighbouring states. We are even not ruling out the possibility of their presence in the towns and villages of Assam."

The army offensive against the ULFA have had an undesirable fallout and disturbing echoes of the Assam agitation can be heard. Already, people are talking of army excesses and charges of rape and harassment are being levelled against the jawans. A routine charge, according to Baljit Singh, but the campaign could well do a lot of damage. Particularly since the AGP and the All Assam Students Union (AASU), which was in the forefront of the anti-foreigners agitation, are leading the crusade against the military. Since the popularity rating of the AGP was at an all-time low and everyone, including all the major political parties, felt that President's Rule was the only answer, the AGP is now trying to turn the attention of the people to the alleged atrocities on innocents by the army in the name of containing the ULFA menace. Former chief minister Prafulla Mahanta accompanied by some of his partymen paid a hurried visit to the Lakhipathar areas and came back to Guwahati with stories of how the army pulled out innocent youths from their homes and beat them up mercilessly. "Even women were not spared," complained Mahanta, adding, "many of them were raped in the presence of their elders." Villagers from Lakhipathar even blamed the army for destroying standing crops during the offensive.

The AASU, which till recently was the AGP's most severe critic, too claimed to have in its posession tape-recorded confessions of rape victims. And on 8 December, the AASU organised a demonstration by women at Guwahati where such tapes were played over the public address system. "We have planned out a prolonged agitational programme. We are against President's Rule and are determined to drive out the army from Assam," thundered an otherwise soft-spoken Samujjal Bhattacharjya, general-secretary of the AASU.

And every day, such stories of army

Brothers in arms

Why the Centre outlawed the NSCN along with the ULFA

The transition of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) from an assorted band of committed Assamese in 1981 to a full-fledged guerrilla outfit in 1990 that is creditably holding out against the Indian Army's offensive (*see main story*) has been largely possible due to the help and patronage of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), the dreaded insurgent gang led by the legendary Muivah. Thus, a ban on NSCN was rightly considered a prerequisite for any crackdown on the ULFA.

The ULFA's association with the NSCN dates back to the days of the "anti-foreigners" agitation, when some activists of the movement, which had turned violent by then, contacted the NSCN headquarters in Upper Burma for arms and training in guerrilla warfare. The ULFA was yet to take shape but a militant group within the All Assam Students Union (AASU) was already swayed with the vague idea of liberating Assam from the clutches of foreigners and outsiders. The NSCN leadership appreciated the spirit of "patriotism" in them, but explained the futility of training an unorganised group of individuals. The NSCN, however, promised to help them in raising an organisation.

In March 1982, the NSCN foreign secretary Angelius Shimray and Captain Athins were sent to Dimapur in Nagaland to help out the militants to form an organisation. The NSCN emissaries not only helped the ULFA in formulating the organisational structure, they also promised to train its recruits in Burma. A draft constitution was also prepared along the lines of



The catch: vehicles seized from ULFA

high-handedness just keep multiplying. Most of them, like the one where the army is supposed to have fired on a crowd of 100 villagers, are bizarre to the point of being ridiculous, but as Lt. Gen. Baljit Singh put it "A lie repeated a thousand times makes a truth. This is part of the psychological warfare that the ULFA is now fighting."

The only saving grace for the army seems to be the fact that the AGP leaders, including Prafulla Mahanta and Bhrigu Phukan, do not enjoy much credibility among the people. But the AASU does and that's what is worrying Governor D.D Thakur. For he knows that once the students get their act together, it will be difficult to contain them. "We have fought the army during the Assam agitation and we are determined to do it again. The Assamese cannot be subjugated," said an agitated Hemanta Biswa Sarma, the general-secretary of the All Guwahati Students Union, the most powerful constituent of the AASU.

Says Samujjal Bhattacharjya, the AASU general-secretary, "Army rule is not the answer to Assam's problems. We are determined to throw out the troops from the state"



Sarma's rhetoric nowadays is being increasingly aimed at the Assamese psyche, where the people of the state are being seen as an exploited lot and the army an occupation force. Heroic exploits of legendary Assamese fighters are being touted to rouse the emotions of the people. And this has already had an impact: the masses are referring to the military as the "Indian" army and the ULFA is being painted as a band of patriots and "our boys". And stories of how a group of 16 has taken on an army of 4,000 are making their rounds throughout the state. Said Baljit Singh: "The army will need tangible success to counter such propaganda. I only wish the ULFA engages the army so that we could fight a battle and finish them off."

But so far, the ULFA seems least interested to face the might of the military. Its guerrillas have successfully cut through the army net, perhaps waiting for the security forces to be pulled out. It will then regroup and emerge as a more dreaded force. For this time round, there will be no dearth of public sympathy for them. The President's Rule and subsequent army operations have already made a martyr of Prafulla Mahanta. It could well be Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's first costly blunder: Assam could well go the Kashmir way. •

Rajiv Bagchi/Lakhipathar and Guwahati

---

that of the NSCN.

According to an understanding with the NSCN, the ULFA has been sending volunteers for training at the NSCN headquarters in Burma since 1983. Around 80 ULFA activists in five batches were trained from 1983 to 1985.

The schedule was briefly interrupted in 1986, when the Burmese army launched an attack on NSCN camps. But in the rainy season of 1988, as many as 70 trained ULFA activists infiltrated into Assam.

But what does the NSCN get in return? Under the agreement, the ULFA pays back in cash and kind.



It includes provisions like medicines and food-stuff.

Though the NSCN provides excellent training in subversive activities to the ULFA, the latter's chief source of arms is the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), an outfit that controls the entire Kachin area of Burma and which supplies sophisticated weapons to many other guerrilla organisations. But as a matter of principle, it directs all its supplies through the NSCN and never deals directly with the ULFA.

The split within the NSCN has indeed hit the ULFA badly. Sometime around March 1988, Khaplang, who is a Burmese Naga, walked out with his followers on Muivah and Issac Swu. The ULFA was in a dilemma. For a time, the ULFA leaders tried to bring the two warring factions together but when such efforts failed, they decided to back the Khaplang faction because the passage from Assam to Burma through dense jungles is controlled by Khaplang.

Initially, the ULFA had its headquarters in the Kachin hills of Burma. But after the Burmese army launched a crackdown and the NSCN split, the ULFA shifted its base to the Lakhipathar areas of Upper Assam. The ULFA has also benefited greatly by being a constituent of the Indo-Burmese Revolutionary Front (IBRF), a broad grouping of ultras of the north-east.

PHOTOGRAPHS. ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

The bumble-bee government

Hopes buzz with Chandra Shekhar coming to power



John Kenneth Galbraith (who later became President Kennedy's Ambassador to India) tells us in his 1952 classic *American Capitalism* that, according to all the laws of thermodynamics, a bumble-bee cannot fly—and yet it does! Much the same can be said of the Chandra Shekhar government.

The bumble-bee is just not structured, in terms of size, contours, spectrum, wing-span, body.weight ratio, or virtually any other relevant criterion, to even take off let alone sustain itself in the air or, indeed, go in for a spot of aerobatics. Our new government, similarly, is much the most unlikely we have ever had.

First, it is composed of one of the smallest groups in Parliament, representing not much more than around a tenth of the membership of the House. Second, it contains such fascinating creatures as (to begin from the tail) the gentle soul who made his name as leader of the Green Brigades (that is not the name of Maneka Gandhi's twee little troupe of green-fingered environmentalists but of the thugs who terrorised the voters of Allahabad into returning V.P. Singh to the Lok Sabha!). It includes my IAS batchmate of yore, Bhagey Gobardhan, who was pulled out of a hat by V.P. Singh in his last, never-to-be-missed performance as Chief Magician (*gillie! gillie!*) to say that he (Gobardhan) had been offered *dhan* of Rs. 50 lakhs and a Ministership to cross to the other—or *gobar!*-side. Consternation!

Also "enjoying" on the Treasury bench is "S2" himself. Why he should have been made minister for communications when clearly he should have been put in independent charge of badminton rackets (or, indeed, given his talents—and his pedigree—any racket!) remains something of a mystery.

We have Kalyan Singh Kalvi, who apparently believes that the code of the Suryavanshis (or is he a Chandravanshi?) stipulates that all good men and true should be in favour of putting widows to the torch when in Opposition—but be entirely opposed to such arson when ensconced in a ministerial *gaddi!*

There in Shastri Bhawan is Raj Mangal Pandey, an education in Education! And there in Udyog Bhawan is deposit-and-withdrawal Swamy, the Scarlet Pimpernel of the new order ("You see him here/ You see him there/ The Scarlet Pimpernel's everywhere!")

Quite at home at Home, is our very own Talleyrand, the Man for All Seasons, Subodh Kant Sahay. As Tennyson said: "The old order changeth/ Yielding place to Subodh—yet again!"—a wunderkind as indispensable, it would seem, to the implementation of V.P. Singh's non-policies as to the implementation of the new dispensation's policies.

And ticking away like a time bomb—silently, let it be ominously added—is the Tau (of whom V.P. Singh said as he fell to the floor: "*Et tau* Brute/Then fall Raja!"), now additionally invested with the portfolio of tourism, presumably to get in some much needed practice in rocking the boat!

Grinding their teeth outside the cage are the Dissatisfied Ones, the Jacobins of the Chandra Shekhar Revolution, led by our own Robespierre, Jagdeep Dhankar, who made the Revolution only to be overtaken at the end by even such a Jani-come-lately as health minister Shakeel-ur-Rehman.

And perched atop this extraordinary collection of newcomers, wizened veterans, wheelers, dealers and some plain good men presides a neophyte Prime Minister, who has never run even a village panchayat let alone a State Government or a Central Ministry.

How, you may well ask, can such a government run? The answer is:
(a) it can't
(b) it does!
For consider the performance of our new lords and masters in the month that has passed since we kissed V P. Singh goodbye on both cheeks and bade him kindly remove himself from our midst for evermore.



At the previous government's All-Party Round Table, in Delhi last year, V.P. Singh smugly insisted that he had no policy on Punjab—and that it was for the other parties to give him one

Take our single most acute problem: the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid dispute. In their competitive rivalry for the Muslim vote, V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav kept upping the ante on each other while, on the other side, the likes of Ms Uma Bharti (*"Samajh na pave baaton se/Ab laaton se samjhane do/Khoon kharaba hota hai/Tho ek bar ho jane do!"*) whipped the *kar sevaks* into hysteria. Instead of cooling the temperature, V.P. Singh resorted, in the final moments of his Gotterdammerung, to competitive duplicity, telling Muslim communalists one thing and Hindu communalists another, hoping against hope that somehow either these rival communalisms would cancel each other out—or, more probably, believing that, as the master of managing contradictions, he would succeed in fooling all of the people all of the time. The result was the tragic and wholly unnecessary killing and wounding of scores of unarmed—if impassioned (*"Us samey pata chal jayega/ Jab ek ek Ali ki chhati par/ Dus-dus Bajrang Bali chadhenge!"*: the *sivasi sanyasin* herself, who else?)—young Bajrang Balis seeking out an Ali (or, failing that, at least a *gumbaz*) to leap upon!

The contrast with the statesmanship shown by the new government, leading to the *kar seva*-turned-*satyagraha*, couldn't be more striking. From the word "go" the new Prime Minister has thrown himself, beard and soul, into taming the devil in Ms. Bharti, on 6 December, the papers reported her urging "non-violence" (whatever became of her injunction in September: "Mahatma Gandhi ruined us by telling us that if we are slapped on one cheek, we should turn the other. *Arrey*, if your second cheek too is slapped, where are you going to find a third cheek"?—another convert to the Gandhian line, and all thanks to Chandra Shekhar!)

The government have earnestly started talking to both sets of activists. The distinction between religion and politics is being maintained. Credibility has been given to religious leaders of different persuasions getting together to find a solution to what is—and must remain—a problem in the spiritual domain rather than the temporal realm. There have been initiatives galore in an atmosphere of constructive competition to generate constructive alternatives, among them the "Rajiv formula". There is a palpable distancing of the BJP from the VHP, on the one hand, and, even more encouragingly, between the VHP and the general body of the country's Hindu community, on the other. Similarly, the hollowness of the claim of Muslim communalists to represent the Muslim community is being exposed.





As far as **Chandra Shekhar** is concerned, he seems content to let servants remain servants and leave it to natural atrophy to pave the way to such changes as have to be made

In Punjab, both buffoonery and appeasement have ended. Instead of open-jeep rides, all along the length of the tortured and tortuous one furlong from Jallianwalah Bagh to the Golden Temple's Clock Tower Gate, we have governance not gimmickry. In a test of strength and will, the Prime Minister has outfaced the extremists, not only banning their proposed Panthic Convention at Anandpur Saheb but also so effectively enforcing the ban that the Convention has had to be abandoned. More startling still, the Akali Dal (Mann) has been reduced to retorting, in the reported words of its Party Secretary, Captain C.S. Sidhu (*Times of India*, 6/12/90): "We would not like to drag our religious institutions into politics". (Isn't that what *we* have been saying all along?!)

Remember the previous government's All-Party Round Table in Delhi last December at which V.P. Singh smugly insisted that he had no policy on Punjab—and that it was for the other parties to give him one? This December, we have just had another Round Table, at which most major political parties have been represented and where the official briefing has stressed that a second round will be held with those who were unable to attend the first round. That is what building a national consensus is all about. Not declarations long on rhetoric and short on substance—or abandoning the fight against terrorism in Punjab on the specious plea that no noose is good news!

In Kashmir, the return of Farooq Abdullah to active political involvement signals, for the first time since that dreadful January day when V.P. Singh compounded his release of hard-core terrorists with unleashing Jagmohan (he has no initials but I might suggest a set—how about B.J.P. Jagmohan?) on the hapless people of Kashmir, a possibility of some reaching out to a needlessly alienated people.

Assam has seen, for the first time in five years, a smack of firm government. Under the competitive ministrations of Prafulla Mahanta and Brighu Phukan, ULFA had become, if not the right arm of governemnt, certainly its night arm! The terrorists in Assam have now been put on the run. One might have one's reservations about the army being called in once again in aid of the civil authority, but after five years of AGP connivance with extortion, kidnapping, and cold-blooded

murder, was there really any alternative left?

Even in Tamil Nadu, the near impossible is beginning to happen: chief minister Karunanidhi being brought to heel. The inner compulsions of the DMK-LTTE tie-up are too strong for any but the most complacent to believe that their clandestine links will be snapped in any hurry. But it is now going to be just that much more difficult for the Tamil Nadu government to convert every government hospital in the state into a hideout for offshore militants, or openly surrender our sovereignty over our coastal waters to the LTTE, or make the Indian Customs and Excise Department into the first functioning department of the Eelam Government! Karunanidhi knows—or, at any rate has been told in no uncertain terms—that he no longer has a marionette government at the Centre that dances to every tune he plays on the National Front *bansuri*—but one that will whack him on the you-know-what if he goes too far out of line.

An entire month has passed and none of the institutions of our democracy has suffered any serious assault. All our Governors are still in place, even that Judas of Thirty Pieces of Silver, D.P. Chattopadhyaya. In Goa, the strictest constitutional propriety has been observed in asking Governor Khurshid Alam Khan to ensure that majorities are proved only on the floor of the House—and that too sufficiently quickly to not let the going price of *feni* shoot up too high!

The Civil Service is, of course, busy as ever dividing itself into rats that jump ship and rodents that gnaw nails! But, as far as the Prime Minister is concerned, he seems content to let servants remain servants and leave it to natural atrophy to pave the way to such changes as have to be made.

So with the judges. So with Doordarshan and Akashvani. So with public sector executives. So with the financial institutions. If such propriety and rectitude were to become the norm, what, oh what, will become of all of us?!

And in its first 15 days in office, it is the Chandra Shekhar government that has accomplished what the V.P. Singh government only kept faking—the actual receipt of Bofors-related documents from Switzerland. Sorry for the delay, folks. A little birdie tells this column that the delay was occasioned mainly by the heroic efforts of the Swiss translators to render Gurumurthy's emendations into plain English. Besides, the fingers of the Swiss clerks kept getting stuck in the fevicol with which Arun Jaitley had stuck on bits and pieces of hastily scribbled confetti to his original Letters Roguery!

Remember the first outing of the V.P. Singh governemnt beyond our shores? It was, if I might refresh your



Under the competitive ministrations of Prafulla Mahanta and Brighu Phukan ULFA had become, if not the right arm of government, certainly its night arm! The terrorists in Assam have now been put on the run



memory, Inder Kumar Gujral heading out to Male (on the First Principle of the National Front that Small is Beautiful—but Big Brothers are Brutes!) Coincidentally, the first trip abroad of the new governemnt too has been to Male: the Prime Minister (accompanied by his external and other affairs minister) for the SAARC Summit. Where Gujral thoroughly embarrassed his hosts by proclaiming that "India" (which was his name for the two-bit trapeze artistes he represented) would "never again" send her armed forces out of the country (and this to a neighbour tearfully acknowledging their undying gratitude to our *jawans* for having saved their delightful democracy from a foreign-inspired mercenary coup), Chandra Shekhar briskly opened a business-like dialogue with the new Pak Premier, Nawaz Shariff, fully understanding the key requirement in our foreign policy imperatives for Pakistan—which is to open lines of communication direct to the top so that, when it comes to the crunch, we don't have to go through that wily veteran, Pak Foreign Minister Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, doubling as the switchboard operator.

The economy, of course, is in shambles. V.P. Singh began by claiming the coffers were empty—and ended by emptying the coffers. Dandavate set out by saying he had inherited a "difficult legacy"—and went out proclaiming that he was leaving behind a "difficult legacy "! Little has been done yet by the Chandra Shekhar government to give any firm reassurance that the economic disaster which looms over us will be averted or, at any rate, met head on. But there is one clear indication that we are determined to meet it turban on—our country's most brilliant resident economist (the non-resident genii are legion!), Manmohan Singh, is to be the Prime Minister's Economic Czar and Montek Singh Ahluwalia is, it seems, to stay. We got over the drought in 1987—which was a natural calamity in the trillions range—without turning a hair. Now, with Manmohan and Montek in the saddle, finance minister Yashwant Sinha might still pull off a miracle. Place your trust, as I always say, in bureaucrats turned politician!

No, the Chandra Shekhar government is not a bumble-bee. And yet it has—at any rate, till now—shown that it can fly. So, what's the explanation?

Two, I suggest. First, there is to our new Prime Minister a sincerity of purpose that was all too non-evident in You-Know-Who. This one believes in governance. That one thought it was all about empty gestures and illusory gimmicks. This one thinks contradictions are to be overcome. That one thought they were to be managed.

And, second (might I in all modesty submit?) the somewhat upmarket quality of Chandra Shekhar's outside support!

(The views expressed in this column are those of the author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress Party's position.)

Charles Sobhraj Limited

A new addition to the Sobhraj industry

Is there no stopping the Charles Sobhraj industry? First we had the official biography: *The Life And Crimes Of Charles Sobhraj* by Richard Neville. Then came the late Thomas Thompson's vastly superior *Serpentine* after which all references to Sobhraj contained the odd snake metaphor. Next was the TV film of Neville's book. Called *Shadow Of The Cobra* it stole Thompson's imagery and wove a highly fictionalised account of Sobhraj's encounters with Neville, made even less believable by the absurd casting of a saturnine Art Malik as the Chinese-eyed Sobhraj.

Now, there's *Venom* by Colin Falconer which purports to be a multinational thriller but is,in fact, a fictional reworking of the Sobhraj saga for the airport best-seller market.

There are some deviations from the facts, of course. The real Sobhraj is part Vietnamese and part Sindhi. Michel Christian, the protagonist of *Venom*,is part French and part Sikh. Nevertheless, he is born in Saigon. Then, while the real Sobhraj linked up with a French-Canadian mistress, Falconer's anti-hero meets up in an incestuous union with his French half-sister. (In fact, the incest angle is played up with such enthusiasm that one is tempted to conclude that the moral of this international novel is 'East West, incest is best.')

But otherwise the facts are pretty much the same and *Venom* is certainly truer to the Sobhraj story than *Shadow Of The Cobra*. Falconer even sets the novel between 1946 and 1973, roughly the correct dates for Sobhraj and makes no attempt to update the saga to the present day.



Charles Sobhraj: a multinational conglomerate

Moreover, the fictional Michel does almost everything that Sobhraj did He starts out by stealing passports from hippies and then graduates to jewel robberies. The *modus operandi* is the same as Sobhraj's: a woman is always seduced. If she is a shop assistant, then she is persuaded to decamp with the goods. If she is merely another guest at the same hotel, then she rings the jewellery shop and asks them to send their best gems over. No sooner has the salesman arrived, then Michel/Sobhraj drugs him and makes off with the jewels.

The problem with *Venom* is that it tries to add psychological complexity to the Sobhraj/Michel character. While the biographies reckon that Sobhraj was evil personified and don't waste time in trying to work out where he went wrong, Falconer blames it all on a deprived childhood. In this version, Michel/Sobhraj is trying to take revenge on the father who never owned up to him and on the mother who abandoned him. The father gets kneecapped but because the mother dies before Michel/Sobhraj can get around to finding her, he makes do with his half-sister whom he seduces with the greatest of ease. Sure enough, the sister sees through him,at which stage Michel/Sobhraj decides with the dull predictability that readers of airport best-sellers know so well: "His Madonna was like all the others. A whore."

The Oedipal and incest themes work against a book that would be a better read if it merely told the Sobhraj story. But then, perhaps Falconer had to make allowances for the fact that his is an old story that has often been told before. Hence the attempts to tart up the tale with incest and pop psychology.

Sensitive readers will be offended by the sneering tone Falconer sometimes adopts (ie "Justice does not exist in India, only process... One case, initiated in the tenth century, is still pending ") But all flag-wavers may find some reassurance in the fact that the Thais get it even worse than the Indians. ("The Thai police are very unreliable, you know. All the officers drive Mercedes and they only get paid a few hundred Bahts a month.")

All in all, a reasonable read for a long, tedious journey. But you won't learn anything you didn't already know about Sobhraj. ●

Vijay Sahni

EXTRACT

"You tried to kill me, Noelle. I offered you riches and in return you tried to trick me and kill me. You women are all the same. You give a man love and then you try and destroy him."

He reached out a hand and unlocked the clasp of a sapphire necklace at her throat. He put it in his jacket pocket and began to caress the whiteness of her throat. Noelle braced her feet on the floor and tried to throw the chair backwards. She was beyond reason now.

Michel held the chair with one hand and continued to stroke her neck with his fingers. "No one had ever loved you like I loved you, had they Noelle? All I asked was a little help in return. Instead you almost killed me. You nearly spoiled everything. What should I do with you?"

Noelle turned her face away, making small mewing noises in her throat, her whole body straining against her bonds. Michel watched her, his face creased with disgust.

Women.

You couldn't trust any of them.

Venom by Colin Falconer. Published by Hodder and Stoughton Limited. Price: £1.95 (Rs 72)

Out of focus

Only one Kannada film makes it to the next Indian Film Festival

It has become something of an annual ritual. No sooner is the list of the films selected to the Panorama section of the Indian International Film Festival announced than howls of protest emanate from one quarter or the other. This year it is the turn of the Kannada film directors to object to the selection procedure of the section which comprises what are popularly known as Indian art movies.

Spearheading the protest is actor-director Suresh Heblikar, who maintains that the selections were appalling. "The powerful Malayali, Bengali and Hindi lobby" have been well-represented, he says, and "most of the films which have found place have been financed by the NFDC (National Film Development Corporation) and Doordarshan. It is as if they have monopolised the section." Says Heblikar, a trifle sarcastically: "If it is a pre-requisite that films be financed by government bodies to be included in the Panorama, then let them tell us."

Of the 19 films selected for screening in Madras (where the festival will be held early next year) eight have been produced by the NFDC, four by Doordarshan and one by the Children's Film Society, with the names of the directors reading like a who's who of Indian cinema: Satyajit Ray, Govind Nihalani, Sai Paranjape, Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, Balu Mahendra, Mani Rathnam, Gulzar and Amol Palekar. But the only Kannada film to be included is Girish Kasaravalli's *Mane*.

Some critics maintain, however, that *Mane* is not a Kannada film, strictly speaking, as it is being made in Hindi as well with Naseeruddin Shah and Deepti Naval in the lead. Kasaravalli disputes this: "The Hindi version is not ready as yet. How can it go as a Hindi film?"

But while *Mane* has made it, such films as Heblikar's *Prathama Ushakirana*, Prema Karanth's *Nakkala Rajakumari*, Sundar Krishna Urs's *Chakra* were left out rather inexplicably, despite their off-beat themes and the varying degrees of critical acclaim they had received. Says Karanth: "The directors whose films have been selected are undoubtedly talented. But that does not mean that the others should be neglected."

This year, instead of the 21 films they were expected to choose, the selection panel headed by Hrishikesh Mukherji has only listed 19 in the Panorama section. And what's worse, says Heblikar: "The selection reveals that lobbying, influence and big names matter, not films. There are directors whose films never get rejected. This is not only loathsome, but an insult to our creativity."

What irked the filmmakers further was that while all three Kannada films were rejected, the selection panel recalled two Malayali films after rejecting them. Says Kasaravalli: "Last year the panel had rejected my film *Bannada Vesha*. I appealed and was told that the decision could not be changed. So, have they now changed the rules?"

The inclusion of the Tamil film *Anjali*, directed by Mani Rathnam also came in for criticism. According to well-known Kannada director, Ravi: "The film is totally commercial and the story has been based on a foreign film. Just because it is about a girl in the year of the girl child does not mean it should be included in the Panorama."

The directors have now got together to urge that the selection be reviewed. If their demand is not acceded to, they have threatened to hold a parallel Panorama near the venue of the festival. Says Heblikar: "Then people can see which set of films is better: the ones selected because of big names and lobbying or the ones rejected." ●

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore



The powerful Malayali, Bengali and Hindi lobbies have been well represented, whereas Heblikar's *Prathama Ushakirana* (above) was left out rather inexplicably, despite its off-beat theme and the critical acclaim it had received

Slender pickings

There wasn't much for the lovers of Indian cinema at the London Film Festival

Raj nostalgia is not fashionable any longer. Not on celluloid, at least, if the recently-concluded London Film Festival (LFF) is anything to go by. Not only was there little for lovers of Indian cinema, there weren't too many films on the country either. And what made the ommission even more glaring was the incongruous fact that there were more Indian critics and delegates in attendance at the festival, than were Indian films.

But of those on show, Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Mathilukal* was a great hit, with *Guardian* film critic Derek Malcolm (an old India hand) putting it high on his list of must-sees, both in print and on television. And sure enough *Mathilukal* played to loud and spontaneous applause.

Satyajit's Ray's latest film *Shakha Prashakha* was among the prime attractions of the festival. Quite significantly so, for, as the festival brochure had it, when the first



A scene from *102 Boulevard Haussmann* which was screened at the London Film Festival



There weren't too many Indian films at the festival. But of those on show, Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Mathilukal* (below) was a great hit, as was Satyajit Ray's latest film *Shakha Prashakha*



Odd man in

Despite his Indian origins, director Udayan Prasad has managed to escape Asian stereotypes

At 37, Udayan Prasad is in an enviable position. The Indian-born freelance director is one of the few filmmakers with more than one film showing at the London Film Festival. And both *102 Boulevard Haussmann* and *They Never Slept* deal with subjects far removed from the sickeningly-familiar stereotypes which non-Whites get boxed into in England. "I have somehow managed to escape that filmmaking ghetto," says Prasad.

Born in 1953 in Sevagram Ashram, where his parents were leading a life inspired by Mahatma Gandhi (his father was from Dehradun and his mother from the Palghat region of Kerala), Prasad came to England when he was nine. He discovered a passion for filmmaking when he was at art school in Cardiff, South Wales. And this stayed with him through a subsequent stint at Leeds Polytechnic, where he made movies "nominally under the guise of doing graphics".





Udayan Prasad has two films showing at the festival. And both use the First World War as a backdrop to tell different tales

Three years in the cutting-room taught him about the structure of a film; invaluable training as it turned out. From 1979 onwards, he worked as assistant director, cameraman and director with several television documentaries to his credit, ending with the two films he has at the LFF, each [illegible]

Both *102 Boulevard Haussmann* and *They Never Slept* use the First World War as a backdrop to tell very different tales. One of the most famous addresses in Paris during the War was 102 Boulevard Haussmann, where France's most illustrious man of letters was holed up, writing his masterpiece. Marcel Proust spent the entire duration of the war in his soundproof bedroom, waited on by his devoted slave Celeste. Occasionally, he would sally forth in search of diversion and pick up people who happened to intrigue him for the moment. The film catches Proust, played beautifully by Alan Benett, at his cynical worst, using people to inspire him and discarding them as soon as he tires of them.

They Never Slept, conversely, has a lovely farcical structure; it regards the war with wicked irreverance, with its bumbling English spies who get run over by buses, master-spies who play catch in their office (Edward Fox in a nicely off-beat role) and yet more foolish spies, all breathless and wide-eyed. Says Prasad: "It *(They Never Slept)* is so completely, intensely English; I loved doing it."

But how did Prasad evolve to making films set in a British context, with British actors and technicians, instead of "filling slots for Asians", as they say in England? "There must be a large element of luck involved in it," says the young director with a smile and due modesty.

But Prasad is aware of the dark side of being brown in Britain as well. Living with his British wife and two children, he can observe racism at close quarters: "Families shut themselves in on holidays because they are scared of going out. Their children go in fear, and they live with their post boxes cemented because they are sick of shit being poured through them...and they sleep with water cans beside their beds because they never know when fire bombs will be hurled through their windows."

Neither of his films shown at the LFF deals with the kind of violence he is talking about, sitting in the press marquee. But Prasad does not see any contradiction in this: "I feel as strongly about it as any other Indian. I live here and I can't deny that I am part of its society, but I am Indian and proud of it."

And quite relieved that Asian youth in battered East London are banding together to fight violence directed against them and their families; skinhead gangs no longer rule the roost in his area. "England has become a much less caring society. It's so aggressive," he says sadly. "But you have to learn to live with it, otherwise you'd be on the verge of a breakdown permanently."

Currently languishing in a project on called exotic rants, Prasad says he'd love to make a film in India, which he hasn't visited for five years. Only, I'm not quite ready to do the film just yet, because I've [illegible] the year after. There are changes to [illegible]

He knows, however, what he is going to do next. Says Prasad: "I'm [illegible] the Indian film, and it's [illegible] of the people."

avatar of the LFF flew out of post-prandial coffee at a dinner hosted by critic Dilys Powell, a Ray film was included to keep the other masters—Kurosawa, Fellini, Bergman—company.

Other than these, the pickings were remarkably slender as far as Indian cinema went. There was Buddhadeb Dasgupta's *Bagh Bahadur*, padded with two documentaries, Anand Patwardhan's *Unna Mitran Di Yaad Pyaari* and Vishnu Mathur's *The Flying Bird*. Even if there had been automatic inclusion of some award-winning films, without any scouting around for the more esoteric stuff, the number would have gone up appreciably. At the last festival, for instance, the line-up had been much more impressive: Ray's *Ganashatru*, Kumar Shahani's *Khayal Gatha*, G. Aravindan's *Marrattam*, Mani Kaul's *Siddheshwari*, Mrinal Sen's *Ek Din Achanak*, Sudhir Mishra's *Main Azaad Hoon* and Sahji's *Piravi*, which people are still talking about.

Festival director Sheila Whitaker has her explanation ready. "Maybe it's because I couldn't go to Calcutta (the International Film Festival)," says Whitaker. "The films we have shown here were picked from Cannes where I did manage to go. But I hope to be in Madras next year and I hope we will have many more films from India at the next festival."

Whatever the reason, Indian representation at the LFF was surprisingly meagre. Unlike most countries, which had a section to themselves, Indian films were relegated to the section on films from the "Three Continents", that is, from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Even miniscule Hong Kong had more films, with top star Jackie Chan—who couldn't make it finally—billed as a favoured guest.

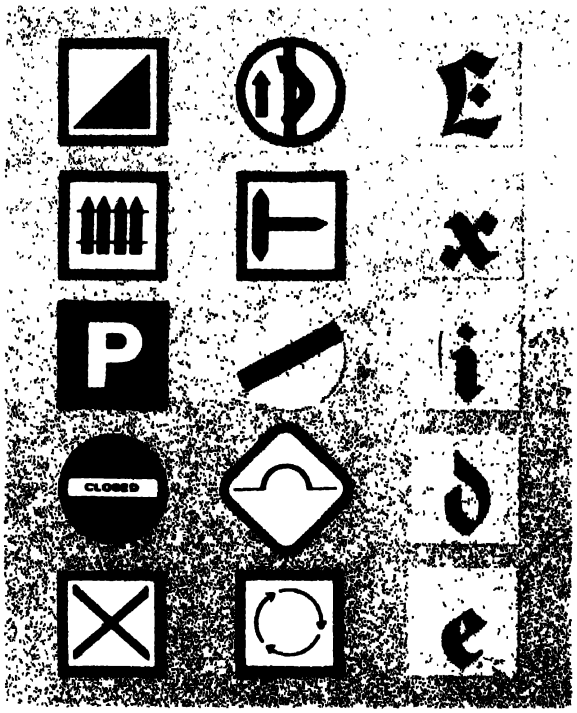
The small Indian presence notwithstanding, this year's LFF was the largest ever, with roughly 200 films from 35 countries on show. Spread over three weeks, it was a sprawling affair, with movies playing at several theatres, including three main ones at the National Film Theatre, the main focus of the festival. The fact that there are so many films meant that there were fewer screenings, and audiences were often forced to make hard choices. "The festival has to be as big as it can be, to get back as much money as it can," says Whitaker. "But people seem to like its size. My view is there should be films for everyone--it's not just a number game."

But there were films for everyone, ranging from the mandatory Godard and Fellini (probably included to keep the completists happy) to B-grade stuff from the USA. Thus, while there was a large audience for Godard's eclectic *Nouvelle Vague*, Mathew Jacob's *Hallelujah* anyhow had people cheering much after the screening.

A close look at the section on British cinema, however, revealed that most of the films on show had been made by television companies, specifically the BBC and Channel Four, the film industry having little to show for itself. The depressing state of affairs, according to some observers, was bound to last for some time. Film director and one of the greats of British cinema, David Lean (82), seemed to agree with this view. He regretfully informed an interviewer that he intended to migrate to France. "They don't want to make movies in England any more," said Lean. "But they like movies in France so I've decided to live there."

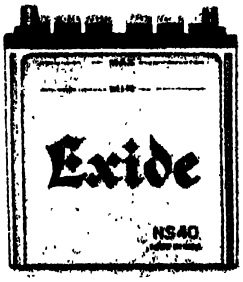
Though he may well fly down for the next festival in London. •

Shubhra Gupta/London



DISCOVER THE SIGN ON THE ROADS TRUSTED BY ALL VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS.

EXIDE. The original fitment on 2 out of 3 cars, commercial vehicles and tractors. The battery you can trust.



Exide

FS Advertising/CH./573

BUY EXIDE. BUY PEACE OF MIND.

It's all in the mind

There's no such thing as a sex tonic, says Dr Prakash Kothari

Masters and Johnson were always considered the last word as far as sexual studies were concerned. Until Dr Prakash Kothari came along to turn the conventional wisdom they'd created on its head. In his recently-published book *Orgasm New Dimensions*, Kothari controverts the view held by Masters and Johnson—and shared by most other sexologists—that orgasm and ejaculation are synonymous.

To further popularise his theories on the subject and thereby educate the public, India's well-known sexologist intends to hold a conference on orgasm at Delhi early next year (3-6 February), the culmination of a dream that began in Caracas, Venezuela, when Kothari was honoured with the most exalted title the world of sexology has to offer.

Kothari wrote to colleagues about the proposed conference to trade information about orgasm, not only in men and women but also in eunuchs and animals. The response was good. Nineteen top sexologists from all over the world accepted with alacrity. Masters and Johnson, however, declined, ostensibly because they suffered from 'travel phobia'.

This will not prevent the International Conference on Orgasm organised by the Indian Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists from getting underway. Financed by the doctor's friends in the jewellery business, the conference—apart from the usual reading of papers—will include *Exhibition Erotica*, featuring



GAUTAM PATOLE

erotic paintings, manuscripts and sculptures. Also on display will be ivory dildos used by women in 18th century India.

An added attraction will be Protima Gauri Bedi, performing an Odissi ballet, *Erotic Sight*, based on traditional songs and dances of India. The music will be composed by Ashit Desai, and sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar has promised to grace the occasion. Dr Kothari will chip in with an audio-visual show, *Kamasutra* which he claims will stun every delegate. A tour of the famous temples of India featuring erotic sculptures has been organised, though the delegates will have to bear travel and hotel expenses themselves. Discussions, meetings over cocktails and study groups will also be organised during the conference.

Some of the papers which are to be read promise to be interesting. Dr Hanny Lightfoot of America will talk about the orgasmic pattern of 2000 women in Africa and Sudan who had been circumcised, Dr A.K. Slob of the Netherlands will talk about orgasm in non-human species while another sexologist will read on the orgasmic pattern in eunuchs.

Says Dr Kothari: "Even in the West, they do not have diagnostic labels for women's orgasmic problems. And with men, whatever diagnostic labels are given are confusing and propagate myths. I hope this conference changes all this."

But for the present, in an interview with SUNDAY, Dr Kothari debunks some popular myths about aphrodisiacs and sex tonics.

SUNDAY: What are aphrodisiacs?
Prakash Kothari: Aphrodisiacs are substances that are supposed to enhance sexual desire. The search for such substances has been going on for centuries and continues even today. Indeed, almost every culture has attributed powers of sexual arousal to some foods or drugs. Sometimes, these even remotely resemble the male phallus, for example, carrots, asparagus and ginseng.

Claims have been made for the aphrodisiacal qualities of many prescriptions and recreational drugs too, but none of them have been proved to be directly sexually stimulating. Indirectly though, they can help sometimes.

Q: What do you mean?
A: For instance, marijuana and alcohol temporarily reduce anxiety and allay inhibitions, thereby allowing sexual desire, freer expression. Some drugs like yohimbine and papavarine increase the flow of blood in the genital apparatus, thus inducing erections. Finally, cantharidine (Spanish fly) causes irritation and inflammation of the genito-urinary tract, leading to reflex erections, but the margin between the therapeutic dose and a lethal dose is very narrow.

Q: What is papavarine?
A: Papavarine is a drug that acts as a vasodilator and muscle relaxant. It has been discovered in the recent years that a solution of the drug injected directly in the penis will result in a firm and long-lasting erection. Papaverine must, however, always be used with caution. One problem is of the erection failing to subside. If it lasts more than four hours, you must contact your physician. He can get rid of the erection by using another pharmacological agent like diluted saline solution containing epinephrine.

One shouldn't use papaverine more than twice a week as it may lead to scarring, bruising etc. Long-term use may also cause fibrosis and occasionally curved penile erection. The drug also loses its effectiveness over a period of time.

Q: Have you come across a sex tonic which can rejuvenate a person?
A: I think Karl Marx once said, "If God did not exist, Man would have to invent Him!" The same thing is true about sex tonics. Despite spending 20 years in this field, I have yet to come across anything that directly stimulates sexual desire.

Q: So you don't prescribe sex tonics?
A: No, never.

Q: Have you never prescribed tonics for your patients?
A: Well, if a patient is suffering from a physiological problem like iron deficiency-anemia and his or her sexual inadequacy is a consequence of that, then of course I prescribe iron salts. But I never prescribe anything purely as a sex tonic.

A few years ago, a patient from a Middle Eastern country was referred to me. After I treated him, he insisted that I write down a prescription for a sex tonic. I refused. Some time later, the referring physician told me that the patient's potency was failing and begged me to at least prescribe a vitamin pill. I was furious, but I finally decided to prescribe a sort of baby food and told the man to take one teaspoonful three times a day. After six months he called back to say he was fine. In fact, he felt so good about his sex life that he asked me if he could increase the dosage!



GAUTAM PATOLE

"In the Sixties, ginseng was the largest selling aphrodisiac in the American market. In fact, ginseng sometimes disrupts a woman's menstrual cycle"

Q: What about vitamin E?
A: At one time many people believed vitamin E boosted one's sex drive. This stemmed from studies that found that rats deprived of vitamin E **developed sexual problems and that** these abnormalities were partially reversed when the rats were given vitamin E.

Unfortunately this did not happen among human beings!

In fact, an overdose of vitamin E

may result in headaches, nausea and muscle weakness.,

Q: Isn't it wrong, then, for doctors to prescribe sex tonics?

A: Yes, this practice is most unethical. Moreover, many doctors are ignorant about these matters. The psychopathology and psycho-physiology of sex and sexual dysfunctions are not taught to medicalstudents and amajority of psychiatric residents neglect such problems. As a result, very often when a patient with a sexual disorder approaches a physician, either he gets no advice at all or he is told to take some sex tonics that may do him more harm than good.

If it works, then it is purely because of faith like the example of my patient from the Middle East.

Q: You'd said earlier, that alcohol can indirectly induce freer expression of sexual desire. So what's wrong with alcohol?

A: Don't forget Shakespeare's lines that "it provokes and unprovokes, it provokes the desire but takes away the performance!" A small amount of alcohol may loosen inhibitions but an overdose will prevent an erection. Moreover, alcohol can damage the liver and lead to irreversible brain and nerve damage. Impotence caused by this kind of damage is almost impossible to cure.

Women who drink too much often report menstrual irregularities, decline in desire and difficulty in reaching orgasm.

Q: Is brown sugar a sexual stimultant?

A: At times brown sugar may have the same indirect effect on sexual desire as alcohol does. But patients addicted to brown sugar have often reported to me a tremendous decrease in sexual pleasure at the time of orgasm.

Q: Let's turn to ayurveda. There are ayurvedic medicines in the market that claim to cure all sexual dysfunctions. Do they work?

A: Absolutely not. Premature ejaculation may occur because of excessive arousal and retarded ejaculation and impotence may be the consequence of reduced arousal. How can one drug be useful for both conditions? Such claims are made to exploit the ignorant public. In fact, even in ayurveda different medications are advised for different sexual dysfunctions.

Q: What about ayurvedic medicines sold over the counter? Are they beneficial?

A: Ideally they should be prescribed . There is no generalisation in ayurveda. It clearly mentions that without knowing the *prakruti* (physiology) or *vikruti* (pathology) of a person the drug should never be administered . Charak, the authority on ayurveda mentions, "A medicine used without adequate knowledge could affect one like thunder, a sword's edge or like poison."

Q: Doesn't the preparation of ayurvedic medicine also have a bearing on its efficacy?

A: Of course it does , not only the preparation, but also how the herbs are grown. Chemical fertilisers could affect the efficacy of the product. The texts *Charak Samhita, Krishiparashar* and *Amritsagar* clearly mention that the plants should be grown naturally without using any artificial fertilisers. I doubt that this is truly practised today. Some classical ayurvedic authorities even specify the kind of land on which the plants must be grown. Does any one bother about that?



Dr Prakash Kothari: sex tonics can do mo

Q: What about the application of oils to increase penis length?

A: Sometimes men with perfectly adequate functioning fall prey to quacks in the hope of achieving some heroic standards of sexual performance. Research has shown that a two-inch long erect penis can satisfy a woman since only the outer third of a vagina has sensitive nerve endings.

Q: Physicians frequently prescribe Manix herbal capsules by Idoss, (a division of Wockhardt Company) for infertility and impotence. They say one must take five capsules twice a day with milk and emphasise that it is necessary to take one teaspoonful of pure ghee and one teaspoonful of honey for the desired response.

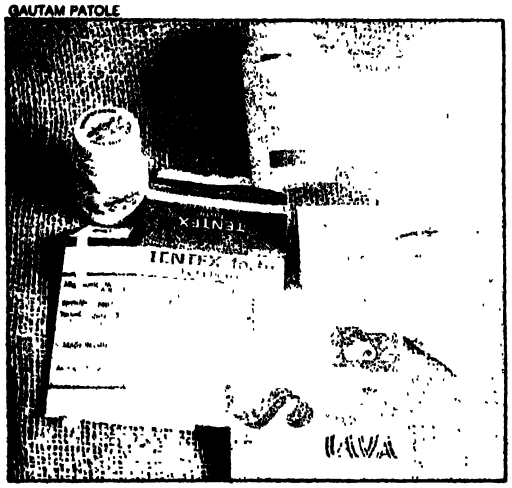
A: This is unbelievable. It violates the basic principles of ayurveda, and could be most dangerous. As Shushrut, in his book *Shushrut Samhita* (one of the most respected treatise on ayurveda) says, "Honey and ghee, if taken in equal proportions, are poisonous!

It appears that they have realised their mistake: they now prescribe only pure ghee!

Q: Is it a fact that ayurvedic herbal medicines do not have any expiry date at all?

A: Of course they do. Herbal *churans* and powder pills should be used in about three to six months and oils may

GAUTAM PATOLE



"If a sex tonic works, then it is purely because of faith, as in the case of my patient from the Middle East, who felt rejuvenated after a prescription of baby food"



rm than good

be for a year or two.

Q: What about homeopathy?
A: In homeopathy there are no particular sex tonics. According to its **founder, Hahnemann, homeopathy is a science based on the concept of individualisation and the concept of** totality. It believes that disease is a reaction of the constitution to certain environmental stresses, external as well as internal.

Then how can homeopathy decide on the remedy for a sexual disease? It is not the analysis of the environmental factor alone but the peculiarity of the individual, of how he reacts to these factors that determine the curative homeopathic medicine. This system is highly individualistic.

Q: So you can't rely on homeopathic remedies mentioned in newspapers and magazine articles?
A: By and large, these medicines are the so-called specific drugs. Since they do not take into account the vital constitutional dimensions of the person, they are totally incapable of curing the illness. I know of a case, in which the patient was having diabetes mellitus as well as depression. After reading the newspaper remedy, he began taking the medicine for depression but the cause of his impotence was diabetes mellitus, not depression.

Q: Do homeopathic medicines have any side-effects?
A: As mentioned by Kent, a noted **authority on homeopathy,** "These small pills can cure sick folks, at the same time it can also kill sick folks." **It's not true that homeopathic medi**cines have no side-effects.

Q: What about the male hormone, testosterone?
A: Testosterone is rarely necessary before the age of 55. **The symptoms and metabolic tests suggest that it should only be used when there is testosterone deficiency. Moreover, tests should be done very carefully, since testosterone levels vary considerably even in the same person.**

Q: Should any precautions be taken before administering testosterone?
A: Yes, older people must be rectally examined. Testosterone is known to precipitate certain kinds of cancer of the prostate gland. It can also alter liver functions and may make the previously stable diabetes mellitus unstable.

Q: Which preparations of testosterone would you recommend?
A: Oral testosterone undeconate which bypasses the liver would be safer.

Q: What is the harm in using testosterone or ayurvedic and homeopathic medicines as placebos?
A: The cost is too great. Firstly, all medicines have side-effects. Secondly, a placebo gives the patient the feeling that there is something wrong with his body when, in fact, the problem may be situational.

Q: Can pornography stimulate sexual desire?
A: Erotic art or literature may have a beneficial effect on a couple's sexual desire and could be a psychological aphrodisiac. In fact, indirect scientific evidence also suggests that pornography helps in increasing testosterone levels.

Q: Do you sometimes recommend extra-marital relations as a sex tonic? Will an affair rekindle sexual desire?
A: While I don't condemn affairs, I don't recommend them either. But I'd like to point out that a flower in someone else's garden always looks more attractive when you ignore your own.

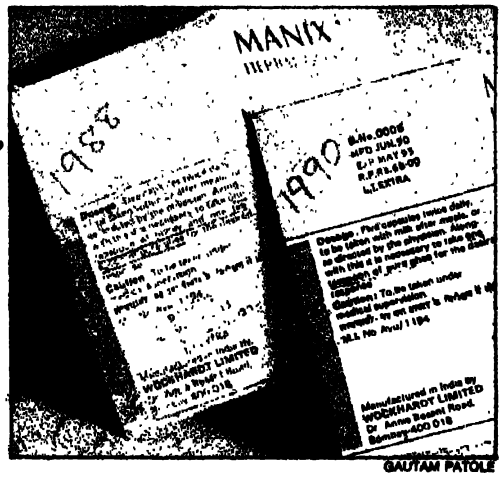
Q: So what is the best sex tonic?
A: An understanding, sensuous and affectionate partner.

Q: If herbal ingredients are filled in gelatin capsules of animal origin, packed or stored in plastic bottles and aluminium foils, can it have a deteriorating effect on the product?
A: Yes, it may. Vaghbhat—another ancient authority on ayurveda—clearly mentions in his book *Rasaratna Samuchaya* that certain drugs need to be stored in a particular variety of containers only,like glass, silver, copper etc. I wonder how much the methods of preservation used today affect the efficacy of the product.

Q: What about ginseng?
A: In the 1960s, ginseng was very popular and was the largest selling aphrodisiac in the American market. It has always been known that aphrodisiacs come and go rapidly. As a matter of fact, in women, ginseng sometimes interacts with the endocrine system and disrupts the woman's menstrual cycle. ●

Interviewed by Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

"Physicians frequently prescribe Manix herbal capsules for impotence, emphasising that it is necessary to take them with ghee and honey. But ayurveda says that honey and ghee, if taken in equal proportions, are poisonous"



GAUTAM PATOLE

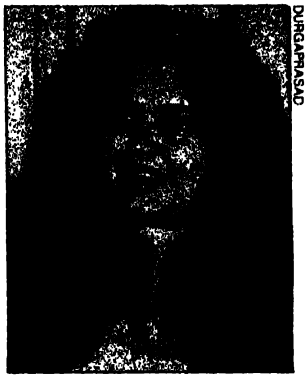
Farha, in a recent interview to *Stardust*, disclosed that her marriage was facing rough weather.

No, dear darling Vindoo hasn't been two-timing her (the poor sod values his life). It's just that she can't communicate with his friends, who were all "BAs and MAs" and indulged in the most intellectual of conversations with her hunk of a husband.

Who could have guessed that behind that dumb exterior of Vindoo's lurked a super brain?

Appearances sure can be deceptive.

Leave aside her one obsession (too well-known to bear repeating) and Parveen Babi, even now, comes across as a reasonably intelligent, sane young



DURGAPRASAD

Parveen Babi: It's going to be some script!

woman.

And she's obviously got all her wits about her for Babi is now busy working on a film script which she intends selling to the highest buyer.

Unfortunately, we don't see anyone lining outside her door.

Not just yet, anyway.

Romance appears to have become synonymous with a Rajiv Rai location shoot. First, it was Sonam who fell prey to the young director's charm during the making of *Tridev*. And now that *Vishwatma* is being shot in Nairobi, Dimple and her Jat paramour Sunny Deol are taking full advantage of their expense accounts, and the distance from *amchi Mumbai*.



GAUTAM PATOLE

Farha: landed with an intellectual

But it's new find Jyotsna who walked away with the honours, and Uru Patel, the son of millionaire Sharad Patel producer of *The Rise And Fall Of Idi Amin*. If insider reports are to be believed, the affair has progressed far beyond the cuddling-in-public stage and the couple plan to get married soon.

Rajiv Rai: facilitating romance



GAUTAM PATOLE

You can't fault her as far as good taste goes: Anu Aggarwal never settles for anything less than the best. Now that her close encounter with Amitabh Bachchan at the Bombay Taj has passed into *filmi* lore, the dosky *Aashiqui* actress has moved on to yet another superstar: cricketing great Imran Khan.

The couple bumped into each other one evening at a discotheque, eyes met, sparks flew and some mysterious chemistry did its work. And the next thing onlookers knew was that the pair was making a quick exit, to continue boogeying in private.

And, no doubt, all through the night.



Mazhar Khan: Zeenat insisted on hospitalisation

Apparently, our sympathies were quite misplaced. For, Mazhar Khan hadn't had an heart attack, after all.

According to the Khan, he'd only been suffering from exhaustion. And worried wife Zeenat insisted that he move into a hospital to recuperate.

But surely if it was only rest and good sleep Mazhar required he could have got it at home.

Perhaps, Zeenat knows differently. ●

The centenary mess

Calcutta's Mohun Bagan Club is in the doldrums

Mohun Bagan Athletic Club of Calcutta has landed itself and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in a mess. Celebrating its centenary, the club organised a soccer tournament which proved to be a damp squib. Besides, Mohun Bagan also faced a humiliating defeat against a young Chinese club side. At other times, this may have been taken in good grace, but with all the noise surrounding Mohun Bagan's entry into the Asian Cup Winners Cup competition, this defeat will only raise doubts about the club's entry into the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

The situation is such that the All India Football Federation will have to do some explaining to the AFC with regard to Mohun Bagan's activities. First, the club organised what it termed as an international tournament, so substantial fees have to be paid to both the AFC and the world body, FIFA. Secondly, Mohun Bagan's name was entered in the first-ever cup winners cup competition organised in Asia, as India's representative. And now it is trying to wriggle out of the return-leg match with its Chinese rival, Dalian F.C.

The tournament was a three-team competition. The much-touted foreign team taking part was a second rate club side from Cameroon. It was stated initially that this would be a representative Cameroon team with at least six members from the side that played in the last World Cup. But that was a hoax, because the only player from that squad who took part in the tournament was Roger Milla.

The only other competitor was East Bengal, a club which drew with the Cameroon side, Diamant F.C., and also with Mohun Bagan, leaving the latter last in the three-team competition, because Mohun Bagan had earlier lost to the foreign side.

In fact, Mohun Bagan had had a dismal season in its centenary year. Its lone triumph was in the Calcutta league. Thereafter, it had failed to reach even the semi-final stages of the major competitions held in the country. This was what provoked East Bengal club to claim that it should represent the country as its champion club in the inaugural year of he AFC-run tournament.

The AIFF, however, stated that Mohun Bagan was selected on the basis of its performance in last year's competitions. There was initial confusion because the AIFF had issued a circular to the leading clubs saying that a points system had been initiated for teams reaching the semi-finals and finals of certain listed tournaments in the country, on the basis of which the champion club would be decided.

Rumours that Mohun Bagan—a club which had, till this year, refused to take part in commercially-sponsored tournaments—were enticed into entering the DCM tournament for the first time with the promise of being India's representative in the first year's Asian level club competition. But the fact remains that Mohun Bagan were in no shape to play in this kind of tournament.

Mohun Bagan had expected to achieve a lot through the tournament it had organised. But with one player of repute, Milla, in its ranks, the foreign side did not attract many spectators. And then Milla left without playing the final because he was not told that he would have to play more than one match!

With the competition a flop, Mohun Bagan pinned their hopes on the Chinese side. But even here, there was disappointment. They had hoped that Dalian would agree to play even their return-leg fixture here. But the Chinese team refused to give away their home advantage. As a last resort, they were requested to play at least an exhibition match. They refused once again.

With stands being empty on all the days that the two competitions were organised, Mohun Bagan officials panicked and asked to be excused from playing the second leg. They cited their lack of funds for making a trip to China which would cost them about Rs 4 lakhs. But the AFC stood firm and cautioned the AIFF that the Indian football body would itself be penalised if Mohun Bagan refused to play in China on 9 December.



ALOKE MITRA

Mohun Bagan playing Cameroon: dismal performance

Realising that there was no way out, the Mohun Bagan officials implored the AIFF to extend financial aid. President Priya Ranjan Das Munshi came up with an offer of almost two lakhs to bail out the club of trouble. Mohun Bagan will now make the trip, but subject to a postponement being granted if the club does not get seats on its air journey.

Now some Mohun Bagan officials are blaming it all on the AIFF, saying that it had taken the club for a ride by touting the Cameroon team as almost a national side and then luring them with the Cup winners Cup bait and forcing participation in the DCM tourney where the club performed poorly.

But all these are just excuses as club politics is said to be the main problem for Mohun Bagan. The team has played almost throughout the season and has paid dearly for it. But East Bengal officials are surely relieved that the AIFF did not give them the opportunities that were offered to Mohun Bagan. ●

Arijit Sen/Calcutta



Death of a PM

Ritu Sarin reconstructs the assassination of Indira Gandhi. An extract from a significant new book

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had read the newspapers, bathed and was at her working table by 7.30 that morning. As she waited for Shyam Lal to serve her breakfast she glanced at the day's schedule prepared by her special assistant, Rajinder Kumar Dhawan.

After a two-day election tour in Orissa the programme seemed relaxed. Her daily morning *darshan* had been called off to accommodate a telesion interview to be conducted by Peter Ustinov of the BBC.

Breakfast was served in the study. Indira Gandhi usually ate the morning meal with the family, but on 31 October 1984 she breakfasted alone. Her son, Rajiv, was electioneering in West Bengal. Her Italian daughter-in-law, Sonia, was still in her bedroom. The grandchildren, Priyanka and Rahul, had left for school.

Breakfast was over in a few minutes. At 8.15 am Indira Gandhi came from her study to a small room at the entrance to the porch. Several people awaited the Prime Minister. Peter Ustinov's car was directed to the entrance of her office in the adjoining bungalow: 1, Akbar Road. The BBC crew were cleared by security and Ustinov's cameramen began setting up their equipment with H.Y. Sharada Prasad, the Prime Minister's information adviser, looking on.

Doctor K.P. Mathur of the Central Government Health Service, who had been Indira Gandhi's personal physician since 1966, drove in through the main gate of 1, Sarfdarjang Road and waited for the Prime Minister in the veranda. Two Doordarshan make-up artists, Kanta Pant and D.V. Nanda, who had received telephone calls from the Prime Minister's house a short while ago, were ready for the make-up session.

Indira Gandhi asked her Man Friday, Nathu Ram, to call for Dr Mathur. She sat on a stool as Kanta Pant held up a mirror and Nanda ap-

plied cream and blusher on her face.

In the lawns of 1, Akbar Road, Ustinnov and his crew were ready with their cameras mounted. Sub-inspector Rameshwar Dayal, who usually rode in the Prime Minister's pilot car, had arranged three chairs and a small table on the lawns. As he was walking across to 1, Safdarjang Road to bring flowers for the table, he saw the Prime Minister approaching.

Her last walk



It was a familiar sight. Every morning the Prime Minister would come out from the bungalow surrounded by her aides and walk down the concrete path that connected her residence and office. On 31 October 1984, when she left the house, she was followed by Dhawan. They were joined by head constable Narain Singh, who had been waiting for the Prime Minister with a black umbrella. As soon as Indira Gandhi appeared, he held it up to shield her against the sun.

Indira Gandhi noticed that one of her trusted guards, sub-inspector Beant Singh, was on duty at the wicket get which she was approaching. With him was a young constable, Satwant Singh, who had joined the Prime Minister's security a year ago. She turned back to say something to Dhawan, but stopped mid-sentence to acknowledge the greetings of the two Sikh guards with a smile. Two steps from the gate, she again turned her attention to Dhawan. Just then Beant Singh pulled his service revolver from under his jacket and pointed it at her.

"What are you doing?" asked Indira Gandhi.

Those were the last words she spoke as the first bullet pierced her abdomen. Beant Singh kept his finger pressed on the trigger and shot her four more times at point blank range. Indira Gandhi raised her right hand to save her face from the fusillade as bullets hit her armpit and waist. Satwant Singh, who was standing outside the sentry booth five feet away, wavered for a moment before he opened fire. He had never seen the Prime Minister at such close quarters. She looked so helpless and frail. Should he fire? Or save her?

Beant Singh glared at the vacillating constable. "Are you going to kill her or not?" his expression seemed to say.

Satwant Singh had the carbine in his hand, pointed at his target. He pressed the trigger and pumped twenty-five bullets into Indira Gandhi's body. It had taken exactly 2.8 seconds to reduce India's first woman Prime Minister to a bleeding heap on the ground.

"We have done what we wanted to. Now you can do what you want to," said sub-inspector Beant Singh as he was overpowered by Narain Singh. Satwant was secured by another sub-inspector, Ganga Singh. The two were taken away to the ITBP guardroom.

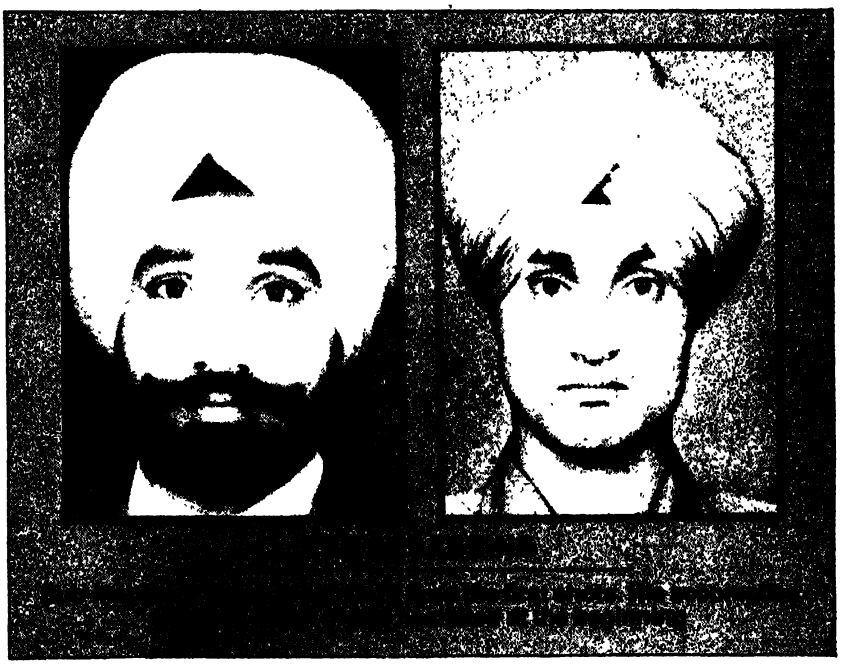
Two men, who had been in the vicinity but had not seen the shooting rushed up. Dinesh Kumar Bhatt, one of the Prime Minister's personal security officers squatted beside Dhawan as Dr Opeh tried to give the dying Prime Minister mouth to mouth respiration. The Prime Minister's political adviser, Makhan Lal Fotedar, came running from the house crying loudly. He gave instructions that the escort car parked in the porch should rush Indira Gandhi to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Half-an-hour after they had shot the Prime Minister, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh were attacked in the ITBP guardroom by the agitated commandos on duty. Instead of manacling them the commandos began to abuse and beat them up. Then, losing control, they opened up their guns. When senior Delhi police officers arrived they found Beant lying dead over the bullet-ridden body of Satwant. The two were rushed to Ram Manohar Lohia hospital in an ambulance.

At the hospital



The doctors in the AIIMS were totally unprepared to meet th crisis. Four interns were on duty in the emergency ward when Indira Gandhi was wheeled in at 9.32 am. Before the junior doctors realised who their patient was, a nurse had recognised Sonia Gandhi, who was crying silently by the side of the stretcher. One intern ran down the corridor to fetch the medical superintendent, Dr A.N Safaya. Minutes later, Dr Rajendra Prasad, a medical officer on duty that day in the casualty ward recorded the case history of the Prime Minister:



> Patient is unconscious. Face is pale. Pulse not felt. Peripheral parts cold. Blood pressure not recordable. Pupils dilated and cannot react to light on both sides. No spontaneous respiration. Heart sound not heard.

It is evident from the preliminary medical report that Indira Gandhi was clinically dead when she reached the hospital.

In the operation theatre, a team of thirty-four doctors headed by the chief of surgery, Professor P. Venugopal,

struggled to revive the Prime Minister.

The death certificate was signed at 2.23 pm. By the time of the announcement of the Prime Minister's death several members of her Cabinet had arrived at the hospital. They stood in a queue silently in the corridor. Indira Gandhi's aunt, Sheila Kaul, was crying hysterically. She was from time to time comforted by Sonia Gandhi, who had by then changed into a white sari.

While the operation and the post-mortem were in progress, crowds began to gather outside the AIIMS. The first indication that all hope was lost came to them from Indira Gandhi's yoga teacher, Dhirendra Brahmachari, who came out of the hospital gates and in response to questions waved his hands in a gesture of resignation. "It all depends upon God now," he said gravely, as he left.

Indira Gandhi's estranged daughter-in-law, Maneka Gandhi was there with her son, Varun, trying unsuccessfully to reach the floor of the operation theatre. After a few minutes Maneka left the hospital with tears streaming down her cheeks. "I pray that she lives a 100 years," she wept.

Rajiv Gandhi heard the news as he was touring the Kolaghat district of West Bengal. A police jeep intercepted his Mercedes Benz and an officer told him that an accident had taken place at his home. Rajiv Gandhi switched on his transistor and learnt from the BBC that his mother had been critically injured. A plane was arranged to fly him home.

Unlike the earlier two occasions when a Prime Minister had died in office in independent India, on 31 October 1984, the question of succession was not disputed. In 1964, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had died and in 1966 when his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, passed away, Union home minister Gulzari Lal Nanda had taken over as caretaker Prime Minister. There were no contenders for the post this time. Even before Rajiv Gandhi had landed in Delhi, a signature drive was on to swear him in as Prime Minister.

At 4.15 pm, all the ministers present in the AIIMS left for 1, Akbar Road where another minister, Shiv Shankar, had informed them that an informal Cabinet meeting would take place. Other leaders were told by P.C. Alexander to proceed to the Durbar Hall in Rashtrapati Bhavan where the swearing-in would take place. They were all waiting for President Zail Singh to return. The Presidential plane from Yemen landed at 5.10 pm and the President drove directly to the AIIMS. There he consoled Rajiv Gandhi in the conference hall.

As the President's motorcade left the hospital, some hooligans pelted the cars with stones. Nobody was hurt but it was the first incident in which the people of Delhi reacted violently against the Sikh community. By then it was known that two Sikh guards had assassinated the Prime Minister.

Soon afterwards, the President was given a handwritten letter by the general secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), G.K. Moopanar. It said that the Central Parliamentary Board of the party had recommended the name of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister.

At 6.57 pm Rajiv Gandhi was administered the oath of office in the ornate Ashoka Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan. After the swearing-in, he returned home.

Twelve hours after she had been shot, Indira Gandhi's body was brought back to 1, Safdarjang Road in a gun carriage. Her body was draped in the national flag and was covered with garlands of her favourite marigold flowers.

Why was she murdered?



'Among the last to speak to Indira Gandhi before she was assassinated was D.V. Nanda, the cosmetician from Doordarshan. Nanda recalled an earlier assignment where he had been called to help with Indira Gandhi's make-up on 2 June 1984. On that day Indira Gandhi made one of the most momentous decisions of her political career—she ordered the Indian Army to storm the Golden Temple in Amritsar where militant leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his armed followers had defied the police for several months. Indira Gandhi felt that she should prepare the nation for the step she was about to take with a special television and radio broadcast.

In her speech Indira Gandhi appealed to the Sikhs to shun violence and invited leaders of Punjab's dominant political party, the Akali Dal, to return to the negotiating table.



Bhindranwale, an obscure 35-year-old preacher was discovered by the Congress in 1977 when he became head of the Damdami Taksal, the oldest theological seminary of the Sikhs. Encouraged by the patronage he received from people high in the administration and the Congress party, Bhindranwale changed his role from that of a purveyor of religion to that of a rabble-rouser.

In a few months Bhindranwale had all but abandoned his *amrit prachar* (baptism by nectar) which had won him many admirers among orthodox Sikhs and began to abuse Hindus and applaud the killings of prominent Hindu and Sikh leaders who had dared to criticise him.

His first targets were the Nirankaris, a breakaway sect of the Sikhs who had gained a sizeable following among the Hindus as well. The Nirankaris were holding a convention in Amritsar on the festival of Baisakhi on 13 April 1978. Bhindranwale declared he would disrupt the congregation. His disciples marched in procession to the venue, waving swords and shouting slogans. A pitched battle broke out in which three Nirankaris and 16 Sikhs were slain. Among the Sikhs was one of Bhindranwale's confidants, Fauja Singh. At the request of the Nirankaris the police case that was instituted against the combatants was transferred to Haryana where all the Nirankaris were acquitted.

Bhindranwale vowed to avenge



THE CAUSE

It was Operation Bluestar that so estranged Beant Singh that he decided to take his revenge on Indira Gandhi

himself against the Nirankaris. On 24 April 1980, Baba Gurbachan Singh, the Nirankari chief who was injured in the 1978 clash, was murdered in his New Delhi residence. The police had enough reason to suspect that the killing had been ordered by Bhindranwale and mentioned his name in their report. On 9 September 1981, Lal Jagat Narain, proprietor of the *Hind Samachar* group of newspapers of Jalandhar (which had the largest circulation in northern India) and who was a staunch critic of Bhindranwale, was murdered while travelling by car on the Grand Trunk Road.

Emboldened by these 'successes' Bhindranwale extended his hit list to anyone who dared to cross his path. Shortly after dawn on 23 April 1983, a deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, A.S. Atwal, was shot in the Golden Temple as he left the shrine after saying his prayers. Barely a month ago Atwal had infiltrated Bhindranwale's ranks through a police informer and had laid a trap for one of the Sant's killer-gangs as they set out on a mission. One of them was killed and three injured in the encounter. For the success of the police trap, Atwal paid with his life.

All this while Bhindranwale and his henchmen camped in the Guru Nanak Niwas, adjoining the Golden Temple. On 15 December 1983, much to the chagrin of the Akali leaders, he shifted his headquarters to the Akal Takht. He took along with him Bhai Amrik Singh, the young president of the All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF), an organisation banned by Indira Gandhi in 1967.

Bhindranwale began to convert the sacred building into an armed stronghold. The fortification was handled by his military strategist, a retired army officer, major general Shahbeg Singh.

One of the first things Shahbeg Singh did after shifting to the Akal Takht was to take over high buildings surrounding the Golden Temple. Rooftops would provide his snipers strategic positions to deter an invading force. Arms and ammunition were smuggled into the Golden Temple in trucks carrying food-grains for the temple kitchen, pill-boxes were erected in the marble trellis along the *parikrama*. Mini firing ranges were constructed in the basement of the Akal Takht. Shahbeg Singh went about his job with military thoroughness. Murderous assaults on prominent Hindu and Sikh leaders continued. H.S. Manchanda, a pro-Congress Sikh president of the Delhi Gurdwara Committee, was shot dead in his car at a busy thoroughfare in the city. A few days later the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, Harbans Lal Khanna, was killed in Amritsar. On 12 May 1982, Bhindranwale avenged his being named in the murder of Lala Jagat Narain, by having Jagat Narain's son, Romesh Chander, who had continued to attack him in *Punjab Kesari*, murdered in Jalandhar. The killing indicated that the hit lists, the militants kept referring to, did actually exist. By effortlessly ticking off targets from their lists, the militants reduced the government and the police machinery to impotence. In just five months in 1984 (from January to May) over 150 people were murdered by Bhindranwale's men.

Other serious developments took place in Punjab. The demand for Khalistan (literally, the land of the pure)—a sovereign Sikh state- -gained a measure of acceptance, and Akali leaders tacitly lent support to it by refusing to condemn it. The Akalis had their own reasons for not curbing Bhindranwale. They accused the government for having supported Bhindranwale when he was hardly known outside a few districts of central Punjab. They also blamed the government for not accepting the demands of the Sikhs spelt out in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973 and endorsed by the party convention in Ludhiana in 1978. In protest they launched a *morcha* (agitation) under the overall command of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal.

It was then that Indira Gandhi decided that the government had no option but to beard the Akali lions in their own den. Ten people were killed outside the Golden Temple on the very day Indira Gandhi made her broadcast to the nation. Even as she was speaking, three brigades of the Indian Army, including an artillery unit, had landed in the holy city. More troops were on their way to Amritsar from their units in Jalandhar. The previous day, a clean-shaven Sikh officer, Major General Kuldip Singh Brar, was seen walking along the *parikrama* making a reconnaissance of the Golden Temple. The general later briefed his men from the 9th Division on their mission.

Even President Zail Singh, with whom Indira Gandhi had discussed the deteriorating situation in Punjab three days earlier, had been kept in

the dark about the nature of the military operation code-named Bluestar.

Operation Bluestar proved to be the second major blunder committed by Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister of India. The first was the imposition of Emergency in 1975. Both these actions were typical of the way she dealt with intractable problems.

Indira Gandhi also ignored the ethics of sending the army, meant to combat foreign invaders, to fight the country's own nationals. The army suffered from the basic disadvantage of having been trained for combat warfare and occupying enemy territory; it was not geared to face religious fanatics eager to achieve martyrdom.

She had been warned by the top brass of the army and the intelligence about what to expect once the troops were inside the temple. Lt General Krishnaswamy Sundarji, commander-in-chief of the Western Command, who headed the operation had estimated it would take five hours to flush the militants out from their entrenchments.

The government had chosen an inopportune time to storm the temple. Hundreds of pilgrims had come to Amritsar to celebrate the martyrdom of the founder of the Golden Temple, Guru Arjun Dev. Once the siege began, many of the devotees were trapped inside. Their situation was worsened because power and water supply to the temple had been disconnected. The rest of the country knew little of all this. Curfew had been imposed in Amritsar, and Punjab had been cut off from the rest of the country by rail and air. Press censorship had been imposed.

General Sundarji, who was in overall command, had worked out a blueprint for the operation. A communications cell had been set up near the temple with a hotline to New Delhi. In the capital, the unit was manned by deputy defence minister K.P. Singh Deo. Rajiv Gandhi was by his side. They kept the Prime Minister informed about the developments. Arun Singh had visited Amritsar but was back in New Delhi on 4 June, 1984, when the army assault began. Along with the Golden Temple, 37 other *gurdwaras* all over Punjab were invested. The firing began on the night of 4 June and carried on intermittently throughout the following day. Before the troops entered the main temple on the evening of 5 June, they neutralised the three structures used as observation posts and sniper nests by the militants. There were two 18th century *bungas* (minarets) and a high, ornate water-tower, which overlooked the main entrance of the temple. The tops of all three were blasted off by 3.7 inch mountain guns of World War II vintage.

After the approach road to the temple had been cleared, General Sundarji sent out his commandos and frogmen to see if they could approach the Akal Takht by crawling along the *parikrama* or by swimming across the pool.

While Bhindranwale had not desecrated the Harminder Sahib by his armed presence, he had no scruples in converting the Akal Takht into an impenetrable fortress. As General Brar said later, "It (the Akal Takht) was a bastion of automatic weapons." The attempt of army paratroopers to capture the fortified Akal Takht under the cover of darkness was a disaster.

On the morning of 6 June, General Sundarji approached New Delhi for permission to use tanks. Indira Gandhi was informed that the troops were facing tough resistance, the *jawans* were being butchered and the only way to end the resistance was to get to the Akal Takht in tanks. The Prime Minister reluctantly agreed. General Brar tried a last-ditch attempt to save the Akal Takht from damage. He sent an armoured personal carrier along the eastern *parikrama*. It was promptly knocked out by a rocket-propelled grenade. Intelligence reports had said nothing about the militants possessing rockets.

Soon after this, seven of the Indian Army's Vijayanta tanks entered the Golden Temple. The one in the lead rolled down the marble steps crushing them to rubble. It came to a halt about halfway down the *parikrama* from where it opened fire at the Akal Takht. Shells went through the *darshani deori* (outer gate of the Harminder) and others landed on the Akal Takht and brought down the upper roof on the heads of its defenders.

Around the same time, the library and archives of the Golden Temple were gutted by fire. Ancient manuscripts and handwritten copies of *Guru Granth Sahib* were burnt to ashes. The destruction of the library outraged the Sikhs as much as the demolition of the Akal Takht.

When the army finally stormed the Akal Takht they found 31 corpses in the basement. Among them were the bodies of Bhindranwale, his trusted aide, Amrit Singh, and General Shahbeg Singh. The militants had died fighting Indira Gandhi's army to the end.



The Sikhs protest



As news of Operation Bluestar spread, Sikhs all over the world went into mourning. When they learnt that the Akal Takht had been damaged and Bhindranwale killed, they condemned the attack on their Vatican as an assault on the entire religious community.

The first violent protest against Operation Bluestar came from Sikh soldiers—who constitute 11 per cent of the strength of the Indian Army, though the Sikhs form less than two per cent of the country's population. Rumours of genocide and the destruction of the Harminder Sahib were rife as hundreds of Sikhs deserted their regiments to answer the call of their faith.

Meanwhile civilian Sikhs demonstrated their displeasure in a variety of ways. In Punjab, two Congress(I) MPs—the scion of the Patiala family, Captain Amrinder Singh, and Devinder Singh Garcha—resigned from Par-



THE FUNERAL

It was the end of an era. Rajiv Gandhi, along with the nation, mourned the demise

liament. In an interview given shortly afterwards, Captain Amrinder Singh claimed that nearly 3,000 pilgrims had been killed in the operation. He had arrived at this estimate on the basis of the unclaimed footwear found at the entrance of the shrine. Honours were flung back. Three eminent Sikhs—Khushwant Singh, Bhagat Puran Singh and professor Ganda Singh—returned the Padma Bhushan awards given to them by the government.

As the backlash gained momentum, Sikhs almost triggered off a constitutional crisis in the country. President Zail Singh was under heavy pressure by his community to resign. Hundreds of letters and telegrams poured into Rashtrapati Bhavan—some blaming him, as supreme commander of the armed forces, for Operation Bluestar; others urged him to step down from office. Zail Singh said he would not take a decision till he had seen the damage done to the shrine with his own eyes. He was warned against such a move, but the President, a deeply religious man, stuck to his resolve.

Sniper's bullets still flew and pools of blood congealed on the *parikrama* when President Zail Singh visited the Golden Temple on 8 June, 1984. He was taken on a guided tour of the temple but no amount of explanation assuaged his anguish and he broke down and prayed for forgiveness.

Operation Bluestar and after



In the days following the operation, measures were taken by the government which instead of healing the hurt feelings of the Sikhs further alienated them. The army launched yet another operation code-named Woodrose, which involved searching the houses of the Sikh peasantry for terrorists. In over three months the army achieved little success.On the contrary, allegations of brutality committed by the army caused deep resentment. Stories began to circulate that the army and the police murdered captives they did not want to bring to justice in cold blood. Every confrontation was condemned as a faked encounter.

The resentment displayed by the Sikhs in India was matched by the violent protests of Sikhs living abroad. They marched in the streets of London, New York, Toronto and Vancouver holding banners claiming they would avenge Operation Bluestar. Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan,a physician living in London who had earlier declared himself president of Khalistan, went as far as to announce in an interview with the BBC that Indira Gandhi would shortly be assassinated. "Mrs Gandhi made a fatal mistake in raiding the Golden Temple. Every man who thinks himself as a Sikh can never forget that she has signed her own death warrant," he told another interviewer.

Indira Gandhi knew she was a marked person. Among the papers found on her table was a note believed to have been written by her sometime in late June:

If I die a violent death as people have been plotting, I know the action of the assassin will be in the thought and action of the assassin, not in the dying-...for no hate is dark enough to overshadow the extent of my love for my people and my country, no force is strong enough to divert me from my purpose and my endeavour to take this country forward.

Although Indira Gandhi had a premonition that she would die a violent death, she was confident that she would be able to, somehow, win back the hearts of the people. But officials responsible for Indira Gandhi's security did not share her confidence. These included Ram Nath Kao, who was responsible for establishing the country's external intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), in 1968, and R.K. Kapoor, the chief of the IB. While both kept the Prime Minister posted on security matters, her personal safety remained the charge of the Delhi Police.

The thrust of the reorganised security at 1 Safdarjang Road after Operation Bluestar according to H.D. Pillai, the additional commissioner who was among those suspended after the assassination, was to prevent an attack from the outside. "What we did not perceive was that an attempt could be made inside the Prime Minister's house," the officer admitted later.

The Assassination Of Indira Gandhi by Ritu Sarin
Published by Penguin Books India Price Rs 65

Dangerous liaisons

Hindu militants attack V.P. Singh in Bhopal



MADHYA PRADESH

Suddenly V.P. Singh had lost his importance. Ever since the former Prime Minister announced his plans to visit the state capital on the sixth anniversary of the Bhopal gas disaster, activists of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the youth wing of the BJP, and the Bajrang Dal, an organisation of Hindu militants, were out to create trouble. They were sulking since the events in Ayodhya last month in which several *kar sevaks* were killed for violating prohibitory orders at the controversial Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid site, and were bent on disrupting Singh's programme. And yet, the callous administration failed to take preventive measures.

When the Tamil Nadu Express, carrying Singh and other Janata Dal leaders, pulled into Bhopal on 2 December, Singh was greeted by a virulent crowd, shouting *"Jai Shri Ram"*, *"V.P. Singh wapas jao"*, *"V.P. Singh gaddar hai"* (Go back V.P. Singh; V.P. Singh is a traitor.) And as the leaders tried to find their way out of the station, a free-for-all ensued between the agitated BJYM workers and the Dal activists, who threw a security ring round their leaders. But in the melee, V.P. Singh sustained minor injuries.

Tension had been mounting from morning, as the BJYM and the Bajrang Dal had sworn to prevent Singh's entry into the city. So the activists of the two outfits thronged the station well in advance, and started raising slogans and pelting stones when Singh arrived. They also set alight an arch put up to welcome the Dal leaders, and complete chaos prevailed. The scene outside the station was equally violent. The crowd set ablaze a police jeep parked nearby and damaged private vehicles.

And the mob did not spare the press or the train passengers either. Many bystanders and mediapersons were beaten up, and one photographer was badly injured.



V.P. Singh at the *dharna* outside the CM's house, and an apologetic Patwa

Apparently, the police had been caught unawares. It swung into action belatedly, and there was a fierce lathicharge. They managed to whisk Singh and the other Dal leaders to the safety of the station superintendent's room, and later escorted them out of the station through the VIP exit. But the trouble was in no way over. The mob continued to pursue the leaders and as the convoy of cars started, acid bulbs were hurled at it. Though Singh and Dal president S.R. Bommai escaped this attack, the Indore Janata Dal leader, Bala Beg was injured.

Bommai, who was manhandled at one stage and got his spectacles broken, and other Dal leaders such as Sharad Yadav and Ramanand Singh, who suffered varied degrees of injuries, felt that the state government failed to make available the protocol arrangements due to a former Prime Minister and accused the administration of conniving with the attackers. The Dal leaders decided to abandon all programmes and sat in *dharna* in front of chief minister Sunderlal Patwa's house, refusing to budge even when Patwa asked them in. The chief minister then came out to express his regrets, which did not soften the smarting Dal leaders.

There is little doubt that the BJP leaders were nursing a grudge against Singh and other Janata Dal leaders loyal to him since the events in Ayodhya. Though Patwa and BJP MP Kailash Sarang vehemently denied that the BJP was in any way linked with the day's incidents, the Dal leaders pointed out to Patwa that two of his ministers, Babulal Gaur and Laxmi Narayan Sharma, besides Sarang himself, were present at the railway station and had been directing the attack.

When Patwa failed to persuade the Dal leaders to call off the *dharna*, he issued a statement that betrayed his mind. Though he regretted the attacks on Singh and others, Patwa hastened to remind the Dal leaders about the Ayodhya incidents and warned that the country would not forget the treatment meted out to the *kar sevaks*.

Significantly, Patwa has not ordered any inquiry into the incident and maintains that he would consider taking such a step only after he received a full report on the happenings.

In the face of a countrywide condemnation, BJP president L.K. Advani hoped that his partymen were not involved in the incidents and promised to get to the truth. But his party leaders in Madhya Pradesh were not happy with his remarks as they seemed to betray Advani's lack of faith in the denials issued by Patwa and his associates. It is unlikely, however, that the BJP national executive will openly censure the state unit on this issue and, once more, Patwa may throw political civilities to the wind. ●

M.V. Kher/Bhopal

Laloo gives berths

To a record number of ministers



BIHAR

Only Laloo Yadav could have done it. And he did. He inducted 60 new members to his 11-member ministry. So now the primary task of the state is to build rooms for the honourable ministers. Yes, rooms, just to counter the rumour that the ministry was taking the shape of an airbus. Besides, said the chief minister, this ministry was better looked upon as "the ninth fleet of Russia, fitted with all the sophisticated weapons, to counter every hostile move".



Laloo Prasad Yadav: thinking big

So much for confidence. And if five of his followers had not opted out, Laloo would have had 76 ministers in all. But one wanted to be deputy CM and the other four were not pleased with the berths offered. So Laloo now has 71 ministers and five potential trouble-makers in his government. Which undeniably breaks the 1980 record of Andhra Pradesh CM, T. Anjiah, who just had a 60-member ministry.

This comes in the wake of the "intensity of dissension" that Yadav assessed recently. But the doling out of ministerial seats did not help much. The caste balance has gone haywire, for one. The Yadavs, with 16 seats, have the lion's share. Harijans have 11, Brahmins, Bhumihars and Kurmis five each, Koeris three, other castes together have nine. No tribal has been given a berth, although Muslims have eight. This comes as a surprise, since the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), which has 19 legislators and supports the state government, might retaliate.

The uncrowned members, of course, are not pleased. "The ministry is as large as Laloo's family," said one. And with the help of the ousted heavyweight of Bihar Dal politics, Raghunath Jha, these unhappy fellows are sure to find a voice.

For the moment, however, everybody is busy accomodating the CM's new "clout". "The immediate task at hand is to build rooms," said a top official, "and the rooms have to be fitted with various gadgets, too." At present there are only 40 rooms in the secretariat that can be used as official chambers of the ministers. And the finance department, which takes care of the ministers' transport, has a shortage of cars with VIP lights. Unhappily, the department agrees that there is no alternative to buying new cars for the new faces.

And once the ministry has sorted out where to sit and how to travel, the "ninth fleet of Russia" is sure to zoom off. •

Subodh Mishra/Patna

Mani matters

Shekhar leaves the Kerala Congress(M) chief high and dry



KERALA

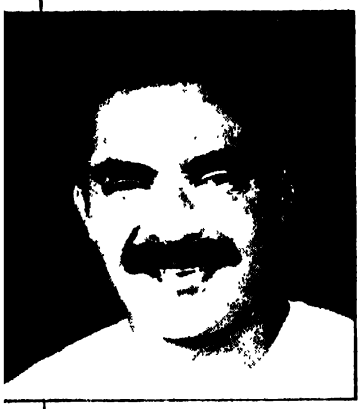
It seems just like old times. After a protracted and unofficial ceasefire, things are on the boil in the Opposition UDF (United Democratic Front) in Kerala. A humiliated Kerala Congress (Mani) and a frustrated Muslim League—constituents of the UDF—are gunning for big brother Congress(I), who they feel has badly let them down. The two regional parties, which have deep roots in Kerala, always wanted a berth in the Union Cabinet. But Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's ministry-making has left the two staunch Congress(I) allies in Kerala high and dry.

The advent of Chandra Shekhar's minority government at the Centre brightened the prospects of these two regional but basically communal parties of Kerala, representing the Christians and Muslims in the state. When Shekhar got down to the job of forming his ministry, the Janata Party leader, Subramaniam Swamy, offered on behalf of the PM, a berth to the Kerala Congress (Mani), which has one member in the Lok Sabha and another in the Rajya Sabha. For some time the 25-year-old breakaway Congress faction, which has been playing a key role in Kerala's delicately balanced communal politics on the strength of its Syrian Christian vote-bank, seemed to be close to its target. Kerala Congress(M), when it started negotiating with Subramaniam Swamy, made it clear that it wanted nothing less than a Cabinet post. Its argument was that in V.P. Singh's ministry the lone MP and leader of the Congress(S), K.P. Unnikrishnan, also from Kerala, was given a Cabinet post.

The party also decided that a post, if offered by the PM, would go to none other than its chairman K.M. Mani. And, if a lower post was offered, the nominee was to be chosen by Mani from the party's Lok Sabha MP, P.C.

Thomas, a political greenhorn, and Thomas Kuthiravattom, whose Rajya Sabha term ends in April next year.

Mani is one of Kerala's shrewdest politicians and an able administrator. He has presented as many as eight budgets as finance minister for various coalition governments led by the CPI, CPI(M) and the Congress(I). The Congress(I) and the CPI(M) had, in the past, tried to cut Mani's political clout but failed. Each time he rebounded with greater force and today Mani is one of the most powerful men in Kerala politcs.



A shrewd politician and an able administrator, Mani was promised a seat in Shekhar's Cabinet. A few hours before the swearing-in, he was dumped unceremoniously

Swamy, after consulting Chandra Shekhar, readily agreed to Mani's request. The Janata Dal(S) was keen on inducting Mani, for the sake of the Christian community, and also to give representation to the state at the Centre. But as Mani went shopping in Delhi to buy an *achkan* for his swearing-in ceremony, Congress(I) MPs from Kerala opposed Shekhar's decision. Said a top Congress(I) MP from the state: "Mani is a master manipulator and even if he became a Union Cabinet minister for a week it would hurt the Congress(I)'s interest.

So Congress(I) veterans Karunakaran and A.K. Antony quietly worked to nip Mani's ambitions. When Mani got wind of Karunakaran's plans to sabotage his chances, he met Congress(I) president Rajiv Gandhi and complained against the party's Kerala leaders. Rajiv, apparently, assured him a berth, but Vincent George, Rajiv's Man Friday from Kerala, advised Mani to sort out with Karunakaran a way to get into the Rajya Sabha.

On the day before the swearing-in ceremony, Swamy asked Mani to be at the Rashtrapati Bhavan at 8.45 am. Passes were even set aside for Mani's party colleagues so that they could be present at the "historic" event. Mani went to bed happy and contented.

At about 1 am Swamy called Mani up to deliver a shocking piece of news: Chandra Skekhar wanted to induct sitting MPs only in the first round. Mani, a heart patient, nearly collapsed and his colleagues say that he was trembling with rage. The Kerala Congress(M) leaders then raced to Karunakaran's house, woke him up and hurled abuses at him.

Chief minister Nayanar also picked up the issue to discredit the Congress. Faced with a barrage of criticisms from the public and the press, the state unit of the Congress(I) sought to make amends by promising to work for Mani's induction at the time of Shekhar's Cabinet expansion.

But the Congress(I) has others to placate as well. The Muslim League, the second largest constituent of the UDF, is pressuring the Congress(I) to secure a berth for it also in the Shekhar ministry. Sources say that Karunakaran was in no position to antagonise the League by supporting Mani's inclusion, as the party already has two MPs in the Lok Sabha. As it is, the Congress-League relations have been strained in recent times and Mani's induction could have caused a rupture. ●

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

Conscience keepers

CPI(M) dissidents hit out at the party leadership



WEST BENGAL

The carefully hidden cracks in the Marxist citadel have suddenly come under the spotlight. CPI(M) dissidents belonging to 16 Marxist organisations and till now working in isolation, decided to come out in the open and organise a joint rally in the city on 30 November. The rally was against the ruling Left Front, and accused the CPI(M) of corruption, nepotism and destroying the very values which had helped the party to grow to its present strength in West Bengal. The dissidents called upon the left and democratic forces in the state to build a sustained movement and expose the bankruptcy of the CPI(M).

Some years back, when a handful of expelled CPI(M) members in north 24 Parganas decided to contest a few seats in the civic polls against the party leadership in the Barrackpore industrial belt, many thought it to be an adventurous task. But today the dissidents suddenly appear to have the

Burial of the dead

Locals protest against a public place being used as a graveyard

When 72-year-old Abul Hasim died on 3 December, his son Afaque Zaman Khan approached the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT) seeking permission to bury his father in their family burial ground. That, however, is now a part of the Mukta Mancha (open-air theatre) complex owned by the CIT. This request was so surprising that the CIT officer-in-charge, Tamal Dasgupta, promptly referred the case to the chief valuer, Rupendra Kumar Mitra, who—as the officer in charge of land disputes and legal affairs—went through all the relevant papers to grant permission to Khan. The letter stated that when the premises had been acquired, on 31 March, 1975, under CIT scheme no. LXXIV (Rabindra Sarovar), "12 square feet was excluded from the limit of acquisition, to be utilised for the burial of Sheikh Jummon Mistri, the Wakf and other members of his family".

The permission granted, Khan and the funeral procession reached the Mukta Mancha complex, only to be stopped by the local police officer-in-charge (OC), Mihir Kumar Gupta. Says Gupta, "We needed to verify certain technical

ASHOK CHAKRABORTY



This was the first time since the Left Front came in the state that the CPI(M) rebels have come out in the open and challenged the party leadership

ASHOK CHAKRABORTY ASHOK CHAKRABORTY

(From left) Sachin Sen, Harmohan Singh, Arun Bhattacharya: old voices on a new platform

details before allowing the burial—namely, the exact location of the graveyard, whether the letter was genuine and if Khan had the final disposal orders from the municipality." Khan was able to satisfy Gupta and after due consideration, the police allowed the burial to take place at 7.30 pm.

But this bizarre incident was strongly opposed by the locals, who object to the burial not only because it sets a bad precedent, but also for reasons of hygiene. "It is a public place," says a visibly irritated local. "Even if the land belongs to that family, does that mean they can bury their dead in it? Am I allowed to cremate a body in my backyard?"

That hardly helps the situation at hand. And the CPI seems to have a lot of answering to do.

potential of providing an alternative to the Marxists. In the earlier strongholds of the CPI(M), like the southern areas of the city—Dhakuria, Jadavpore, Garia, Tollygunge—and in many districts of the state, CPI(M) cadres are getting increasingly disillusioned with the party and building alternative fora to air their views.

"The CPI(M) is no longer the party where debates and discussions could be held," said the party septuagenarian leader from Jadavpur, Sachin Sen, whose association with the party spans more than four decades. "I have pointed out to the leaders many times the rampant corruption among party members, but no one bothered to take any notice of it. Instead they decided to expel me from the party."

Another veteran CPI(M) leader and former legislator of the party from Burdwan, Harmohan Singh, pointed out how members are expelled from the party on utterly flimsy grounds, simply if they dare to raise any questions regarding the corruption in the organisation. "They charged me of carrying out developmental work without the party's sanction," he said. "But that did not stop them from highlighting the developmental work that I had done for the area in their election speeches."

The significance of the rally was not in the size of the crowd (the turnout was not too impressive, anyway), but in the fact that this was the first time since the Left Front came to power in the state in 1977, that the CPI(M) rebels have decided to come out in the open and throw a challenge to the party leadership. Till now, CPI(M) dissidents forced to leave the party had been operating in splinter groups in different districts. But now, the dissident leaders point out, over the last few years the splinters established contact which resulted in this broad-based unity of the 16 Marxist organisations. Reduced to a party of yes-men, nepotism within and outside the party had stifled the voice of protest and those party members who dared to protest were summarily thrown out of the party, the dissidents said. "Though the government of the working class is still firmly ensconced in the Writers Buildings, life continues to be unbearable for the people of the state," said a dissident leader from Nadia, Arun Bhattacharya. "The CPI(M) has been in power for 14 years on the strength of the communist movement all of us helped to build—yet the masses continue to be exploited."

Realising the growing strength of the Congress(I) in the state, the dissident leaders stressed that their prim-

ary task would be to re-instill confidence and faith of the people on the left movement. Dulal Chakraborty, former district secretariat member of the north 24 Parganas district committee, said that the apathy of the CPI(M) leaders towards launching any kind of movement had turned the people against the leftists. "We have to re-instill the faith of the people that leftism is still the answer to their problems." Ruling out the possibility of launching a new party at the moment, Chakraborty pointed out that such a step would not help solve the problems of the masses. "We have to begin our mass-contact programme now," said the dissident leader, adding that the overdependence of the CPI(M) on elements like Lallu and Billu had distanced the people from it.

Enthused by the rally's success, the dissident leaders are now thinking of holding a state convention in the city early next year. The response of disgruntled members, they said,had been overwhelming. Members who are still within the organisation only because of the lack of a proper platform, had expressed their willingness to join the dissidents, it seemed. Not only those who had been expelled from the CPI(M), but other leaders, who had once been part of the Left Front, are being contacted. One such leader, former PWD minister, Jatin Chakraborty, recently expelled from the RSP, not only attended the dissidents' rally, but also assured them of his active participation in future programmes.

But the dissidents have not yet chalked out their alternative programme to counter the CPI(M). "At present, we just want the CPI(M) to implement its party programme adopted in 1964—but the Marxists are not even doing that," said Chakraborty. The dissidents would like to bring about some changes in the party's earlier programme, he added, and a change in the party's structure.

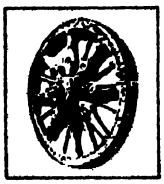
Jatin Chakraborty also pointed out that the present situation was similar to that in 1964, when the undivided Communist party of India split to give birth to the CPI(M). The people of West Bengal were looking for an alternative to the ruling Left Front, he asserted.

Political circles in the state, however, remain skeptical about the future of the dissidents. Unless the dissident leaders can actually come out with an alternative programme, they cannot hope to have much of an impact.●

Pranay Sharma/Calcutta

Invitation to a battering

Biju advises the people to take the law into their own hands



ORISSA

Beat up corrupt officials, said Biju Patnaik to his people, and promptly got beaten up himself. Undaunted, he nursed his broken nose, washed his bleeding face, and stuck to his appeal to the public. So, the next day, it was the party's deputy chief whip in the Assembly, Pradip Maharathi's turn. That too in his own constituency, Pipli.

Stop, cried one's senses. But not Biju's. He had appealed to his people, declared his "helplessness" as chief minister faced with such a "corrupt" bureaucracy, and asked the public to go ahead and beat up the crooks. This he did at a public meeting at Sambalpur, on 29 November. Later he confirmed the statement at a press conference, and added that MLAs, ministers and even the chief minister should not be exempted. And the assaulters should send a telegram earlier, just to inform the officer that he would be assaulted, and if the officer is found to be truly corrupt by the state, then no action would be taken against the attackers.

Hardly had the news spread, when Biju faced people willing to take up his request. On 3 December, a group of young enthusiasts in Kalahandi flung a barrage of questions at him, on his government's "failure" on all fronts. Soon brickbats replaced the questions. But a most battered Biju refused to accept this as an answer to his call to the people. He blamed the Congress(I).

Biju Patnaik: yes, chief minister



He had not, however, blamed the Congress(I), when the chief medical officer of Puri, Dr Gunanidhi Bhuyan, was allegedly assaulted by local Dal members for violating government orders by using the official vehicle on a Saturday. Bhuyan's explanation that he was going to check out a sudden outbreak of gastro-enteritis, did not satisfy the agitated public. And the CM stoutly defended the hooligans. "He must have deserved it," he announced. Somehow, the assault on himself did not bring out the same emotions in the CM.

But former Congress(I) minister Niranjan Patnaik points out that the place of attack was Kalahandi. The locals are naturally quite upset over lack of development activities in the poverty-stricken area, and might have taken the cue from Biju's call to the people.

Even West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu, on holiday in Puri, commented that the whole thing was "unfortunate", and hurried to add that he had no concrete idea about the CM's call to the people. Unlike Basu, Janata Dal (S) leader and minister of state for railways, Bhakta Charan Das, was blunt. This reflected Biju's "inability to meet the people's growing disenchantment with his rule," Das declared. And the dissident Dal members, who are trying their level best to split Biju's party, seem to have scored, thanks to the CM himself. Besides, his own admission of "helplessness" and appeal to the people to take the law into their own hands has prompted the Congress(I) to demand his resignation.

All said and done, his idea of moralistic punishments has not gone down well at all. It will only alienate the bureaucracy further. And that might not help Biju achieve his much-publicised dream of a prosperous Orissa. Said an administrative official, "It is the proverbial case of the bad workman blaming his tools." A battered chief minister may be just the beginning. ●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

ODDS AND TRENDS



Maggie may

■ Indians may soon find former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher consoling herself in Bhagwan Rajneesh's ashram in Pune. That is, if she accepts the invitation recently sent to her by the ashram, to rid her of a "deep sense of inferiority"

Swami Devageet, the late Bhagwan's dentist, believes that Thatcher's "Queen-like behaviour is just a strategy to conceal a deep-seated feeling of inferiority. What she needs first is a cleansing catharsis, with plenty of screaming and beating pillows to release her repressed anger and frustration."

Did anyone say Indians didn't care?

Second to one

■ Believe it or not. A recent survey conducted by *The Sun*, a London tabloid, ranked the Delhi Police second among the police forces of seven major cities around the world for "courtesy and responsiveness".

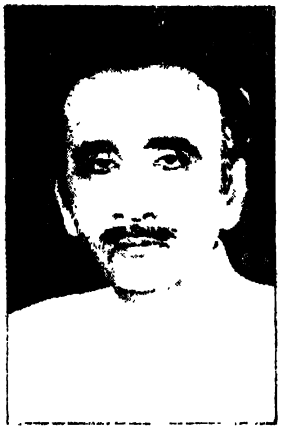


Delhi just lost out to London, while Moscow, Munich, New York, Brussels and Paris followed, in that order.

In the survey, the basic questions asked were: How do I get to the nearest train station? Where is the nearest doctor? Where do I catch a bus out of the city; and so on. The Delhi Police ended up with 38 marks, behind London's 39.

But, all said and done, it was a great show.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



Mohammad Junejo



Arun Shourie

(Contributed by Narendra Sharma/New Delhi)

THIS INDIA

NEW DELHI: A simian visitor broke the security cordon around Parliament House, taking over the security staff's job of screening visitors for some time. The securitymen had a tough time packing off the monkey, who insisted on staying put.

The main door of Parliament House was closed for some time to ensure that there were no further attempts to breach the cordon.

But this did not deter the monkey, which sat for some time on the footsteps leading to the door allowing everyone to pass, except the watch and ward staff, who had behaved harshly with him. *The Statesman* (Deepali Sinha, Patna)



BOMBAY: "Stop smoking if you love Mumbai," the ticket checker told a first class passenger on a Western Railway local train.

The checker's admonition on the occasion of the 'I love Mumbai' festival, prompted the passenger to retort: "But I love my cigarette more than Bombay."

Finally, the passenger put out the cigarette on being shown the notice in the train compartment that smoking was prohibited and could attract a fine of Rs 500. *The Hindu* (H. Rajaraman, Madras)

NEW DELHI: The ambulance that follows the Prime Minister's motorcade seems to be merely a 'decorative piece'.

Mr P.P. Balachandran, correspondent of a Bombay-based newspaper, who received a deep cut during a scuffle between securitymen and newspersons, was rushed to the Prime Minister's ambulance for first aid. But to his dismay, there was no tincture or Band-aid available. *The Hindustan Times* (E.J. Patro, Bhubaneshwar)

CALCUTTA: A pickpocket, caught stealing by bus passengers, escaped arrest by playing dead at Judges Court Road in south Calcutta this morning.

The pickpocket feigned death to escape from the angry mob, which dragged him from the vehicle and started beating him up. Fearing that they had killed the man, the passengers panicked and fled. The pickpocket, who was lying on the ground where he had collapsed, availed of this opportunity and ran for his life. *The Telegraph* (Raja Banerjee, Balasore)

BEGINNING 16 DECEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



This is not a favourable week for most of you. Professionals are advised to be cautious in their dealings with superiors. Your wife may suddenly fall ill adding to your financial woes. A good period, however, for businessmen . .

Good dates: 16, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: West

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



This is a favourable week to go ahead with marriage plans. Do not hesitate to take your friends into confidence. On the professional front, you will make steady progress, but businessmen will find the going tough.

Good dates: 17, 18 and 20
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 7
Favourable direction: North west

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



This is a favourable week for most of you. There may be problems, however, for businessmen and professionals. This is not a good week for love and courtship. Postpone marriage plans .

Good dates: 18, 20 and 21
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: South

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Mixed fortunes are in store for you this week. Your financial prospects appear bleak. You may have to borrow money. Your health may give you trouble, so take precautions. The domestic front will prove troublesome.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 19
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 8
Favourable direction: East

LEO (21 July—20 August)



Financially, this is not an encouraging week. Stay away from gambling and speculation. You are advised to postpone plans of changing your career. You will be able to repay most of your debts.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 22
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: West

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



This is a favourable week for most of you. If you are planning to start a business, this is the best time to do so. Students, artists and sportsmen will prosper. Lovers can go ahead with marriage plans.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 20
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



A favourable week for most of you. Social engagements will keep you busy, but do not neglect your profession. A favourable week for architects. The domestic front will remain peaceful.

Good dates: 17, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



If you have plans to start a business, this is the ideal time to do so. Utilise the opportunities that come your way. A journey undertaken in the middle of the week will prove financially profitable.

Good dates: 19, 20 and 22
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7
Favourable direction: East

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



This is a week of mixed fortunes. The prospects are not very favourable for love and marriage. Professionals will face problems in office. But the home front will remain peaceful.

Good dates: 16, 18 and 21
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



Financially, you will do well this week, but do not be extravagant. This is a favourable period for those in service and a promotion may be in the offing. A favourable week for scientists.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 22
Lucky numbers: 7, 8 and 9
Favourable direction: South

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



Success in all your ventures is a certainty for most of you. This is the perfect time for love and matrimony. Professionals and businessmen will make steady headway. You will be cured of a chronic ailment.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 18
Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: East

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



This is a favourable week for most of you. Friends and relatives will be of immense help to you. A pleasure trip you were looking forward to may come about. Businessmen and professionals will make steady progress.

Good dates: 19, 20 and 21
Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: West

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—ARIES

The practical outlook of the Aries man makes it difficult for him to empathise with the emotional highs and lows of the Scorpio woman. This leaves the Scorpio feeling unloved and neglected. However, the two share some wonderful moments of fun and frolic.

What now, Nehru?

What news of Arun Nehru, legendary master manipulator of Indian politics?

Two new developments are of some consequence. One, the former commerce minister is now making his differences with V.P. Singh public. He tells interviewers that he disagreed with the timing of the Mandal move. And though the Raja is trying hard to cultivate a Muslim constituency, AKN is busy spouting pro-Hindu rhetoric, and talking about the damage to the Hindu psyche caused by Mulayam Singh's refusal to allow the VHP to destroy the mosque.



Arun Nehru: spouting rhetoric

Two, Nehru has a full-scale battle on his hands. His successor at the commerce ministry is busy scouring the files to find the dirt on his predecessor. Subramaniam Swamy seems convinced that he can tie Nehru up in endless corruption controversies.

So, what will Nehru do now?

Return of the prodigal

Arun Jaitley had quit the BJP when it became clear that he wasn't likely to achieve much in the face of opposition from such heavyweights as Madan Lal Khurana and Dr L.K. Jain. The last straw came when Khurana effectively prevented him from contesting the Lok Sabha elections from South Delhi. Piqued beyond measure, Jaitley began cultivating the Raja and managed to wangle appointment as additional solicitor-general to the Government of India.

But the change of government forced Jaitley out. And recognising that, in the changed political climate, the BJP was a force to reckon with, Jaitley began manoeuvering to get a toehold in the party once again. His lobbying with party president L.K. Advani paid off, with a nomination to the national executive of the BJP.

And no prizes for guessing who's most unhappy at this turn of events. Yes, it *is* M.L. Khurana.

HEARD AT KRISHI BHAVAN

Why do Haryanvis need an amusement park? Doesn't the Tau provide them with enough laughs?

A SENIOR BUREAUCRAT ON OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA'S DISNEYLAND PROJECT



Arun Jaitley: back in the BJP

CHECK-LIST

The secretaries who are in with Shekhar's government

- **A.R. Ganesan:** Secretary, civil aviation. An upright bureaucrat, Ganesan was regarded as a favourite of his previous boss, Arif Mohammad Khan. And he's apparently found favour with the new minister Harmohan Dhawan as well. Dhawan has asked Ganesan to continue as secretary, and the civil servant has agreed in his most civil manner.

- **N.N. Vohra:** Secretary, defence. Has been part of the ministry for a decade and is tipped to continue in his current post. If, on the outside chance, he moves out, it will only be to move into the home ministry, on an equally important assignment.

- **A.N. Verma:** Secretary, industry. The Raja tried his best to remove Verma from his post but failed in the face of Ajit Singh's insistence on keeping the bureaucrat. Now that Shekhar is in South Block, Verma is tipped to continue in office, either in industry, finance or as principal secretary to the Prime Minister.

- **S.P. Shukla:** Secretary, commerce. Has perfected the art of getting in the good books of his minister, be it V.P. Singh or Arun Nehru. Among the Janata Dal(S) ministers is regarded as being close to finance minister Yashwant Sinha. Hence, reports which suggest that he may find a prize post in the finance ministry if he fails to retain commerce.

- **S.K. Mishra:** Secretary, agriculture. The Tau relies on him completely. And thus, Mishra is expected to call the shots in tourism as well as agriculture. His wife Sukhda Mishra's (she's a minister in Mulayam Singh Yadav's Cabinet) connections ensure that the civil servant will occupy a pre-eminent position in the new dispensation.

Justice for all

Guess who's the most-sought after man these days?

None other than the Chief Justice of India, Ranganath Mishra, never mind his less-than-fortunate utterances about the place for women.

Apparently, the Prime Minister has taken to consulting Mishra on every contentious issue on his agenda—Mandal and Ram Janmabhoomi among others—to be acquainted with the correct legal position on these matters. And in his best man-of-the-people manner Chandra Shekhar makes it a point to call on Mishra, instead of standing on protocol, whenever he's in need of the learned Chief Justice's advice.

Critics of the PM, of course, insist that there's more to this than meets the eye. According to them, Shekhar owes Mishra one. When the constitutional crisis was at its height, President Venkataraman summoned Mishra to ask if he could ask Shekhar, as leader of an "unattached" group, to form the government. Mishra was quick to clarify that there wasn't any constitutional provision which prevented him from doing so. A relieved Venkataraman immediately invited Shekhar over to offer him the prime ministership. Hence, Shekhar's preference for the Chief Justice's point of view.

Pilot is better

He'd always held a measure of importance in the Congress. Rajiv Gandhi, however, made sure to balance him off by granting Ghulam Nabi Azad equal eminence. But with the hugely-successful *kisan* rally at the Boat Club, all that is likely to change, with Rajesh Pilot finding himself in the forefront of party affairs.



Rajesh Pilot: the rally did it

Already a campaign has begun to appoint Pilot to the Congress Working Committee in place of that other Gujjar leader Ram Chandra Vikal. The argument is that given Vikal's recent obsession with naturopathy and yoga, he's better qualified to run health classes than function on the CWC. And what better man to take his place than Pilot, who's proved his organisational ability and mass base with the *kisan* rally.

Swami at large

Chandra Swami may have become a regular at 3 South Avenue Lane, but his presence goes down ill with well-wishers and friends of the Prime Minister. Though their public stance is that there is no reason why Swami should be ostracised by Shekhar, in private they admit that it would have been better for the PM's image if the godman had continued pulling strings from his haunt in America.

But Swami hasn't restricted himself to visits to the prime ministerial residence alone. He turned up in Ayodhya *(see cover story)* to declare that the *mandir* should be built at the site of the *garba griha*. While the VHP leaders ignored the Swami when they weren't abusing him virulently, the BJP remained very silent on his presence in the temple city.

The reason was obvious: the Swami still retains close links with such BJP stalwarts as Vijayaraje Scindia and Dr J.K. Jain. Readers will remember that a year and a half ago, Swami had arranged for Mrs Adnan Khashoggi to be awarded the World Peace Prize at the Rajmata's residence, the function being organised by Dr J.K. Jain.

And now that the Swami claims that he can get the Gulf countries to pressure the Babri Masjid Action Committee to accept a compromise formula, he's bound to become a favourite in several other quarters as well.

HEARD AT 10 JANPATH

I just wish Rajiv wouldn't put his mouth where his Mani is.

A CONGRESS(I) LEADER ON RAJIV GANDHI'S READINESS TO ACCEPT MANI SHANKAR AIYAR'S SPEECHES



Chandra Swami: the Rajmata doesn't mind

BOOK-MARK

The shortest books in history

- **Madhu Dandavate:** How To Fight Inflation
- **Ram Vilas Paswan:** Jokes I Heard At The Golf Course
- **I.K. Gujral (edited):** A Directory Of Janata Dal Intellectuals
- **Sharad Yadav:** Fight Casteism Today
- **V.P. Singh:** Ethics
- **Chimanbhai Patel (edited):** A Directory Of Gujarati War Heroes
- **George Fernandes:** How I Solved The Kashmir Problem
- **Rajiv Gandhi:** Poverty In India
- **Ramnath Goenka:** Keep Your Editors Happy
- **Ashok Singhal:** My Muslim Friends
- **Raj Babbar:** Amitabh: The Official Biography
- **Shatrughan Sinha:** The Virtues Of Silence
- **Devi Lal:** The Menace Of Opium
- **Maneka Gandhi:** A Guide To Good Manners

Jawaharlal Nehru Public Library

Power without responsibility

The announcement took everyone by surprise. Dr Manmohan Singh, vice-chairman of the Planning Commission, had been appointed economic advisor to the Prime Minister, *not* Dr S.K. Goel, long-time crony of Shekhar's. What made the appointment even more piquant was the fact that Singh had been very close to both Indira and Rajiv Gandhi during their stints in office.

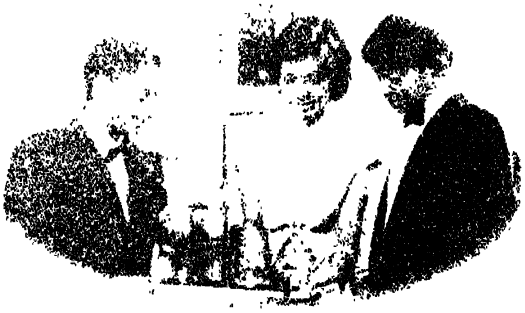
But no, this didn't mean that the Congress president was calling the shots as far as appointments were concerned. According to sources close to the PM, Goel himself had turned down the post of economic advisor, for reasons which were still far from clear. Yes, he'd told Shekhar, he would visit him every day and offer him advice on economic matters, but he didn't want an official post.

We suppose power without responsibility has its attractions.

Golden moments. McDowell moments



WHEN YOU GROW UP WITH THE BEST
YOU STAY WITH IT.



Lal Imli Dhariwal. Suitings that have remained classics through the years.

Yet, contemporary too! Keeping with to-day's fashion trends they offer you a range to choose from. Tweeds, Worst
Blazer Material, Woolli
Blankets, Cosy Shaw
And mc

Lal Imli Dhariwal. Alwe
in style Never out of fashi

THE ORIGINAL DRESS CIRCLE!



BANGLADESH: A DICTATOR FALLS

SUNDAY

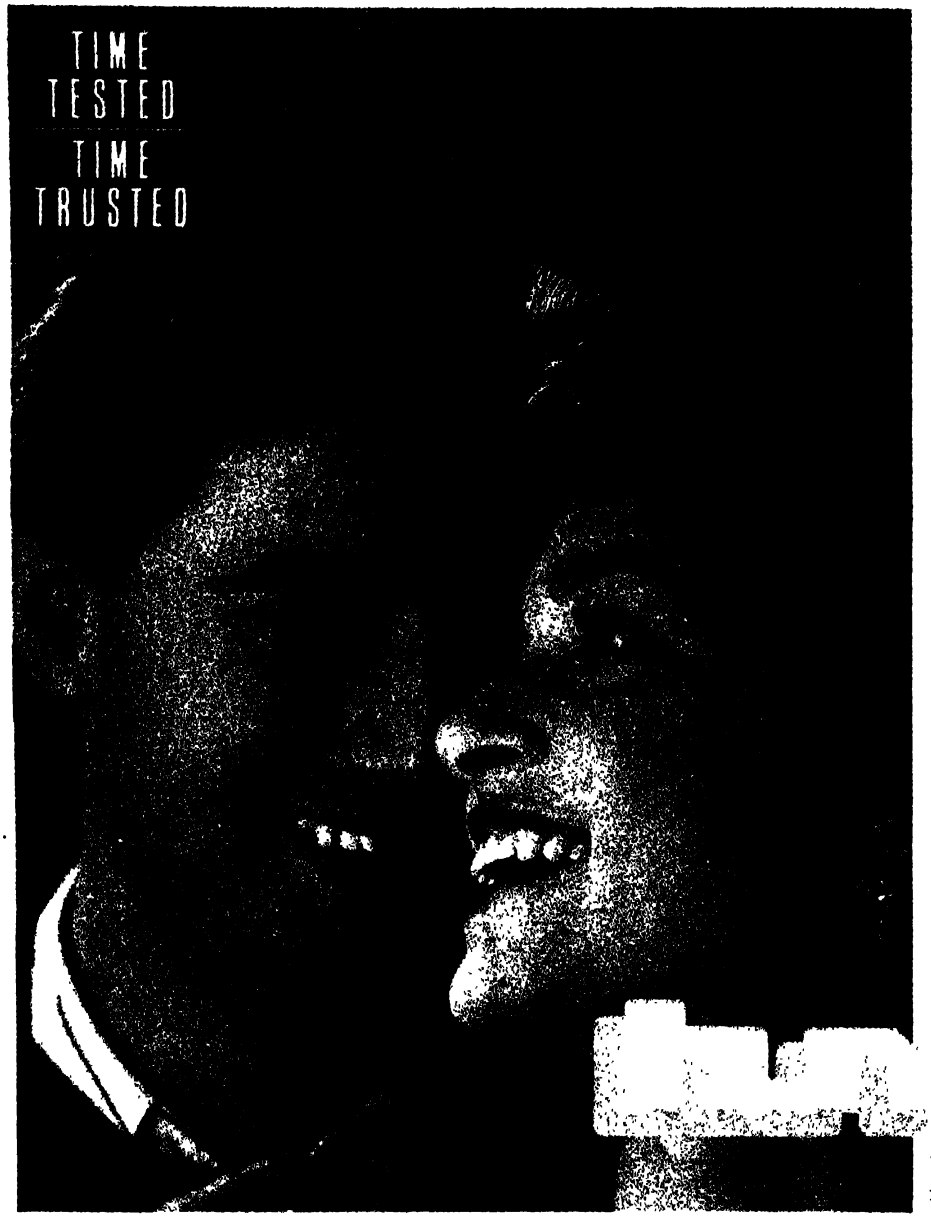
COMMUNAL MADNESS



REDDY

YADAV

One chief minister goes and another totters as violence sweeps India



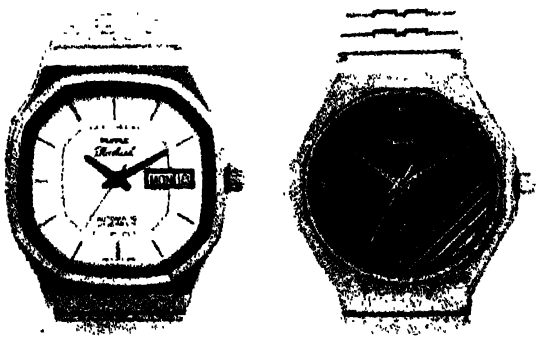
hmt
WATCHES

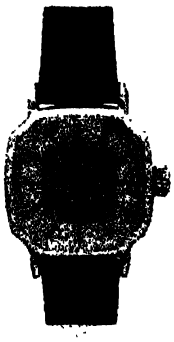
Every memorable moment in life has been timed by HMT.

HMT has preserved the spirit behind those seconds. The magic behind those minutes.

Simply put, it has stood the test. And earned the trust.

WATCHES
TIME KEEPERS TO THE NATION





OVER 60 MILLION INDIANS WEAR HMT
OVER 25 THOUSAND JOIN THEM EVERY DAY

CLARION-BL/HMT/9059

CONTENTS

SUNDAY

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 50 RS 7.00
AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION
23--29 DECEMBER 1990



27
COVER STORY
Communal madness
One chief minister goes and another totters as violence sweeps India.

10
NEWSBEAT
Red alert!
Andhra Pradesh witnesses an upsurge in Naxalite violence.



16
BOFORS
Here comes the judge
The curse of Bofors reaches the judiciary.

51
BUSINESS
"One has to be realistic"
An interview with Aditya Birla.

70
PERSONALITY
Different moods
The life and times of Pandit Ravi Shankar.



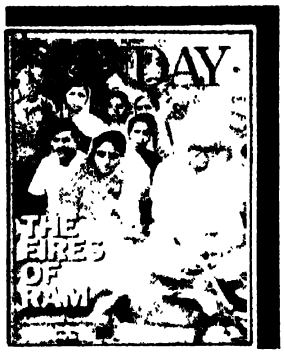


76
INVESTIGATION
The money changers
Forgery of notes is big business in Kerala.

80
HERITAGE
Our man from Madras
US Indians prepare to celebrate the arrival of the first countryman 200 years ago.

LETTERS 4
SIGHT AND SOUND 7
COUNTERVIEW 8
MEDIA MUSINGS 14
GOSSIP SWEET AND SOUR 19
NEWSWATCH 22
Leaving home
FOCUS 42
The No-men
SPOTLIGHT 44
ANALYSIS 48
The TV epics
PERSONALITY 50
No more Gossip
MUSIC 67
Pop and porn
KHAAS BAAT 74
BOOK REVIEW 75
India of the imagination
CRIME 78
Striking terror
SPORTS 84
Washout!
MILESTONES 87
SUNDAYWEEK 88
RANDOM NOTES 89
DELHI DIARY 90

Printed and published for Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd by Bijit Kumar Basu and edited by Vir Sanghvi from 6 & 9 Prafulla Sarkar Street Calcutta 700 001
Air surcharge for Srinagar ex-Delhi and Tripura 20 paise, North-eastern states, 30 paise.



Religion and politics

The decision of the BJP to construct the Ram temple (*The fires of Ram*, 2—8 December) by demolishing the mosque at Ayodhya will be a national disaster.

The BJP's claim that by constructing the *mandir* it will regain national prestige and honour, is purely illogical. Instead, the prestige of Hindus will suffer as they will never be successful in their attempt to construct the *mandir* under any circumstances.

The Ram temple issue is now in the hands of some power-hungry politicians. These people want to come to power by any means.

Balkunthanath Sasmal, Baripada (Orissa)

■ The new Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, hopes to succeed where V.P. Singh failed so ignominiously. He believes he can resolve this contentious issue, soothe communal passions and take the sting out of the BJP's campaign. But given the state of affairs prevailing in the country, it will be quite difficult for the new regime to bring the situation under control. But if Shekhar flounders, India will be the biggest loser. Therefore, he should tread carefully and if he slips up, he might have to leave like V.P. Singh.

S. Ahmed, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)



L.K. Advani on the Ram Rath: driving a wedge between two communities

Biased profile

The profile of Jaipal Reddy (*Reddy for the attack*, 25 November—1 December) is biased and motivated. The article failed to mention his stint in the eighth Lok Sabha. He won laurels as a good parliamentarian until he resigned along with hundred-odd MPs on the Bofors issue. Reddy's performance as an ordinary member as well as deputy leader of the Dal Parliamentary Party was in the best traditions of parliamentary democracy.

Comparing Reddy to K.K. Tewari and Subramaniam Swamy is not in good taste. Also, he was one of the few who never aspired for positions of authority and this appears to be the only reason for calling him a nonentity. Your main plank appears to be misinterpreting Reddy's publicity-loving nature as a sort of crime. For that matter, all politicians are publicity-hungry and they are always looking for an opportunity to hog the limelight. Therefore, there is no reason to compare him with power-hungry and publicity-loving politicians.

N. Anjaiah Goud, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

Jaipal Reddy: a media flop



Target: Rajiv

The Bofors story (*The curse of Bofors*, 18—24 November) has brought to light a shocking revelation about the level to which our politicians can stoop to grab power. The investigations so far seem to be aimed at discrediting the Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi in particular. And these episodes were masterminded by people who preached value-based politics. So in order to uphold the ethics of journalism, all those who misled the nation by planting false stories should make a public apology to Rajiv Gandhi.

Michael Noronha, Mysore (Karnataka)

Pop mania

The article (*The Indipop boom*, 18—24 November) made for interesting reading. What was missing was the mention of Usha Uthup who ranks as one of India's best pop singers. Usha is head and shoulders above Sharon Prabhakar.

Usha Uthup's exclusion from the article is unpardonable.

R.Joseph, Madras (Tamil Nadu)



Uthup: the best of the lot?

■ Indipop won't be around for too long. It is rightly mentioned that today's Hindi film music is littered with copies of Western chartbusters.

The death of stalwarts like Kishore Kumar and Mukesh has also heralded the death of authentic Indian music.

Is it any wonder that a few genuine music fans have lost interest in the state of the music industry as a whole?

Mahesh Kumar, New Delhi

Wanted: a new system

The cover story reflects the true situation prevailing in the country today (*The desperate hours*, 11—17 November). It is high time that India adopted the presidential system of government, where no parliamentarian or legislator gets elected unless he polls more than 50 per cent of the valid votes cast in the elections. And at the same time, the people should elect their President and chief ministers through ballot. This system will eliminate the instability caused by politicians greedy for power.



Chandra Shekhar: will he provide stability?

R.N. Vaswani, Bombay (Maharashtra)

A lost cause

The article (*Suicide fever*, 4—10 November) was shocking to say the least. A few sentimental students killed themselves over nothing. Self-immolation is not the way to protest, regardless of the cause. The government does not bother and neither does society in general. The only ones hurt are parents and relatives. It is hoped that the students will learn a lesson and find better ways to prove a point.

Parimal Sarkar, Burdwan (West Bengal)



Intellectuals protesting the glorification of self-immolation

■ Mandal is not the only reason for suicides by Indian students. The media have played their part. Most people who have committed suicide are children of the lower middle class.

The attention of politicians needs to be drawn to this corrupt and inefficient political system which encourages kids to kill themselves.

I.P. Gandhi, New Delhi

Back to the barracks

The article (*The Benazir saga*, 11—17 November) deserves certain clarifications. The Pakistan People's Party made a tactical blunder by making the poll a referendum on corruption against Benazir and thus played into the hands of its opponents.

However, Benazir's best bet now is that the coalition government would be unstable. As for now, the fate of the Pakistanis lies in the hands of the generals and religious fundamentalists.

Chayan Gupta, New Delhi

Majority phobia

The Ayodhya imbroglio is a frightening replay of the medieval crusades carried out by the Christians to liberate Jerusalem from the clutches of the Muslims (*Groping in the dark*, 18—24 November).

The only reason for the Muslims to feel claustrophobic in India is due to the fact that Hindu fanatics are being arrested for plotting violence against the minority community. Evidently, the Muslims have reasons for fear, since the Hindus are being galvanised by unscrupulous politicians.

Chiranjib Haldar, Trivandrum (Kerala)

Benazir Bhutto: battered and beaten



Defying tradition

The suspension of three students from IIT Kharagpur is a direct mockery of the very foundations of decency and good conduct that this institution is supposed to stand for (*Ragtime blues*, 18—24 November). The suspension of these students should be revoked. These students could be the models for future generations, not to mention the present ones who are engaged in ragging.

Suresh Kumar, Bagepally (Karnataka)

Elitist press

The press is indifferent to the problems of rural India (*Paper chase*, 18—24 November). Pages of major newspapers carry comments of discredited political leaders, salacious comments on the lives of film stars and cricket news. Most newspapers and journals of the country do not reflect the viewpoints of the poorer sections.

The poor people have to struggle for existence, a fact which is largely ignored by the country's press.

Abir Padhy, Berhampur (Orissa)

Distorting culture

Our attention has been drawn to the feature *Finally, the film* (2 - 8 December). We feel constrained to mention a few words in response to some of the points raised

There certainly has been a controversy about the film. But we may categorically state that formal clearance of the script and permission to shoot was never denied to the filmmaker. The correspondent was perhaps unaware of the fact that the onus for clearing a script by a foreign filmmaker lies not with the state government but with the Government of India. In fact, the producer and the director of the film had sought unofficially to evince the views of the state government about the script. Frankly speaking, we found the novel on which the film is based to be utterly reprehensible since its basic aim appeared to be to humiliate the denizens of the city about the socio-economic realities that historically exist here. The script, too, we think, goes a long way in hurting our national sentiments.

A few random quotes from the 'novel' would, we believe, tend to confirm to your readership the *raison d'etre* of our attitude towards the film:

"Like the majority of other Indian women still untouched by feminist liberation movements, the women in the *City of Joy* had no way other than seduction to attract masculine attention and assert their identity."

"They used the embryos and foetuses either for scientific work or in the manufacture of rejuvenating products for a clientele of privileged people in specialised establishments in Europe and America. The demand had provoked a fruitful trade for which Calcutta was one of the central sources."

"He had taken refuge in an air-conditioned suite in Calcutta's luxury hotel, The Grand. A foaming Niagara of perfumed froth was already tumbling into the bathtub of his marble bathroom. The nightmare of the *City of Joy* had receded to another planet. He slipped a ten-rupee note into the servant's hand. Just as he was leaving, however, the servant swung around in a half-circle. He was a very wrinkled little man with a grey beard."

'Would you like a girl, sahib? A very pretty young girl?'

Startled, Max put down his glass of whisky.

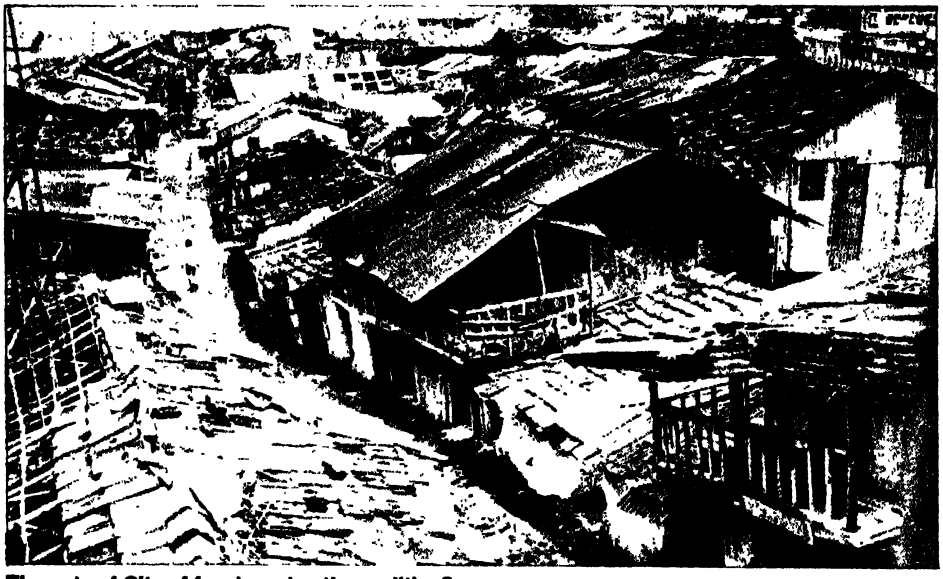
'Very pretty and sweet-natured,' elaborated the servant with a wink. The American swallowed another mouthful of alcohol. 'Unless you'd prefer two girls together urged the Indian. 'Young girls, but very, very skilful. The entire range of the *Kama Sutra*, sahib.' The Indian plucked up his courage. He knew his clientele all too well. As soon as they arrived in Asia, Europeans and Americans turned into devils. No temptation seemed spicy enough for them. 'Perhaps you'd prefer a boy, sahib? A fine looking young boy, sweet and...' The servant made an obscene gesture and matched it with another wink. With the same air of complicity, this time he suggested two young boys. After a few moments, he volunteered 'two young boys and two girls together', then a eunuch, and finally a transvestite 'Very clean, sahib, very safe.'

"In a few years the city was to condemn its ten million inhabitants to living on less than twelve square feet of space per person, while the four or five million of them who squeezed into its slums had sometimes to make do with barely three square feet each."

"Nothing is going to change the fact that there are over a million poor bastards without work in Calcutta, and that if you eliminate the livelihoods of a hundred thousand rickshaw pullers, you'll condemn eight or nine hundred thousand more people to starvation. It's a matter of common sense, but then, politics and common sense are not the teats of the same cow."

There are some people who end up being hateful of the realities that prevail here. Therefore, it is our considered opinion that just as filmmaking is a basic right, so it is within the definition of human rights to have certain kinds of media creation.

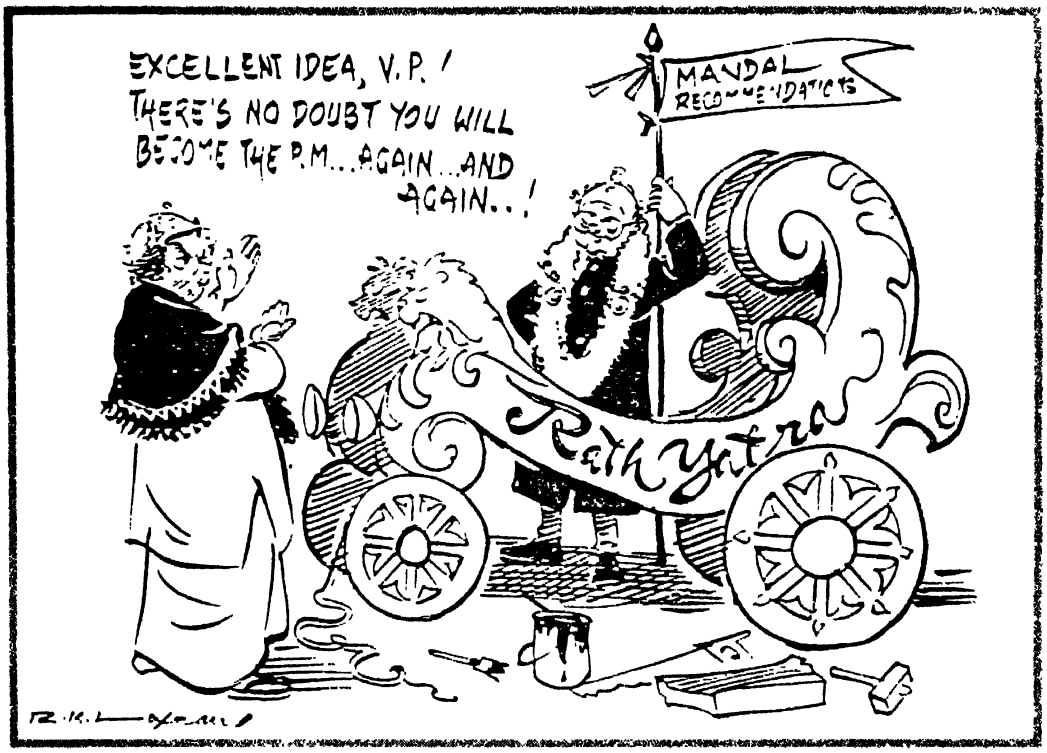
Prasanta Banerjee, confidential assistant to the minister of information and cultural affairs, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta.

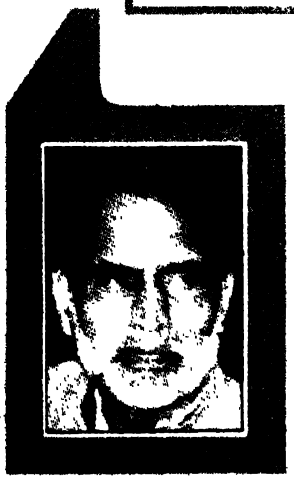


The sets of *City of Joy*: ignoring the realities?



Director Roland Joffe





■ I cannot understand how a person claiming to be a Hindu will go to the extent of demolishing a mosque. Great Hindus like Rana Pratap and Shivaji never demolished a mosque when they fought against Aurangzeb and other Mughal emperors.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR, *Prime Minister*

■ Why is Mr Advani worried about the housing problem of Ram who created the world? If he thought this was such an important issue, why did he not do anything when he was a minister in the Janata government in 1977?

RAM VILAS PASWAN, *former Union labour minister*

■ To us, secularism does not mean irreligion. Nor is it euphemism for Hindu-baiting.

L.K. ADVANI, *BJP president*

■ He (Chandra Shekhar) is doing a wonderful job. The only sad thing is that he is not in good company.

BANSI LAL, *former chief minister of Haryana*

■ Whenever I want to become chief minister of Haryana I can. Whenever I wanted to I became chief minister and whenever I wanted to resign I did.

OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA, *Janata Dal(S) general secretary*

■ I am not as stupid as I look. I am an intelligent man.

SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY, *Union commerce minister*

■ As far as Chandra Shekhar is concerned, we do not think he was guided by any morality when he formed the government at the Centre. It's opportunism.

JYOTI BASU, *West Bengal chief minister*

■ Just as a creation of an "Islamic Rashtra" could not save Ershad, the God of the "Hindu Rashtra" could not save himself in Kathmandu. Neither God nor General proved stronger than the will of the people.

M.J. AKBAR, *Congress(I) spokesman*

■ The Indian cricket team does not need one manager. They need 16 different managers, one for each player.

BISHEN SINGH BEDI, *former manager of the Indian cricket team*

■ Money is something that I don't think of at all. Money is thought of by the market, by the trade. It is a commodity that is decided by your standing.

AMITABH BACHCHAN, *filmstar*



VINOD MEHTA

Medium cool

The new Chandra Shekhar: A TV star!



Those of us for whom the daily ups and downs of public life are of irresistible concern, sometimes forget that the average citizen has little or no interest in politics. His response to those who rule, or seek to rule, is made up of prejudices, gut feelings, vague notions, word-of-mouth anecdotes and self-certified opinions. Facts, deeds, views of newspaper pundits rarely cause him to adjust his conclusions.

My *paanwala*, for instance, is devotedly and doggedly anti-Chandra Shekhar ever since he heard that our Prime Minister had decided to shorten his name from Chandra Shekhar Singh to Chandra Shekhar in the name of some alien ideology. "How can you trust a man who has betrayed his own caste?" he asks. "I am also a *sochalist*, but I still go by the name my father gave me." Chandra Shekhar could turn India into a haven of peace and prosperity, yet I suspect my *paanwala* would never vote for him.

My purpose in presenting the meandering musings of *paanwalas* is to report a gradual but perceptible change of mood *vis-a-vis* our Prime Minister in a significant section of the electorate. Just as V.P. Singh was being shown the door, I asked a friend, who is a paid-up member of the Malabar Hill Elite Club, how he viewed the prospect of the Old Turk stepping in. He curled up his nose and said, "That man is evil" – and he put a lot of feeling into the word "evil". Without the benefit of an opinion poll I would claim that my friend reflected the sentiments of large sections of the urban intelligentsia. Four weeks after assuming office, Mr Chandra Shekhar has made that same population sit up and think. Could it be that they were wrong? Perhaps he is not as evil as they thought him to be?

Of course, the subtle change in mood could be the result of incumbency. The Prime Minister's Office has built-in glamour and awe-inspiring trappings. The occupant of 7, Race Course Road is splashed across our front pages and TV screens, he is seen receiving high foreign dignitaries, he whizzes off to international conferences and rubs shoulders with statesmen and assorted glitterati, he is seen comforting those who have suffered through natural or man-made calamity. He is here, there and everywhere. Not surprisingly, the ubiquitous, frequently healing visibility helps soften part of the hostility.

Mr Chandra Shekhar is the recipient of another lucky benefit—public expectation of him and his government is so low that he simply cannot fail. No one expects him to perform or accomplish anything, he has no manifesto to implement, no promises to keep. The single task he has before him is to survive. Even here, survival not for four years but for 12 months. Never in the history of democratic governance has a Prime Minister been asked to do so little, so leisurely.

Given the fact that the Prime Minister has accomplished precisely nothing, how has he been able to make a positive impact on the country in so short a space of time?

It is a truism that in politics perception is more important than reality, and as I indicated earlier, perception is the composite of intangibles—received impressions, random signals that may or may not have anything to do with reality. Experience from other parts of the world confirms that the single most powerful instrument for transmitting impressions, favourable and unfavourable, is television. In our country, television assumes even greater potency because competing instruments (lobbies, press, professional fora, cable TV etc.) are either non-existent or have restricted reach. It is through television, then, that Chandra Shekhar has, to some extent, won the hearts and minds of the very people who till a few weeks ago were calling him "evil".

Interestingly, unlike Mr Thatcher, R. Reagan and J. Kennedy, Mr Chandra Shekhar has had no coaching in the medium. Mrs Thatcher hired a consultant (Gordon Reece) who, among other things, taught her to stand properly in front of a microphone and how to speak into it. Our man in South Block, meanwhile, seems to be a TV natural who comes off best when he has no script and when he speaks in Hindi. I can think of no other politician in recent times who has used television to such advantage. And it has been done without Doordarshan management or the plastering of Chandra Shekhar on our TV screens. Indeed, I am quite sure that the Prime Minister is not even aware of the sublime effect he has been having on the air waves.



People are talking of three Chandra Shekhar 'performances'. The first was at SAARC. His official speech in English was mundane, but just before he ended he switched to extempore and Hindi. Even those who did not understand the words he used to sketch out his "one world" vision found the sincerity and simplicity of his oration moving. The second was at an indoor stadium in Delhi where he pleaded with the audience not to fall prey to



It is through television that **Chandra Shekhar** has, to some extent, won the hearts and minds of the very people who till a few weeks ago were calling him 'evil'

"people who want to divide this country in the name of caste and religion. Hunger has no caste, poverty has no religion. Let us fight these, not ourselves". Finally, in western UP he delivered the same message. The impact of all three performances on viewers was electric.

On occasions V.P. Singh spoke eloquently too, but he had the distressing habit of straying into Hindi film dialogue which sounded not merely theatrical but also shifty. Rajiv is incapable of rousing a crowd because he is invariably reading other people's lines. Indira Gandhi, when in trouble, resorted to shrieking and shouting. Chandra Shekhar, in contrast, knows how to pitch his words and since he is well-informed with views on everything from regional cooperation to five-star hotels, he has no need for prompters or slips of paper. He looks his audience straight in the eye and rattles off at a cracking pace. The impression left is of a man who, while not fully in control of his destiny, knows exactly what he is doing. However spurious, however counterfeit, there is a sureness of touch, a self-confidence exuded by a Prime Minister believed to be living on life-support systems.

Through intelligent and forceful use of television, Mr Chandra Shekhar has been able to cool caste passions in the country. He has not reneged on Mandal, he has simply put various riders to make the recommendations 'more complete'. And he makes sure that when he refers to caste inquities he also mentions the shame of poverty, wherever it is found. As a result, the anti-reservationists have no cause to pursue on the streets, while quota champions cannot claim they have been betrayed. Nothing solved, just a little respite gained.

On the Ram Janmabhoomi question, Chandra Shekhar has managed to present on our screens nightly a motley collection of *sadhus*, *mullahs* and self-styled religious leaders allegedly engaged in serious parleys. Again, nothing substantial has been registered, but the very sight of feuding holy men sitting across a table in the elevating company of Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Pawar and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat is enormously reassuring for a frightened nation. Whether by trick or by fraud, a perilously insecure Prime Minister using old-fashioned communication techniques has been able to convince a few of his countless critics that he has the skills to heal the wounds of a deeply wounded nation.

TV images are notoriously unreliable. However, it is difficult to manipulate them for too long. If the Prime Minister talks about bringing the country together and privately does deals with communalists in order to secure his tenure, the same medium which is serving him today will mercilessly expose him. For the moment, however, it must be noted that Mr Chandra Shekhar has a formidable TV presence which for the *moment* is paying him dividends. •

RED ALERT!

Andhra Pradesh witnesses an upsurge in Naxalite violence



Nobody saw it coming. To the residents of Narmatta, a tiny village in Andhra Pradesh's Warangal district, 4 December seemed like it would be just another uneventful day. Until about noon, that is.

The Bank of Baroda which is housed in one of the few pukka buildings in the village- was virtually deserted as it was nearing lunch hour Suddenly, a group of about six men marched in and confronted the branch's assistant manager, K. Sairam Gopal. "Come with us quietly," they demanded and Gopal had no choice but to comply

The abduction of Gopal was only one of the many carried out by the dreaded Naxalite People's War Group (PWG) in Narmatta that day. Only a few minutes earlier, another group of PWG men had kidnapped the village's head constable, Yakub Ali, as he was on his way to the marketplace. During the day, the PWG picked up five others at intervals of an hour or more. Among them, the *mandal* president Pengali Raju Reddy, the *mandal* development officer and three other government employees

The provocation for the abductions was the arrest on the same morning of Kalyanam Chandramouli, the leader of the Radical Youth League (RYL). And on the following day, 5 December, the PWG kidnapped 18 others, bringing the total to 25.

There was also violence in Narmatta on that day. The Naxalites forced a large number of residents of Narmatta to demonstrate in front of the police station. The villagers were made to chant anti-government slogans as the extremists sang and danced to 'revolutionary songs'. When the crowd became restive and violent, the police resorted to firing. Three policemen were injured and the Naxalites claimed that as many as 13 people (all "peaceful demonstrators") were killed.

The district administration, which by then was in a frightful panic, announced that Chandramouli would be released on 6 December. The RYL leader was freed only on the following day as, apparently, no one had come forward to sign the bail application on his behalf. By then, the Naxalites had kidnapped a number of others and released a few in their custody. One of those 'abducted' -head constable Yakub Ali—was killed;, his body was recovered from a nearby village. Others such as Bala Bhaskara Raju were lucky, being released after a night in captivity. "They took me to one of their hide-outs near the forest. But they did not ill-treat me," he says.

But even after Chandramouli was freed, as many as 15 people remained in PWG custody.

Narmatta is no isolated incident. Over the past few months, Naxalite groups—particularly the dreaded PWG –have become extremely active in the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh. Abductions have become

FACES OF VIOLENCE



COURTESY DECCAN CHRON. C.E

RELEASED

Narmatta's Bala Bhaskara Raju was abducted and then freed. Others remain in Naxalite captivity



G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

AWAITING VERDICT

Andhra tribals attend a "people's court" called by the Naxalites



G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

UNDERGROUND MEETING

The Andhra jungles provide an ideal cover for subversive activity



NARMATTA POLICE STATION

The local cops were unable to prevent mass abductions in the village

very common and the state government appears to be clueless about how to deal with the extremists.

Consider the other incidents of Naxalite violence which took place in the state during the first week of this month.

- Three policemen were shot by PWG men at Belampalli in Adilabad district on 7 December. The Naxalites got away with the policemen's firearms and some gelatine sticks. Coming as it did on the heels of Narmatta, it sent shock waves through the state administration.
- A forest official V. Srihari, who had earlier been a stringer for a Telugu daily, was kidnapped on 4 December. His body was discovered with multiple stab injuries near a temple at Govindraopetta, about 100 kilometres from Warangal town.
- On the same day, a village *sarpanch* was also abducted in Warangal district. He was shot dead the following morning, ostensibly because he refused to agree to distribute *benami* land among the poor

Tag these along with the violent incidents, abductions and 'executions' that have taken place all through this year and the list appears endless

To many, the upsurge in Naxalite activity has one main cause: the attitude of former state chief minister Marri Chenna Reddy. When Reddy assumed office late last year, he had suggested that N.T. Rama Rao's Telugu Desam regime—which, for the most part, had treated the Naxalite menace as a law and order problem—had resorted to unnecessarily repressive measures in dealing with extremism. Reddy had evolved a three-pronged strategy that was aimed at curtailing the illegal activities of Naxalites while permitting non-violent political expression. The three prongs were:

- Allowing Naxalites to carry out peaceful campaigns -that is, rallies, demonstrations and the like.
- Releasing all Naxalites detained in prison without trial.
- And, finally, maintaining a close watch on law and order violations by Naxalite groups which chose to reject the government's accommodating approach

Reddy had hoped that this relatively soft approach would help bring the Naxalites around and restrain them from acts of violence. But, clearly, it has been a dismal failure.

His attitude had led to embarrassing allegations as well. As early as last year, in the run-up to the December 1989 Assembly polls, Reddy was accused of having struck a deal with the Naxalites and seeking their support for the elections. Later, many eyebrows were raised when he appointed his long-standing friend and adviser, Kondapalli Chandramouli Reddy, as the state Dairy Development Board chairman. Chandramouli Reddy is said to be related to the PWG chief, Kondapalli Seetharamaiah. Some of Chenna Reddy's detractors go to the extent of claiming that he himself is a relative of Seetharamaiah's.

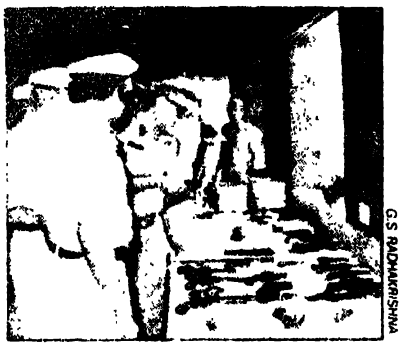
As a part of his strategy of winning over the Naxalites, Chenna Reddy withdrew numerous cases against their



G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

NAXALITE LEADER

Champion of the poor and downtrodden or just plain terrorists?



G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

ARMS SEIZURE

Rifles, mines and walkie talkies—the Naxalites have an impressive arsenal



COURTESY DECCAN CHRONICLE

AMBUSH

A police jeep blown up by a Naxalite landmine in the Karimnagar jungles

SUPERANNUATION SCHEME



deCunha LIC 4 90

How to prevent key employees from leaving you...

LIC's Group Superannuation Scheme – for increased employee loyalty and morale, and tax savings.

LIC's Group Superannuation Scheme provides an added incentive for employees to continue in their current organisation. It guarantees regular post-retirement income, based on number of years in service and last salary drawn or contribution made.

- Contributions (inclusive of PF), are tax-deductible up to 25% of salary.
- If implemented retrospectively, up to 80% of contributions (with respect to past years of service), are allowed for tax deduction in the year of payment.
- Interest accrues at 11.4% to 12% p.a., depending on the size of the fund.
- For those who are members of LIC's Group Gratuity Scheme, higher interest rates will be applicable for both schemes. The Superannuation scheme can also be linked to life insurance cover.
- On retirement, a choice of pension-payment plans is available.

For more information and advice about the scheme, send this coupon to your local LIC Divisional Office.

I'd like to know more about LIC's Group Superannuation Scheme. Please send me full details.

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Organisation: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____ **PIN:** _____

Life Insurance Corporation of India

leaders. He also instructed that the state government's controversial Special Task Force (whose men were known as the Greyhounds), which was created by NTR to deal with the Naxalites, be disbanded. A Rs 65-crore Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) was launched in the nine Naxalite-prone districts of the Telengana region to improve the economic condition of the people. And, finally, Reddy also hit upon the idea of having *praja sadassus* (or people's gatherings), which state ministers were to attend along with local officials. The idea was to provide a forum for the people in remote areas to talk about the problems and voice their grievances.

These were not bad ideas in principle, but their execution left much to be desired. For instance, the RADP scheme hardly benefited those it was targeted at. As for the *praja sadassus*, they became something of a farce. Ministers began to find excuses for not attending the meetings as, apart from the security risk, they were given a hard time by Naxalite sympathisers who taunted them about their VIP status, their wealth and their irrelevance at such gatherings.

The only time during Chenna Reddy's reign that the Naxalites were dealt with firmly was when the former chief minister had left for the US this July for medical treatment. The four-member coterie which ran the state during his absence, comprising Samarasinha Reddy, Diwakar Reddy, Geetha Reddy and Rosaiah, decided that it was time to get tough with the extremist groups. The state police were instructed to crack down on the Naxalites and nearly 30 of them were killed in the encounters that took place in the month that Chenna Reddy was away.

But, for the most part, Naxalite violence has been unabated in the state during the last year. For instance, in 1990, the PWG alone accounted for almost 90 abductions, including those of two MLAs, one IAS officer and several other government officials from the banking sector and the state revenue department. During the same period, the PWG also burnt six railway stations, raided three police stations and killed large numbers of people. What was easily the ghastliest Naxalite attack was that on a train on 9 October near Hyderabad. Forty-seven passengers were burnt alive after a bogie was set on fire by the extremists.

None of this, of course, can be used to conclude that NTR was successful in dealing with the Naxalites. But despite the fact that he has for long maintained that the Naxalites were his "friends", the TDP supremo did attempt to deal with them more firmly.

The state's Naxalites were extemely angry with NTR and had often charged him with using terror tactics to repress civil rights campaigners. During his reign, the Naxalites suffered heavy casualties. But the PWG kept up its strategy of abducting government officials to pressure the NTR regime into releasing its cadres from state prisons. In 1989, the PWG stepped up its campaign to destroy public



CHENNA REDDY

He tried to win the Naxalites over, but violence increased during his reign

property to protest against the encounter killings. When its leaders, Daggu Rayalingu and Puli Ramulu, were killed in encounters in Warangal and Karimnagar respectively, the PWG took to burning buses, railway stations and government offices.

Like Chenna Reddy, there were times he did make attempts to weaken the movement by winning them over. For instance, following the public uproar after the the kidnapping and murder of one of the Telugu Desam's *mandal* presidents in Karimnagar district, T. Malhar Rao, NTR evolved a voluntary surrender scheme. Naxalites who gave themselves up were rehabilitated and given state assistance. About a hundred middle-ranking Naxalites did seek rehabilitation, but the scheme failed in the end as most of them returned to the jungles after accepting the government doles.

At the moment, there are about half a dozen Naxalite groups active in the Telengana region. But it is the People's War Group of Kondapalli Seetharamaiah's which is the largest, the most ruthless and the major cause for concern.

The writ of the PWG and the other groups runs through many remote parts of Telengana, where they evoke considerable sympathy among the tribals and the poor. The Naxalites have helped them escape the clutches of the landlords, provided them with basic literary and numerical skills apart from financial assistance in the form of interest-free loans (which are given by Naxalite-promoted cooperatives).

Given the record of work of some groups with the poor, the Naxalites have earned some sympathy in certain quarters of the urban intelligentsia. Human rights campaigner and lawyer K.G. Kannabiran, for instance, has represented Naxalites in a number of court cases and is known to be close to many of them. "I don't approve of Naxalite kidnappings. But at the same time, you cannot talk only about the violence of the radical elements and turn a blind eye to the illegitimate methods used by the state," he says.

Men like Kannabiran—unlike those who advocate annihilation of the Naxalites—probably believe that the problem must be tackled at both the social and economic levels. When Chenna Reddy came to power last year, he appeared to suggest pretty much the same thing. But his economic programmes, such as the RADP, to benefit the poverty-ridden, Naxalite-infested regions seemed more like publicity stunts than serious attempts to alleviate the lot of the people. At the same time, he failed miserably in checking Naxalite violence, which had grown considerably during his reign.

It may have been the communal carnage that ravaged Hyderabad last fortnight which forced Chenna Reddy to resign. But his successor—irrespective of who he is—will have to find a way of meeting the Naxalite challenge. As Chenna Reddy had discovered, it is threatening to become an extremely difficult and dangerous problem. •

R. Bhagwan Singh/Narmatta and Hyderabad

V. GANGADHAR

Check your sources

This should be a reporter's cardinal principle

In tension-filled Ayodhya, a charred body is found. There are no marks of identification and the reason for his death is yet to be established.

The Press Trust of India, supposed to be the more sober of the two English-language agencies strangely enough went on to report that the body was that of a *sadhu* who had self-immolated himself in support of his demand for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya And PTI's source? The vice-president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, Mahant Ramachandra Paramhans.

Was the Mahant a reliable source? Did he know more about the *sadhu* who had allegedly set himself on fire? PTI does not say. But this was enough for some of the national newspapers. *Indian Express* came out with a headline about a *sadhu* immolating himself and *The Daily* followed suit. Fortunately, a number of other papers did not lead with the PTI report but mentioned it only towards the end of their reports.

The PTI report was objectionable If the Mahant did say that the body was that of a *sadhu*, the agency should have tried to confirm it. And how reliable are these *mahants*, *swamis* and *mullahs*? They are only adding fuel to the fire. Didn't the PTI know that the reasons for the death were still unknown when it filed its report? *The Hindustan Times* said that "certain eye witnesses claimed that he was chased by a mob, lynched and set ablaze." Sajeda Momin of *The Telegraph* reported that "*Ram bhakts* in the area believe the corpse was that of a Muslim youth who had come to the town with a crude weapon to damage the temple: when *kar sevaks* came to know of this, they burnt him alive. Another version said the body was that of a *kar sevak* who had immolated himself in support of the Ram Temple."

If the PTI version was irresponsible, the attitude of some of the newspapers to have led with that and even headlined the event, was even more irresponsible. Will the press ever learn of its responsibilities?

Speaking of responsibility, *The Sunday Observer* had a lead story that many of the contract workers, employed by the Department of Atomic Energy at the Kalapakam power plant, near Madras, are being excessively exposed to harmful radiation.

This conclusion is drawn, not from any investigating reports by the paper's staff. It is based on studies undertaken by certain organisations like the Campaign for Peace and Prevention of Nuclear Threat, a Madras-based anti-nuclear group and one Mr C.N. Deivanaygam, convenor for Physicians for Peace.

Nuclear safety is serious business. The convenor's study states that between 1982 and 1988, there were 13 cancer-related deaths among 3,000 workers, and 14 among their family members. There were 11 infertile ovules.

It is quite clear that the organisations and the individuals who are behind the study are no supporters of nuclear plants and hence their conclusions may not be as objective as one would like them to be. What *The Sunday Observer* should have done was to have sent a senior journalist to study the issue, talk to the Kalapakam plant officials and scientists and use the findings of the anti-nuke protesters as backgrounders. The lead story, as it stands, is too one-sided and taxes one's credibility.



Youth found burnt, 800 kar sewaks arrested

The PTI report was objectionable. But it was enough for some of the national newspapers. ***Indian Express*** came out with a headline about a *sadhu* immolating himself and *The Daily* followed suit

Cigarettes for money

The Times of India would do anything for money. Even then, I was shocked at the extensive coverage given to the launch of Legend Kings, the country's first allegedly low-tar, low-nicotine cigarette. One presumes that the launch was a glittering affair

on board a launch off Bombay's Gateway of India with expensive liquor, eats and Legend Kings.

The staff reporter, who covered this mighty event, waxes eloquent quoting one Harsh Wardhan, a marketing vice-president. According to this whiz kid, the new brand is aimed at the health-conscious executive, 30 plus, who can't kick this habit but wants to reduce the health risk! (Do health-conscious executives really smoke?). Wardhan says a lot more. His low-risk cigarette contains the finest tobacco blended with the famous American Burley and it uses high-porosity paper. Legend claims to contain 12 mg tar, 0.8 mg nicotine average per stick. "The actual content is less", claims Wardhan virtuously. "We have taken the maximum limit."

Wardhan is confident that Legend will be a runaway success. And why not? With such coverage in the venerable *Times of India*, you can sell any death formula. Legend comes from the stable of the notorious Ms brand whose launch some time back ran into a controversy. How did this item get past the environment conscious *Times of India* editor?

The 'free press'

More on the antics of the representatives of our 'free press' who are a law unto themselves. During a special Airbus A320 flight from Delhi to Bombay, despite a 'No Smoking' rule observed on domestic routes, most of the scribes puffed away merrily, even when the 'No Smoking' sign appeared. The crew could only watch uneasily as even the honourable minister for civil aviation was puffing away.

That was not all. Even before the plane had come to a halt, the journalists jumped up to open the overhead lockers, despite pleas from the crew. During the best part of the flight, the 'moulders of public opinion' were crowding the aisles, preventing the crew from moving about and performing their duties.

Finally, it was an all-play-and-no-work trip. Many of the journalists who had boarded the plane had nothing to do with civil aviation and were only the special invitees of the minister.

Harassed hacks

From the antics of the privileged press to the problems of the regional press in Lucknow. Rajiv Saxena of *The Sunday Observer* has done his homework before filing his story on the Lucknow press. Here is a summary of the tragi-comedy situation.

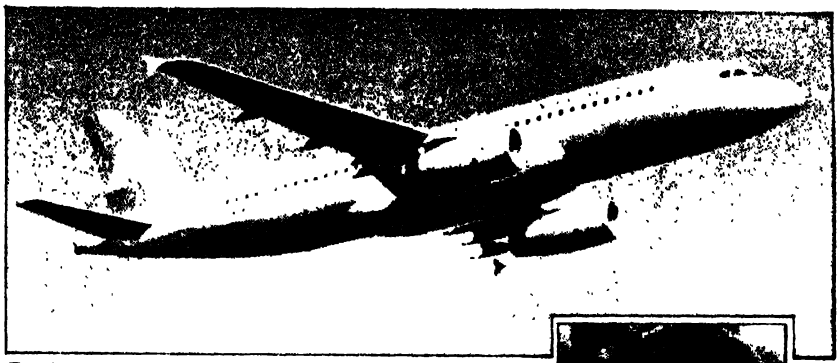
Very few journalists are actually on the company pay roll and are paid in a bizarre fashion -reporters getting money through *lekhan puruskar* (writing awards) and sub-editors, *sampadan puruskar* (editing awards). A young journalist who insisted on a proper letter of appointment was slapped by the manager and told that he could walk out, if he so desired.

So hard up are employees of the *National Herald*, that they pilfer parts of expensive machinery from the press and sell them off at ridiculously low prices. The general manager appeased an agitated staffer who demanded payment, by presenting him with a large, home-grown pumpkin in lieu of hard cash!

'Managers' who know nothing of journalism strut about, harassing journalists. One of this tribe, on being told by the chief reporter that he is finishing his story, retorted, "You are paid to report news. Write your stories when you are at home!" Another proprietor-editor who had made a pile from selling spices spent hours with his journalists discussing the exact positioning of the 'bottom spread'!

The 'editor bug' has bitten quite a few characters in Lucknow, including a former cinema hall manager, a taxi operator and an owner of godowns! With such people running the show, one can imagine the plight of professional journalists. Recently, the management of a Hindi daily sent two reporters -one male and the other a female- to Ayodhya and booked them a single room at the local hotel. Not in a position to rent separate rooms, the journalists shared the room for the night, with the two beds in two corners of the room. But such news travels fast and the distraught wife of the male reporter, despite protestations of his innocence, left for her mother's place.

Thank you, Mr Rajiv Saxena. I'm sure honourable members of our esteemed Editors Guild would not have read this 'trivia' news report.





During a special **Airbus A320** flight from Delhi to Bombay, despite a 'No Smoking' rule, the crew could only watch uneasily as even the honourable minister for civil aviation, **Harmohan Dhawan**, puffed away

Brotherhood!

A very interesting letter from Chanchal Sarkar published in *The Hindustan Times*: "Judges of the Supreme Court and other judges address their fellow judges on the bench as 'Brother'. Recently I was privileged to witness an example of 'brotherliness'. Mrs Ratna Mukherjee, widow of the late Chief Justice, Sabyasachi Mukherjee, was taking a tearful farewell from Delhi, leaving for Calcutta by the Rajdhani Express. Not a single 'brother' of the late Chief Justice was present, and not any Sister (Judges' wife) either."

What's in a headline?

And special mention to the *Indian Express* sports sub editor for this headline 'Pak kneel before Bishop' (based on the happenings of the Lahore cricket test, Pakistan vs West Indies). •

Here comes the judge

The curse of Bofors reaches the judiciary

The curse of Bofors strikes again. The latest casualty of the long-running howitzer scandal is the judiciary. Over the last fortnight, the Delhi High Court has witnessed unprecedented mayhem as lawyers have accused the Bench of impropriety, political parties have entered the fray, a Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI) official has got up to disown his own counsel and an additional solicitor-general has given the impression that he is arguing his opponent's brief. Moreover, the court has been rocked by bomb scares, the media have suggested that the judge is behaving strangely and the law minister has been dragged into the controversy.

While these developments can only be dated to the assumption of office by the Chandra Shekhar government, the case itself has been in existence since 18 August, 1989. That was when an H.S. Choudhary filed a public interest petition seeking to squash the First Information Report (FIR) filed by the CBI in the case and asking that the Letters Rogatory (LR) be withdrawn.

At the time, the attitude of the V.P Singh regime was that this was a nuisance petition intended to hamper and delay the investigation. Nobody thought it had much chance of success. And even the regime's critics thought that the most damage it would do would be to force the CBI to part with the LRs, which it had, till then, regarded as classified information.

Then, two things happened. The CBI began to feel that Justice M.K.Chawla, who was hearing the case, seemed surprisingly well-disposed towards the petitioner. Next, the government changed, and additional solicitor-general Arun Jaitley, who was arguing the case for the regime, resigned.

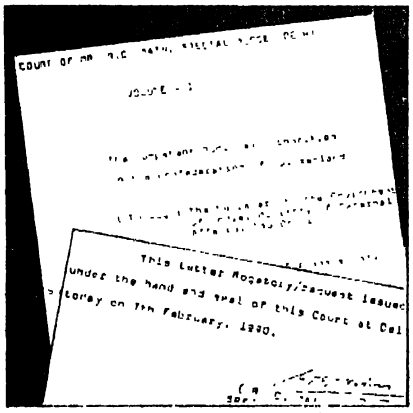


At that stage, the matter took on an entirely new dimension.

For a start, there was the attitude of Justice Chawla. Normally, judges dispose of *habeas corpus* petitions first on the grounds that these have priority over most other matters, especially public interest litigation.

However, according to lawyers, Justice Chawla has decided to hear this

FARCE AND FASTER ■ *How the case progressed*



This Letter Rogatory/Request issued under the hand and seal of this Court at Del... torney on 7th February, 1990.

Letter Rogatory

Public interest litigation is filed challenging the Bofors FIR



Arun Jaitley

The government argues against the quashing of the case



Chandra Shekhar

The change of government means that all those arguing the case resign



case on a priority basis. As he is due to retire on 5 January, 1991, the suspicion has grown that perhaps he wants to finish hearing the case before he steps down.

While Chawla has been in the news before (he was one of the three judges who confirmed the death sentence in the Indira Gandhi murder case), most advocates have regarded him as a fairly diffident, mild-mannered individual

Why then is he in such a hurry to hear this case even if it means overturning established legal norms?

In a representation to Chief Justice Ranganath Mishra, senior advocates posed this and other questions: "The unseemly anxiety which he is showing to keep the matter with him, the undue priority which he has accorded to the matter and the undue haste which he is showing to dispose of the matter have not gone unnoticed by the people..."

This was unprecedented enough. But there was more to come. Once the V.P. Singh government fell, several other entities felt that the new regime would not pursue the case with the necessary vigour. So five parties (three political parties: the BJP, V.P. Singh's Janata Dal and the CPI(M); and two individuals, Padma Bhushan N.Ram and Prashant Bhushan, son of a former law minister) filed applications asking to be impleaded in the case.

Justice Chawla was not impressed. On 6 December, he told Ram Jethmalani, who was appearing on behalf of the Janata Dal: "I will not hear you. I will not hear any of you now. I can't tell you at this stage when I will hear you."

The lawyers were appalled. Ram Jethmalani then walked out of the courtroom declaring: "The proceedings in this case are ceasing to be judicial."

The matter was eventually settled by the Supreme Court, which issued a directive on 10 December asking Chawla to hear the applicants.

Almost as soon as Jethmalani made a legitimate return to the case, he decided to go for Chawla. On 11 December, the courtroom watched in stunned astonishment as Jethmalani made a passionate appeal to the judge:

"In this thoroughly abnormal situation, I say with the greatest humility as an officer of your court that I beg you to rescue yourself from this case. Please don't deal with this case any more."

The suggestion that Chawla was on the verge of committing impropriety was blatant enough and the judge reacted with outrage. He threw his papers on the table and loudly declared that he would not hear the case if the Bar was against him.

That should have been that but in a day's time, Chawla had rediscovered his old enthusiasm for the case. He would continue, he decided after all, adding that he would not be cowed down.

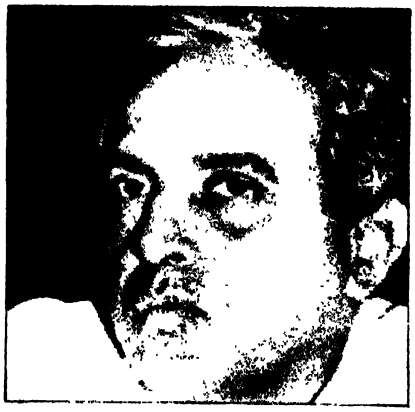
Now, it was the turn of the lawyers to get outraged. The exchanges continued on 13 December with Jethmalani claiming that the judge's statement was an "assault on the rights and privileges of the Bar".

Apart from the anger and the outrage, there was also the legal matter.



Ram Jethmalani

Five new parties ask to be impleaded. Jethmalani asks the judge to step down



Subramaniam Swamy

The new government counsel argues the opposite brief. Law minister Subramaniam Swamy backs him



Rajiv Gandhi

Oddly enough, it is now Rajiv Gandhi who wants the investigation to proceed

"The new regime wants the Bofors case quashed"

Says Soli Sorabjee, the former attorney-general

If there is one thing that is troubling former attorney-general (AG) Soli Sorabjee these days, it is the manner in which the Chandra Shekhar regime is pursuing the Bofors case, which at present is being heard in the Delhi High Court. Says Sorabjee, "It is obvious that the new government wants the Bofors case quashed. But why don't they say so? This is because they don't have the candour to withdraw the request to the Swiss authorities and want to use the judicial machinery by devious means."

Personally, Sorabjee was convinced that there would be little headway in the Bofors case now. The intentions of the new government, he feels, is clear enough: the director of the CBI, who was pursuing the case, was axed and the new attorney-general, G. Ramaswamy, has admittedly been consulted by the Hindujas in the past. "Therefore," feels Sorabjee, "the high tradition required that he (Ramaswamy) should not touch the case."

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

Hadn't Chawla declared in an open courtroom that he did not want to hear the case? The counsels for the impleaders (the parties that had later demanded a right to be heard) took the line that according to law "a judgement of a High Court judge becomes effective the moment he pronounces it verbally in court".

Nonsense, responded Chawla. "You mean I have no right to change my mind?"

By now any detached observer might have begun to wonder what the proceedings had to do with Bofors—or with jurisprudence for that matter. But there was more to come.

The Chandra Shekhar government asked K.T.S. Tulsi, the additional solicitor- general to represent it in the case. Tulsi's job ought to have been to defend the FIRs and I.R and argue against the public interest petition.

But that wasn't the way it came across.

Rising to support the government's position, Tulsi told the court that the CBI's FIR "did not contain any definite charges or allegations against specific persons and it relied only on some inferences and referred to some documents."

This argument caused widespread incredulity in the courtroom because it seemed to suggest that Tulsi was arguing the other side's brief. An outraged CBI official, K. Madhavan (who has made numerous foreign trips while pursuing the case) then got up and offered to make a submission on behalf of the CBI against the government counsel's stance.

Enter Subramaniam Swamy. The new law minister is technically the man who decides what to do if his officials behave strangely. So it was to Swamy that lawyers and the media turned.

Yes, said Swamy, a public official had behaved strangely. And he thought action should be taken against Madhavan.

Madhavan?

Absolutely, retorted the law minister. The CBI officer had no business getting up in court and trying to contradict poor Tulsi, who was only doing his job.

This declaration caused even more amazement than any of the bizarre goings-on that had characterised the trial so far. How could Swamy possibly claim that he was satisfied with Tulsi?

Justice M.K. Chawla



By some accounts, the Prime Minister's Office then got in on the act and Tulsi was replaced. The government announced that A.D. Giri, the new solicitor-general, would personally argue the case.

But Swamy was unrepentant. He stood by his earlier stand, he said. The only reason he was replacing Tulsi was because he feared for the poor man's safety. Apparently, he had received threats to his life and a concerned law minister thought that it would be better for him if he was off the case.

Nobody can predict with any degree of certainty what will happen next. Justice Chawla has now passed the stage where he can be embarrassed. He has only a few days left in office (because of court vacations) and little to lose. From all appearances, he will fight any attempt to take the case away from him. Perhaps he will even manage to deliver a judgement before he retires.

The judiciary, however, is not past the stage where it cannot be embarrassed. And over the last fortnight, there has been such sustained criticism of Chawla's role in the case from lawyers and the media that the reputation of the Bench has come under something of a cloud. This has distressed most reasonable members of the legal fraternity.

Meanwhile, having declared that the Bofors enquiry was a sub-inspector's job, the Prime Minister now seems loathe to even nominate that sub-inspector. Rajendra Shekhar, the upright director of the CBI has been transferred and Madhavan who, despite his reputation as a tired and emotional junketeer, at least understood the case, is in disgrace.

Oddly enough, the failure to proceed with the enquiry has drawn an angry response from an unusual quarter. The Congress(I) is confident that should the names of the beneficiaries come out, they will exonerate Rajiv Gandhi and his friends. Thus, this delay has caused some muttering at 10, Janpath.

If anybody pushes Chandra Shekhar into speeding up the investigation, it will be Rajiv Gandhi.

In this bizarre comedy of errors, that will be the final twist. ●

Minu Jain/New Delhi

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Brahmin power

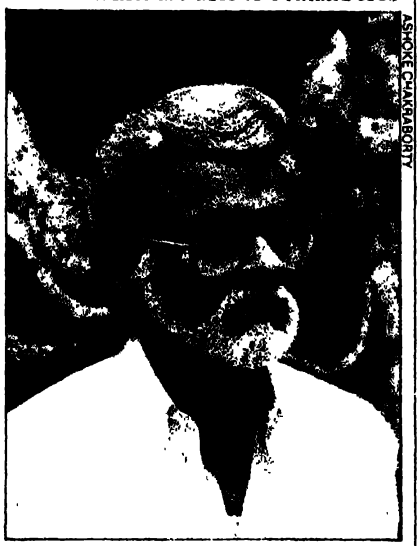


I have a consuming interest in castes without having the slightest bit of prejudice for or against any of them. Whenever I am in a conference, seminar or a social function, I count how many of the most important belong to what castes. It has never been more than a matter of curiosity. But one conclusion is inevitable: whatever be the sphere of curiosity—literary, scientific, bureaucratic or whatever—the Brahmin remains the top dog. It may be ethnic; or it may be the result of several generations of learning of which they held the monopoly till the last century, or both combined. Before I give details, we should bear in mind that Brahmins form no more than 3.5 per cent of the population of our country.

My statistics come from a pen friend, Brother Stanny, of St. Anne's Church of Dhule in Maharashtra. He has compiled figures of different castes in government employment during British rule in 1935 and as they were 35 years after Independence in 1982. During British rule, the largest proportion of government jobs (40 per cent) were held by Kayasthas. Today their figure has dropped to 7 per cent. Next came the Muslims who were given special privileges by the British. They had 35 per cent jobs in 1935; in free India their representation has dropped to 3.5 per cent. Christians likewise favoured by the English had 15 per cent; their figure has dropped to 1 per cent. Scheduled Castes, tribes and backward classes, who had hardly any government jobs, have achieved a representation of 9 per cent. But the most striking contrast is in the employment of Brahmins. Under the British they had 3 per cent—fractionally less than the proportion of their population; today they hold as much as 70 per cent of government jobs—I presume the figure refers only to gazetted posts. In the senior echelons of the civil service from the rank of deputy secretaries upwards, out of 500 there are 310 Brahmins, ie 63 per cent; of the 26 state chief secretaries, 19 are Brahmins; of the 27 Governors and Lt. Governors 13 are Brahmins; of the 16 Supreme Court judges, 9 are Brahmins; of the 330 judges of the High Courts, 166 are Brahmins; of 140 ambassadors, 58 are Brahmins; of 98 vice-chancellors 50 are Brahmins; of 438 district magistrates, 250 are Brahmins; of the total of 3,300 IAS officers 2,376 are Brahmins. They do equally well in electoral posts: of the 530 Lok Sabha members, 190 are Brahmins; of 244 in the Rajya Sabha, 89 are Brahmins. These statistics clearly prove that this 3.5 per cent of Brahmin community of India holds between 36 per cent to 63 per cent of all the plum jobs available in the country. How this has come about I do not know. But I can scarcely believe that it is entirely due to the Brahmins' higher IQ.

Satish Gujral

The creative artist has never had it so good. Our top singers and instrumentalists are able to demand fees



ASHOKE CHAKRABORTY

Satish Gujral: a money spinner

of between Rs 50,000 to Rs one lakh in hard cash per performance. Paintings by celebrated artists fetch upto Rs 3 lakh per piece. Satish Gujral, who combines painting, sculpture and architecture as his specialities, has become one of the biggest money spinners of our times. Last week he had an exhibition of 23 of what he describes as icons on the Ganapati theme. I got to see them two days after the inauguration. By then 21 exhibits had little red *bindis* indicating they had been sold. I was curious to find out how much they had fetched and who were the buyers. Since there was no catalogue or price list available, I approached Satish and his lovely wife Kiran who interprets for him. I could not extract details of the price of each piece but Satish told me that the majority of buyers were Indians; only one piece had been bought by the ambassador of Brazil. "Middle class Indians like you and me have come into the art market in a big way. They think nothing of spending between Rs 35,000 and Rs 60,000 for a painting," he said. And added, "For appreciation of art or as investment, I do not know." However, amongst the purchasers were the Birlas—nothing middle class about them.

The icons are made of charred wood and leather to give it the required pitch-black and sombre background. The rest of the woodwork is covered with gold dust. Blue and red beads are placed at strategic points. Though it is difficult for the untrained eye to locate Ganapati's trunk, arms or paunch, the effect is quite spectacular and pleasing. One can sense how much visualisation and work had gone into every piece. It must have taken him years to mould or chisel the wood before it fitted the image he had conceptualised. The one thing missing was the rat which is Ganapati's *vahanum* (vehicle). I put it to him, "*Chhoohey nahin hain*!" He smiled broadly and replied, "*Daur gaye*—they ran off when I put up the icons for public display."

Happy ending

At a recent Lions Club meeting, a political heavyweight gave a very long speech to the embarrassment of all members. However, his beaming private secretary said, "This political speech had a happy ending." At the end of the row one member was heard to remark, "Yes, it was so, everybody was happy when it ended."

(Contributed by R.N. Lakhotia) ●

You don't need the magic of a maestro's touch to be a Raymond's man



What paint and brush were to Picasso, the Santoor is to Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma – an extension of a supremely creative will. In his inspired hands, the Santoor has transcended rhythm and melody and sings to the world in the inspired language of his beloved Kashmir.

The world has, in turn,

responded with accolade and honour: the Sangeet Natak Academy Award, Honorary Citizenship of the City of Baltimore, Indian Classical music's first Platinum Disc for The Call of the Valley and special performances before the House of Lords in Britain, and the Queen of Holland, Chief Guest of India's President, at the Hague.

On social occasions, when heads turn at his presence, it is certainly *not* because of his flawless sherwani which may just happen to be tailored from Raymond's sparkle polyester, wool and silk. A fabric with impeccable feel and fall, it never fails to sing the praises of its wearer.

You don't have to be a musical genius to be a Raymond's man. For that matter, you don't even have to be a Raymond's man.

... but it helps.



Raymond's

Never say no to life.

Leaving home

Ethnic violence drives Sindhis across the border and into Rajasthan

Amid controversy over Pakistan's role in the Punjab unrest, Pakistan is busy thinking up ways of accusing India of fiddling with Sind. At least that is what the Pakistani Hindus seeking refuge in India believe. And recently there has been an influx of such hapless aliens in Rajasthan.

"The Pakistani police blame us for spying and smuggling arms into Sind," says Lakshman Das, a Rajput gardener who fled from Umarkot, Sind, in end-November. Lakshman Das is among the hundreds of Hindus who have been pouring into Jodhpur, Rajasthan, to seek citizenship from the government of India. According to these refugees, more than 600 families arrived in Jodhpur in 1990 itself, because of the political instability across the border. The official figure, of course, is much less. An official of the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) put the number of families seeking refuge at around 200. "It is wrong to call these people refugees," the official said. "They come to India with valid visas which we have been extending from time to time. Whether or not they are granted Indian citizenship is to be decided politically."

The seeds of the present communal unrest had been sown during the 1947 Partition. While thousands of Hindu families continued to live in the border belt of Pakistan, many Mohajirs who were living in India infiltrated across afterwards. "The Mojahirs and the local people of Sind are at war with one another and we Hindus are caught in the crossfire," said Shankar Lal, a cobbler who has come over from Sind.

Unfortunately, in Sind, the reality is far worse than just an unrest between two communities. Not only are the Hindus in a minority there: they are also economically the weakest community and therefore susceptible to harassment and intimidation. Today, there are four major politiçal forces operating in Sind, and the student wings of all the groups have taken up a militant posture against the Hindus. Arms are frequently used and proudly flashed and, as one migrant described it, during a shoot-out, most of the roof tops are "taken" by one armed group or another.

The movement launched by the Muslim inhabitants of Sind is called the "Jiye Sind Movement" and is headed by the aged Gulam Mohammad Sayeed. The people of the Jiye Sind have for decades been at loggerheads with the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM), whose leader, Altaf Hussain, is dreaded by most Hindus. Also in the fray for autonomous rule in Sind are the Pathan leaders, most of whom have settled in the region from Afghanistan and Baluchistan and have added an extra dimension to the economic struggle in the state. The Pathans initially came to Pakistan as refugees; were given a dole by the government but gradually began to arm themselves and usurp business including the transportation trade. There are allegations, however, of the government giving arms freely to the Pathans to continue the period of instability in Sind.

The first bloody clashes between the Pathans and the Mohajirs started around 1986. President Zia had tried to suppress both the armed factions and several colonies of Pathans had been flattened by bulldozers. By the time Benazir Bhutto came to power, the scenario had somewhat changed. Bhutto went into an electoral alliance with Altaf Hussain, who brought her a rich haul of seats from Sind. However, Benazir also began to support Wali Khan, a prominent Pathan leader, and the Mohajirs began to campaign against her.

Again, there have been occasions when activists of the Jiye Sind and Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) have joined hands. The PPP is the fourth political front which the Hindus have to deal with in Sind, and with its activists and those of the Jiye Sind joining hands, the differences between the Mohajirs came into sharper focus.



Many of the Hindus who have come over from Sind complain that they are treated like second-rate citizens, if not bonded labour, in Pakistan. Among the 200 families who have rented small houses in Jodhpur's Housing Board Colony is that of a Rajput, Sukh Ram, who lives with his wife Ganga and two children. Sukh Ram ran a watch-repair shop in Umarkot, before he fled. According to him, most of the Hindus are forced to desert their homes because of their religion. "We are not allowed to pray peacefully in the temple or celebrate Hindu festivals," he said.

Also, it seems that Hindus in Sind are even finding it difficult to perform the last rites, in the event of a death in the family. At several places in Sind, cremation grounds have been usurped by the Mohajirs and funeral processions would be pelted with stones. Women were not safe either. "Though we are much poorer in India, at least here we can live with respect," said a vividly relieved Ganga. "I never want to go back to Sind."

For a majority of such families, Jodhpur has been a first choice for resettlement, though a trickle of aliens has also reached Bombay and Ahmedabad. The Sindhis are granted three-month visa permits at the Wagah-Attari border, and mostly travel to Amritsar by train. But, in view of the persistent threat of military aggression between India and Pakistan, the Government of India has prohibited resettlement along border towns like Barmer, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. The desert city of Jodhpur is an obvious choice as it already has a sizeable Sindhi population and accommodation is





For most such Sindhi families, Jodhpur is the first choice for resettlement, though a trickle of aliens has also reached Bombay and Ahmedabad. They are granted three-month visa permits at the Wagah-Atari border

cheaper than in other parts of the country.

This is the third time that there has been such a heavy influx of Hindus from Sind—the first two being after the 1965 and 1971 wars. In those years, the refugees infiltrated illegally into Rajasthan, and a majority of them were eventually granted citizenship when the BJP came to power in the state. It also helped the party electorally, with the votes of the newly-registered citizens assured to the party. And now the question of citizenship seems to be in the melting pot again.

Though hundreds had filled forms for citizenship, these aliens have little hope of anything materialising soon. But it seems that during the Congress(I) regime many of them got their names in the voters' list and even got ration cards, though they are still officially Pakistani citizens. The method was easy, and still in practice, says Narayan Das, who had migrated from Sind as early as 1982: some relatives of the Hindus from Sind would stand guarantee for the aliens in Rajasthan and the Pakistani families would keep getting their visas renewed every three months.

Giving accounts of their life in Sind, the Hindus recount how every time there was a Hindu-Muslim clash in India, it would have its repurcussions in Pakistan. It started with the communal riots in Meerut last year. And ever since the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi issue has flared into a major controversy across the border, the Mohajirs in Sind have been making life difficult for Hindus there.

In fact, there is a clear parallel between the situation in Sind,and in Punjab,today. Only, while the militants in Punjab have a common demand for the formation of a separate Sikh state; in Sind there are disparate groups, of different communities, all wanting control of the fertile province. Both Punjab and Sind are agriculturally highly productive areas and while Punjab is the grain basket of the country, Sind has the added attraction of having the port of Karachi. More recently, oil has been struck in Sind—all the more reason why the Mohajirs, the Sindhis and the Pathans want to gain control over what is described as the "heart of Pakistan ".

What is not known is that the violence in Sind has reached the level of terrorism in Punjab. Around ten people are killed in communal clashes every day. Nand Lal, a cobbler who has come to Jodhpur's Pratap Nagar from Hyderabad, Sind, described how even children are seen armed with Kalashnikovs. The colleges are schools for armed activists. "If the Mohajirs get to know there is a wedding, they will come and take away the jewellery," said Lal. "Things did not improve when Benazir took over and we think they will worsen now that Nawaz Sharif is the Prime Minister."

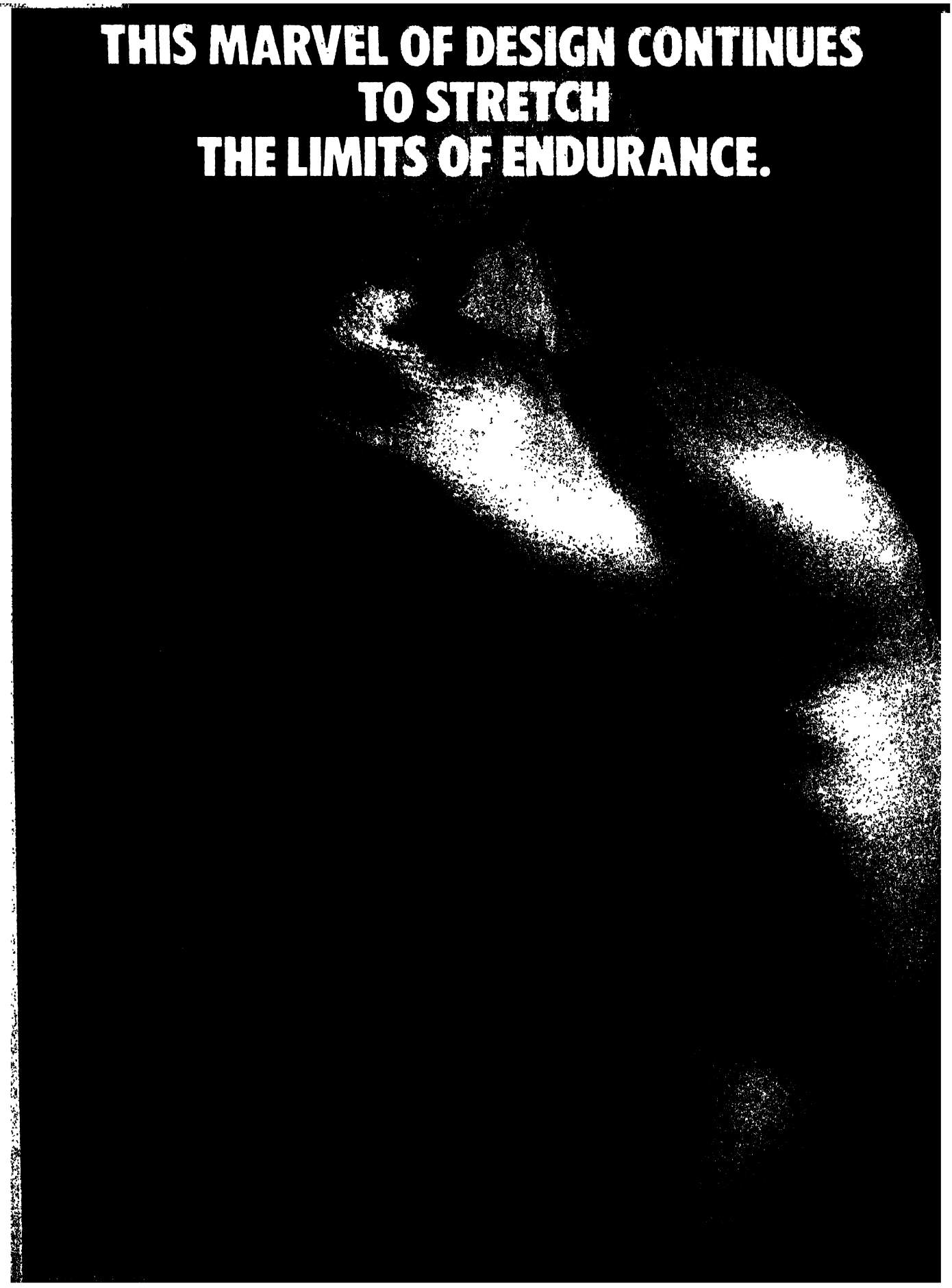
Ever since the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi issue flared into a major controversy in India, the Mohajirs in Sind have been making life difficult for Hindus in Pakistan

The frequent ethnic violence in Sind was one of the factors that brought Benazir down in this election. And the new PM, Nawaz Sharif, who was earlier the chief minister of Punjab, is not really much concerned about the rival state of Sind. In fact, none of the Pakistani leaders have taken decisive steps to curb the flow of Hindus out of Sind. They seem to be encouraging Hindus to leave the country. Chela Ram, a 16-year-old boy, whose father had fled from Sind in 1947, declared: "We all think here that Pakistan is a country for Muslims and only Hindustan is the country for us Hindus."

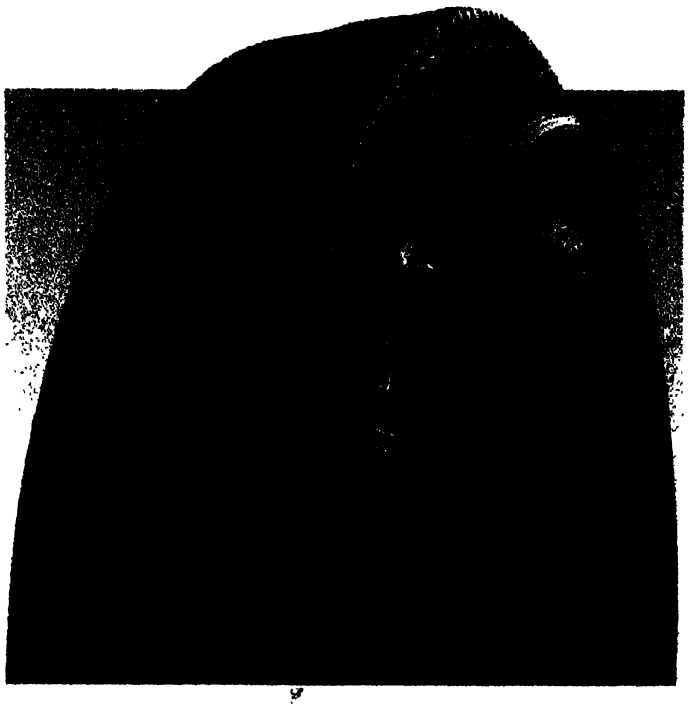
Such feelings will only aggravate the sense of alienation between the two communities in Sind, and probably make things more trying for the Hindus living there. Though there is pressure on the Indian government to grant citizenship to the Hindu Sindhis, their rehabilitation can trigger off a diplomatic controversy. Presently, the refugee problem does not only comprise the people from Sind, but also refugees from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The people from Sind might be trickling into Rajasthan in ones and twos every day, but granting them citizenship would invite similar demands from thousands of people of other nationalities who have been waiting at India's doorstep for years. ●

Ritu Sarin/Jodhpur

THIS MARVEL OF DESIGN CONTINUES TO STRETCH THE LIMITS OF ENDURANCE.



SO DOES THIS.



For once we disagreed with international experts.

Performance is fine. That's why the R-90 responds to acceleration, steering and braking with the grace of a ballerina.

But what we considered more critical was the endurance factor.

So we built more rubber into the tread (5mm to be exact), lowered the rolling drag and made the R-90 more resistant to wear and tear.

We strengthened the sidewall by adding a flex - durable compound. And beefed it up further with an unique sidewall protector rib.

We broke another convention. We heat-set the nylon not once, but twice. So the R-90 could better cushion the impact from potholes and bumps.

What about the international experts? Were they unhappy?

On the contrary. Their words reaffirmed what lakhs of car-owners have always believed about the R-90.

"It's a miracle!"

R90 EXECUTIVE
Car Tyre

A MIRACLE OF DESIGN.

Modi Tyres



When you forecast a blazing year ahead for your product, you surely didn't expect this.

To be optimistic is indeed a positive attitude. Especially about the future. Record sales. Higher profitability. Better working conditions...

But while you look at all the things that should go right, it makes good business sense to consider what could go wrong. A riot that affects your office. A fire in the warehouse. A damaged consignment. An accident in the plant.

At United India, we've spent years understanding risk. And how it can be reduced, controlled and covered. Because, we believe that the greatest business risk you could ever take is to ignore the ones you already face.

Come, call on us at any of our 1120 offices. Together, let's make risk management work for you. Risk management which denotes innovative covers, personalised service, and speedy settlement of claims.

UNITED INDIA INSURANCE CO. LTD.

(A subsidiary of General Insurance Corporation of India)



TROOPS PATROLLING ALIGARH: a riot-ravaged city

Winter of hatred

A wave of communal madness sweeps across the country

It all began on 4 December, in the Ganj Dundwara area of Etah district. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Uma Bharti was scheduled to address a public meeting and insisted on passing through the Muslim-majority area of Patiyali Gate *en route* to the rally. Despite the possibility that violence may result, given the surcharged atmosphere, the administration chose not to prevent Bharti. The procession wound its way through the narrow lanes of the Muslim locality, raising provocative slogans. The BJP MP, of course, claimed that some persons shot on her motorcade from a mosque, injuring one of those accompanying her, a charge strenuously denied by the police.

But whatever the truth of the matter, it wasn't long before rioting broke out. Shops belonging to both communities were looted and destroyed. And as highly exaggerated reports of the violence did the rounds, Muslims in nearby villages were also assaulted and killed. Within two days, the official death toll stood at 15.

Worse was to follow. By 7 December, the day after the *kar sevaks* commenced their peaceful *satyagraha* at Ayodhya for the "liberation" of Ram Janmabhoomi, communal violence had erupted in several Uttar Pradesh towns and down south in the city of Hyderabad. As the number of dead and wounded increased with every passing day and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) let loose a reign of terror in the best traditions of Maliana, it was clear that things would never be the same again.

As the politicians played their games and the policemen shirked their responsibilities, nobody seemed to care for the innocent men, women and children who lose out in every communal riot

In Hyderabad, a private land dispute sparked off the riots. One person was stabbed in this connection on 6 December and in no time at all the city was in the throes of a communal conflagration. The death toll said it all: 17 killed on 7 December, 30 on the 8th, 13 on the 9th, 11 on the 10th, eight on the 11th , ten on the 12th, 13 on the 13th...Charred bodies were left on the roadside by frenzied mobs who appeared from nowhere and then disappeared into the narrow bylanes of the walled city. The army was called in by the beleaguered Chenna Reddy government, but the violence continued.

As both communities claimed to be the worst-affected, the traffic of the dead and injured continued at the Osmania General Hospital even a week after the orgy of violence. Both

Hindus and Muslims began deserting their homes for safer places, fearing a repeat of the rioting.

The Andhra Pradesh chief minister took the view that the riots had been engineered by his rivals within the party to discredit him and the violence was being perpetrated by hired goons. The team of AICC(I) observers blamed the BJP, while it, in turn, passed the buck on to the Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM). And while the politicians quibbled on this issue, the situation got progressively worse.

The communal divide was apparent even in the police force. On 12 December, for instance, a Muslim constable shot dead his superior officer, an additional commissioner of police (ACP), while the latter was talking to headquarters over the wireless. Apparently, the constable was upset at the stern measures the officer had taken against some Muslim demonstrators and resorted to this extreme step to express his displeasure. Not surprisingly, after this incident police officials displayed considerable nervousness about going on their rounds, accompanied by Muslim juniors.



THE ARMY IN HYDERABAD: uneasy calm

In Aligarh, the communalisation of the security forces was only too apparent. Trouble began in the city on 6 December, when two Hindus allegedly attacked Munni Devi, a Hindu woman who'd been living with Nabi Sher, a Muslim milk vendor. Sher retaliated the next morning with his men, and soon large-scale rioting had commenced in the city.

On 9 December, after Friday prayers at the Jama Masjid in the Uppercoat area, a PAC constable Vijendra Singh was reportedly attacked by

CALENDAR OF CARNAGE

Over the last fortnight, communal violence erupted in several parts of the country, especially in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

6 December

The BJP and the VHP offer peaceful *satyagraha* at **Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh).** However, a stabbing incident sparks off widespread violence.

7 December

Communal violence spreads to other towns of Uttar Pradesh. In **Aligarh,** three persons are killed and 12 seriously injured in the arson. Indefinite curfew is imposed and the paramilitary forces are called out.

In the **Etah** district, ten persons are killed in communal clashes and shops belonging to both the warring communities are set on fire.

VICTIMS OF HYDERABAD RIOTS: mostly innocents



COURTESY DECCAN CHRONICLE

In **Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh),** 16 persons are killed and over 50 injured in a spate of stabbing incidents and police firing. The old city, in particular, witnesses widespread arson.

8 December

The riots in Hyderabad continue unabated. The death toll rises to 37. The army is called out to assist the civil administration. Meanwhile, violence erupts in fresh areas of UP—in **Kanpur,** police round up anti-social elements as a precautionary measure.

9 December

Hyderabad is handed over to the army as violence engulfs the whole city. The death toll mounts to 72.

One minister in Chenna Reddy's government, Srinivasulu Reddy, resigns, charging the chief minister with being personally responsible for the



RAJESH KUMAR



THE PAC AT A TROUBLE SPOT: a communal force?

the crowd that emerged from the mosque. Some policemen alleged that shots were fired from the *masjid* while petrol bombs and grenades were hurled by the crowd. The Muslim version, however, was that the sound of a bomb blast in the neighbouring Sarai Sultan induced panic in the crowd. The PAC jawans immediately opened fire, killing two persons. And it wasn't long before the Hindus joined the PAC offensive. Even the imposition of curfew didn't deter the PAC. In Manubhanja, Jogipara, Khydora, Kazipura and several other areas, the jawans went on a rampage. On 9 December, some of them stopped an ambulance carrying medicines to the affected areas, and beat up the driver.

The same story was repeated in Kanpur. On 11 December, a number of Muslim-owned shops in the Gumti area were set ablaze, apparently with the connivance of the police. At the Hiramanka Purwa outpost, where it was rumoured that a call to resist the PAC had been given from a mosque, the jawans went berserk and opened fire on those emerging from the *masjid*. At Phulamati Tirha, a Muslim-dominated area, a group of women and children, who were moving from one locality to another, were stopped at gunpoint by the PAC.

But the most shocking incident took place at Goshiana in Chamanganj, where six persons including a woman and her two children were shot down because they were "defying the curfew". It was only after Subhashini Ali, member of Parliament from Kanpur, pressured the administration that the PAC was pulled out of the streets and confined to police stations.

In Aligarh, kites with virulently

bloodshed. All the educational institutions of the town are ordered closed.

In Aligarh, fresh violence claims six more lives. The Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) is charged with instigating a section of the people. The number of those killed rises to 40.

RIOT-TORN ALIGARH: widespread destruction



11 December

"Communal clashes break out in Kanpur and Ahmedabad (Gujarat). Six people are killed and scores injured in Kanpur while the army stages a flag march in Ahmedabad.

12 December

The situation flares up in Kanpur after the PAC opens fire on a group of children, killing four of them on the spot. The army is called out.

In Ahmedabad, police open fire on two warring groups, killing five people, and in Kanpur, the violence intensifies.

15 December

Chenna Reddy, chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, quits amidst continuing violence in Hyderabad.

In Uttar Pradesh, the communal fire spreads to fresh areas—Agra in particular.

16 December

The death toll in riot-torn Agra mounts to 11. Hyderabad remains tense though no new violent incidents are reported. And in Ahmedabad, police fire 40 rounds to disperse mobs.

17 December

Riots spread to Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh, where 25 persons are killed. Two more people are killed in Hyderabad.

Cassette communalism

Incendiary audio and video-tapes inflame passions and increase violence

Buried amidst the clutter of reports on communal violence, the news item could be missed only too easily. Just when the security forces had restored a semblance of normalcy in one of the bylanes of Hyderabad, some miscreants began playing an audio-cassette on Ayodhya, comprising an inflammatory speech by Sadhvi Rithambra. The tape roused the rabble only too easily. Armed hordes were soon scouring the streets, looking for trouble and some easy targets. And the situation was back to being virtually uncontrollable.

This scary scenario was replayed in almost every city where riots erupted. In Aligarh, Kanpur, Lucknow, Agra, Hyderabad and innumerable small towns of the country, such incendiary cassettes—both audio and video—played on frayed tempers and raised passions to further worsen communal relations and increase violence.

Behind that small news item lurked a story of far greater significance. Technological warfare was being waged between the lunatic fringes of the minority and majority communities, with propagandist video and audio-cassettes being circulated with impunity, while the government pretended that no problem existed.

M.L. KHURANA: careful not to identify with Rithambra's speeches



True, the Delhi administration had banned the playing of Sadhvi Rithambra's cassette, produced by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). But several other cassettes, Dr J.K. Jain's film on Ayodhya among them, remained in circulation, including, claimed VHP members, one containing the Shahi Imam's speech in which he asked Muslims to break the legs of ministers for their failure to control the situation.



SADHVI RITHAMBRA: rabid utterances



DR J.K. JAIN: inflammatory cassette

The Union government took the line that this was a matter for the state governments and local police to contend with. The circulation of these cassettes affected the law and order situation, and since the maintenance of peace was a state concern, the Government of India could not be expected to intervene.

Such Muslim leaders as Insaf Party chief Syed Shahabuddin appealed that the Jain Studios-produced video-film on Ayodhya be banned, but to no avail. The Prime Minister, apparently, met Dr J.K. Jain and asked him in his characteristic style: "*Kyon musibat khadi kar rahe ho, Doctor?* (Why are you creating problems, Doctor?)." But the ban was not forthcoming, despite the BJP video doc declaring, a trifle facetiously, that such a move would benefit him most.

The BJP, however, made out as if the cassette had been banned. The party held demonstrations at Palika Market, New Delhi, playing Rithambra's cassette, earlier publicised as comprising a speech by BJP member of Parliament Uma Bharti, for the benefit of those assembled. And then exhibited the film on Ayodhya, giving the impression that even the video had been banned.

But the BJP members were not charged with playing a banned cassette. Instead, the police arrested them for violating prohibitory orders issued under Section 144, that is, for unlawful assembly. Said M.L. Khurana: "If they had charged us with playing a banned cassette, we would have challenged them in court."

For, the BJP's contention was that the ban was illegal and violative of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. Said party spokesman K.L. Sharma: "People attacked Advaniji and the *rath yatra* every day. No action was taken against them. If the cassette contains anything objectionable, then why has the government not prosecuted Rithambra? Why have they just banned her cassette?"

But the party is careful not to identify itself completely with the rabid utterances of Sadhvi. "If certain sentences had not been there,

K.L.SHARMA: "why ban the cassette ?"



the cassette would have been much better," said M.L. Khurana when asked to comment on Rithambra's statement to the effect that Mahatma Gandhi had destroyed the Hindu community (*"bede garh kar diya"*). Nonetheless, argued Khurana, that was not reason enough to ban the playing of the cassette, especially when the Iman had not been arrested for his inflammatory speech at the Boat Club, despite warrants being out against him.

Dr J.K. Jain, however, transferred the argument to a more elevated plane, deftly turning the controversy into a matter involving the freedom of the electronic media. The 1952 Cinematography Act, said the video doc, had been evolved for the censorship of feature films, ie, fiction, and the government was wrong in arbitrarily extending it to video newsmagazines. "My contention has always been that pre-censorship of information cassettes is illegal and unconstitutional," said Jain. "If no such restrictions are imposed on the print media, why should the electronic media suffer?"

According to the BJP member, he'd been making what he called "political education cassettes" since 1987 for such leaders as Devi Lal and Ram Jethmalani, which were used during election campaigns. None of these had been submitted for censorship and nobody had ever objected to their public distribution. So, why all the fuss about Ayodhya?

The doctor dismissed allegations of communal reporting out of hand, never mind the near-continuous refrain of *'Jai Siya Ram'* on the soundtrack and the frequent references to VHP activists as *Ram bhakts*. His defence: "The media give news as well as views. And the Ayodhya cassette was made with a target audience in mind: that of VHP and BJP members.

It was not a Hindu-Muslim question he was addressing himself to in the cassette, claimed the doctor, but a human rights issue. The police and the state administration had indulged in destruction of evidence, and failed to conduct post-mortems on the bodies of *kar sevaks*. He expressed indignation at the [illegible] as if nothing of consequence had happened at Ayodhya. In such a situation, it was the duty of the media to project the truth.

Taking the lead from Dr Jain, the BJP and VHP propagandists also posed as crusaders of the *desi* version of Amnesty International. Said B.L. Sharma, general secretary of the VHP's Delhi unit: "If anyone talks of atrocities on Muslims, nobody objects. But if we try to project the injustice done to Hindus, we are said to be communal."

The BJP's position, then, was that it was absurd to take to task those who informed people about a crime, while letting off those who had committed it. Instead of banning the Ayodhya (and such other) cassettes, the authorities should investigate the events of 30 October and 2 November and punish those guilty of atrocities against the people.



CURFEW-BOUND HYDERABAD: mindless mayhem

Nonetheless, the VHP was planning to appeal to the Delhi High Court against the order banning the Rithambra tape, according to B.L. Sharma. And Dr Jain was just waiting to be prosecuted for distributing the Ayodhya video-cassette so that he could challenge the government's right to pre-censor information cassettes, while minister of state for information and broadcasting Subodh Kant Sahay maintained bravely that if "someone walks around naked on the street I don't need any legislation to stop him".

Clearly, it would be a long time before the last was heard of cassette communalism. ●

anti-Muslim slogans were flown and the Dr J.K. Jain-produced film on Ayodhya beamed through dish antennae. Protests by the Muslim community went unheard, while the police made it only too clear where its sympathies lay. For instance, when a group of Muslims were on their way to meet Mufti Abdul Qayoom, the Imam of Aligarh's Jama Masjid, to tell him about the mischievous kites, they were stopped by the PAC. In the ensuing struggle, three people were killed in police firing and curfew imposed.

Despite repeated requests by the residents of the city, however, the PAC continued to patrol Aligarh, while the BJP fact-finding team returned to Delhi to hold a press conference and allege that only Hindus had died in Pakistan-inspired violence.

The Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) was projected as the epicentre of the violence by BJP leader V.K. Malhotra and others. According to them, hordes of angry young Muslims emerged out of the campus every day, armed to the teeth, and raided Hindu-majority areas. Journalists who'd been on the spot hotly contested this version, but the party stuck to its story.

Disinformation, in fact, was the order of the day. It was widely reported that a PAC jawan, Aparwal Singh, who was fast recovering from a stab injury, had died. On 10 December, all major newspapers reported that several Hindu patients admitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital, situated within the AMU campus, were dragged out of their beds and killed. No such incident had occurred, but the report led to the resurfacing of Hindu fury anyway.



JAGDISH YADAV

***KAR SEVAKS* IN AYODHYA:** rousing communal passions

Eight members of a Muslim family were burnt alive at Katra near Hamdard Nagar the same day. The papers even had it that AMU had been transformed into an arsenal, but barring stray incidents the campus remained quiet.

Contrary to press reports and the stories put out by the BJP fact-finding team, there were no organised offensives launched by the Muslims. Even the Harijans of Saifi Colony, who were attacked by some Muslims admitted that their retaliation had been far more violent, and executed with the connivance of the PAC. As a CPI(M) delegation, which made an on-the-spot assessment of the situation, stated: "Casualties are there on both sides but the brunt has been borne by the minorities."

By 7 December, the day after the *kar sevaks* commenced their *satyagraha* at Ayodhya for the liberation of Ram Janmabhoomi, communal violence erupted in several Uttar Pradesh towns and the city of Hyderabad

Surprisingly enough, Varanasi, the centre of Hindu revivalism in UP, didn't witness large-scale violence, despite the build-up by the BJP and VHP. Said Riazuddin, a member of the Small Scale Weavers' Federation: "The memories of the riots that occurred in November 1989 are still fresh in people's minds. Neither Muslims nor Hindus have forgotten the extent to which their earnings are affected." But while the residents of the city remained passive, students of the Banaras Hindu University created a stir by assaulting a Muslim student and smashing the doors and windows of the Urdu and Persian departments. The students even clashed with the administration on not being allowed to organise a procession within the campus. There was no widespread rioting, though, like other UP towns.

But this didn't hold out much comfort for the government, as the communal virus spread to other areas. On 14 December, 11 persons, including nine children were locked up within a house in Bulandshahar district and burnt alive. The VHP's *asthi kalash yatra*, with the urns of those killed in the firing at Ayodhya, inflamed passions in Agra, and curfew was imposed on the tourist city after incidents of stabbing were reported.

The credibility of the security forces reached rock-bottom when policemen in Aligarh refused to resume duty after one of their colleagues was attacked, and demonstrated outside the office of the senior superintendent of police (SSP). And the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, made matters worse by asking that the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force be deployed in Uttar Pradesh as the Muslims had lost faith in the local police force. The BJP and the VHP reacted only too quickly terming the call "anti-national", going on to allege that massive infiltration had taken place from Afghanistan and Pakistan and that it was these foreigners who were clashing with the PAC and giving it a bad reputation.

It was a time for pointing fingers and levelling charges. But as the politicians played their games and the policemen shirked their responsibilities, nobody seemed to care for the innocent men, women and children who lose out in every communal riot.

They are the true victims of this winter of hatred. •

Radhika Ramaseshan/Uttar Pradesh and R. Bhagwan Singh/Hyderabad



Reddy, unsteady, gone

Communal violence accounts for a second Congress chief minister

In many ways, the parallels between Karnataka's Veerendra Patil and Andhra Pradesh's Chenna Reddy were too stark to ignore. Both were Congress chief ministers at odds with party president Rajiv Gandhi; both became victims of the communal violence that ravaged their states; and both were asked by the party high command to go.

The similarities, however, ended there. While the riots in Karnataka provided just the excuse that Rajiv Gandhi needed to fire Patil, the Congress president seemed to be—initially at least—in two minds about Chenna Reddy's continuance. Then, while Patil defied his party president by refusing to resign until the end, Chenna Reddy—after a brief display of reluctance—stepped aside without a fight. And, finally, while Patil was regarded as an innocent victim of Rajiv's temperamental ways, there were few tears shed for Chenna Reddy. Most people—whether in the Congress, the Opposition or the press—felt he deserved to go.

If Reddy, unlike Patil, left unsung, it was partly because of the extent of the communal violence which consumed Hyderabad for much of the last fortnight—perhaps, the worst in recent memory. His own explanation for the carnage—which he attributed to Congress dissidents—was hardly convincing. At the same time, there were allegations that Reddy himself was responsible for the state police's failure to check the riots as he had, time and again, interfered in the affairs of the force. And then, there were the numerous and growing problems during his year-long reign—particularly, the Naxalite menace and Congress dissidence.

Reddy believed the writing was on the wall ever since the five-member Congress team led by Balram Jakhar arrived in Hyderabad on the evening of 9 December—three days after the violence broke. "They are Rajiv's hatchet-men," his supporters kept suggesting. "He has sent them to do his dirty work." Sources close to 10 Janpath, however, denied the allegation and suggested that it was Chenna Reddy's attitude to the fact-finding mission that finally made up Rajiv's mind.

Although most of the local press did not buy Jakhar's repeated assertion that "the team was not a fault-finding mission and was only there to assess the situation", there were indications that the 'hatchet-men' theory may have been somewhat simplistic. For one, the team squarely blamed the carnage on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Majlis Ittehadul Musalmeen (MIM) and suggested that the violence was a fall-out of the *satyagraha* to perform *kar seva* in Ayodhya. Moreover, the fact-finding mission went as far as commending some of the measures that the state government took to contain the violence.

Whatever the truth, there is little doubt that Chenna Reddy resented the presence of the team. The first slight, in the former chief minister's eyes, was its decision to meet state government officials and visit the riot-affected old city area before calling on him. Then, when pro-Chenna Reddy legislators tried to accompany the delegation to the old city, in order to brief it on the violence, they were told brusquely by team-member P.Chidambaram to stay away. To make matters worse, the team sought the assistance of APCC(I) chief V. Hanumantha Rao, a Rajiv Gandhi loyalist, during its visits.

What really upset Chenna Reddy, however, were the complaints of Chidambaram's behaviour. The Congress MP is said to have behaved like the state home minister ordering police officials about and even transferring some of them out of the riot-hit areas. Understandably, Reddy expressed his displeasure at the team's behaviour to the party high command. "They are trying to undermine my role as chief minister," he complained. It is not clear how Rajiv responded to this but Jakhar, at any rate, was at pains to clarify the role of the delegation to the local press, which by now was full of stories about how Chidambaram had insulted Chenna Reddy. The former Lok Sabha Speaker, who had earlier admitted that there were lapses on the part of the state government, now gave the impression that all the team had done was to go around the sensitive areas and suggest steps to improve the situation. "It is up to the chief minister to accept our suggestions or not," said Jakhar.

By the time, the Congress team left Hyderabad for New Delhi on the evening of 11 December, there was no doubt that it was going to blame Chenna Reddy's government for failing to contain the violence. The chief minister, however, told the press that there was no question of his stepping down. After all, communal riots occur sporadically in Hyderabad, he argued. And wasn't what happened in the state capital this time related to the Ayodhya *kar sevaks* anyway?

To an extent, Chenna Reddy's attitude was related to his meeting with the Congress team just before its departure. Its members had expressed satisfaction about the "corrective measures" that he had taken recently particularly, the arrests of BJP and MIM leaders. This has had a great impact on improving the situation Reddy was told.

The team also gave the chief minister the impression that there was no question of replacing him at that juncture—when the city was still in turmoil. It is probable that Reddy was deluded into believing that he had saved his chair. For, he was shocked and angry the following day when Congress MP M.L. Fotedar called up and asked him to resign. Reddy is said to have banged the phone down after complaining that the violence was engineered by Congress dissidents.

On the same night, the chief minister summoned some of his loyalist ministers and MLAs and told them he was going to quit. He even showed them a copy of a resignation letter he had drafted to Rajiv Gandhi. It was to reach the party president first thing the next morning (13 December), Reddy told them.

The news of his decision to step down was broadcast by All India Radio that day. And the next morning's newspapers front-paged similar stories. But, to everyone's surprise, Reddy decided against sending that letter to Rajiv. And soon enough, Hyderabad was agog with speculation and rumour. 'Had the high command undergone a change of heart?' 'Had Reddy decided to defy Rajiv?' 'Is he going to be the next Veerendra Patil?'

It is not very clear what led Chenna Reddy to hold out. But to Rajiv's frustration and anger, the septuagenarian chief minister behaved as if nothing had changed. He called for a meeting of the state Cabinet on 14 December, which was cancelled at the last minute on the orders of Rajiv himself.

One theory went that Reddy was delaying his resignation for a couple of days so that he could hand out favours. The 14 December Cabinet meeting, for instance, was to grant permission to two private sector groups—Essar of Gujarat and GVK of Andhra—to build power plants at Kakinada and Rajahmundry. Both of these proposed decisions were controversial as plant construction was initially handed over to the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC). Moreover, the prices tendered by Essar and GVK were not the lowest.

There was another reason to believe that Reddy was planning to use his last few days as chief minister for this purpose. On the 14th and 15th, he appointed as many as 40 chairmen to government corporations. In some cases, the beneficiaries themselves brought appointment letters to the chief minister's secretariat for Reddy's signature. As many of the appointees were state legislators, it seemed likely that Reddy was trying to gather support within the party before stepping down.

Seeing the way things were going, Rajiv decided it was time to turn the screws on Reddy. On the evening of the 14th, Congress spokesman V.N. Gadgil announced in Delhi that the party's working committee had decided to accept the chief minister's 'resignation'. A letter containing Reddy's offer to quit had supposedly been received by party president Rajiv Gandhi that morning.

If the Congress high command believed that Reddy would immediately follow this up with a resignation letter to Andhra Governor Krishna Kant, it was mistaken. And on the following day (the 15th), Gadgil was grilled by the press about Reddy's stubborness. "Where is the delay?" an embarrassed Gadgil snapped. "We expect Dr Reddy to go to the Governor in the course of today." Later that day, the AICC(I) spokesman told the press that Reddy had informed Krishna Kant of

THE RACE TO THE TOP

INITIALLY, a number of heavyweights such as J. Vengala Rao, P Shiv Shankar and Vijaybhaskara Reddy lobbied to be made chief minister. But their hopes were deflated with the high command's decision that Chenna Reddy's successor must be elected by the Congress Legislature Party (CLP).



DURGAPRASAD

Vengala Rao



Shiv Shankar

THIS LEFT a few serious contenders. Among them, animal husbandry minister N. Srinivasulu Reddy, former chief minister Nadiendla Bhaskara Rao, APCC(I) chief V. Hanumantha Rao and education minister N. Janardhan Reddy. But the first two were struck down for being unpredictable and unpopular.

his desire to quit. But, in truth, no such thing had happened.

Furious over Reddy's defiance, Rajiv telephoned APCC(I) chief V.Hanumantha Rao in Hyderabad on the evening of the 15th and ordered that he convene a legislature party meeting the following day to elect a new leader. As the right to convene a CLP meeting is the chief minister's alone, Rao contacted Reddy and informed him of Rajiv's decision. This led Reddy to throw in the towel: he called Krishna Kant late that night and told him that the much-awaited letter would reach him the next morning (the 16th). Krishna Kant invited Reddy for breakfast, during which his resignation was finally handed over.

Meanwhile, the Congress dissidents, who had been pressing for Reddy's ouster, were lobbying desperately for the post. Among the aspirants were heavyweights such as former Union minister P. Shiv Shankar and former chief ministers Jalagam Vengala Rao and Vijaybhaskara Reddy. Former Governor P. Venkatasubbaiah and MP Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy also jockeyed to be selected

The hopes of these contenders were squashed when the Congress high command announced that Chenna Reddy's successor would be elected from the state legislature party. This left four serious candidates: education minister N. Janardhan Reddy, animal husbandry minister N. Srinivasulu Reddy, APCC(I) chief V. Hanumantha Rao and former chief minister Nadlenda Bhaskara Rao.

As soon as the four AICC(I) observers—H.K.L. Bhagat, G.K. Moopanar, Janardhan Poojary and A.K. Antony—arrived in the state capital, the Lake View guest house where they stayed became a beehive of activity. In time, the choice was narrowed down

While Veerendra Patil was regarded as an innocent victim of Rajiv Gandhi's temperamental ways, there were few tears shed for Chenna Reddy

even further. Srinivasulu Reddy, who was NTR's number two before he defected to the Congress, was ruled out because of his unpredictability and his tendency to shoot his mouth off. And Nadlenda Bhaskara Rao—the man who betrayed NTR to become chief minister for a few days in 1984—would hardly have been an inspired or popular choice.

This left Hanumantha Rao and N. Janardhan Reddy. Rao's credentials were impressive: he was a hard worker and enjoyed a consistent record of being a Rajiv loyalist. Moreover, he enjoyed backward class support, an impressive attribute in the post-Mandal political scenario. But, in the end, the party bosses finally gave the nod to Janardhan Reddy.

A number of factors advanced Janardhan Reddy's prospects. He was well-disposed to Rajiv, had administrative experience by virtue of being a minister and enjoyed the support of more party MLAs than Rao. But it was caste considerations that swung things his way. Traditionally, the Congress has been dominated by the Reddys in Andhra and it was felt that the state would be more stable in the hands of a Reddy leader. All the same, Janardhan Reddy did receive the support of non-Reddy heavyweights such as J. Vengala Rao and P. Shiv Shankar. Later, Rao complained privately that he was done in by the Reddy combine and betrayed by friends such as Shiv Shankar, who like him is a backward class leader.

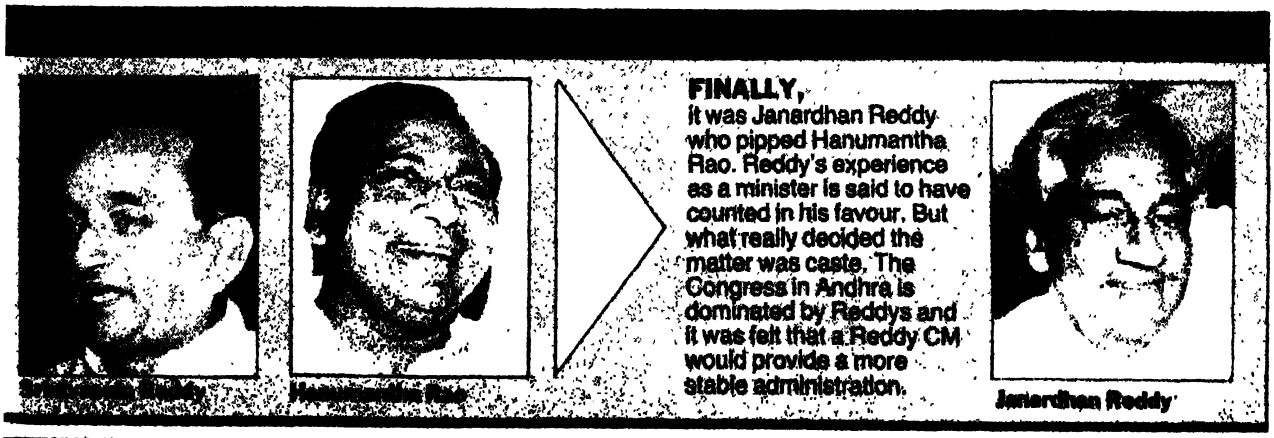
The motions of the CLP meeting were gone through on 16 December and Janardhan Reddy was elected its leader. The new chief minister, however, has his work cut out for him. Apart from ending the communal violence—which has abated but not yet stopped—Janardhan Reddy will have to find ways of containing party dissidence, a problem that dogged Chenna Reddy all through his year-long reign.

In an immediate sense, his first challenge may be the constitution of the Cabinet. Janardhan Reddy had promised just about every third Congress legislator a ministerial post in return for his support. "If he keeps his promise, he will have a Cabinet twice as large as Laloo Prasad Yadav's," muttered a woman M.L.A.

As for Chenna Reddy, it is difficult to say what he will do now. Some estimates had it that he enjoys the support of a sizeable 50 M.L.As—a number which was attained after his distribution of largesse. But it appears that many have deserted him. For instance, on 15 December, only 21 of the 36 MLAs invited to breakfast (which was intended to be a show of strength) by one of Reddy's close associates turned up.

One thing, however, is clear. Congress politics in Andhra will be no less turbulent and dissidence-ridden with the exit of Chenna Reddy. There are enough factions in the state to ensure that. ●

R.Bhagwan Singh/Hyderabad



ON THE BRINK

Can Mulayam Singh Yadav survive?

There was a certain inevitability to the denouement. For most of 1990, the rise and rise of Mulayam Singh Yadav has been one of the most extraordinary features of politics. A man who had been dismissed as just another Yadav leader with an inferiority complex about those who spoke English, emerged as the kingmaker of Indian politics and the saviour of Indian Muslims.

And yet, while Mulayam was rewriting the rules of Indian politics, there were those who expressed reservations. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), of course, regarded him as Maulana Mulayam, a traitor to his own people. But even within the Janata Dal, Ajit Singh, his rival for prominence in UP politics, treated him as a mere demagogue, while Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammad Khan believed he was a dangerous rabble-rouser whose actions would damage Muslims more than they would affect Hindus.

In the Congress(I), Mulayam's successful cultivation of a Muslim constituency was treated with alarm as local UP leaders saw their traditional vote-bank slipping away. But Rajiv Gandhi refused to make common cause with Mulayam. His views were not dissimilar to Arun Nehru's: he felt that the UP chief minister was pandering to Muslims and thereby creating new communal conflicts. These views first found expression in Rajiv's now famous SUNDAY interview (*Time to be frank, 12—18 August 1990*) and though they were never again exposed with quite the same force, they guided the Congress' thinking.

Thus, last week, as riots spread across UP and the state administration seemed unable to control them, it was the Congress that made the demand for Mulayam's head. Though Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar tried to shield his friend from Rajiv Gandhi's wrath, the feeling was growing that Mulayam had overplayed his hand.

Yes, he had become the leader of the minority. But he had also become a hate object for the majority.

The way the Congress sees it, the situation is simple enough. The party replaces its chief ministers when they prove incapable of controlling communal violence. It demonstrated this with Veerendra Patil in Karnataka and again, with Chenna Reddy in Andhra Pradesh.

By that criterion, Mulayam has to go. This is the first time that riots have taken place in nearly every important UP town: Kanpur, Meerut, Aligarh, Varanasi, etc. Both the state police and the Provincial Armed Constabulary have also revolted against the Mulayam government.

The man who was dismissed as just another Yadav leader with an inferiority complex about those who spoke English has emerged as the kingmaker of Indian politics and the saviour of the country's Muslims



Moreover, such is Mulayam's personal unpopularity that he finds it impossible to visit areas in his own state. His car is often attacked and his helicopter has been stoned, as it was recently in Nainital. In Chandra Shekhar's own constituency of Ballia, the chief minister stalked off the stage at a public meeting after *chappals* rained down on him.

According to the Congress, such a man cannot be expected to maintain law and order, particularly when the majority community hates him so much. His cultivation of the Muslims might have paid off had he been able to make the minority feel secure, but as Muslim homes have gone up in flames in the current riots, Mulayam has not been able to achieve that either. Also, because the Muslims believe that the state armed constabulary is pro-Hindu, Mulayam is perceived as being unable to protect their interests.

The Congress has another reason for getting rid of Mulayam. The political scare-mongers told Rajiv earlier this year that their party had lost the support of the Muslims to Mulayam. Rajiv did not react. A few months later, when the Janata Dal split, the Congress backed Mulayam against V.P. Singh's efforts to topple him.

Then, the same scare-mongers told Rajiv that their party had lost the support of the Hindus because it backed Mulayam.

So far, at least, Rajiv has been unwilling to accept this see-saw approach, though he must be perturbed by reports that the Congress has lost 12 per cent of its vote to the BJP in UP.

His position is slightly different: forget the vote-bank and concentrate on law and order. Regardless of which community supports/does not support Mulayam, the Congress cannot be expected to back a man who is incapable of maintaining the peace.

There is a logical basis to the Congress argument, but it puts Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar in a difficult situation. At the time when the Congress was first asked to back Mulayam, Rajiv suggested that Yadav be brought to Delhi as Union home minister. Somebody else from within the Janata Dal(S) could take over as UP chief minister and be guaranteed the Congress' support. This quite reasonable proposal met a premature death because of Mulayam's intransigence. "I would rather sell peanuts on the streets of Lucknow than be home minister in Delhi," he announced melodramatically.

Now that the Congress' worst fears have come to pass, the party has revived that proposal with one proviso: Mulayam can have any portfolio except for home. The Congress feels that a man who can't keep the peace in UP can hardly be trusted to maintain law and order throughout India. One suggestion is to give Mulayam defence. Another is to give him industry. (At present, Shekhar holds both portfolios.)

So far, Mulayam is refusing to shift to Delhi, though Shekhar has upped the ante to include the deputy prime ministership. On 17 December, he rushed to Delhi to meet both Shekhar and Rajiv and explain his position. Chandra Shekhar was sympathetic, but Rajiv was uncompromising because he had to contend with the UP state Congress, whose leaders are in favour of unilaterally withdrawing support from the government.

As the communal situation in UP continues to give cause for concern, Mulayam's position seems increasingly untenable. How long can he survive? ●

Rajiv Shukla/Lucknow, Agra and New Delhi

RISE AND FALL

The year of Mulayam Singh Yadav



MULAYAM AND V.P. SINGH

PHASE I

Mulayam was not V.P. Singh's candidate. The Raja wanted Ajit Singh to be UP chief minister, but Yadav made it because he had the support of Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal.

Ajit never liked him and V.P. Singh remained suspicious.

ADDRESSING A RALLY

PHASE II

Certain that VP and Ajit would topple him, Mulayam carved out a base for himself among Muslims and backwards. This made it difficult to touch him. He began to be seen as a national figure.





MASJID/MANDIR

PHASE III

The test of Mulayam's credentials was the *kar seva* at Ayodhya. He used force to keep the *kar sevaks* from the *masjid/mandir*.

In the process, he antagonised the Hindus.

MULAYAM AND SHEKHAR

PHASE IV

While V.P. Singh was keen to be associated with the Ayodhya action, Mulayam accused him of double-dealing and broke with him to support Chandra Shekhar's bid for the prime ministership. VP tried to topple him. He stayed afloat with Congress support.





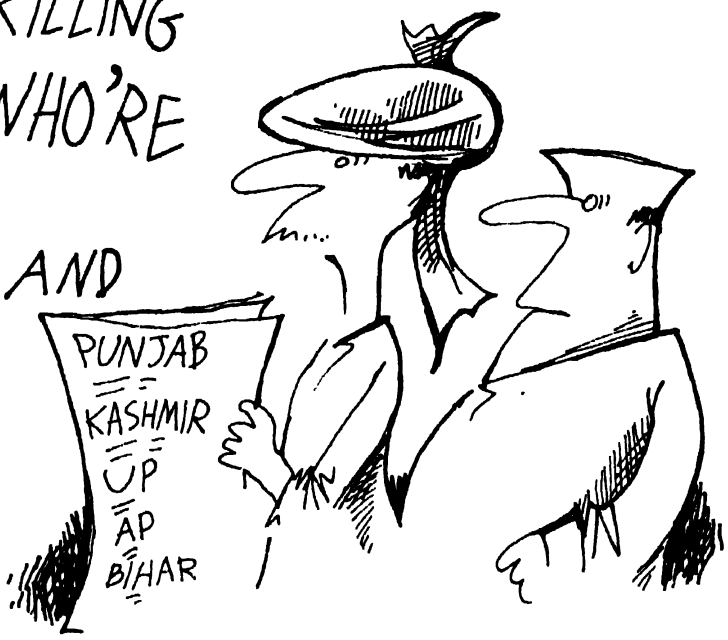
RIOT-TORN ALIGARH

PHASE V

Mulayam paid the price for his cultivation of the minorities when unprecedented communal violence rocked UP. He proved unable to protect the Muslims, control the police or win the trust of the Hindus. The Congress demanded his removal.

RAVI SHANKAR

MUSLIMS KILLING HINDUS WHO'RE KILLING MUSLIMS AND GETTING KILLED BY SIKHS..



HAVE THINGS BEEN EVER SO SECULAR?



RAVISHANKAR
SUNDAY © OBSERVER INDIA (LTD)

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Agenda for Sri Lanka

What Chandra Shekhar should do to clear up the mess left by V.P. Singh



As a child, I used to love long drives through my home district of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. The green of the paddy fields stretching endlessly to the horizon in that particular Thanjavur shade of glistening green. The wind wafting through the paddy in waves of emerald chasing waves of emerald. The women, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, bending to their tasks like column upon column of birds of paradise. The palm trees standing straight as sentinels, stretching dozens of feet into an azure sky, then suddenly throwing their arms out in protection. It is a land of great tranquility, peace and beauty, a land for the refined cultivation of the mind and the soul.

Not, alas, any longer. It is also now—thanks to the combined exertions of V.P. Singh and that startling son of its own soil, Honorary Doctor Great Artiste Muthuvel Karunanidhi (the titles are as integral to his name as chicanery is to his character)—it is also now, as I was saying, the maw in which is being crushed the hopes of the Tamils, both the Tamils of India and the Tamils of Sri Lanka and, to use a favoured phrase of the Great Artiste himself, "the Tamils of the World". For it is more in Thanjavur than perhaps even in the redoubts of the Jaffna peninsula or along the cutting scythe of the Trincomalee Bay or in the Killing Fields of Batticalao that the fate of the Tamils is being decided.

Let me explain.

Back in those grim days last December when not the electorate but sleight of hand brought upon our heads the V.P. Singh government, Inder Kumar Gujral manufactured a Sri Lanka policy before the mandarins of the ministry of external affairs could even commence the necessary process of detoxifying the National Front's foreign policy manifesto prescriptions.

Determined to show the Sinhalas what good little chaps we were (a fact which, incidentally, had not escaped the Sri Lankans even if it had our homegrown Rajiv-baiters), the first assumption of the National Front's Sri Lanka policy was the need to apologise to Sri Lanka for the previous government.

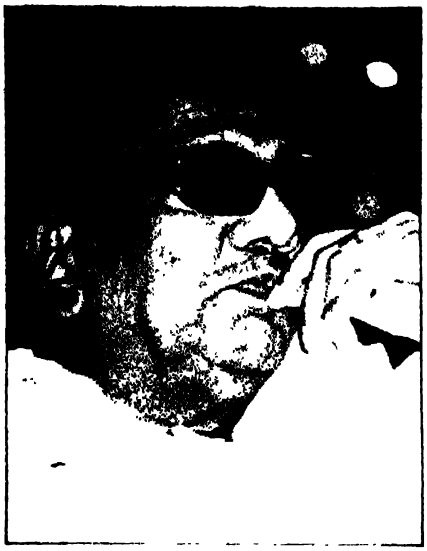
So, before you could say Junius Richard Jayawardene, the V.P. Singh government unilateraly announced that we were pulling out the IPKF and leaving it to Sri Lanka to implement—or not implement—(as their fancy took them) the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 29 July 1987. Not even Ranjan Wajeratne, the street-smart foreign minister of Sri Lanka, could believe his luck. He thought he'd better check out if the Incredible were, in fact, the Truth. So, without even an invitation—let alone a by-your-leave—Wijeratne plopped down at Palam like an unsolicited bread basket dropped from the skies. Where another government would have firmly—if politely—escorted the Sri Lankan foreign minister back to the airport and snapped a finger to hail a passing aircraft to take our friend back to Colombo, Gujral—who would have made a great protocol assistant if destiny had not reserved for him the external affairs ministership—slipped a disc rolling out the reddest carpet available for the Man Who Came to Dinner.

Could we, said Wijeratne, have a date for the IPKF to pull out? Certainly, replied Gujral, shall we make it yesterday?" No, no, guffawed Wijeratne, not at all, dear boy. 31 March would make a splendid deadline.

And, betimes, the mandarins in attendance spluttered what about the implementation of the Agreement? What of the preconditions incorporated in the joint India-Sri Lanka communiqu of 18 September 1989? What about the safety and security of the Tamils? What of real devolution to the North-East Provincial Council? What



Where another government would have firmly escorted **Wijeratne** back to the airport and snapped a finger to hail a passing aircraft to take him back to Colombo, **I.K. Gujral** slipped a disc rolling out the reddest carpet available, for him



Instead of enunciating a Sri Lanka foreign policy, Karunanidhi, with the acquiescence of the Prime Minister, the external affairs minister and the union home minister, contented himself with inviting the Tigers into his own lair

of the future of the merger of these predominantly Tamil provinces? What of the induction of Tamils into the Sri Lankan armed forces, where they constitute less than one per cent of the personnel despite constituting over a quarter of the population? What of a police force under the command of the chief minister of the North-East, drawn from the Civilian Voluntary Force and the Additional Civilian Voluntary Force trained by the IPKF? What guarantees that the forcible Sinhala colonisation of Tamil lands will end? What promise that Colombo's divide and rule policy of driving a wedge between Sri Lanka's Tamil-speaking Hindus and Tamil-speaking Muslims will be stopped? What of amendments to the Constitution to give constitutional sanctity to those solemn pledges of the Indo Sri Lanka Agreement not covered by the 13th amendment piloted by former President Jayawardene through the Sri Lankan Parliament? What of the LTTE being restrained from murdering its fellow-Tamils? What of the LTTE being brought into the democratic process? And then -and only then the one question to be posed after all the other questions have been satisfactorily answered: what might be the possible time frame for the withdrawal in phases of the IPKF?

Gujral had no time for any of these questions of substance. His aim was confined to earning plaudits from his superannuated luncheon companions at the India International Centre.

Even the notorious Anandpur Saheb Resolution of 1978 concedes that foreign policy should remain a Central subject. Not for V P. Singh such Constitutional proprieties. Either that– or he regards Eelam as a *taluka* of Tamil Nadu. Whatever be the explanation. V.P. Singh simply devolved Sri Lanka policy to the chief minister of Tamil Nadu The Great Artiste quickly hammered out a policy based on four key parameters that had everything to do with the DMK's domestic political compulsions and nothing at all to do with national interests, national perpectives or national imperatives

First, abuse the IPKF to curry favour with the LTTE, never mind that the IPKF was manned by Indian *jawans*, no less than 1200 of whom had laid down their lives in the service of the nation. Second, cultivate the LTTE for the gentle persuasion the LTTE resorts to against their own Tamil opponents so that the DMK cadres might usefully learn such instructive lessons for deployment against their own democratic opponents. Third, leave Sri Lanka to the Sri Lankans, even if it means the sabotage of everything so patiently achieved after years of negotiation by MGR and Rajiv Gandhi, so that a point can now be scored against Jayalalitha and Vazhapadi Ramamurthy. And fourth, as for the unity of Sri Lanka, the immunization of the island from powers hostile to our vital security interests, equality for the Tamil minority, autonomy for the Tamil regions, and the guarantee of basic civic, political and human rights to the Tamils—the Code of the Karunanidhis apparently deemed that since the DMK was intent on depriving India's Tamils of democracy, decency and the quiet life, why should the Indian government bother itself with guaranteeing such goodies to the Tamils of Sri Lanka?

Instead of enunciating a Sri Lanka foreign policy, Karunanidhi, with the acquiescence of the Prime Minister, the external affairs minister and the union home minister, contented himself with inviting the Tigers into his own lair Does it surprise you that old K is now heartbroken at the exit of his dupe and is rapidly emerging as the South-of-the-Vindhyas counterpart of Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan in nursing V.P.'s Great Illusion of the Backward Bylanes to the Comeback Trail?

As for the Tamils of Sri Lanka, I have for 11 months seen the pain and bewilderment in their haunted faces, the sorrow and the humiliation in their hunted eyes. It has been for them months of unmitigated misery. If we are relieved that the Raja's Raj is over, they are ecstatic. It is only the Tigers and their zoo-keepers who harbour any regrets.

When Mahatma Gandhi led the Salt Satyagraha to Dandi in Gujarat, Rajaji led the salt march in the South to the small fishing town of Vedaranyam on the Thanjavur coast. It is from that same Vedaranyam that Karunanidhi began the process of devolving to the Tigers our sovereignty



over our coastal lands and our territorial waters. Admiral Ramdas, the new Chief of Naval Staff, has revealed how hundreds of LTTE cadres caught by our Navy cavorting illegally in our waters were simply let off on the orders of the chief minister. I have heard tales of a collector who, on his personal bond, secured the release of LTTE militants caught red-handed in the act.

RAW and IB reports—unread or, at any rate, unheeded by V.P. & Co—have swollen the files of the Prime Minister's Office with hair-raising stories of the Tigers smuggling gold into India, smuggling narcotics out in turn, smuggling more gold in, and smuggling arms, ammunition and explosives out in a never-ending but ever-widening chain of crime and vice. The same reports speak of cadres of the Dravidar Kazhagam (specifically the Kovai Ramakrishna faction) and the Naxalite "Tamil Liberation Army" receiving training from the LTTE in the use of arms, including the deadly AK-47. It is again the same sources that have detailed the growing links between the LTTE and the Punjab terrorists, the LTTE and the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen on J&K, the LTTE and ULFA.

Not intelligence but ordinary police reports exist in the files of both the State and Central Governments of a girls' polytechnic at Vallam, on the outskirts of Thanjavur, being used as a military base by the Dravidar Kazhagam's *Tharkolai Padai* (Suicide Squad) in conjunction with the LTTE—threatening, in real measure, to become the Tamil Nadu equivalent of the Golden Temple under the Bhindranwale occupation. Police officers routinely tell anyone who cares to ask that arrested LTTE cadres insouciantly demand hot-line communication direct with Karunanidhi or his ministers—and equally routinely receive instructions to let the "boys" off.

At the point of a gun, LTTE militants demand —and get —priority supplies of upto 200 litres and even 300 litres of diesel a time, while truck drivers and farmers on tractors sit it out in snaky queues for hours at a stretch to collect a measly five litres—which is all that diesel rationing in the state entitles them to.

Is it any wonder then that such a regime has done all it can to cover up the tracks of the assassins of the EPRLF's Pathmanabha and 14 others, that far from arresting any of the assassins' accomplices, it has merely indiscriminately harassed the relics of the victims themselves? Or that it does nothing about the extortion resorted to by gun-toting LTTE agents against not only Sri Lanka expatriates but even Indian businessmen? Or that it closes its eyes to the Tigers terrorising Sri Lankan refugees in their wretched camps with informers? Or that it lets a printing press in Madurai, owned by a DK activist, churn out, without let or hinderance, vast quantities of LTTE propaganda?

While Chandra Shekhar firmly tells Karunanidhi that the conduct of foreign policy has been resumed by the Centre (and that if the Great Artiste gets up to any unconstitutional mischief he'll get the order of the boot), Vidya Charan Shukla needs to hammer out a perspective plan for what the new government should set out to achieve in Sri Lanka. The point of departure of such a strategy must necessarily be the unambiguous reaffirmation by the Government of India (to make up for the lapses of the last 11 months) of the need to honour and implement the 1987 India-Sri Lanka Agreement. And Sri Lanka must be persuaded, cajoled, blandished, bullied, bribed and threatened—in whatever combination circumstances merit—into fulfilling its Treaty obligations.

Next is a time-table for talks, progressing in stages from bringing the LTTE and non-LTTE groups separately to Delhi for talks with the Central Government, followed, in due course and after a number of preliminaries are cleared, by direct talks between the non-LTTE groups and the LTTE, leading to the evolution of a Tamil consensus that can provide the basis for an interim settlement between the Sri Lankan Government and the Sri Lanka Tamils, guaranteed by the Government of India, which could result in a resumption of that process of democratic devolution—but this time with LTTE participation—which was so rudely interrupted by the tragic interregnum of our own Laurel & Hardy show, the V.P.-Gujral *jugalbandhi*. ●



For the Tamils of Sri Lanka, it has been 11 months of unmitigated misery. Now that the Raja's Raj is over, they are ecstatic; it is only the Tigers and their zoo-keepers who harbour any regrets

A CORRECTION

I must apologise to readers who have been appalled by my dreadful mistake in my last column in saying the bumblebee defied the laws of "thermodynamics" when I should, of course, have said "aerodynamics"! But, then, I have always astonished myself at my amazing ignorance of elementary physics. Sorry, everybody!

(The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not purport to constitute an official statement of the Congress party's position.)

The No-men

Biman Bose of the CPI(M) and Govind Acharya of the BJP are two sides of the same coin



NPTN RAI

They represent, at one level, two opposite, even antagonistic, sides of the political spectrum. At another, they could not be more similar. On one side is: Govind Acharya, 47, a hardcore BJP activist; and, on the other, Biman Bose, 50, a diehard CPI(M) leader. The political chasm between them is so wide that this comparison would make them flinch. Yet, at one level, both are driven by the same basic forces and held together by an unlikely quality, the courage of conviction. They are the 'No' men of contemporary Indian politics. They are the antithesis of the 'Yes' men and the sycophancy that characterises today's age.

Neither men are household names. They cannot be seen waving to the crowds or hogging newspaper frontpages. The trappings of office do not excite them, nor does the prospect of a mention in contemporary history. Yet, these two men are currently perhaps the two most significant backroom boys in politics.

Both men are enormously important in their respective organisations. And they have reached their present positions through half a lifetime of backbreaking organisational work and the ability to think independently. For them, the real world is far bigger, more complex and awesome, than the narrow view afforded by partisan sights. They sense that a clouded or motivated reading of the real world can only lead to faulty actions and ultimately to an obscure future for themselves and their organisations as well.

For, both at heart, are wedded to their respective political parties. Both are bachelors for whom life revolves around the party. They genuinely believe in the ideologies they profess and if they are fierce about anything, it is the interest of their parties. Only, they are not two blind, servile soldiers of higher leaders. They are two independent minds that will survive the vicissitudes of present day politics.

Acharya is a national executive member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and special assistant to the party president, Lal Krishna Advani. Prior to the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, Acharya had played a key role in the process of arriving at electoral adjustments with other parties, particularly in Bihar. In more recent times, he mediated between his party and the V.P. Singh government during the *rath yatra* and Ram Janmabhoomi crises. Political observers in New Delhi believe that Acharya functions as the right hand man of Advani and executes crucial party decisions in his inimitable, low-key manner.

Acharya's special clout derives from his association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS), in which he holds the privileged rank of *pracharak*. The RSS along with the BJP, the students' organisation called Akhil Bharatya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), belong to the loosely knit family of organisations, called the Sangha Parivar. All the members of this family are free to frame their specific policies, appoint office-bearers and manage their own finances. At the same time, they all share a common ideal, that of Hindu revivalism.

Biman Bose, similarly, is a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) central committee (equivalent to the BJP's national executive) and an extremely influential member of the party's West Bengal unit. Bose has also risen from the party ranks. He started his political career in the CPI(M) students wing, the SFI (Students' Federation of India), which gave him opportunity to travel to diverse parts of the country. Bose's views, consequently, are not circumscribed by the regional boundaries within which he is confined. He has also been involved in a number of national level activities.

The trappings of office do not excite them, nor does a mention in contemporary history. Yet, these two men are perhaps the two most significant backroom boys in politics

In recent times, Bose's voice has acquired a new authority in West Bengal politics. However, he has chosen not to join the government or become a public figure, as has his compatriot, Buddhadev Bhattacharya. "My work is carried out behind the curtains," he says. "The more publicity I get, the worse it is for me." But when Bose puts his foot down, his party listens.

Neither Bose nor Acharya are scared of voicing opinions that might not exactly match the rhetoric of their leaders. Bose, for instance, publicly decried police action against protesting crowds. Earlier, he had spoken out against corruption in the CPI(M)-run Calcutta Municipal Cor-



Neither Biman Bose (left) nor Govind Acharya (far left) are scared of voicing opinions that might not match the rhetoric of their leaders. They are two independent minds

poration and was instrumental in the ouster of the former mayor, Kamal Basu. He is also critical of the blind conservatism preached by many of his Bengal party comrades. Recently, he was dismayed to learn that the women's wing of his party planned to issue strictures against women wearing *salwar kameez* and sporting short hair. "People don't seem to understand that times are moving fast," he says in exasperation. "The *sari* is a nice dress, but it is inconvenient and so is long hair."

Bose believes in adapting and rising above dogma. "Communist parties are basically democratic: if any member whether senior or the most junior, can support his point of view with logic—relevance to the prevailing objective and subjective conditions, and with the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism—there is no reason why his view should not be affected." Bose believes in this and obviously practises it.

Acharya has not had occasion to publicly air his views. But if he did, it would raise a lot of eyebrows. For, his views are refreshingly candid, without the usual rhetoric spouted by his party leaders. He does not, for instance, hold that the BJP's impressive showings in the last general elections was a one-to-one reflection of the party's intrinsic strength. Rather, he believes at least four factors were responsible: Opposition unity, the Hindu factor, the anti-Congress(I) vote and the pro-change atmosphere prevailing in the country.

His analysis of V.P. Singh's downfall is equally dispassionate. He does not believe that deceit or treachery on the part of Singh played any part in the entire episode. "V.P. Singh was always clear about his politics. He wanted to win over other minorities, the backwards and the Scheduled Castes," explains Acharya. "We knew this and acted according to the dictates of our own politics. "Singh's mistake, according to Acharya, was in underestimating the Sangha Parivar's commitment to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. In other words, had the BJP-V.P. Singh relationship been ruled merely by political compulsions, there would have been no showdown or collapse. And Acharya is candid in admitting: "The fall of the government was certainly a loss for us. But the loss was greater for the Janata Dal."

The similarities between the two go beyond their style of politics, their openness and cognitive abilities. Their lifestyles too are uncannily similar: austere, almost ascetic—Bose lives in a tiny room where the legendary CPI(M) leader Promode Dasgupta lived, while Acharya occupies a bare room at the back of the BJP office in New Delhi's Ashoka Road. Both politicians spend their days receiving party workers, getting reports and staying in touch through the telephone. And both come from middle-class backgrounds: Acharya grew up in Varanasi where his father taught in a local college; Bose was brought up in a joint family in Calcutta's middle-class neighbourhood, Ballygunge.

Acharya grew up in a world of ideas and tradition. He ultimately chose to uphold those ideas and find their expression through politics. Bose, on the other hand, rejected the old breed of politicians for whom politics is a mere tool to capture state power. They believe that state power is just an instrument to establish the values they believe in. At one level, the two men are potentially more dangerous than most politicians. For, it is the zealots and the believers who have wreaked havoc on mankind in recent times. On the other hand, politics bereft of beliefs and ideas has proved sterile and ultimately ruinous to the Indian people. Now, it is the turn of the believers—the Boses and the Acharyas. •

Indranil Banerjie/New Delhi and Calcutta

PREMIER SHOW

"A lot of people saw the film long before it was released," he admitted. Nevertheless, added director Satyajit Ray, his latest offering *Shakha Prashakha* went down well with the first-night audience.

The world *première* of the release, held at the Nandan auditorium in Calcutta, had several celebrities in attendance: French sex symbol Gerard Depardieu and Toscan Du Plautiere (joint producers of the film), Ketan Mehta, Habib Tanvir, Kumar Shahani, Mohan Agashe and, of course, such members of the cast as Soumitra Chatterjee, Mamata Shankar and Dipankar De.

HIRAK SEN



Ray with his French producers Plautiere and Depardieu at the *premiere*: celebrities in attendance

Satyajit Ray and son Sandip welcomed guests to the show, with the legendary director putting his praise for his French collaborators on record.

While Depardieu and Plautiere, who'd travelled down to Calcutta only for the event, put on suitably modest looks for the benefit of the cameras.

LOOK, IT'S RUSHDIE!

The jowls were slightly heavier and there was less hair on that distinguished head. But it *was* Salman Rushdie, signing copies of his latest book, *Haroun And The Sea Of Stories* at a London bookshop, to the bemusement of most onlookers.

In hiding for nearly two years after Ayatollah Khomeini passed a death sentence on him for his blasphemous book, *The Satanic Verses,* Rushdie appeared in public for the first time, escorted by a posse of bodyguards.

Looking happy and relaxed, despite the strain he is under, Rushdie spent 20 minutes at the shop, chatting to shoppers, who clearly couldn't believe their eyes.

The surprise visit fuelled rumours that a deal had been struck between the Iranian and British governments to allow Salman to come out of hiding.

But Iran was quick to put everyone straight. No, the death sentence on Rushdie stood. And he could bid all hopes of leading a normal life goodbye.

Leave aside the occasional visit to a bookshop, no doubt.

Salman Rushdie: taking everyone by surprise

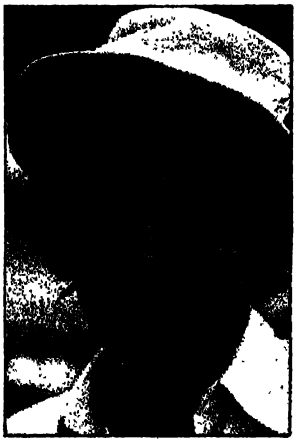


HOWZZAT!

Old cricketers don't fade away. They turn to modelling, column writing and administration, instead.

And now, former Test spinner S. Venkataraghavan has added a new vocation to that list, standing in as an umpire in a Ranji Trophy league match between Uttar Pradesh and Railways.

Always a keen student of the game, Venkat served on the technical committee of the cricket board. And then, after umpiring some local league games, sat for the board's umpire examination in Bombay.



S. Venkataraghavan: second innings

Not surprisingly, he was the only one to score a hundred per cent in the exam, and the Ranji assignment followed soon after.

But Venkat doesn't find his new role too different. "You only have to concentrate more," he maintains.

And, if his record as a spin bowler is anything to go by, that shouldn't be too difficult.

LOST AND FOUND

Confusion reigned in the Joshi household. Noted vocalist of the Kirana *gharana*, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, had left his Pune home on what looked like a routine visit to some friends. But 36 hours later, there was no sign of the singer, and the worried family hit the panic button.

Without reason, as it turned out. For, Joshi was safe in Hubli, confabulating with his good friend Gangubhai Hangal on the 38th Sawai Gandharva Sangeet Mahotsav, soon to be staged in Pune. And, as is his wont, he'd forgotten to inform the family about his plans.

JAGDISH YADAV



Bhimsen Joshi: up and away

He rectified the fault well after one day was over, calling Pune to give details of his whereabouts. And his nephew was promptly despatched to Hubli to escort an abashed Joshi home.

MY FAMILY AND OTHER ANIMALS

You've known Pamella the sex symbol, sleaze queen, wild-life and sport photographer. Now meet Pamella, lover of snails and other animals. (And no, it has nothing to do with her obsession with a teddy-bears' picnic, either.)

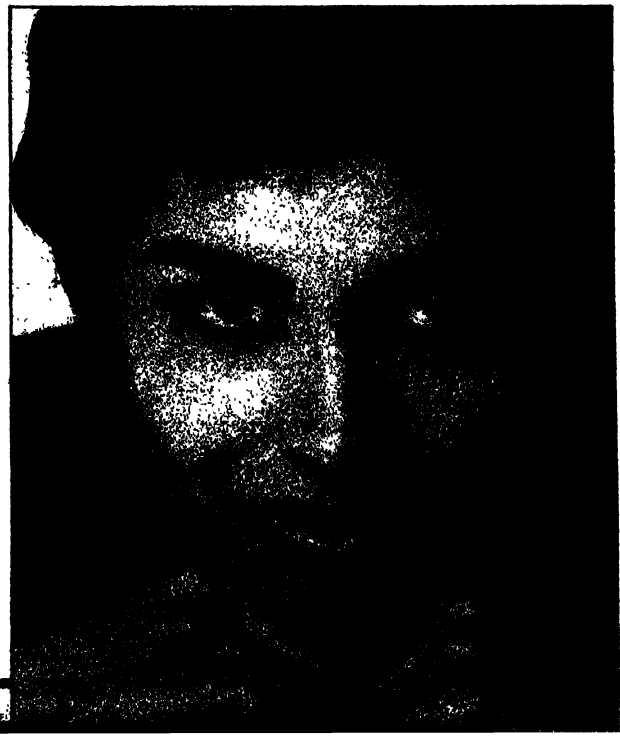
In a recent interview with Danny Danziger of *The Independent*, London, Bordes revealed a little-known side of what she describes as her "weird" personality. Said Bordes: "I had snails all through my schools and when I wrote to my mum I used to make them walk over the envelope and I would seal the letter with the slime and write 'sealed with love and a kiss and a hug from Cracker'."

The confessional mode continued. Her mother taught at a university where experiments were conducted on animals, disclosed Bordes. "One day the keeper forgot to lock the cages, my brother and I freed every animal and went away. It was wonderful. We kept it a secret until this day," said Pamella.

Unfortunately, this revelation, like her other disclosures, had little impact.

Perhaps, the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will offer her life membership, if nothing else.

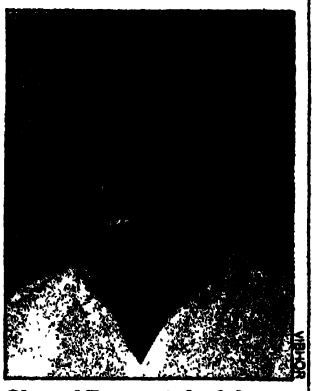
Pamella Bordes: true confessions



BACK ON THE TUBE

He'd boycotted television after being asked what he regarded as communal questions during an interview. This was in the run-up to the general elections.

But now that Doordarshan has established its bona fides as the best propaganda machine in the business, Sharad Pawar has reversed his stand.



Sharad Pawar: television makes for better publicity

The Maharashtra chief minister was featured on TV recently, being interviewed by Dr Jabbar Patel, the well-known film director. Answering questions on a wide range of subjects, Pawar came across as a surprisingly agreeable personality. And a family man to boot, the camera lingering on his wife and daughter occasionally, to drive the point home.

Now that he's proved himself a TV natural, Bombay viewers will, no doubt, be administered an overdose of the CM.

Electronic media autonomy can take care of itself. ●

I AM PHILIPS. I AM TOMORROW.



Philips components form the core of many modern electronic products

* Peco Electronics and Electricals Limited is an affiliate of N V Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken The Netherlands

When even the latest innovations become history before they become news, there is no time for complacency. Philips* never forgets this. Yes, Philips gave the world the X-ray tube, the audio cassette, the laser video disc and the compact disc, and brought modern lighting and radio to India – but that was yesterday. Today's Philips is already in the future. As always, Philips components lie at the heart of most of today's electronics. Because they're based on Philips' inside knowledge of micro-electronics, our components are chosen worldwide in products ranging from computers to radios. Our professional electronics equipment provides analytical, testing, communication and automation tools for changing R&D and industrial needs. Our extraordinary audio equipment breaks barriers in sound. Our lighting technology is so advanced that it sets the standards for others to follow. And our TVs let you see right into tomorrow.

We've given India our best for over 60 years. We'll do it for the next hundred.

FOR YEARS, WE'VE BEEN INVENTING THE FUTURE.

PHILIPS

The TV epics

Ramayan *and* Mahabharat: *were they responsible for the recent spate of Hindu revivalism?*

There are some aspects of the impact of the TV serials *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* that have been widely discussed. We know that they recorded unprecedented viewership ratings, raked in staggering sums of money, brought everything to a standstill on Sunday mornings and held the whole nation in thrall.

The other—and hardly considered—aspect is their impact on the Hindu mind. Could they, as both the political right and the left in India have obliquely suggested, have been a major cause for the recent spate of Hindu revivalism?

If the question has rarely been asked directly, it is because the answer is difficult to conclusively establish. No systematic empirical studies have been conducted on the influence of these serials on Hindus. All we have are informal newspaper surveys carrying the remarks of a haphazardly selected cross-section of viewers. (Examples: "I started visiting temples regularly only after *Ramayan*." "*Mahabharat* made me realise that being a Hindu is a matter of pride.")

Moreover, the question has a shallow or unacademic air about it. Can something as complex and mysterious as Hindu revivalism be caused by something as mundane as the idiot box? Surely, a social phenomenon of this import requires to be traced to more weighty causes—political, economic or other?

Perhaps. But there are still many people who believe that the two TV serials were major contributory factors towards the recent upsurge in Hindu religious sentiment. Even Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders—some of who have publicly admitted that the serials "helped them"—appear to concede this. And as for the left, the plausibility of the thesis is perhaps suggested by its fierce criticism of the serials, which, it feared, could alienate the minorities and fan retrograde religious feelings among the majority.

While this may be impossible to prove, there is no doubt that the serials had an unprecedented impact on the people. *Ramayan*, at its height, had a viewership rating of over 70 per cent; *Mahabharat* clocked a giddy 96 per cent, a figure which suggests a national obsession.

A number of explanations have been proferred for this success. The serials were said to have embodied ancient and very Indian values, recalled memories of stories told at childhood and appealed to the collective unconscious. But, to many, the attitudes of the viewers were the most cause for concern. Pujas were performed in front of TV sets before *Ramayan* was shown, power cuts during the screening often led to violence and watching the serials became as compulsive and important as, say, a visit to the temple. Clearly, to most people, the serials represented more than well-produced entertainment (which they possibly weren't) but constituted a moving religious experience.

Here, one may well be tempted to ask: so what? For even if, as *Mahabharat* producer B.R. Chopra admits, "the two serials made millions proud of their culture and religion",



Says *Mahabharat's* Chopra: "My serial may have been misused by politicians. But this shouldn't be used to judge it"

SANTOSH GHOSH

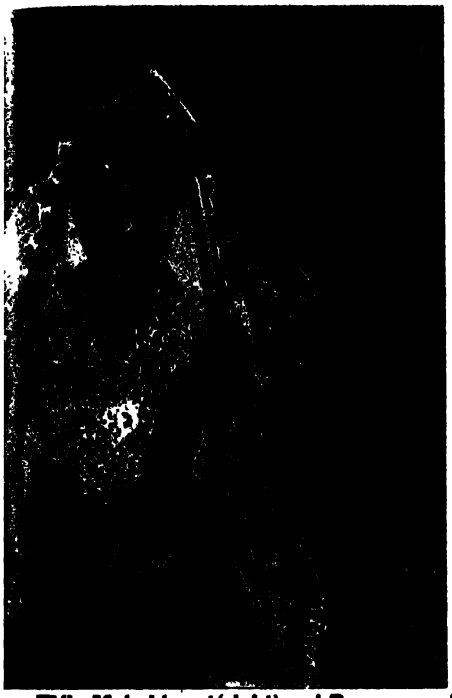


can this be equated with a dangerous Hindu revivalism?

Perhaps not. But, in part, the criticism of the left and liberal-minded is based on suspicions regarding the decision to air the serials. Both *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*—along with the *Discovery Of India*—were cleared in 1986. And the decision to screen them, as well as the choice of producers, were made by the central government. To many, this smacked of cynical politics: that while the mammoth 52-part *Discovery Of India*, with 'Nehru' as anchorman, was a plug for the Congress party, the even longer *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* were aimed at pleasing the Hindus.

Says well-known literary and film critic Iqbal Masud: "With these two serials, Doordarshan—which had evolved the formula of screening socially relevant programmes such as *Hum Log*, *Buniyaad* and *Nukkad*—made a dangerous departure. The government started to cynically activate religious sentiment. I see the impact of this on young people—particularly from the lower-middle classes." Adds P.C. Joshi, chairman of the Institute of Mass Communication and professor of Delhi's Institute of Economic Growth: "The reasons behind the decision to screen these serials must be examined. It would be simplistic to say that the ruling party wanted to be the beneficiary of the Hindu vote. But it may have wanted

DURGAPRASAD





TV's *Mahabharat* (right) and *Ramayan*: wholesome entertainment or mischievous propaganda?

to make out that Hindu identity could be accommodated within the Congress. The serials sent the message: 'We (the Congress) are not anti-Hindu'."

Neither Masud nor Joshi—who, in fact, headed a Doordarshan committee which recommended that Indian culture be more widely represented on the electronic media—is against the screening of *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan* in principle. But both believe that there were far more sophisticated and less dangerous ways of doing so.

Says Masud: "Ramanand Sagar and B.R. Chopra are trashy filmmakers who failed on the commercial circuit. Why were these serials—which were full of commercial cinema *masala* – handed over to them? One result of this was that viewers came to understand that whoever is a non-Hindu is an enemy. You could say that Ram became a substitute for Hindu and Ravan for non-Hindu." Joshi has a similar but more moderate view: "These projects should have been handed over to people who could be regarded as authentic continuators of Indian culture. The result then would have been artistic and not propagandist."

There is, of course, another sense in which the serials led to politics becoming mixed with religion. During the Allahabad by-poll, the Congress used *Ramayan's* Arun Govil—dressed up as Ram—in its election campaign. Later, actor Raj Babbar (*Mahabharat's* Bharat) lent his character to the Janata Dal campaign during the November 1989 elections. And even *Mahabharat's* Muslim script-writer Rahi Masoom Raza admits that "L.K. Advani very consciously tried to associate his *rath yatra* with the theme of the serial." So great was the belief in the vote-gathering power of the serials that there were objections raised last year that the Janata Dal's election symbol—the wheel—resembled that used in Chopra's *Mahabharat* too closely. Says Chopra, "My serial may or may not have been misused by political parties. But this shouldn't be used to judge it."

Chopra says it is illogical to claim that *Mahabharat* vitiated the communal atmosphere as it is more a mythological yarn than a religious text. "This has nothing to do with TV serials. The truth is that we are passing through a period of Hindu revivalism. And there are certain political compulsions for the fostering of fundamentalist attitudes," he explains.

The strongest argument in favour of his view is, in his opinion, the secular viewership that his serial enjoyed. "Everybody has seen it in Pakistan. And nobody can deny that millions of Muslims watched it in India. You can't get a 96 per cent viewership with Hindus alone."

Both Masud and Joshi agree that *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* were watched keenly by the Muslims but claim that the community, unlike some sections of the Hindus, saw them merely as spiffing yarns. Nevertheless, whether it approved of these programmes being shown on television is a different matter. The informal newspaper surveys, which have quoted Muslims both for and against their airing, are ambiguous on this question. Says Muslim leader Syed Shahabuddin: "My view is that most Muslims looked upon these programmes as the misuse of the national media for religious purposes and not as cultural programmes."

Such arguments and debates, of course, are all too likely to be subordinated to economic compulsions. Doordarshan earned a hefty Rs 20 crores from *Ramayan* and as much as Rs 57.42 crores from *Mahabharat*. Clearly, there are windfalls for more than just the producers of such serials.

It is probable that Ramanand Sagar understands this fact well. He is already in the midst of making a serial on Lord Krishna, which he hopes will be aired on television, despite Doordarshan not having approved it yet. Perhaps, in the end, it is not politics or religion but money which matters when it comes to mythological extravaganzas. •

Mukund Padmanabhan/Bombay and New Delhi

No more Gossip

Columnist Khushwant Singh calls it a day

It came as a bolt from the blue. When Khushwant Singh, the most widely read columnist in the country, decided to call it a day, editors of several newspapers and periodicals were not unduly worried. For, over the years, Khushwant's columns added both variety and revenue to the publications which carried them. But for the columnist himself, there were more pressing engagements at hand: Khushwant Singh had lined up his autobiography long back but was unable to concentrate on it because columns took away most of his time and energy. "In any case," he said candidly, "people have been telling me it is high time I stopped writing such rubbish."



D.V. JAYNER

It was a dinner meeting with author Vikram Seth which finally did the trick. Seth argued that Khushwant Singh should give up writing his columns and concentrate on books. And Khushwant agreed

But surely there must be more behind Khushwant's decision to quit. The columnist himself admitted that at 75, he felt that age was catching up with him. Moreover, two incidents hit him badly. First was the death of his friend, Charanjit Singh, followed by the demise of his cousin brother-in-law. Finally, it was a dinner meeting with author Vikram Seth which did the trick. Seth convinced Khushwant to devote all his time to writing books.

Readers apart, in strictly financial terms, Khushwant Singh stands to lose around Rs 45,000 every month. "In fact," joked Khushwant, "when my wife came to know of my earnings from the columns, she wanted to know if I was sure I was doing the right thing." Editors and owners have not yet reacted to Khushwant's decision as yet because he has told them that he might resume writing for newspapers after three or four months. "And during this period," he added, "if they decided they did not miss me too much, it might be an unpleasant surprise for me too."

Of course, there can be no doubting the popularity of Khushwant's pen. This episode should settle all doubts. When Khushwant Singh returned the Padma Bhushan award in protest against Operation Bluestar in Punjab, the then *Hindustan Times* editor, N.C. Menon, wrote a strongly-worded editorial criticising the action. Khushwant Singh promptly withdrew his With Malice Towards One and All column from the paper. And within three weeks, Khushwant recalled, the circulation of the Saturday edition, which carried *Malice*, dropped by at least 10,000 copies.

That's not all. Soon, the paper's executive director, Naresh Mohan, came to Khushwant with a request from proprietor K.K. Birla to resume his column. "I agreed only after I had it in writing that the request had come from Birla himself and that not a word of my column would be changed." Only Khushwant Singh perhaps could bargain for such a deal.

Khushwant Singh is indeed a prolific writer. Apart from penning his weekly columns, he also contributes to foreign magazines like *Stern*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *The New York Times*. Besides, Khushwant has already written more than 50 books and his latest, *New Delhi*, was an instant sell-out. The book has created publishing history by going in for its eighth re-print within one year.

In between writing his columns, Khushwant Singh started on his autobiography and is at present on the fourth chapter. Now, he will have all the time to concentrate on the book, which undoubtedly will be an epic affair. "I already have requests from magazines for exclusive rights of the first chapter— even at the draft stage," said Khushwant.

Such an interest is understandable. Critics feel that of particular interest to the reader would be Khushwant Singh's account of the pre-Partition days, the Emergency, Operation Bluestar and, of course, his relationship with women.

For all this, Khushwant says, he will be relying heavily on the personal diaries which he has been maintaining systematically. For instance, Khushwant has in his possession a detailed account of what transpired between Indira Gandhi and her daughter-in-law Maneka before they split. "I was close to the family then and I still don't forget the abuses used by Maneka and her sister," said Khushwant. The book will also have an interesting account of his friendship with Jayalalitha.

In literary circles, the autobiography is already being talked about as a best-seller—even before it has hit the stands. After all, it is the account of a man who is undoubtedly among the country's best story-tellers. ●

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

"One has to be realistic"

Aditya Vikram Birla on the economy, the government, group companies and his life as a painter

After the father, the son. Basant Kumar Birla spoke to SUNDAY six months ago (issue dated 17-23 June 1990), outlining his plans for his companies, talking about his corporate philosophy and giving our readers a glimpse of his personal life. But above all, B.K. talked about his son, Aditya Vikram, as someone whose capacity, dynamism and verve he believes in, and who, hinted B.K., would be the corporate presence of the 1990s. As a force in the B.K—Aditya Group's Rs 5,300 crores worth of companies.

Last fortnight, Aditya met SUNDAY. The son uses words more sparingly than the father, but no less emphatically. The scion of what is India's largest independent business empire talked to us about the state of India's economy, the government, his operations--specially, the synthetic textile, cement and fertiliser businesses—and his life as a painter. This year, Aditya went public with his paintings—copies of other masters' works, admittedly, but with enough of a personal touch to bring his exhibition positive reviews. Excerpts from the interview:

SUNDAY: How would you evaluate the present business environment in India?
Aditya Birla: Indian entrepreneurship and Indian management have finally come of age. They have matured and become systems-oriented. This, in turn, spells a bright future for the business environment of the country. Indian companies abroad are doing extremely well and are giving all multinationals a run for their money.

I have established 16 companies in South-East Asia—Indonesia, (the) Philippines and Thailand—which are not only faring well but growing with the day. Our balance sheets record the best sale-profit ratio in (the) Philippines, and we produce the best quality yarn in Indonesia. We also export 60 per cent of our products to Australia, Europe and a host of other countries which are highly quality-conscious.

Q: But how can one be optimistic about the economic environment of India when political conditions are so unstable?
A: Frequent changes in the systems of governance in any country directly affects its industry. But fortunately, we have a good bureaucracy which has prevented the total disruption of our economy inspite of successive changes in the government. Since the governments that came and went were all oriented towards encouraging the private sector, not much damage has been done.

But there is no denying the fact that when you have a stable government, then the (industrial) growth rate increases.

Q: What about the short-term prospects of the Indian economy?
A: The short-term prospects are difficult, very difficult.

There are several problems. At the moment we are burdened by the severe crunch of foreign exchange. Then there are problems that have been perpetuated by the Gulf crisis. The communications system is inefficient. You do not get power at reasonable rates and the quality of power too, is sub-standard. We get less of bitumen (coal), more of ash (in it) and even stones with coal that damage our boilers.


ASHOK CHAKRABORTY

The prices of inputs supplied by the Indian government are higher than elsewhere. All this culminates in a high-cost economy.

Q: To what extent has the Gulf crisis affected India's exports?
A: The United States of America and the United Kingdom have been hit by a severe recession, some of which has to be shared by us. But the basic fact remains that we are not as competent exporters as our neighbours— Taiwan, (South) Korea, Singapore, Thailand and even Malaysia. Theirs is a healthy low-cost economy characterised by high productivity and special infras-

tructural benefits made available by the government. Therefore, they have a distinct advantage over us.

What we require immediately is an improvement in productivity in each unit to increase our share of exports in the world market.

Q: What about the synthetic textile mills—including the ones run by your group—that are major consumers of petroleum products and by-products? These will surely be hit by rising petroleum prices. And if you plan to pass the cost increase on to the consumer, do you think he will be able to absorb it?
A: There are two basic fibres that we produce in our synthetic textile mills – viscose staple fibre and terylene. We are not very competitive in the production of the latter. But we have achieved a high degree of success in the production of viscose fibre.

You will be surprised to know that we sell viscose fibre in India at a price that is much lower than the prevalent world rates. This is primarily because we are the largest producers of viscose fibre in the world and our technology is extremely quality-oriented. Because of our relentless research, constant upgradation of our machines and de-bottlenecking we have become extremely cost effective and we are giving our consumers in India the advantage of this.

Q: And the cement industry? Is the industry optimistic, keeping in mind the bad patch that it went through recently?
A: Yes, as you say,the cement industry did go through a disturbing phase but the last four months have been reasonably good. The demand persists and prices have gone up. By the next two to three years cement fortunes should become much more satisfactory.

Q: But if the price of cement per bag increases, do you think the government will encourage it?
A: Not at all. But one has to be economically realistic. If the costs go up, if you want a fair return to ensure proper growth of the industry, then you must have price rises that are commensurate with a fair return to your commitment.

Q: Some newspaper reports have mentioned an acute shortage of fertilisers by 1991. Would Indo-Gulf Fertlisers stand to gain?
A: You must be referring to the speech made by the deputy Prime Minister (Devi Lal) where he said that while fertiliser demand had gone up, the production has not kept pace with the growing demands. If so be the case, Indo-Gulf is geared up to take up all challenges. Today we are operating at 126 per cent of the rated capacity. When we established the plant, we had a certain pricing formula. Thereafter, the government changed the formula and made it unrealistic. We protested and told them that with this kind of formula even repayment of debts would become difficult.

The government was compelled to revise the system. Indo-Gulf now looks forward to getting clearance from the government to expand its capacity to double. However, while we do expect a fair return we are not anticipating a very good return.

Q: Talking about Indian entrepreneurship, the general opinion is that while the average entrepreneur is shrewd, innovative and canny, he is dishonest, he does not have integrity.
A: My work experience spans eight countries. And I say this not by conviction but by experience, that our standards of honesty are no worse than the standards of integrity of an average entrepreneur in any other part of the world. This notion, that Indian entrepreneurs are dishonest is not true. Indian entrepreneurship is perhaps more intelligent and there is more of entrepreneurship in India than in any other part of the world.

But I concede that there is a dearth of managerial talent in the country. We have to produce better managers. I feel that barring the first five per cent of managerial talent that is available, Indian entrepreneurship is trapped within mediocrity.

Q: Could we talk about Aditya Birla, the painter? What inspires you to paint?
A: It is a long story. Fourteen years back, I went through a difficult phase and was at home for three weeks. A relative suggested that I paint to pass the time. It was then that I realised that I could paint. I was surprised. Over the last 16 years I have worked on 13 canvases.

Painting gives a lot of satisfaction to my creative instincts. As I have said before, putting up a factory and painting are similar in many ways. For putting up a factory you choose a site and conceive the plant. It's the same with painting. You have a blank canvas and start from scratch.

Q: Do you subscribe to the growing trend of commercialisation of art?
A: Not at all. Art should not be viewed as a commercial proposition. Art should be enjoyed for art's sake. You buy something because you appreciate it, not because it will fetch you a tidy sum in the next ten years.

Q: Is there any logic behind recreating paintings? Why don't you, for one, work on an original theme?
A: Well, you must have a lot of talent to work on an original theme. Moreover, I certainly do not have the courage to paint an original. Maybe when I have some time in hand, I may try an original. All the rave reviews that my exhibition fetched has made me more confident.

Q: What makes you tick?
A: *(Laughs)* God! ●

Interviewed by Manisha Gupta/Calcutta


RAJIV GANDHI


V.P. SINGH


CHANDRA SHEKHAR

"Frequent changes in the systems of governance in any country directly affects its industry"

POLICY PROBLEMS

Amma, dear amma

Kerala's industry minister K.R. Gowri is in a soup over her protection of K.P.P. Nambiar, her scandal-ridden protégé

Not too long ago, *amma* was all Kerala's industrial sector talked about. Here was a lady who, despite being a solid, no-nonsense Marxist, was progressive enough to realise that the state required an economic boost, and that the only way out of a disastrous slump was to bring in private sector investment. Even three months ago, *amma*, as Kerala industry minister K.R. Gowri is popularly known, was the state's manna, its economic mentor.

Today, she is regarded as one of the biggest mistakes in recent times.

Gowri has fallen out with the state's Communist Party of India (Marxist) leadership. Over her highly personalised style of functioning, and the way in which she is going all out to protect Kerala's special advisor for industries, Kunnath Puthiyaveetil Padmanabhan Nambiar. There may be some rationale—after all, Nambiar is as progressive as Gowri. But the thing is, Nambiar, a former secretary of the department of electronics in New Delhi, is as scandal-ridden as they come. And Gowri is staking her political future for a person whom nobody will now touch, even with a bargepole.

Recently, Nambiar has been the subject of a controversy involving Bangalore-based Namtech Exports Pvt. Ltd and KELTRON, the state government's electronic goods manufacturing agency that he helped set up. The brouhaha involves Namtech's being appointed agents to push a deal for KELTRON, for digital control systems, to the Soviet Union. (*See SUNDAY 14—20 October, 1990*) Nambiar is part-time chairman with KELTRON, and chairman of Namtech, a company that his son, Padman, owns.

Still, the Marxists would not dare to take any action—yet—against Gowri because she is a popular leader. Highly-placed CPI (M) sources—who decline to be identified, told SUNDAY that the party has asked Gowri to change her style of functioning and to drop Nambiar from her orbit. Because, they say, from what was her once exalted status in the party, Gowri has been virtually reduced to a cipher, Nambiar's, actually.

Which is not really a bad thing, considering what the duo started out to do. Less than a year ago, Gowri set forth to court private business for setting up industries in the state.



Gowri is staking her political future for a person whom nobody will now touch. For, Nambiar, a former secretary of the department of electronics in New Delhi is as scandal-ridden as they come

Nambiar and Gowri talked about an aggressive approach to industrialisation. Gowri even announced in the state Assembly that private ventures would be welcome. And Nambiar confidently told SUNDAY in an interview in April this year that "the government is very keen to industrialise the state, and I am sure big names in Indian industry are bound to come to Kerala ...(Gowri) is sharp and goes through all files pertaining to her department and is able to take quick decisions. I am just coordinating with her for the rapid industrialisation of the state."

Now, it seems that the duo is out of step with Kerala's ground realities. For one thing, their progressive approach angered Stalinist hard-liners within the party who accuse Gowri of never consulting them before taking any decisions. Besides, they do not agree with anything remotely resembling perestroika—this time, Mikhail Gorbachev notwithstanding. For another, as a call for privatisation meant curbing Kerala's militant trade unions, a major reason behind entrepreneurs shunning the state, the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU), a CPI (M) affiliated organisation, is livid.

Perhaps the most important shortcoming of the team, however, is the fact that of all the projects with big names they had tom-tommed as being indicative of their policy success, not a single one has actually gone through. And the Gowri-Nambiar team is also being accused of lying and, deliberately misleading the government and the people of Kerala by presenting untruths for personal glory.

The first major operation was the much-talked about move to hand over the state-run titanium dioxide unit, Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd (KMML), to the Tatas. Nambiar is a former Tata employee, and in fact, gave TELCO chairman Ratan Tata



Nambiar, Gowri and Nayanar basked in the glory of bringing one of India's top industrialists to the state...Ratan Tata announced that he would finalise a Rs 30 crore telecom project in the state within six months. Now, eight months later, nothing has happened

the red-carpet treatment when he visited Trivandrum last February (See *SUNDAY 11--17 March, 1990*) At that time, Tata said that his visit formed part of an "old personal" commitment to Nambiar. As flash-bulbs popped and Nambiar and Gowri basked in the glory of bringing one of India's top industrialists to the state, they raised the state's hopes. Especially as Tata announced that he would finalise a Rs 30 crore telecommunications project in the state within six months.

Now, eight months past the date, nothing has been heard of the telecom project. But still more shocking is that KMML is still in the red, and the Tatas have gone to neighbouring Tamil Nadu to set up a titanium unit, thanks perhaps, to chief minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi's more persuasive charm. Says a top CPI (M) leader in Kerala, who declines to be identified: "Gowri *amma* never got the green signal from the party secretariat to hand over KMML to the Tatas. All this big talk of the Tata takeover was engineered by Nambiar." The trade unions, particularly CITU, was against the deal, so it appears to have been a non-starter from the beginning.

(Gowri, who readily spoke to SUNDAY even two months ago, and Nambiar, who earlier, practically went overboard to talk to the magazine, both refuse to clarify their stand with SUNDAY.)

More criticism. About a year ago, Nambiar visited the US and brought back with him one Dr Satish K. Sanan whom he introduced to the Kerala cabinet and the press as a computer software expert. Gowri even arranged a presentation by Saran at the secretariat. There, Saran announced that he will be setting up a Rs 300 crore export-oriented software unit at the Cochin Export Processing Zone. It was to be a joint-sector project with KELTRON, and Gowri asked the government agency to prepare a project report. Three months later, KELTRON, report all ready, sent it across to Sanan's US address. Says a senior bureaucrat at the industry ministry: "The report was returned with a postal note that the addressee could not be found."

At the prestigious Trivandrum Golf Club, where senior bureaucrats meet in the evenings over drinks, the joke is that any fly-by-night operator can get a red-carpet treatment from the Kerala government, provided Nambiar sponsors him.

Nambiar keeps on saying that the Tatas, Birlas, Kanorias and Vijay Mallya's UB Group have made overtures to Kerala. But the fact is that nothing concrete has emerged out of these proposals. Even the Raunaq Group, which already has its Apollo Tyre unit in Kerala, preferred to locate another unit in Gujarat, far away from trouble-prone Kerala.

Nambiar keeps on saying that the Tatas, Birlas, Kanorias and Vijay Mallya's UB group have made overtures to Kerala. But nothing concrete has emerged out of these proposals

Another much-talked about instance: a venture between the Kerala Tourism Development Corp. (KTDC) and the Taj Group of Hotels to set up a hotel project in Trivandrum has not come through. The land has yet to be allotted. Besides, the unions are opposed to another project, a Taj takeover of an incomplete KTDC hotel in Cochin (where Taj already runs a hotel, the Malabar).

Recently, some of Gowri's moves have been negated, an indication of her plummeting clout. She sought to remove K. Vijayachandran, secretary of the state's bureau for public enterprises who has CITU backing, from his post. But last month, she was embarassed when the party leadership intervened, and extended Vijayachandran's term, despite Gowri's strong opposition.

Today, noone really takes Nambiar, Gowri and chief minister Nayanar seriously. And their critics are going around building public opinion against them, especially Gowri and Nambiar. For instance, Susheela Gopalan, a member of the state secretariat of the CPI(M) and Vijayachandran's relative is said to be the main force behind the anti-Gowri lobby in the state. The two questions doing the rounds in party circles are: why is Gowri protecting Nambiar? And why is chief minister Nayanar shielding Gowri and Nambiar?

The threesome are not talking. And according to party sources, while Nayanar may hold on to his political mantle, he is likely to sacrifice Nambiar. And even Gowri, who will be allowed to continue as minister till the next elections, but will not be allowed to contest polls.

Nambiar's exit from Kerala's industrial scene is unlikely to generate tears. But Gowri is another matter altogether. As a pragmatist, she was appreciated. But now, there appears to be a sense of disappointment over her actions and the fact that she has not been able to fulfill her promises. As far as *amma* concerned, her political sunset is near. And with her—unfortunately—Kerala's economic sunset too. •

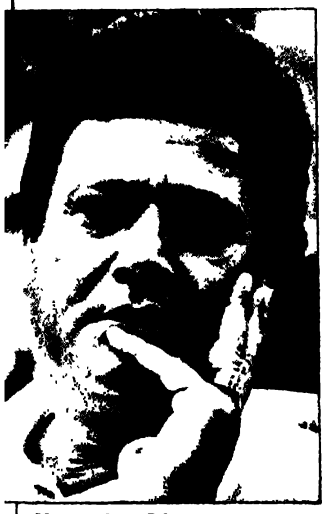
Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

■ Bury the Centaur

With the A320s back in the air, the civil aviation ministry has resolved its most pressing problem. But it has yet to decide how to tackle another problem: the Hotel Corp. of India (HCI).

Owned by Air India, HCI runs the two airport Centaurs (Bombay and Delhi), a beachfront hotel in Bombay's Juhu, a hotel that caters to Japanese pilgrims in Rajgir, Bihar, and an ill-starred property in Srinagar.

Of these, the airport hotels survive on the traffic from delayed flights. The Kashmir property is closed. The Rajgir hotel operates only for five months a year. And the Juhu Centaur which was opened with great fanfare recently has deteriorated alarmingly, with cockroaches over-running the bedrooms, inedible food and unhelpful staff.



Harmohan Dhawan: curtains for the Centaur?

When he was managing director of Air India, Rajan Jetley tried to hand HCI over to the India Tourism Development Corp. but didn't succeed. Now, the new civil aviation minister, Harmohan Dhawan is also keen to act before things get much worse.

One proposal that finds much favour in Sardar Patel Bhavan is for Air India to sell 49 per cent of HCI equity (or to hive off the hotels as individual companies and sell just below half of each company's equity) to non-resident Indians in return for hard currency payments. Private sector hotel companies would then take over the management.

The idea is appealing but there are two catches. One: who would want to buy the Srinagar Centaur? And two: what happens to HCI's surly, unprofessional staff?

STOCK QUOTE

"They must be doing *aarti* to S. Gurumurthy's photograph at Nariman Point."

A businessman, at The Chambers, Taj Mahal Intercontinental hotel, Bombay, on the Indian Express lobby failing to damage the Ambani empire

RAJIB BASU



Kishore Chhabria: to our health and theirs

■ A Vôtre Santé

France prevented Indage India's Sham Chougule from using the 'champagne' tag for his sparkling wines. But that didn't stop him from exporting the stuff and carving out a name for Indian 'champagne' in the West, even Japan, giving France the go-by.

Shaw Wallace has it easier. The Rs 600 crore-plus Indian liquor giant, managed by Kishore Chhabria, doesn't have to battle French pride, and chauvanism.

The company plans to export six of its premium wine and liquor brands—Muscari and Golconda red wines, Moghul Monarch and Royal Challenge whiskies, Pink Lady gin and Olde Adventurer rum—to France by the beginning of 1991. This is purely an experimental export attempt, but a crucial one for Shaw Wallace. If the French—noted for their fussy affinity to all products Bacchanalian—accept the Indian liquors, the company can trumpet the achievement to the rest of the world. Especially with the Muscari brand wine, which company executives say has been made from superior grapes. This is a first, the export of Indian wine to France. Well, cheers. ●

ALLIANCE OF THE WEEK

B.K. Modi-CIT Alcatel



● If it works, it could be a major telecom alliance. The B.K. Modi Group and France's largest telecom outfit, Alcatel, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to make digital telephone exchanges. These exchanges are to be based on Alcatel's E10 series of exchanges. The E10-B is already being manufactured at Mankapur, Uttar Pradesh, in collaboration with Indian Telephone Industries, and has a capacity of five lakh lines a year. The thing is, Alcatel was denied a second facility at Bangalore, courtesy Sam Pitroda, which now makes exchanges with Centre for the Development of Telematics technology. Pitroda and Alcatel have never really got along, and the French company's venture with Modi—the post-MOU situation willing—could help circumvent the Pitroda bogey. With Pitroda around, however, it won't be easy to do that. Unless Alcatel pulls some heavy-duty strings thanks to B.K. Modi. But the French company's last attempt to reach out in India failed. It was said to have recruited the Hindujas' help, mention industry observers, but that got Alcatel nowhere.

A different reshuffle

Chandra Shekhar plays the good guy



"A good leader," Richard Nixon once said, "needs to be a good butcher." This was an axiom that Rajiv Gandhi never paid much heed to. At the best of times, he is a bad butcher: firing chief ministers at airports and foreign secretaries on TV. Vishwanath Pratap Singh, on the other hand, made a marvellous butcher. Soon after he took over, he reshuffled the bureaucracy, sacked Governors and yet, managed to cloak his butchery with an air of moral uprightness.

Over the last week, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar finally wielded the knife. The changes, when they came, were not particularly surprising (most had been anticipated by SUNDAY : *Who's in, who's out*, 9—15 December). What was most extraordinary, however, was that a strict no-punishment policy seems to have been followed. Those that had to go, went. But all found jobs elsewhere that were more or less equal in status, even paan-chewing Cabinet secretary Vinod Pande, who had presided over the politicisation of the bureaucracy.

Consequently, the civil service reshuffle was regarded with relief by the bureaucracy and earned surprisingly little rancour from its victims. Only one man seemed unhappy: Rajiv Gandhi.

It is now becoming increasingly clear that while Chandra Shekhar is grateful for the Congress(I)'s support, he is certainly not going to waste his long-awaited shot at the prime ministership by being perceived as Rajiv Gandhi's puppet. Those who had maintained that he would have no more freedom of action than a Congress(I) chief minister have had to revise this opinion: as the weeks go by, it is obvious that Shekhar is his own man.

Hence the disquiet in the Congress(I). Before the reshuffle, Rajiv's men had put forward their own candidates for each key job. In nearly every case, their recommendations were disregarded.

As Cabinet secretary, for instance, the Congress(I) wanted T.N. Seshan, the stocky, aggressive, abrasive secretary to the Planning Commission. Seshan had been Rajiv's Cabinet secretary. V.P. Singh broke with precedent by removing him and he only got the Planning Commission job because principal secretary to the PM, B.G. Deshmukh, insisted that he be given a post of equal rank.

The Congress(I) believed that the time had now come to right that wrong and revert Seshan to his old job. Unfortunately for Seshan, Subramaniam Swamy was the only Cabinet minister who pushed his case. And in the end, Shekhar went by the recommendations of the civil service: whose members regard Seshan as being arrogant to his inferiors and sycophantic to his superiors.

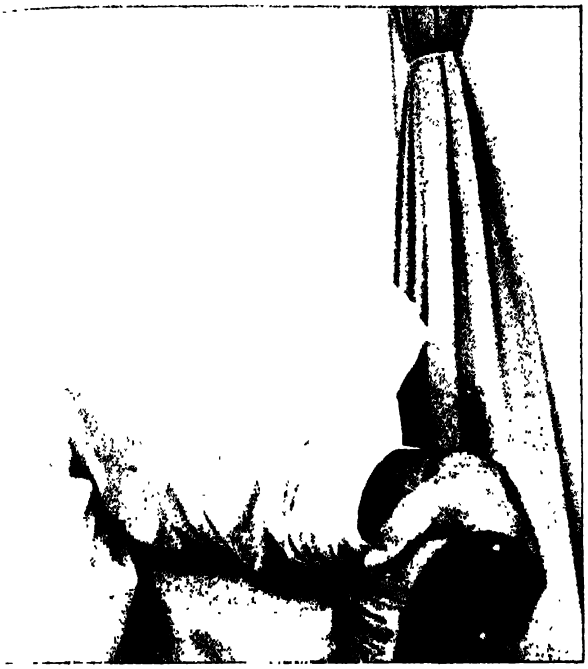
The Congress(I) would not have been unhappy with S.K. Mishra as Cabinet secretary either. The easy-going Mishra earned his reputation as Bansi Lal's principal secretary in the Seventies but since then, has concentrated on relatively light-weight jobs (India Tourism Development Corporation, civil aviation secretary, Festival of India, etc.). He has shown a remarkable capacity for getting on with Jat leaders though. Despite his background as a Bansi Lal man, he is now a Devi Lal favourite. Moreover, his wife, Sukhda Mishra, is a Cabinet minister in UP and thus, his candidacy had Mulayam Singh Yadav's backing.

In the end however, Shekhar decided to give both Seshan and Mishra good jobs—but not the one they wanted. Seshan, who was due to retire on 15 December, became chief election commissioner (an appointment that drew howls of outrage because of his perceived Congress leanings) and Mishra got the key assignment of secretary to the Prime Minister.

Shekhar made it clear that in choosing the next Cabinet secretary he would go by the bureaucracy's views. As as far as the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was concerned, there were only two candidates: A.N. Verma and Naresh Chandra. Of the two, Verma is the more senior but Chandra (who has a full two years to go before retirement) was the favourite largely because of his outstanding record as Union home secretary.

Finally, Shekhar chose the favourite and Chandra's appointment was widely welcomed by his peers. Like his predecessor (Vinod Pande), Chandra, 56, is a bachelor from the Rajasthan cadre. Unlike Pande (whom he regards as a close friend) however, he does not have a *choti*, play politics or spend his time planting stories with a coterie of favoured journalists. Chandra served in the home ministry at a time of unprecedented stress and strain, yet kept a low profile and avoided the media.

While Verma's is a neutral appointment, Rajiv Gandhi regards the choice of former Delhi police commissioner Vijay Karan as director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as plain wrong. At a dinner for journalists thrown by a party functionary last week, the Congress president made his displeasure known: "Those who were with Charan Singh are now in positions of power," he complained to one editor.



While Chandra Shekhar is grateful for the Congress(I)'s support, he is not going to waste his shot at the prime ministership by being perceived as Rajiv Gandhi's puppet



The reference was clearly to Vijay Karan, who was special assistant to Charan Singh during the Janata period. Perhaps Rajiv regards him as being involved in the Shah Commission, which caused so much grief to his mother and to Emergency-era Congressmen.

But this is a strange position. After all, it was the Rajiv regime that appointed Karan to the sensitive post of police commissioner of Delhi. If he was good enough for that job then he is clearly, good enough for the CBI.

The loser in all this has been Rajendra Shekhar, who proved to be one of the best CBI directors in recent memory and professionalised the organisation following the havoc wrought by Mohan Katre. Shekhar kept himself aloof from the keystone cops-like shenanigans of the VP regime's Bofors investigators (who reported directly to S. Gurumurthy and Vinod Pande) and once, when attempts were made to pressure him over the Sanjay Singh case, he even threatened to quit.

But because he was a V.P. Singh-appointee, he had to go. The Rajasthan government has requested that he be returned to the state cadre, but it is not clear if a suitable job can be found for him. When he left, he was already director-general of police. That post has now been filled and there's talk of making Shekhar chairman of the State Industrial Development Corporation.

It is indeed surprising how Raj Bhargava managed the home secretary's post for himself. A 1958 batch UP cadre officer, Bhargava had even failed to become an additional secretary in Delhi. His case was twice put up before Rajiv Gandhi when he was the PM by former Cabinet secretary P.K. Kaul, but on both occasions, Rajiv turned them down. However, Mulayam Singh Yadav found him an able administrator and made him the chief secretary of UP last December, superseding several IAS officers.

Ironically enough, it was Bhargava's stint in Lucknow which got him the top job in Delhi. While in Uttar Pradesh, Bhargava was dealing with the sensitive Ram Janmabhoomi issue, and the Prime Minister felt that his experience in the matter could well be utilised by the Union home ministry.

Obviously, the Congress(I) could not be too happy with this key appointment too. As one party leader put it, "It is uncomprehensible how a Prime Minister can appoint a person to such a post, someone whom the previous government had found unfit even for an additional secretary's job.

When finance minister Yashwant Sinha began looking around for a secretary in his ministry, his eyes naturally fell on Shitla Prasad Shukla, who was then the commerce secretary. Shukla has known Sinha since the latter's days in the administrative service. And despite the fact that Shukla worked closely with the former Prime Minister V.P. Singh—he was the ambassador to GATT when the Raja was commerce minister under Indira Gandhi—Sinha chose him because of his reputation as a highly capable man.

Another posting which has had the Congress(I) up in arms is that of P.K. Lahiri as the revenue secretary. Rajiv Gandhi is yet to forget how his predecessor, Nitish Sengupta, was humiliated by V.P. Singh and was reverted to his state cadre, West Bengal. It took a Jyoti Basu to persuade the Raja to retain Sengupta in Delhi. (He was finally made secretary, civil supplies.) With the change of guard at the Centre, Rajiv had hoped that Sengupta would be given back his place in the revenue department, but that was not to be.

The first round of reshuffle has sent out the following signals:

- Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar is prepared to work with any officer irrespective of his past loyalty. In meetings with partymen, Shekhar has stated that he is against the policy of "my men and his men".
- No officer should be humiliated. Thus, all those who were replaced found good postings elsewhere, except perhaps Rajendra Shekhar. Take the instance of Montek Singh Ahluwalia. He was a special secretary in the PM's Office, whose views of ecomonics clashed with those of Chandra Shekhar. What's more, just a few months back, Shekhar had publicly lambasted the VP regime's indistrial policy, which was largely Ahluwalia's handiwork. Thus, soon after taking over, Montek Singh was shunted out but he was not punished: he was sent to the commerce secretary.
- The Prime Minister has made it clear that seniority and experience must be respected. Thus, despite R.P. Joshi's association with the previous regime, Chandra Shekhar was reluctant to remove him from the Intelligence Bureau (IB). But when Joshi insisted, he was made chief of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in place of M.K. Narayanan, who was reverted back to the IB.
- Finally, the Prime Minister does not seem to be in a tearing hurry to accommodate his favourites. While Dr Manmohan Singh has found a place in the new set-up, Dr S.K. Goyal continues to wait in the wings. This, despite the fact that Goyal and Shekhar share more or less the same views on economic matters. •

K. Srinivasan/New Delhi

The second liberation

Bangladeshis celebrate the end of army rule

Bangladeshis are celebrating what they call 'the second liberation' of their country. Ever since former dictator, General Hussain Mohammad Ershad, resigned on 6 December, 1990, euphoric crowds have taken to the streets, singing patriotic songs, hurling invectives on Ershad and hailing the restoration of democracy. The transformation is dramatic. For, till the night of 6 December, totalitarianism in its worst form, had held complete sway over the country. The country's most prominent political leader, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed, was under house arrest; protesting students were being gunned down by the soldiers; and for a long time it had seemed that nothing could dislodge General Ershad, the man who had ruled the country with an iron hand for 8 long years.

But when the collapse came, it was astonishingly swift and dramatic. At a heavily guarded ceremony, Ershad resigned, appointed Opposition nominee Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, acting head of state, shook hands with the three service chiefs and quietly drove back to his house in Dhaka Cantonment. When the resignation ceremony was telecast that night, lakhs of Bangladeshis came out in the streets screaming with joy. In Dhaka, the crowds made their way to the houses of Ershad's ministers. They wanted to tear them apart. But the ministers had fled, leaving their possessions and houses behind.

The Jatiya Patry, the powerful political organisation created by Ershad, vanished overnight. Not even its office was left intact. In downtown Dhaka, rampaging mobs attacked the party's plush city office and took away carpets, furniture, airconditioners, and even the doors and windows. What remained was a ghost building with a newly pasted sign in Bengali that read: public lavatory. A few days later, mobs attacked the house of former vice-president Moudud Ahmad and managed to set ablaze the reception area before the police arrived.

Bangladeshis evidently wanted their 'second liberation' to be completely free of the Ershad legacy. Within a few days after his fall, posters demanding that Ershad be hanged began appearing on the walls. Dhaka University students, who had spearheaded the anti-Ershad movement, demanded that the ousted President be tried and hanged. They threatened to storm Dhaka Cantonment, where Ershad was ensconced. Ultimately, the interim government headed by Justice Ahmed was forced to arrest Ershad and intern him in a government house miles away from the cantonment.

This move was greeted with more celebrations. It was beginning to look as if the 'second liberation' was here to stay.

"December 6 is a historic day for Bangladesh," says Sheikh Hasina Wajed. More than anything else, this was a day of national catharsis. Fifteen years of military rule had finally given way to democracy. And most significant of all, the change had not come about through an armed struggle or a counter-coup. Hasina points out: "As a first step, we have been able to prove that it is the ballot, that is, the people who are the real strength. Not weapons."

It was not merely the denial of democracy that made Ershad a national villain. The people of Bangladesh also felt that the General and his military minions had siphoned off public wealth



ANIL BARAI

The Bangladesh Army, as a matter of fact, quickly relinquished power because they realised how ineffectual guns were proving against the awesome tide of a mass uprising. In the past, Ershad had been able to quell popular agitations through the use of brute force and by exploiting the deep-rooted animosity betweeen the country's two principal political parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Begum Khaleda Zia. This time Ershad's standard tricks failed. Chiefly, because of the rock-like determination of the students.

Ershad had clamped Emergency on 27 November, the day his goons had shot dead a prominent doctor outside the Dhaka University campus. The same day, Hasina was placed under house arrest. The BNP chief, Begum Zia, managed to evade arrest, thanks to a last minute tip-off. Processions, meetings and all kinds of political activities were banned. But the students





(Above) Deposed President H.M. Ershad; (left) Bangladeshis celebrate victory day: return to democracy?

blew the lid off Ershad's Emergency by refusing to be cowed down. Defying curfew orders, they fought pitched battles with carbine-wielding soldiers. According to conservative estimates, over 100 students and ordinary Bangladeshis were killed by security forces between 27 November and 6 December, this year.

The country's political parties too expressed total solidarity with the students' movement and refused to compromise with Ershad. Both the Awami League and the BNP were united on two points: General Ershad had to resign with immediate effect and, secondly, free elections were to be held under a neutral, interim government. When Ershad found that his Emergency was not working and thousands of students were preparing to martyr themselves, he began offering all kinds of sops. In the end, nothing worked. Ershad had to go.

Political observers in Bangladesh believe that the final blow for Ershad was the army's disinclination to kill students. The army chief, General Nooruddin Khan, apparently was of the view that continued fighting between citizens and the army would ultimately consume the latter. In other words, the army, after a point, decided not to support Ershad in his crusade against the masses because of reasons of self-preservation.

The army, by that time, had become an object of national revulsion. Military officers, under Ershad's regime, had been promoted to key administrative, police and public sector posts. Many of them had amassed sizeable fortunes and the average Bangladeshi believed that the military was the source of corruption. Once the army started killing the protestors, it was clear that this time it would be a fight to the finish. The leaders of the anti-Ershad movement threatened that the relatives of armed forces personnel would be lynched if the army continued to kill ordinary people. Some leaders even hinted that the entire cantonment would be overrun and razed to the ground.

Confronted with this grim prospect, the military leadership appears to have decided to make a tactical retreat. In the process they even sacrificed Ershad. The political parties, in turn, appear to have assured the military that its interests and the personal businesses of individual servicemen would not be touched. On 12 December, the army even allowed Ershad to be arrested and placed in the custody of the civilian administration. According to preliminary reports, General Ershad will be tried for corruption and perhaps, even for his alleged involvement in the assasination of former General Zia-ur Rehman.

Disclosures by the Opposition show Ershad to be another Marcos, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale. They alleged that the ousted General and his two mistresses, who live in New York, own a luxury hotel in Hawaii and a palatial house in the United States bought with funds siphoned off from the state treasury, foreign aid and through gold and drug trafficking. Besides, they further alleged that Ershad—a keen golfer—had bought golf clubs that cost more than US $ 100,000. Ershad was, however, cun-

UI: Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Public Library

ning as well as cupid. To build up a coterie of loyalists around him, he had shared the booty with key people, both within and outside the armed forces. The fact that none of these men rallied around him in the end must have come as a bitter disappointment for the General.

Army chief General Nooruddin is believed to have worked hard, quickly and efficiently to ensure that no Ershad loyalist rebelled against the collective decision to sacrifice Ershad. General Nooruddin, an Engineers Corps officer, might not have pulled it off alone. For, at least two powerful divisional commanders, who were well-known Ershad loyalists, could have easily disobeyed the army chief. Bangladesh has about five divisions of troops, and had two of the divisional commanders rebelled, the remaining commanders too might have withdrawn support from the army chief.



Army chief Nooruddin Khan: deserting Ershad

General Nooruddin, however, found a powerful ally in the person of the chief of general staff, Lt. General Salam, who is an infantry officer and an Ershad appointee. Salam backed Nooruddin and together they neutralised a handful of key senior officers who might have revolted. Major General Rafique-ul Islam, the commander of Bangladesh's elite 9 Division based some 20 miles north of Dhaka, was relieved of his commands. A few other army officers were posted out or relieved of their commands These included Brigadier Faruque of the 46 Independent Infantry Brigade.

Most significant were the charges made against the country's intelligence agencies. Major General Mohammad Ashraf, the chief of Bangladesh's National Security Intelligence (which is a civilian outfit akin to a secret police) was stripped of his post and sent back to the army. The

"The military rulers have looted the country"

Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed on the fall of Ershad

Sheikh Hasina Wajed, leader of Bangladesh's largest political party, the Awami League, is delighted at the turn of events in her country. She is confident that the era of military rule in Bangladesh is finally over. In an interview to SUNDAY, *Ms Wajed explained why General Ershad fell. Excerpts:*

SUNDAY: There have been several agitations against Ershad in the past. But all had failed. Why did this round of agitations succeed?
Sheikh Hasina Wajed: I won't call it an agitation. I would say that ours has been a movement for establishing democracy. Ever since Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was killed on 15 August, 1975, this country has seen only authoritarian rule.

Authoritarian rule, as only to be expected, is characterised by misdeeds, violations of fundamental rights, denial of the right to vote, the looting of national resources and the protection of the interests of a small group. The ordinary people have been suffering. They have not been getting anything to eat, they were not even getting enough clothes to wear, and most important, they were deprived of employment facilities and proper education. As a result, discontent that had set in over the last 15 years, exploded. 6 December, 1990, was a historic day for Bangladesh. We can call this our democratic liberation day.

Q: Many people fear that Ershad might return to power through a counter-coup...
A: One thing is significant in this country: after 15 August, 1975, all the changes that have taken place in the government, have occurred through conspiracy and murder. In other words, by means of bullets. Change has never taken place through the ballot. This is the first time that power has changed hands through constitutional means.

The people of Bangladesh want that democracy should be institutionalised, and that democratic processes should begin. In other words, they want that the change of power should come about through the ballot. And, as a first step, we have succeeded in proving that the will of the people is the strongest weapon. After this, if anybody tries to establish another authoritarian situation, I firmly believe that the people of Bangladesh will not



director general of the Forces Intelligence (FI) was similarly posted out. The Forces Intelligence, modelled along the lines of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), had sensitive files on all senior military officers and Ershad had used these files as extremely effective instruments of blackmail. The NSI and the FI chiefs were staunch Ershad loyalists and were known as the angels of death. Their ouster marked the defeat of the pro-Ershad elements in the military. After this, the remaining Ershad loyalists, inlcuding the commander of the Chittagong Division, fell in line.

General Ershad might have made a permanent exit, but his legacies survive. And it is these legacies that could be far more difficult to negate. The ousted General has left behind a country that is perhaps the poorest in the world. The extent of dependence on foreign aid can be guaged from the fact that as much as 92 per cent of development expenditure is financed through external sources. While the country's capacity to create productive resources has been dwindling, its population has been constantly rising. The result is an economic nightmare, made worse by rampant corruption and inefficiency.

Shrinking opportunities have made life extremely stifling for the average Bangladeshi. It was not merely the denial of democracy that made Ershad a national villain. People felt that the General and his military minions were siphoning off national wealth which otherwise would have gone to the people. They believed that corruption was the cause of their poverty. Only, the truth is not quite as simple. For, prosperity is determined by the level of productivity and corruption is only a peripheral factor.

Political leaders like Sheikh Hasina and Begum Zia realise that they have an uphill task ahead of them and that no economic miracle is possible. The big question, however, is whether the people will give the next democratically elected government time to reverse the negative processes started by Ershad. The people of Bangladesh want freedom—not merely from the military but also from hunger and deprivation. Only, for that they just might have to wait for a third liberation. ●

Indranil Banerjie/Dhaka



Police beating up demonstrators: coercion didn't work

accept it.

Q: The people of Bangladesh want that Ershad and his ministers should be tried. Will this be possible?

A: Obviously, this should happen. Considering the way people have been misruled and their rights taken away, there should be a trial of the guilty. But that should be according to the law.

Q: What if Ershad flees the country?

A: If he runs away, at least the people of this country will be free from his clutches.

Q: Do you think that political parties like the one you lead will be able to solve the major problems confronting the country within a reasonable period of time?

A: It won't be possible for anyone to solve the country's problems in a short time. But what we do believe is that without democracy, there can be no progress. There can be no quick solutions to the problems because over the last 15 years, the military junta has looted the country. The mess created cannot be cleared overnight. The people will have to be patient.

Our people have suffered a lot. After Mujibur Rehman was assassinated, this country was ruled by military dictators. They indulged in corruption, nepotism and they ruined our economy. So, it will take a while to overcome the problems. But there is one thing: our people will not tolerate military rulers. The masses now want democracy, they want their fundamental rights restored and above all, they want a people's government.

Sheikh Hasina(left) with Begum Zia: architects of democracy



Settling scores

Om Prakash Chautala tries to get his own back on the press



HARYANA

He is a man that the press loves to hate. Over the past year, Om Prakash Chautala has been ridiculed for Disneyland and derided for his bluntness. But while he may have been at the receiving end from the media all this while, the Haryana strongman—now in his powerful avatar as the Janata Dal(S) general secretary—appears to have decided to hit back.

The main target of Chautala's ire is the *India Today* group (whose *Newstrack* video-cassette carried an extremely critical programme on the rigging and violence in Meham). Apart from getting back at the press, the Dal(S) general secretary is said to be promoting himself through a Gurgaon-based Hindi daily, which he allegedly owns.

Fortunately for Chautala, Thompson Press, which publishes *India Today* and the other Living Media magazines, is located in his own backyard—Faridabad, Haryana. For long, Chautala has claimed that he "will not rest until Thompson Press is closed down". Now, there are reasons to believe that he has begun to try and fulfil that promise.

Apparently, Chautala has chosen an indirect and clever way to harass the Thompson Press management—using the workers. Although the press' union is dominated by the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), some of the workforce owe allegiance to the Lok Mazdoor Sanghatana (LMS)—which Chautala helped create in 1987 when his father, Devi Lal, was Haryana chief minister. Although the HMS won the last union election, the press has faced worker unrest—supposedly at the direct instigation of Chautala and his men.

Early this month, LMS members hoisted their union's flag outside the press' premises. Some HMS followers—who had known of the LMS' plan—had maintained an all-night vigil at the main gates to prevent this. But they were picked up by the police in a pre-dawn swoop and the LMS workers (allegedly with the protection of the cops) arrived to raise their flag to shouts of "*Chautala zindabad*". This led to hundreds of HMS sympathisers pouring out from the adjoining factories in Faridabad and a police *lathi* charge.

The Thompson Press management is diplomatic about Chautala's interference in its affairs. Says works director Vinod Kumar: "He has not come out in the open though he may be the invisible hand behind all the trouble we are facing." Last week, however, the press' administrative manager, Ramesh Kapur, was called to the police station only to be told that he should "talk to political bigwigs" if he wanted the union's problems resolved. Vinod Kumar says that the press loses lakhs of rupees every time the LMS declares a strike.

The HMS, however, is more frank about Chautala's role. Says Haryana secretary R. S. Yadav: "Chautala's nuisance value has increased even more than when he was chief minister. The police and the city administration are in collusion with him. They have been instituting false police cases against our men, blackmailing the management and creating a crisis all over Faridabad."

At the same time, Chautala has been actively promoting a Hindi daily called *Jan Sandesh*, which he is believed to have acquired in a *benami* deal a year ago. The Gurgaon-based newspaper enjoys a circulation of 36,000 and the trust which owns it plans to launch an eveninger soon. *Jan Sandesh*'s editor, Chander Trikha, claims that too much is made of Chautala's association with the newspaper. "I admit, though, that he is sympathetic towards us. But this is because we do not display an absolute bias as other newspapers do," he says.

However, there have been recent



and growing complaints that Janata Dal(S) politicians in Haryana have been discouraging the sale of other Hindi dailies in the state. Says Anuj Sharma of *The Times of India* group's circulation department: "Our agents in places such as Panipat and Hissar have complained about the forced sales and subscriptions of *Jan Sandesh*. The circulation of the group's Hindi daily, the *Navbharat Times*, has dropped by 1,000 copies in the state because of the government's backing of *Jan Sandesh*.

According to Sharma, this has taken two forms. The state government tries to despatch copies of *Jan Sandesh* to all village *panchayats* and to *panchayat*-run schools. Also, the state tourist department has taken over a large number of bookstalls located on the national highways. These, he implies, are used to restrict the circulation of rival Hindi dailies.

The *Indian Express* group's Hindi daily, *Jansatta*, has also been affected badly. Says the newspaper's circulation manager, S.C. Thakur: "We have received specific complaints that agents have been instructed not to lift copies of *Jansatta*. If this continues, it could develop into a very serious problem."

Chautala has made no effort to hide his intention to settle scores with those newspapers that attacked him. Now that he 'owns' one, his resolve may well have become that much firmer. •

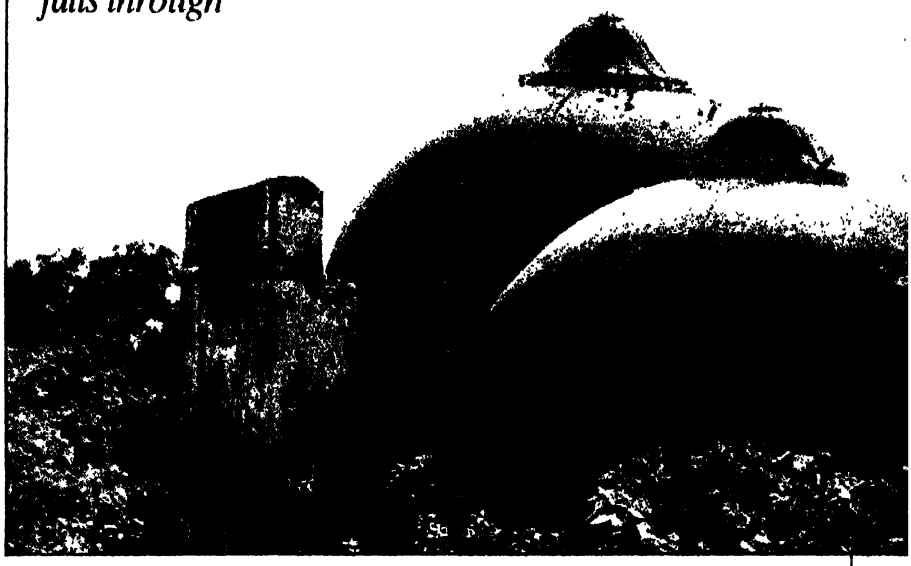
Ritu Sarin/New Delhi



Chautala has chosen an indirect and clever way to harass the Thompson Press—using the workers. The press has faced worker unrest—supposedly at the direct instigation of Chautala and his men

The plot that failed

The Shiv Sena's attempt to blow up the Babri Masjid falls through





UTTAR PRADESH

Few took the Shiv Sena's role in the agitation to claim the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya seriously. Till two Sena members struck. In the thick of night, at around 10 pm, the pair—Suresh Chandra and Samant—were nabbed by a CRPF posse manning the shrine. They were carrying four bundles of dynamite, with which they had planned to blow up the entire structure. Samant, however, managed to slip away.

Suresh, who was later interrogated by the police and the CID in the presence of central investigating agencies, said he and Samant had arrived in Ayodhya on 29 November. Suresh was from Brindavan, in Mathura district, where he worked as a carpenter in an *ashram*, while Samant, from Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, was employed as an electrician in Bombay. Suresh revealed that his accomplice was an active worker of the Shiv Sena, while he himself was involved with both the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). And on 29 October, when BJP president L.K. Advani was arrested in Bihar, Suresh too had courted arrest in Mathura.

The UP chief minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, saw the attempt as "part of a deep-rooted conspiracy by some anti-national elements, who wanted to take advantage of the Ayodhya issue and were out to disturb the peace in the country". His statement might acquire credence in view of the fact that Samant and Suresh had not known each other until very recently and were probably hired by another group, based in Ayodhya, which was bent on asserting itself violently. Sources in the district administration said that a fringe group of about 30 are doing precisely this in Ayodhya; its leaders are unknown, its members do not recognise one another, nor are they individually informed of its programmes. They are only told what they have to do.

At the same time, why the security forces and the intelligence have not been able to nab such a small group is a mystery. After all, Samant and Suresh were amateurs. The attempt was not a well-planned operation of a mastermind. They had smuggled the dynamite bundles in thick blankets and clothes—the most obvious camouflage. The CRPF spotted and caught them some 200 metres away from the mosque as they tried to get past the barbed wire fence around the complex.

"The reality is that the administra-

tion is a puppet in the hands of the VHP," commented a journalist based in Faizabad. He pointed out how BJP leader Vijaya Raje Scindia openly held a meeting on the Ram Lila grounds in Faizabad on 29 November, without seeking the administration's permission. The grounds are located right in the middle of the Muslim-dominated area of Chowk, and no public meeting has been permitted there for the last five years. The Shiv Sena itself was not considered a force, even by the BJP and the VHP, which had isolated the Sena members from its ongoing agitation, as they feared that they might disrupt the VHP's peaceful programme of offering *satyagraha* and courting arrest. But on 6 December itself, when the second phase of the VHP's agitation began, the Shiv Sena members, visibly incensed at not being issued membership cards by the VHP, shouted slogans and tried to force their way inside the shrine complex through a special pathway opened by the administration for ordinary pilgrims. They threatened the Faizabad district commissioner into allowing them entry in groups of six and eight. The Shiv Sena certainly managed to score a point over the VHP and its allies. And fearing that they might steal the thunder, that very day the Bajrang Dal chief, Vinay Katiyar, proudly declared: "We have performed *kar seva*."

The Shiv Sena apart, the younger, hot-headed elements within the VHP itself publicly condemned their leadership's newly discovered "peaceful strategies". "It is like giving up the spoils of victory to the losers immediately after the battle. Such magnanimity has no place in our movement," said Mahant Balibaba, who came from the Chambal ravines of Madhya Pradesh and is a leader of the newly constituted Garam Dal. Balibaba clearly indicated that his group would "resort to activities that will make our leaders sit up and learn a lesson or two". Sources in the administration have not ruled out the possibility of the Shiv Sena teaming up with such elements within the VHP to create large-scale violence.

More than anything else, the recent attempt to blow up the mosque, was clearly intended as another message to the Muslims that they had bettter give up the shrine without further ado, or else face the consequences. And the country-wide communal riots do not seem out of place. •

Radhika Ramaseshan/Lucknow

Fairer options

Women rally for communal harmony



DELHI

As riots broke out in every corner of the country and an older generation recalled the trauma of partition, women's organisations in Delhi did their bit to promote communal harmony. In a fortnight-long joint campaign, eight women's organisations covered every corner of Delhi, spreading their message of communal amity– from the Sikh dominated Bhogal and Turkman Gate in the walled city to the BJP stronghold in crowded Karol Bagh.

And, at a time when every small effort mattered, it seemed that the women's organisations did succeed, if only to make people stop and think about the newspaper headlines they read mechanically every day. "*Mandir masjid nahin girenge, Hindu-Muslim ek rahenge*", the women activists shouted as they stopped at a crowded intersection in the capital's busy Karol Bagh area. Passers-by stopped and stared. Then they clambered on to the open tempo asking for the leaflets being distributed. "Can you give me an extra copy?" asked a bystander. "I want my family to read it as well."

At a time when every small effort mattered, it seemed that the women's organisations did succeed in making people stop and think



And there was a lot of emotion as well. An activist recounted the riot killings, how the mania spread from city to city, the politicisation of the Babri Masjid—which was essentially a non-issue—and the agony of a young mother in Aligarh whose six-month-old baby was burnt alive in Aligarh. The crowd listened in rapt silence. But then, with the tension mounting, apprehensive shopkeepers, fearing trouble, threatened the activists with "dire consequences" if they did not move away. That the simple speech and slogans, like "*Bharat ma ke char sipahee, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isahi*" had obviously touched a raw nerve somewhere, was evident from the heated arguments that followed.

And, in strife-torn Trilokpuri, which witnessed the worst incidents of the post-assassination riots in 1984, at least 200 women joined the march, also shouting slogans.

"The one thing we have not faced as yet is indifference. Tension yes, hostility yes, and sometimes enthusiastic crowds, but never indifference," said an activist. The communal tension in the country had visibly spread to apparently safe and secure capital, representatives of the organisations felt. To counter every rabid fundamentalist who threatened to drive away the activists if they spoke one word against the Hindus, there was one woman who came out of her home to join the campaign. And, if nothing else, the fortnight-long campaign, including *padayatras*, exhibitions, speeches and corner meetings, was worth it just for that. •

Minu Jain/New Delhi

Pardon, the split is showing

The differences within the state Congress(I) surface during Rajiv Gandhi's visit



ORISSA

Perhaps for the first time this year, the Congress(I)'s stock in Orissa is showing signs of improvement. The long drawn out bickerings and the entire unsavoury episode of the Janata Dal's fall at the Centre have no doubt contributed immensely to the Congress(I)'s present position.

However, such gains have been negated to a large extent by the increasing factionalism within the party. The discontent within the state Congress(I) unit was on public display when party president Rajiv Gandhi visited the state on 7 December.

When Rajiv Gandhi landed at the Rangeilunda airport for his day long tour of the flood-hit Ganjam district, the factional alignments in the state Congress(I) unit were all too visible. On one side was the former chief minister J.B. Patnaik, his wife and former president of the All India Mahila Congress(I), Jayanti Patnaik, and their numerous followers. On the other, was the anti-Patnaik group, headed by PCC(I) president Giridhar Gomango, MP, Congress(I) Legislature Party leader Basant Kumar Biswal, former chief minister Hemananda Biswal and former Union minister Ramachandra Rath.

As the Congress party president emerged from his King Air Private Plane, there was a stampede. The rival groups fought for the limelight as they welcomed Rajiv. The situation worsened when the Patnaik loyalists raised the slogan *"Rajiv Gandhi zindabad"* and *"Janaki Patnaik zindabad"*. This was a breach of an earlier agreement that there would be no slogans in favour of any state leader on that occasion. In the ensuing fracas, some anti-Patnaik youth tried to pull off Patnaik's clothes. Even former chief minister Nandini Satpathy was not spared in the ugly episode—jostled by the crowd, the lady almost fell flat.

The state party leaders continued to demonstrate increasingly crude instances of their pettiness. First there was great confusion and speculation about who would go in Gandhi's car on his visit to the flood-ravaged areas. Initially the party president invited only Gomango and the local party MP, Gopinath Gajapati, to accompany him. Later on he invited Basant Biswal and Ramachandra Rath when he toured the district's other parliamentary constituency, Aska. Patnaik was left far behind in the convoy following Gandhi. The anti-Patnaik leaders were visibly jubilant at this



Rajiv Gandhi: the guest

turn of events, since Gandhi had not only "ignored" Patnaik at the airstrip earlier, by not enquiring about him, but had also taken no note of him throughout his visit.

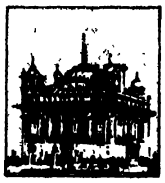
However, the anti-Patnaik faction was taken aback when the ex-CM accompanied Rajiv Gandhi in his aircraft back to Delhi. Now it was the turn of Patnaik's followers to crow in delight and claim that whatever his adversaries may say their mentor was the party president's most trusted leader in Orissa.

The anti-Patnaik camp is probably being over-optimistic about its chances of winning favour with the party high command. Patnaik, most observers feel, is still a force to reckon with in Orissa politics. ●

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

Enter the army

Military presence in Punjab creates speculation



PUNJAB

The death toll was the highest since Operation Bluestar in 1984. There were more than 500 killings in Punjab in November 1990. And finally, in mid-December, the army moved in. So, now the border with Pakistan is completely sealed off, from Jammu and Kashmir to the Rann of Kutch.

The army has been deployed in Amritsar, Ferozepur, Gurdaspur, Bhatinda and Faridkot. Of these, divisions seven and nine of the army which were moved from Khemkaran and surrounding areas into Ferozepur, had also been involved in Operation Bluestar. And special commandos have been posted, allegedly, to help Chandigarh police nab militants.

Not surprisingly, there has been a lot of resentment over the army deployment. All Akali factions and the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), among others, are strongly critical of the deployment. Gurcharan Singh Tohra, ex-president of the SGPC, was the first to condemn the act: "The present situation in the state is the result of army action in 1984. The government is repeating the mistake." Prakash Singh Badal, former chief minister of Punjab and president of the Akali Dal(Badal) was quite resentful too: "This army deployment will prove to be the greatest blunder of the government."

Simranjit Singh Mann has called this an "authoritarian act" on the part of the Centre. And the Panthik Committees led by Sohan Singh and by Bhai Wassan Singh Zaffarwal have jointly condemned the army deployment.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has categorically denied that the army deployment had anything to do with terrorism. It was just a matter of routine exercises, he stated. And Virendra Verma, as Governor of Punjab, said the army was in the state to check infiltration. ●

Reshmi Saxena/Chandigarh

Blood, oil and tears

Lord of oil adulteration Shiva Kumar is killed, as gang wars continue in Bangalore



KARNATAKA

Fate finally caught up with the 32-year-old B A. Shiva Kumar on the night of 19 November. As he got down from his Maruti in a posh residential colony in Bangalore, the don of oil adulteration was brutally hacked to death.

But "Oil" Kumar, who ran a business of petrol and diesel adulteration was not the first ganglord to be killed so brutally. Meanwhile, the fight for supremacy over the illicit business has reached fever pitch.



Shiva Kumar: felled

The enterprising kingpin of the adulteration racket was also a politician of sorts. His "business"—which used to fetch him about Rs 5 lakhs a day—had funded many political bigwigs of various parties.

In fact, Oil Kumar had such good ties that he had even been appointed the principal election manager of the Congress(I) in the Gandhinagar Assembly constituency election, in 1985. But when he died—by the same rules that he had lived by—there were no mourners. It was just the murder of another baddie, who in his time had ruled the roost, called the shots, loved fast cars and enjoyed Scotch.

The attack on Oil Kumar was said to have been masterminded by his "business and financial associate," Mutthappa Rai. The gory act was carried out by some hired hoodlums, five of whom are now cooling their heels behind bars. The police are still on the hunt for Rai, who is said to be hiding in Bombay.

What is surprising is that such gangs and their lords should exist at all in a place like Bangalore, which is otherwise known for its peace and tranquility. But they do and their business is mainly extortion, unlike the gangs in Bombay which thrive on smuggling and related activities.

The gangs came into the limelight only after the Emergency. A well-known criminal, M.P. Jairaj, had the audacity of attempting muder in broad daylight, in front of the High Court. While he was serving his term of nine-years imprisonment, another man was making his presence felt in the underworld—Kotwal Ramachandra.

Wanted for rape and a number of other crimes, Ramachandra achieved notoriety when he barged into Ramakrishna Hegde's—who had just taken over as chief minister—chambers and brandished a chopper. And to show that he had the active support of some politicians, a photograph surfaced mysteriously in which Ramachandra was seen alongside S. Bangarappa, the present chief minister. Bangarappa had, however, dismissed it saying he could not help it if some people wanted to get photographed with him.

But Kotwal Ramachandra did have political connections. Although he was spotted many times at the Congress office, he had still eluded the police. By then, Jairaj was released from prison and the big time gang warfare started in right earnest. A short while later Ramachandra disappeared. Three months later his bones surfaced in a well on the outskirts of Bangalore.

Jairaj was immediately booked for Ramachandra's death. But with his connections, he got first class treatment even in prison. For a short while during his sentence, he was even falsely admitted to the government-run Victoria Hospital, as a patient, from where he conducted his illegitimate businesses.

He was soon acquitted from the charge of murdering Ramachandra for lack of proof. But he had to contend with a new rival—Sriramapuram Kitty. In the battles between these two gangs, over 16 persons were chopped to death. And it left Kitty partially paralysed. To this day, the don supervises his interests from a wheelchair.

With cries of Bangalore turning into a criminal city, the police swung into action and raided Jairaj's house. They unearthed an armoury, and Jairaj did his stint in prison again.

His release saw a new avatar of Jairaj. Publisher of a newspaper called *Garibi Hatao*, Jairaj also decided to contest as an Independent candidate from the Jayanagar Assembly constituency in the city, in 19 November 89. But his political career was nipped in the bud as Jairaj was felled by a hail of bullets.

It was after Jairaj's brains were blown out that Oil Kumar took over. By then, at least 37 persons had been killed in gangwars in Bangalore alone. Now, with Oil Kumar dead as well, it is not a question of whether the gang rivalries will end, but a question of who will be the next underworld king. And possibly he will go the same way as the others—dead in a pool of blood, not unheard, but certainly unsung. ●

Gauri Lankesh/Bangalore

Pop and porn

Samantha Fox promises Indians an exciting winter

It was as a pin-up girl that she achieved fame, her nude pictures pushing up the circulation of many a publication. But Indian audiences will have to make do with Samantha Fox, the singer—never mind how difficult it is to recognise her with her clothes on. On her way to South America for a concert tour, Fox has decided to stop over in India to perform at Bombay, Delhi and Madras, along with the London City Dancers. Says Fox: "I've always wanted to come here. It's just that the opportunity didn't arise." So, when Shaw Wallace offered to sponsor her Indian tour, the singer was game.

But then Samantha Fox has always been game for anything. Beginning her career as a page 3 model in England, she more than proved her lack of inhibitions, only stopping short of frontal shots. Then came the mysterious pornographic video movie with David Essex (a pop singer) which kept the gossips busy for a while. And once she was a public figure—of sorts—Fox decided to switch over to a career in music.



GAUTAM PATOLE

A crooner with social consciousness she isn't. But Samantha Fox realises only too well that she can't keep her fan following with titillation alone, and has begun taking her music career more seriously

For someone perceived as just another dumb blonde bombshell, Fox didn't do too badly in the highly competitive world of pop music. Her first album *Touch Me* zoomed to the number three position on the UK charts. She followed up this success with *Nothing's Gonna Stop Me Now* and *I Wanna Have Some Fun*. The charge that all her songs have to do with sex puts her on the defensive. "People think that I sing about sex all the time because of my modelling career. But if they really cared to listen to the lyrics, they will discover another side," she pouts. "I don't want to sing about politics."

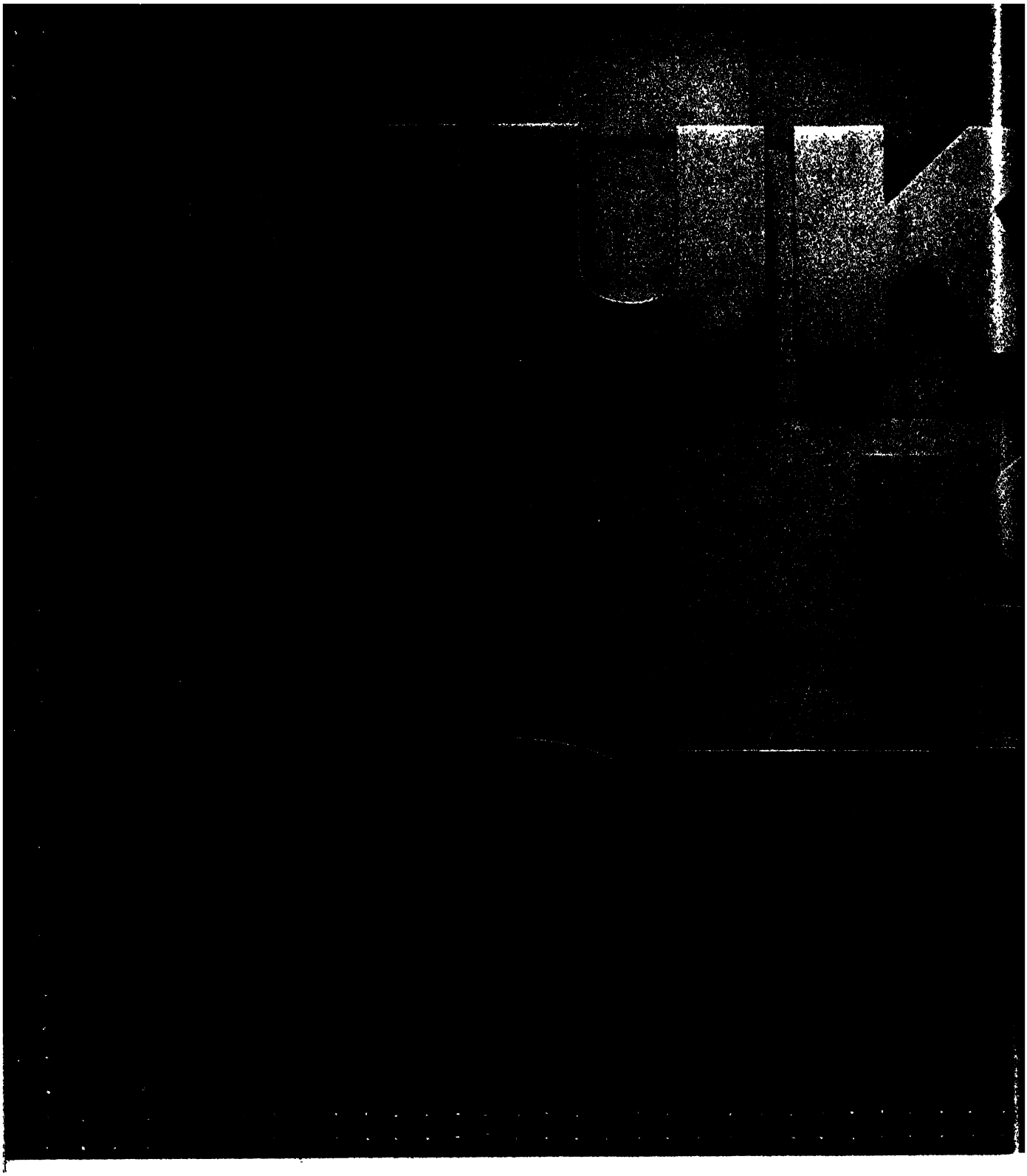
A crooner with a social conscience she isn't. But Fox realises only too well that with such talents as Madonna and Paula Abdula around she can't keep her fan following with titillation alone, and has begun taking her music career more seriously. At her age she can't get back to modelling (though she wouldn't be averse to a *Playboy* or *Penthouse* assignment, she confesses) so music is all that's left to her. Hence, she plans to release her fourth album in February next year. A Hollywood movie project is also on the cards, but Fox is loath to say anything about it at this point.

But her Indian concert will come before that, with Fox enthralling audiences with her singing and body language. Abroad, her audience largely comprises under-18s, who come to boogey the night away at her live shows. And Fox, who lists the Beatles among her early influences, hopes that her numbers will keep Indian audiences swinging as well.

She won't get to see much of the country, though, which she knows little about. "I've heard about the poverty, the very rich and the very poor," she says. "But it's too early to form an impression."

Anyway, Fox hasn't any intentions of wasting her time trying to analyse the Indian reality. She'll content herself with sunbathing in Goa and singing at her shows before making off for southern climes.●

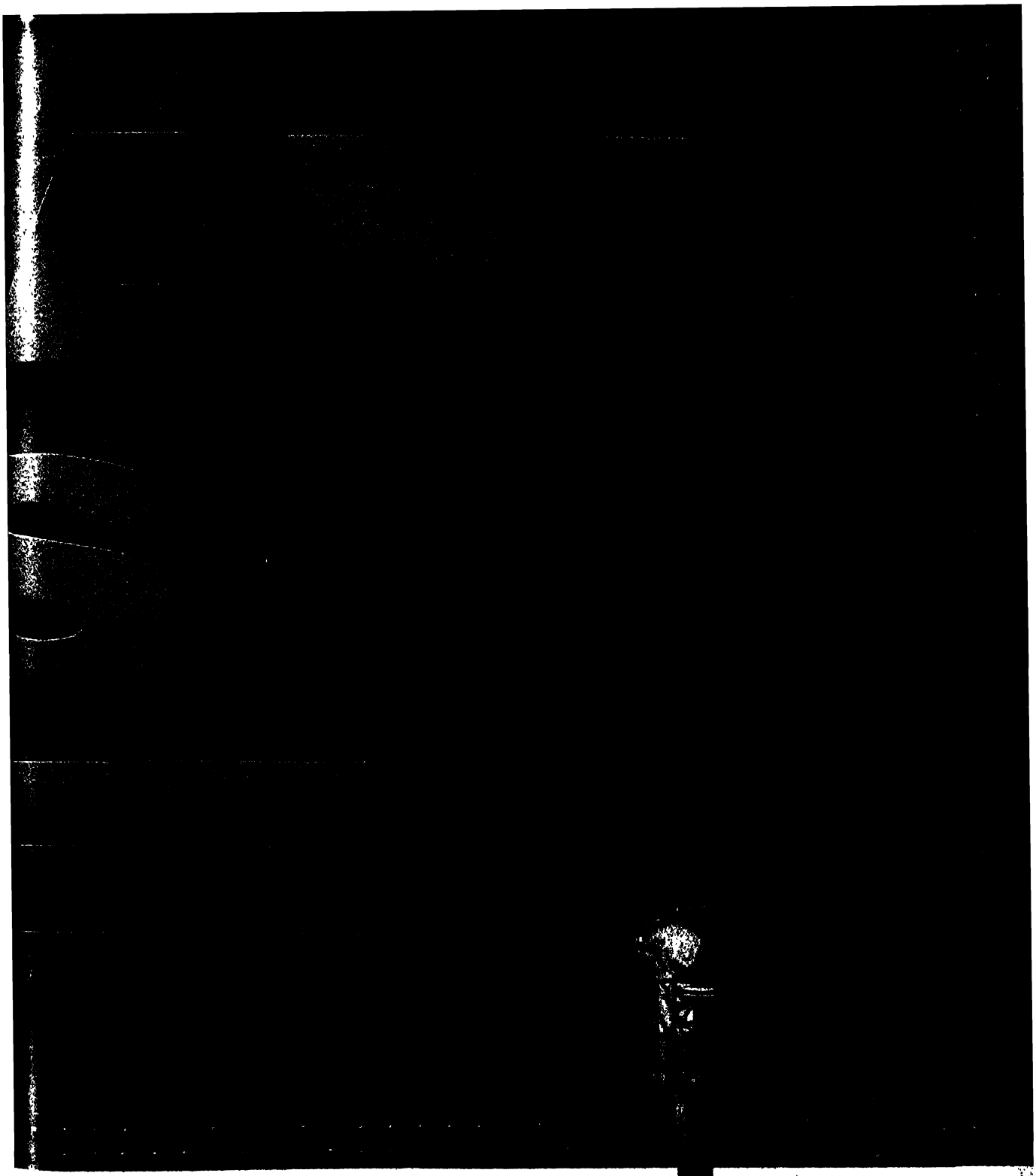
Godfrey Pereira/Bombay



For over five decades, Mukand has been synonymous with steel.

Mukand is India's largest producer of the widest range of stainless and speciality steels; leads in exports of alloy steel castings; designs and builds some of India's biggest, most complex cranes and machines; helps launch her rockets; and undertakes execution of turnkey engineering projects. Making it a multi-product, multi-division, Rs. 500-crore conglomerate.

The commitment of Mukand's people to technology,



i novation, research and development has given them a rare
i sight into steel and its applications. Mukand knows how to
i ake steel, engineer it and use it effectively.

In 50 years, Mukand has truly become a mastermind
i steel.

MUKAND LTD.

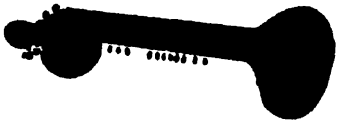
(Formerly Mukand Iron & Steel Works Ltd.)



SOMNATH GHOSH

DIFFERENT MOODS

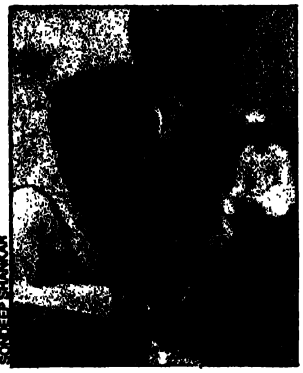
The life and times of Ravi Shankar



The past has a way of catching up with all of us. And with sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, reluctant idol to the drug-happy Sixties generation, it did so in the guise of *Ghanashyam*, a dance drama exploring the twin themes of addiction and exorcism. For Shankar, the return to his first love, traditional dance, wasn't just a trip down memory lane. The opera served as a vehicle to express all those forebodings Shankar had harboured when he played guru to George Harrison, the rest of the Beatles gang, and by extension to the entire brood of flower children. Recalls Shankar: "The whole thing was drug-oriented. They said Indians take *ganja*, *bhang* and *charas*. That's why they are so advanced in literature, art and music. I was protesting all the time. These are things people don't know."

Hence, *Ghanashyam—A Broken Branch*, to drive home the anti-drug message Shankar had always ached to convey.





SOMNATH GHOSH



SOMNATH GHOSH

MUSIC AND BEYOND

In deep concentration with his sitar; relaxed and smiling

It all began in 1989, when the City of Burmingham Touring Opera Company director Graham Vick asked Shankar to produce a piece meaningful to the modern audience. And what better theme for that sort of work than drugs?

Using the dance forms of Kathak, Bharatanatyam and Kathakali, Shankar decided to convey the anti-drug message through a simple tale, reminiscent of the *Jatakas*. The story was fairly uncomplicated. Two couples, Raman and Kantha and Ghanashyam and Lalita, teach dance in a small village at "the turn of the century". During Holi, *bhang* is distributed and Ghanashyam overindulges himself. He soon becomes addicted to stronger drugs given to him by some *sadhus*, selling his wife's jewellery to buy the stuff.

Ghanashyam's fall down the moral ladder is complete when he spies on Kantha while she is bathing and is caught in the act by his wife. Things go from bad to worse and finally he dies the death of an animal, being chased by the villagers for having stolen a precious jewel.

Soon after Ghanashyam's death, a spirit possesses Kantha. The *ojha* says she can only be saved if the ghost is accepted by another person, who will die in the process. Lalita volunteers, the ceremony is duly performed, and a branch breaks to mark the moment.

This incident is autobiographical—Shankar witnessed such another breaking of the branch after an exorcism as a child—as are passages which deal with the problem of addiction. According to British critic David Toop, the opera was "a reflection" of Shankar's role as an idol to the Sixties drug culture with his "performances at American rock festivals as Monterey and Woodstock". Shankar, for his part, insists: "These characters are real. I have seen them."

This verisimilitude seemed to have worked in Britain, where *Ghanashyam* got rave reviews and standing ovations wherever it was performed. The reception in India, however, was lukewarm in comparison. While everyone agreed that the production was an interesting experiment, it was said to lack the intensity that marks a great work of art. And the inevitable comparisons to Uday Shankar's *Kalpana* didn't do *Ghanashyam* much good either.

Shankar readily admits the influence of brother Uday on his work. "*Ghanashyam*," he says, "is a meeting of *dada* and *baba* (Ustad Allauddin Khan)." The maestro is equally candid about the bad press the piece had received. "People are not saying anything good about it now, maybe they will later. First let me get the *gaalis*," he says ruefully.

Most of the criticism is misguided, anyway, maintains Shankar: "For instance when people say that in the Shiva episode it was *raga malkaus*, it was not, it was *dhani*." Nevertheless Panditji is content: "I have shown the hypocritical side of religion and as an artist I have the right to do that."

For Shankar, the tears of those enthralled by the show are adequate recompense. And more than make up for the damage he may have inadvertently done in his guru-of-the-flower-generation avatar.

But flower power and the Beatles came much later. Ravi Shankar began life in Banaras (on 7 April, 1920), born into a Brahmin household. Exposure to the outside world came soon enough, though. When Shankar was nine, the family moved to Paris so that his elder brother Uday's ballet troupe could get better exposure. Here, Ravi began his career as a dancer, under the shadow of his more illustrous sibling, learning several languages, stagecraft, set designing, lighting and the art of showmanship on the side. In 1932, he accompanied Uday Shankar's troupe to USA and then in 1934 he returned to India to master traditional dance.

NOVEL VENTURE **His latest brain child Ghanashyam was a combination of dance, drama and music**



SOMNATH GHOSH

Only to hear Ustad Allauddin Khan perform on the sitar one evening and succumb to the magic of his music. "It was as if a floodgate had opened and an ocean of beautiful and divine music was flowing out," he recalls.

The experience changed the course of Shankar's life. And he travelled straight to Maihar, a serene village in Madhya Pradesh, to learn music at his guru's feet. In 1941, Shankar married the Ustad's daughter, Annapoorna Devi, no mean sitarist herself. But the marriage soon turned sour,



TARAPADA BANERJEE

The verisimilitude seemed to have worked in Britain, where Ghanashyam got rave reviews and standing ovations wherever it was performed. The reception in India was lukewarm in comparison

and broke up rather bitterly. While Annapoorna became a recluse, giving up public performances, Shankar drifted more and more into the world of music, seeking catharsis in its strains.

He didn't just restrict himself to concert-hall performances, scoring the music for such films as *Dharti Ke Lal* and *Neecha Nagar*. Joining the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) Shankar formed the Indian Renaissance Artist's Movement to stage the choreographic presentation of *Chitrasena, Discovery of India* and *Samanya Kshati*. Working with All India Radio (AIR), the sitarist took the initiative to form the *Vadya Vrinda* (national orchestra).

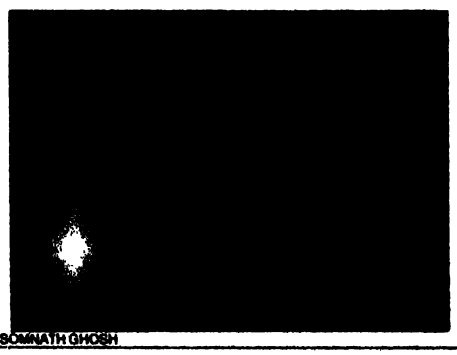
The Fifties proved to be the decade for tie-ups with other geniuses. Shankar worked with Satyajit Ray on the music for *Pather Panchali, Aparajito*, and *Apur Sansar*. Then came Tapan Sinha's *Kabuliwala*, which went on to win the Golden Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival.

In 1951, Shankar met celebrated violinist Yehudi Menuhin and teamed up with him to perform duets at the Bath Festival in 1966 and at the United Nations Humans Rights Day Concert (New York) in 1967. Said Menuhin about the experience: "By the magic aura of his (Shankar's) presence and music, he made sense and brought order out of chaos."

The Sixties was the decade of Beatlemania. The sitar attracted great attention as, following Geroge Harrison's lead, Jefferson Airplane, The Doors, The Rolling Stones and Grateful Dead took to it. The high string music appealed to the highly-strung



SOMNATH GHOSH



SOMNATH GHOSH



GHANASHYAM

The themes of drug addiction, exorcism and the use of shadow dancing

generation, and inevitably Pandit Ravi Shankar was dubbed the "honorary hippie" for his contribution to the movement. Recalls Shankar: "Thanks to my musician friends and their *chamchas*, I was facing criticism. They were having a heyday saying that I was making Indian music Americanised and had become one of the Beatles."

But despite the tag of cult guru, Shankar clung on to his principles. He reminiscises: "They (the American audience) would be drinking beer and making out with their girlfriends. The atmosphere was against my principles. Many musicians from Indian never objected but I'd keep telling them, 'don't smoke'. I used to walk out..."

He performed at the Woodstock Festival, though, before a 3,50,000-strong audience only to be accused of prostituing Indian music in the West by the critics the day after.

Unfazed by such criticism, Shankar went on to choreograph such ballets as *Melody And Rhythm* and *Nava Rasa Rang*, composed the score for such dance dramas as *Immortal India* and *Chandalika* and was the music director for such films as *Canadian Fantasy, The Charity Tale, Alice In Wonderland* and *The Flute And The Bow*.

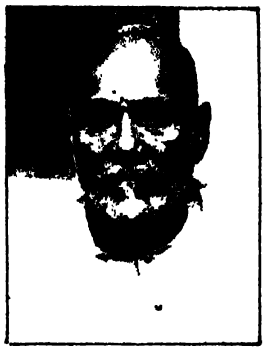
And, to be fair, something good did come out of his partnership with Western musicians: the Concert in Aid of Bangladesh. The plight of the Bangladeshi refugees drove Shankar to get George Harrison, Bob Bellani, Harrick Captan and Ali Akbar Khan together for a show to raise money for the homeless lot. The concert proved more than successful: an astounding $8 million was made in the course of one night.



SOMNATH GHOSH



N PRASAD





BEHIND THE LEGEND **Shankar at a concert, and his two gurus Allauddin Khan (top) and Uday Shankar (above)**

You don't see anything of that enfant terrible in the Pandit Ravi Shankar of today. With honours such as a nomination to the Rajya Sabha and the Padma Vibhushan under his belt, the sitar maestro has turned into an establishment figure, despite his second marriage to 34-year-old Sukanya Rajan (who'd been a regular member of his entourage over the last ten years) in 1989 at the secluded Venkateswar temple in Chilka. The event attracted a fair amount of media attention, with Rajan's—and Shankar's—daughter Anushka being in attendance. But gossips soon tired of the topic and Sukanya and Ravi Shankar now do the rounds as any other happily-married couple, while Anushka, discloses her mother, "spends half her time in London and the other half in Delhi".

Shankar remained in the news for other reasons as well. His sitar concerto, *A Garland Of Ragas*, with noted conductor Zubin Mehta and the European Community Youth Orchestra, for example. Or even his self-described "birthday performance" for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and President R. Venkataraman at the Saint James Court Hotel in London. Early this year, Shankar did a recording with American composer Philip Glass, doing the orchestration for his pieces and vice versa. The album *Passages*, says the maestro, will almost certainly be a chartbuster, as much a hit as his efforts in Attenborough's *Gandhi*, the '82 Asiad and the several Festivals of India.

Like most establishment figures, Shankar is critical of the dilution of Indian culture. "Nowadays people feel uneasy to touch the feet of elders. It seems like their backs would break," he says. "We knew humility. Just being able to play a bit, shampooing your hair and dressing tip-top cannot make you a good musician. You need *sadhana* (dedication)."

And all artists, he adds, "need encouragement" and a fair bit of applause. *Ghanashyam* didn't do too well on that score in India. But Shankar has seen too many bad patches not to take that in his stride. And go on to the next phase of what has proved to be an immensely rewarding career. •

Sourav Mukherjee/Calcutta

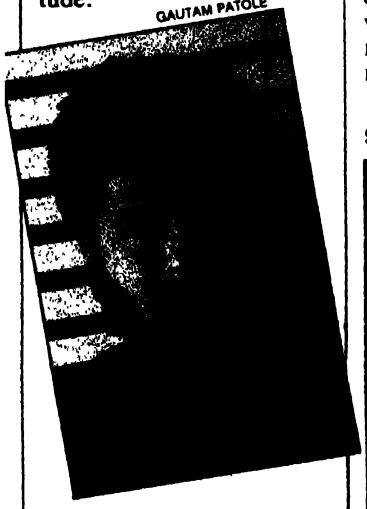
What's the latest joke doing the rounds of the film industry?

Now that *Jeevan Ek Sanghursh, Amba* and *Jamai Raja* have flopped, Anil Kapoor should change his name to A Nil Kapoor.

You just can't win with film folk.

One would have thought that after she'd spent years reporting on time at the sets and following directions to the tee, Sridevi would be held up as the model of professional rectitude.

GAUTAM PATOLE



Anil Kapoor: butt of jokes

Not quite.

And certainly not after she cancelled all her shootings and flew off to Madras to be with her mother, who'd taken very ill.

Sri's plane had barely taken off before all the worms crawled out of the woodwork to pillory her for her lack of consideration.

After all what are family ties worth when a few crores are at stake?

It can't be easy being the sole survivor of a family of four. Especially after the press has gone to town on the subject of your father's bizarre shoot-out.

But Kamal, son of Brij Sadanah, finally has something to feel pleased about. Producer Nitin Manmohan has signed him on for his forthcoming release, *Prithvi*.

Yes, it's not quite the same as having your father launch you, but it is the next best thing.

Being a millionaire's fiancee isn't what it's cracked up to be. Ask Sonam.

Recently, the prospective Mrs Rajiv Rai had some unwelcome visitors: officers of the directorate of revenue intelligence, who'd come to check on the millions her husband-to-be may have passed on to her.

Small wonder then that

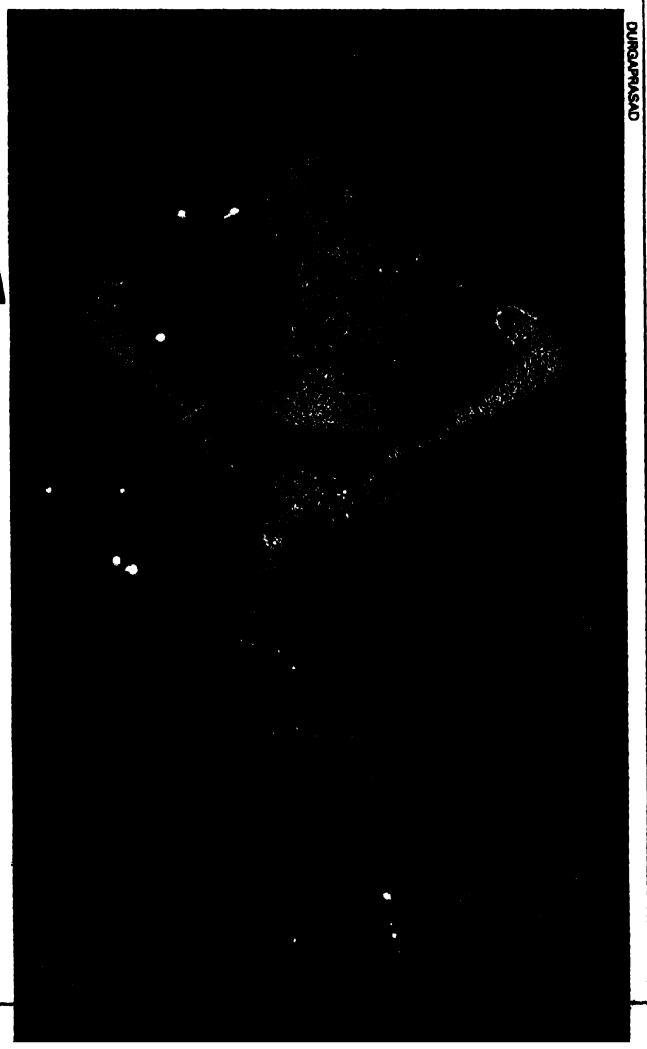
KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



Sonam: Nairobi is best

Sonam and lover boy have decided to get married in Nairobi. Knowing how nosy our income tax officials are, they might just land up at the *mandap* to evaluate the bride's jewels.

Sridevi: you can't please everyone all the time



DURGAPRASAD

Has the price of easy success become too much for Salman Khan? After the mass hysteria generated by *Maine Pyar Kiya*, things have never been quite the same for him. From being just another midget son of Salim Khan's, to usurping the 'Heartbreak Khan' mantle from Aamir Khan is to come a long way indeed.

The new Salman is now making enemies by the minute, alienating even friends with his new-found arrogance. It is not surprising then, that he is slipping up a mite. Recently he even forgot his lines for the *mahurat* shot of *Andaz Apna Apna*—the film in which Salman and Aamir co-star. Going by his dismal performance at the

GAUTAM RAJADHYAKSHA



Sunny Deol: proud father

mahurat, perhaps 'happy times are here again'—for Aamir that is, not the midget.

Sunny Deol's happiness is quite complete. Now in addition to a sexy girlfriend and dutiful wife he also has a beautiful baby to boast of.

Is it any surprise then that the Jat hunk can't stop grinning these days, in celebration of his recent fatherhood.

No, not even in Dimple's presence. ●

The Indian experience

Raine's journal is the stuff of tourism

"When did I set out on my passage to India? Since I arrived there I must have set out, but when? Or did I arrive? Perhaps I have not arrived—am as far from India as before I set out." A somewhat unfortunate beginning to a book on the country, especially as the author goes on to ask, "Who am I to write of it?" Who, indeed.

Kathleen Raine is a poetess of formidable output and co-founder of *Temenos*, an imaginative arts review. When she first set foot on Indian soil she was over 70, but then she arrived after a detour of Blake, Yeats, Tagore and other areas of the mind.

Her India, she defines, is not geographical but metaphysical; a state of mind. This work is a gentle, loving appraisal of what she perceives to be a gentle, loving subject. She refers to it more than once as her "passage to India" and, in fact, the books resemble each other in so far as they employ a mystical I-don't-know, an eternal question-mark to typify the country's stance in the world. It is the vast, listening quality of the land that most captivates Raine, that state where all certainties melt away.

She is especially lovely in her frequent dissertations on poetry, and her style and syntax do in fact suggest that she is more comfortable in that medium. She arrives often upon a happy turn of phrase or thought: "I hope there may be such poetry in a world that seems rather to be experiencing a darkening of thought than an evolution of higher consciousness. But although Western civilisation is perhaps spent, it is possible that India feels the urge to create what we no longer can."

She is chasing a sort of "higher consciousness", and a good many rainbows besides. Her great fortune lies, perhaps, in seeing India only from afar, in being the one that got away. For those of us that stay, perchance to read, Raine's India remains where she found it: in her imagination. Her visit to the country was coloured by the concept and was an exercise, purely, in *déjà vu*.

Self-confessedly, she absents herself inwardly from that which is not of her imagination. As a result of this faculty, her work, while it stops short of being a picture-book India, is certainly a romance. In India she saw no vandalism; in its wonderful parks no one picked the flowers. Everywhere she perceived a "pride and happiness in being Indian". A scene typical of her ability to withdraw from what does not conform to her "India of the Imagination" appears towards the end of the book: "The gentle servants bring tea, the dhobi washes my dresses and presses my suit; I skim the newspapers that appear under my door for nature items."

One of Raine's influences is "an Indian Prince of the Solar dynasty...Rama was his ancestor, the Lord Buddha a sort of second cousin" Dizzied by such Oriental splendour, she can only apologise for the West. Gentle, mournful but never bitter, she is plagued by the fear that "civilisation has done its work and is over". She can still find and rejoice over traces of this civilisation in various territories of the imagination; above all, India. Therefore, she laments the adoption of Western mores in that country, fearing they will lead to a stripping of the last vestiges of permanence in that culture.

Raine is equally disturbed by vignettes of Christian India. Confronted at a church service with the sight of Indian Christians in dresses, she is taken aback—clearly unprepared for the new paradigm. Unable to reconcile the powerful, three-eyed, ten-armed, many-headed gods of the country with Christ, naked and helpless on the Cross, she is consoled by the Jesus she sees in calendar art at the back of shops "beautiful and uncrucified. India has claimed Him".



This book will endear itself to the Indian reader who acquiesces to the type-cast role assigned to him of a noble, if colourful, savage

That Raine is disconcerted by anomalies is understandable: neither East nor West likes a watered-down version of the other. Each wants the gamut and the whole of the exotic experience. This is the stuff of tourism. But here we have an artist who is so artlessly grateful for the 'Indian experience' that she wants to pay it back.

Now and again, her perception and natural maturity have some lovely consequences. In Banaras, listening to legends of Krishna, she is charmed by the story where the child Krishna vanquishes the serpent but spares its life when it implores him with the unanswerable "After all, you made me!" Later, reflecting on the destruction of art along with the desecration of religious monuments, she explains, "But it is not 'art' to those who create such beauty, nor is it to those who destroy it." She admits against her will that "the Indian experience may be spacious, may include beauty, even joy; but it is not consoling." Nor does she attempt to pose a simplistic solution—she is too close to her subject not to know there is none.

One may suppose this book will endear itself to the Indian reader who acquiesces to the type-cast role assigned to him of a noble, if colourful, savage. The truth of the matter is we're tired of being told we are, quaintly and "quietly poor", old, eternal, charming in our squalor and our proximity to the animal kingdom, majestic in our paradoxes. It would be a relief to get all that over with and down to the business of profitable living—and an occasional good read. ●

Prita Maitra

India Seen Afar by Kathleen Raine. Published by Green Books, UK, 1990. Price £14.95.

The money changers

Forging currency notes is big business in Kerala

Changing money in Kerala is risky business. Over the last few years, fake notes worth crores of rupees have been pumped into the state market by racketeers and the change you get may contain counterfeit currency. The enormity of the problem can be judged from the fact that the Crime Branch (CID) of Kerala Police is at present investigating into as many as 380 cases relating to currency fraud. Said a senior police official: "The manufacture of counterfeit currency has become a cottage industry in Kerala."

Last fortnight, the Trivandrum city police seized counterfeit currency of ten-rupee denomination worth Rs 7.5 lakhs and arrested three people: Manvila Joseph, owner of International Printers and Publishers, his printer Shahabuddin and Appukuttan Nair, who was allegedly in charge of circulating the fake notes. Joseph had taken a loan from the state-owned Kerala Financial Corporation (KFC) to start his press in a suburb near Trivandrum. According to the police, the gang had already printed notes to the tune of Rs 20 lakhs. Which means a large sum of counterfeit notes printed by Joseph are still in the market. Besides, the cops also recovered blocks for printing 100 rupee notes as well.

The haul from Tripunithara near Cochin last March was even more shocking. In a swift move the police seized fake notes—again of ten rupee denomination— worth Rs 35 lakhs. And, of the eight persons arrested, one was a college lecturer. The eight-member gang was led by Thomas, owner of a 50-acre rubber plantation, and his brother Johnson, a college lecturer from Thodupuzha. And it was by sheer accident that the two brothers got into this murky business. During one of his trips to Sivakasi, the printing town of Tamil Nadu, Thomas was fascinated by the modern press. And when one of the brokers suggested to him that he buy a press that could print currency notes, Thomas promptly bought the idea. The rest followed: the two brothers purchased a Swift 300 model offset press, leased a lonely house at Thipunithara and hired the best hands in the business. It was clearly the beginning of the end for Thomas and company.

The success of the counterfeit currency business depends solely on the quality of the notes printed—they must look exactly like the ones churned out by the government press at Nasik. Thomas employed three of the best block-makers in the job. Each room of the rented house was used as a printing unit which included a dark room. The notes that these men reproduced were near-perfect. But there was one problem: the paper used by Thomas and company did not quite match the quality of genuine currency.

The confiscated 50 rupee notes

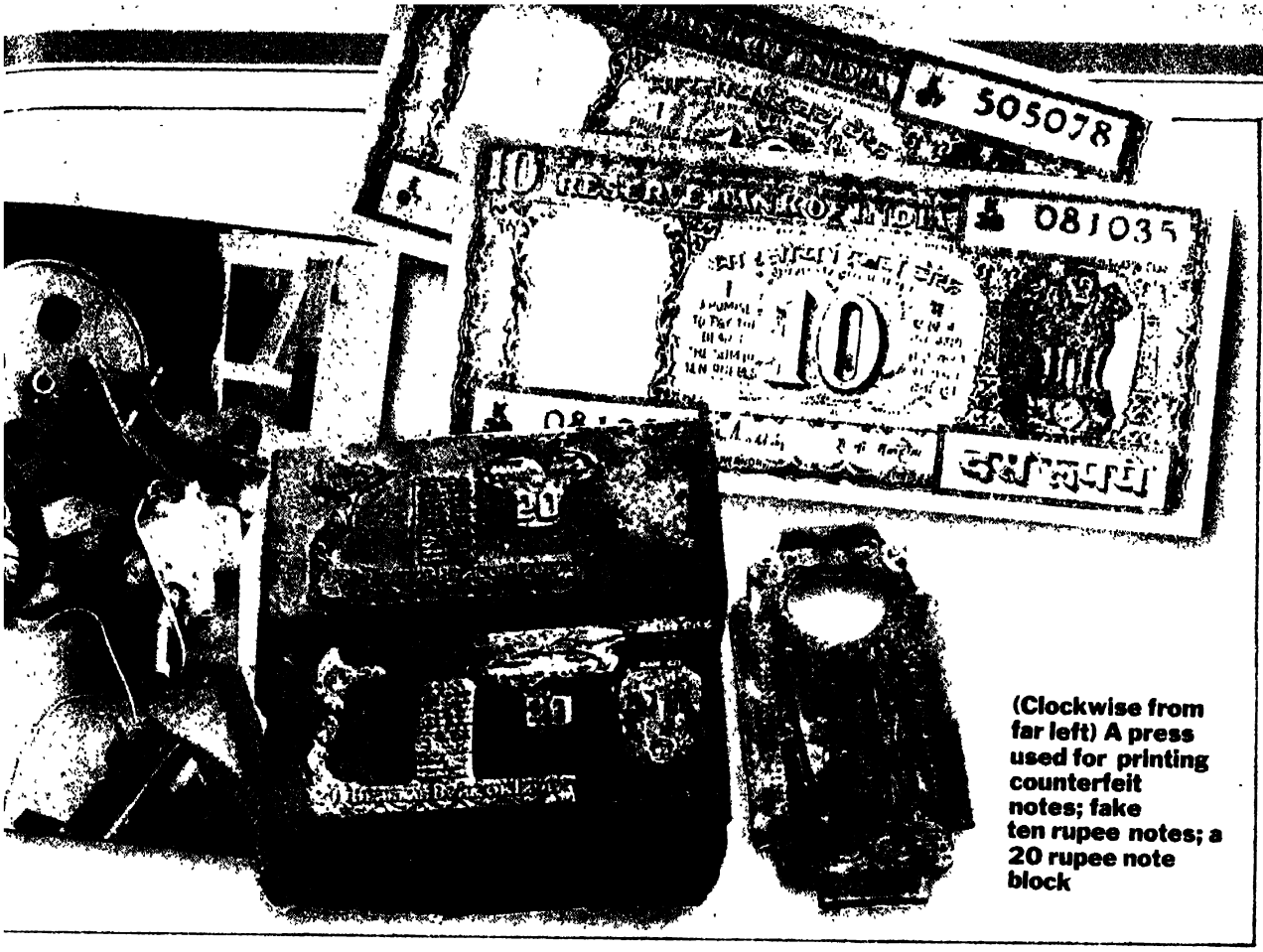




As a bank cashier put it: "The quality of counterfeit notes have improved over the years, but still an expert can detect it by the texture of the notes because they have not been able to get the paper in which genuine notes are printed at Nasik."

Apart from the quality of notes, another important aspect is marketing. The technique is to palm off the fake notes with genuine ones and never to release it in bulk. In most cases, the fake currency is distributed by petty traders, chit fund operators and small-time contractors. The cardinal rule is never to market it in bulk but only in small amounts, carefully hidden among genuine notes.

The economics of the counterfeit business is also mind-boggling. And as in any other trade, there are retailers and distributors, who buy fake currency from the kingpins in exchange for genuine ones. The profit margin is usually 100 per cent: thus, one could buy Rs 20,000 worth of counterfeit currency for Rs 10,000. Of course, there is a lot of bargaining and the exchange rate could vary accordingly. Recently, a farmer from Idukki bought Rs 50,000 worth of ten rupee denomination fake notes for Rs



(Clockwise from far left) A press used for printing counterfeit notes; fake ten rupee notes; a 20 rupee note block

20,000. The notes were not up to the mark and had such glaring spelling mistakes like the "Riserve Bank of India". Still, he managed to distribute them to the labourers in his farm. But the police nabbed him when one of his employees tried to change a 'note' at a post office and was caught. The racketeers find it safer to operate in remote villages since the innocent people can be easily duped and there are less chances of being detected. And, it is always the middleman who gets caught while trying to palm off fake notes. But rarely the kingpin, who is always on the move.

The risks are immense but the lure of making the fast buck is attracting more and more Keralites to the counterfeit trade. Points out Rajesh Devan, SP, Crime Branch (counterfeit squad): "Like all other socio-economic crimes, counterfeit is also on the increase in Kerala. Even the middle-class has joined the counterfeit bandwagon mainly to get rich by hook or by crook."

Of course, the rising unemployment problem has a lot to do with youths taking to this illegal profession. Take the case of Satish Kumar (26) from Trivandrum. Satish, who is now behind bars, told the police that he wanted to become rich like his friends who made it big in the Gulf. He also wanted to go to the Arab countries, but didn't even have money to make the trip. So, he started learning the art of block-making from a teacher of Fine Arts College, Trivandrum. Using a camera, Satish started making blocks from negatives of genuine currency notes. And he sold one such block of a 50 rupee note to a man for Rs 10,000. But the police somehow got wind of it and nabbed him.

But the profits in this business are so huge that forgers stick to the trade despite serving prison sentences. At most they shift their business elsewhere: many forgers who were caught in Kerala are now operating in neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Of course, many people maintain that the business could be busted if the police would have been more vigilant and strict. So far the men who have been pulled up were sent to prison for a few years, though the law clearly says that they could be imprisoned for life. Last year, the Kerala High Court had even indicted the state government for its lukewarm attitude in the prosecution of counterfeit currency cases. Alarmed by the increase of such cases, Justice K.T. Thomas remarked that the government was apparently not serious enough to bring the culprits to book.

The police seems to be somewhat handicapped due to a shortage of staff and the frequent transfer of officials involved with the investigations. The state government however, has made a belated effort to tackle the problem and has decided to appoint an SP to head the counterfeit wing besides agreeing to double the manpower. Moreover, seizures have increased after the Reserve Bank set up its office in Trivandrum. Now on an average ten cases are referred by the RBI to the counterfeit squad every month.

Such measures, however, have not dampened the spirits of the counterfeit racketeers. There are also rumours that the veterans of this trade are planning to set up computerised printing of counterfeit notes. But top police officials are tight-lipped about the steps they will take to counter such a possibility. For the moment at least, it seems that there is nothing that can stop the counterfeit currency business.

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum



Striking terror

The changing profile of Bombay's underworld

Hours before midnight on 4 December, a green jeep was speeding down the Gandhi Nagar area of Vikhroli in north-east Bombay. The car ignored the red lights at a traffic junction and continued on its journey towards Ghatkopar. It was then that the police got suspicious of the vehicle. Constable Shantaram Deoke followed the car closely and as soon as it slowed down, he rushed towards it and forced the driver to stop the vehicle. All the four occupants panicked and one of them, a Sikh, pulled out an AK-47 rifle and threatened Deoke. The constable beat a hasty retreat and informed his superior, sub-inspector Amar Singh, who was patrolling the area on his bike.

For a while, Amar Singh tried to chase the jeep, but seeing that he was steadily losing sight of the vehicle, got off at a road-side restaurant and alerted the police control over the telephone. But as soon as sub-inspector Singh stepped out of the hotel, he found the jeep waiting. One of the occupants trained his rifle at him and gunned him down.

The bloodbath did not end there. Constables Deoke and Shivaji Bhosale were the next victims. While Bhosale was also gunned down on the highway, Deoke managed to run towards a petrol pump. But the jeep followed him and he too was shot dead. An auto-rickshaw driver at the gas station also fell to the criminals' bullets.

This is not an isolated incident. Ever since the beginning of this year, the Bombay Police have had to deal with a new kind of weapon: the AK-

Policemen investigating a crime: up against formidable foes



A jeep used by the terrorists: hit and run tactics

47. And if there were any doubts that several terrorist gangs from Punjab and Kashmir had infiltrated into the metropolis, the following incident set them to rest. In May this year, the cops nabbed five men in Bombay. When interrogations revealed that they were from Kashmir, a message was sent to the police of that state. Soon a team from the Jammu and Kashmir Police flew down to Bombay and identified them as terrorists from the Valley who had been trained in Pakistan.

Then in September, a police constable challenged some Sikh youths who were aimlessly loitering on the streets of Bombay. One of the boys promptly took out a stengun and fired at the cop. Later, the police managed to apprehend one of the culprits and he confessed that his links with a terrorist group which operated in Punjab.

Senior officials of the Bombay Police feel that a good number of terrorist groups have made their way into Bombay from Punjab and Kashmir. While some have found the city's underworld to be an ideal temporary retreat away from the searching eye of the police, others have made the journey to the city to purchase arms. And the gun merchants of Bombay are doing brisk business. Recently, the police recovered a large number of sophisticated weapons from a posh flat in Andheri. This was followed by yet another seizure from near the same place. And in September, the cops arrested a leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) from the city. Interrogations revealed that he had made the trip to Bombay to buy arms.

Indeed, Bombay today has become a veritable arms bazaar. Pramod Navalkar of the Shiv Sena once said very rightly that "guns can be bought like sweets in the city". And to prove his point Navalkar even smuggled a gun, which he claimed he bought from one of the arms markets in Bombay, into the Assembly.

There is yet another disturbing trend. The police feel that the underworld dons of Bombay have begun to use the terrorists for hit and run operations. Of late, the city has witnessed several bloody gang wars and the possibility of hardcore terrorists taking part in them cannot be ruled out.



Constable Deoke (left) and constable Bhosale: a gory end

The terrorist hand in the series of bomb blasts that rocked Bombay in the last one year, too, cannot be ruled out. In August, a powerful bomb exploded in a public place injuring at least 20 people. A week later, the police spotted yet another explosive inside a train which was about to leave Bombay's Church Gate station. Fortunately, the cops succeeded in defusing the bomb. Police sources feel that these incidents are a frightening repeat of the violence that rocked Delhi and the rest of north India last year.

The Sri Guru Singh Sabha and other Sikh societies have always condemned terrorist violence in Bombay. But they also have a grouse against the police. Members of this community feel that the Bombay Police suspect every Sikh in the city, especially after Punjab terrorists have descended on Bombay. Harbinder Singh, a cloth merchant at Dadar, said: "We have nothing to do with the terrorists. Yet we are treated with suspicion. This is unfair."

But then the police are up against a formidable challenge. The city's cops may be acquainted with Bombay's underworld, but when it comes to battling professional terrorists—many of them have been trained in Pakistan—it surely requires a different kind of skill. So far, the Bombay Police have proved unequal to the task. ●

Godfrey Pereira/Bombay

Our man from Madras

US Indians prepare to celebrate the arrival of the first countryman 200 years ago

He was a servant. An Indian servant, who crossed the dreaded *kalapani* with his American master, stepped on Massachusetts soil, caused much eye-popping, and sank into oblivion. And 200 years later, this nameless 'man from Madras' has been resurrected as the token seed of the Indian presence in America.

Committees were formed, research initiated, seminars organised and there was excitement all around. Indian Americans, or Asian Indians (as differentiated from American Indians of cowboy fame) got busy polishing their *desi* hats as they prepared to celebrate the bicentenary of the 'first' Indian's arrival in the New World.

The bicentennial plans were in full swing when the internal power-structure of the organisation spearheading the celebrations programme, the Washington-based Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), allegedly collapsed. After an intense build-up to a promising bicentenary on 29 December,1990, the IAFPE suddenly went limp.

But the re-emergence of the nameless servant had sparked off the curiosity of Indians in the States. Was this man truly the first Indian to set foot in America? Does his arrival set a date to the Indian American sub-culture, which has actually developed over the last 30 years? No, the event is significant, say IAFPE officials, as the first recorded visit of an Indian in America.

Strange as it may seem, everything hinges on a diary notation by a clergyman in Salem, Massachusetts. In the entry for 29 December, 1790, Reverend William Bentley writes: "Had the pleasure of seeing for the first time a native of the Indies from Madras. He is of very dark complection, long black hair, soft countenance, tall and well-proportioned. He is said to be darker than Indians in general of his own caste, being much darker than any native Indians of America. I had no opportunity to judge of his abilities, but his countenance was not expressive. He came to Salem with Capt. J. Gibaut and has been to Europe."

Apparently, the arrival of this Indian in Salem caused as great a sensation as his rediscovery. The 26 December, 1790, entry in the local paper, *The Annals of Salem* reads: "Capt. John Gibaut arrived from India. He brought with him a native of Madras, who excited much curiosity." The rest of the story comes from the log-book of the American brigantine *Henry*. This ship had picked up our friend from Madras and delivered him to the shores of Salem, Massachusetts.

Those were the early days of Yankee trade with India. America offered ice to the sunbaked British in India, along with European wines, silver coins and other civil necessities for the Raj. India offered a stunning variety—spices, indigo, cotton and silk being the major attractions. This trade gave America its first millionaire, Elias Haskett Derby. But Derby never went to sea himself. His sons did. And E.H. Derby Jr was in charge of the *Henry*.

According to Captain Benjamin Crowninshield's log-book records, the *Henry* sailed from Madras on 21 March 1790: "At 2.00 pm Mr Derby and Mr Smith and Mr Gibaut and servant came on board. At 3.00 pm weighed anchor on Madras roads." Derby Jr had found a virgin field for American commerce. And John Gibaut had found a servant.

The rest is speculation. This Indian's name, birth, death, place of origin, function and family life are shrouded in mystery, and the 'man from Madras' remains an obscure ob-

CLUES TO THE 'FIRST' INDIAN IN AMERICA



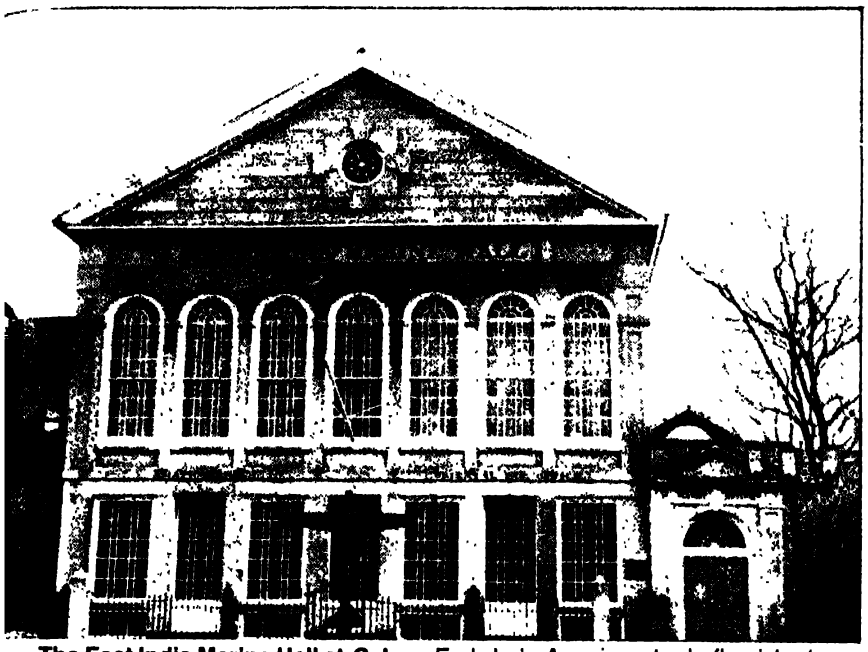
A painting of the brigantine *Henry*: it delivered him to the shores of America



The log-book of the *Henry* which gives details of his trip: important evidence



Clay model of an early Indian trader, in the Peabody Museum of Salem: how different was he from this contemporary?



The East India Marine Hall at Salem: Early Indo-American trade flourished

ject of celebration on the one hand, and a faceless servant on the other.

But Susan Bean, curator of the Peabody Museum of Salem, throws a little more light on the subject. "In Derby's Madras accounts we come across a servant called 'Dada'," says Bean. "Since 'Dada' in India is a term of respect, it is possible that he wasn't just any other servant. This was probably the Madrasee who came to Salem with Gibaut. His wages, too, were twice those of the 'Derwanee' and 'Mattronee' also named in the accounts."

William Lamoy, archivist of the Essex Institute of Salem, shares Bean's view. "Only one of the individuals named in the accounts is clearly defined as to his function," explains Lamoy. "Dada is described as the butler to Elias Haskett Derby Jr. He is the most likely of the servants to have made the journey to Salem."

Dada cannot be traced beyond Salem, though. "He probably left for the East on the ship *Astrea* with Gibaut, on 17 May, 1791," says Tapan Mukherjee. A top official of the National Science Foundation, Washington DC, Mukherjee has done a good deal of research on early Indo-American links. "But it is terribly difficult to track down Indian immigrants who came before 1900," he admits. "Because of the Hindu socio-religious strictures, crossing the *kalapani* was considered extremely inauspicious. Thus, the early arrivals were usually Christians and their names are lost among all the Christian names in available American records."

But was this Madras man the first Indian in America? Mukherjee gives a whole list of people who had been to America before him, complete with name, age, date of arrival and period of bondage (these were indentured servants). The earliest seems to be John Adams, 17, indentured in England for Maryland, America, on 27 January, 1719. Yet, with no details of Gibaut's servant, no trace of his lineage, no sub-culture of the early Indians in America, there is still this urge to celebrate the date a Salem clergyman first saw an Asian Indian, as the bicentennial of the Indian presence in America.

"This is mainly to perpetuate an awareness of Indians as citizens of this country and contributors to this society," says Achamma Chanderasekaran, president of the IAFPE. "We are trying to change the image of Indians as newcomers. Indians have been settled here for ages and it is time we established our rights." The fight is against the 'new immigrant' stigma that Indians seem doomed to bear. And in this struggle for equal treatment, establishing the presence of Indians in 18th century America does help. At the initiative of Joy Cherian, founder of the IAFPE and member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Washington, research on early immigrants is in full swing.

But not all Indians in America are thrilled. "Why is it important to prove that Indians are not new immigrants?" asks Ratnabali Day, a primary schoolteacher in Washington. Partha Sengupta, a graduate student at the University of Maryland, seems pretty annoyed: "How would it help to establish that Indians are not new immigrants who have come to the US on their own merit, out of choice, but have actually been around for centuries, having been dragged over as slaves or thereabouts?" An undergraduate at Harvard, Nandana Dev is slightly amused: "This desire to prove a hazy pedigree sprouting from one traceless servant is rather odd." And ninth-grader Indrani Sen flashes an embarrassed smile: "A slave, was he?"

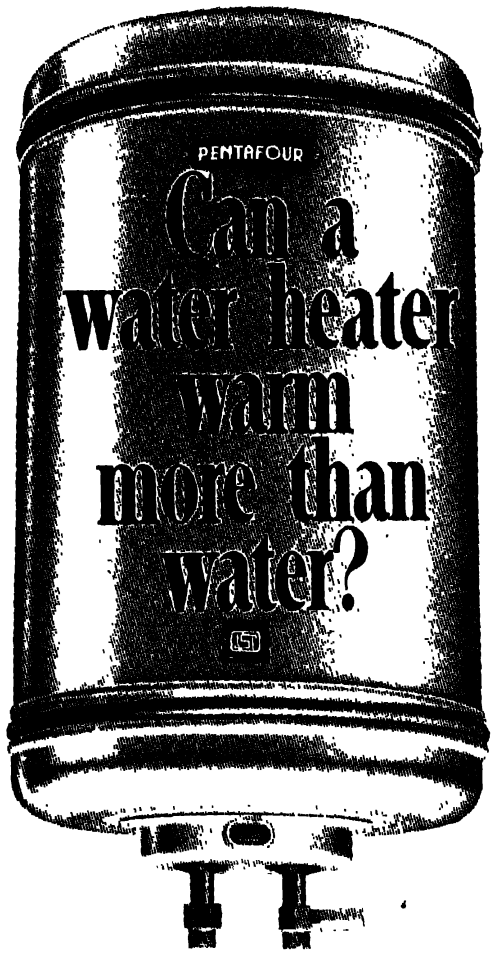
Unlike African Americans, reared in a sub-culture based on an awareness of centuries of racial exploitation, Indians in America—mostly students, doctors, well-paid white collar workers or private businessmen—cannot claim such a race-history. Today they are happily aware of having the highest per capita income among immigrants. They pride themselves on being the lucky ones who passed strict immigration laws to escape from the Third World into the First by talent and sheer grit. Thus, this bicentennial celebration might seem a bit incongruous.

"But this is a question of our roots," says Tapan Mukherjee. Maybe. But roots that have not formed branches, fruits or flowers. There is no record of those isolated labourers, who probably got assimilated in the Black community in those days of segregation. No family can trace back to them, nor can any sub-culture. Unlike the Afro-Americans, these Indians do not have a race identity enriched in any way by those uprooted Indians lost in a foreign land centuries ago.

Nevertheless, the celebrations are on. Were on, rather. With the IAFPE's sudden silence, one is not quite sure whether or not to expect a bicentennial bash on 29 December. The coordinator of the programme, J.John Wycliff, has been keeping a low profile for a while. But there are quite a few enthusiasts waiting for the merry-making. Whether one calls it the Brown man's salute to the White, or just romantic nostalgia, is quite beside the point. •

Antara Dev Sen/Washington and Salem

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANTARA DEV SEN



Install a Pentafour water heater. Watch it warm your heart with its trouble-free performance and low maintenance costs. By its sheer warm presence

So, like in everything else you do, look beyond the best

Get yourself a Pentafour

PENTAFOUR
WATER HEATERS

For those who look beyond the best

Option available in **stainless steel** and in colours of your choice

PENTAFOUR PRODUCTS LIMITED

Corporate Office: Chitra Towers, 332 E, Arcot Road, Kodambakkam, Madras 600 024. Tel 428848/421628/428666, Tlx. 041-25023 PENT IN

Offices: Phones: Ahmedabad 402161, Bangalore 579134, Bombay 4135691, Calcutta 449156, Ernakulam: 353197, Hyderabad 229392; New Delhi 7211628, Trivandrum 62655

R K SWAMY/BBDO PF 8560

A landmark judgement

The Calcutta High Court rules against solitary confinement

It is a landmark judgement that could well bring about a transformation in the status of condemned prisoners. On 15 November, a division bench of the Calcutta High Court comprising Justices Sumsuddin and Amal Kanti Bhattacharya ruled that prison authorities had no right to keep prisoners on whom death sentence had been pronounced in condemned cells—away from the other jailmates in solitary confinement.

This is, of course, not the first time that the courts have come down heavily on solitary confinement. In the celebrated Sunil Batra vs the Delhi administration case in 1978, Justice Desai had ruled that the provisions of the Prison Act do not allow the authorities to impose solitary confinement upon a condemned prisoner. It may be recalled that Batra was sentenced to death by a sessions court and was kept in one of the condemned cells of the Tihar Jail.

Twelve years later, came the judgement of the Calcutta High Court. And, along the same lines. It all began with the Alipur sessions court sentencing two youths, Anup Biswas and Prasenjit Tapadar, to death. They were removed to the Alipur Central Jail and lodged in condemned cells since 17 September 1990. Anup and Prasenjit went in appeal to the Calcutta High Court which admitted their petitions.

But before the appeal could be heard, another petition challenging their solitary confinement was moved by three senior lawyers, Balai Ray, Sekhar Bose and Dilip Dutta. Citing the precedent of the Sunil Batra case, they argued that sub-section 2 of Section 30 of the Prison Act—which deals with solitary confinement—violates the provisions of Article 20 and 21 of the Constitution. So, the detention of Anup and Prasenjit in condemned cells pending the final determination of their crime by a higher court was illegal. Balai Ray told SUNDAY, "Psychopathological expert Mr Chitley had observed in Sunil Batra's case that such retributive punishment has had its detrimental effect which can cause insanity."

Justices Sumsuddin and Amal Bhattacharya, while delivering the judgement, observed that solitary confinement of condemned prisoners was not only a gross violation of constitutional protection of life and liberty of an individual "but also a violation of constitutional guarantee of a single punishment for a single offence". The judges said that "solitary confinement is itself a punishment and the imposing of such punishment upon a person with death sentence tantamounts to double jeopardy for a single offence." The court also rejected the prosecution's prayer for an appeal and ordered Alipur Jail officials to shift Anup and Prasenjit to general cells.

The ruling of the divisional bench was made known to the jail authorities on 15 November itself. Yet, nothing was done and Anup and Prasenjit continued to languish in the condemned cells. Defence lawyer Shyamal Banerjee made one more effort to wake up the prison authorities. On 19 November, Banerjee sent a letter to the Alipur Jail superintendent, reminding him of the High Court's order. Said an agitated Sekhar Bose, "Our intention is to let everyone know that the Alipur Jail authorities have scant respect for court orders."

The legal implications apart, the lawyers have a point. For, a sentence pronounced on the accused by a lower court does not indicate that the trial is over. For, the accused still has the option of appealing against the judgement in the High and Supreme Courts. And, in the case of death sentences, the accused can even appeal to the President for clemency as a final resort. Thus, argued the lawyers on behalf of Anup and Prasenjit, it would be unfair to detain them in condemned cells because the judgement in their case was pronounced only by a sessions court.

But the jail authorities seem to be unmoved. For Anup and Prasenjit, it is a living hell. The cells where they are lodged are dank, and even the bare essentials are denied to them. But both the youths have not given up hope. They wait patiently for justice.

Sangeeta Chakravarty/Calcutta



Despite the court ordering the Alipur Jail authorities to shift Prasenjit Tapadar and Anup Biswas to general cells, the two youths continue to languish in the condemned cells

WASHOUT!

The Pakistani cricket team calls off its tour of India

Whatever one may have to say against Imran Khan, one can never accuse him of talking through his hat. When he said, early this month, that the law and order situation in India could jeopardise Pakistan's tour at the turn of the year, sceptics thought he was just shooting his mouth off. The fact of the matter is, when Imran speaks on cricket, Pakistan listens. In this case, the secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in Pakistan (BCCP), heeding his advice, wrote to its counterpart in India to postpone the tour, "until the situation there improves".

This postponement comes in the wake of the cancellation of the tour albeit short of the West Indies team, which was to have played limited overs matches after the conclusion of their trip to Pakistan. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had even proposed a three-way competition, with Sri Lanka forming the third peg.

Pakistan was to have taken part in the Asia Cup competition along with India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. This tournament was originally scheduled to be held in Pakistan. When they declined the offer, Bangladesh tried to stage it, but due to India's objection, it was "transferred" to this country. So, midway through this year, there were great prospects of an exciting season at the year-end. Ultimately, one Test and three one-dayers against Sri Lanka, is all that cricket-lovers are likely to get.

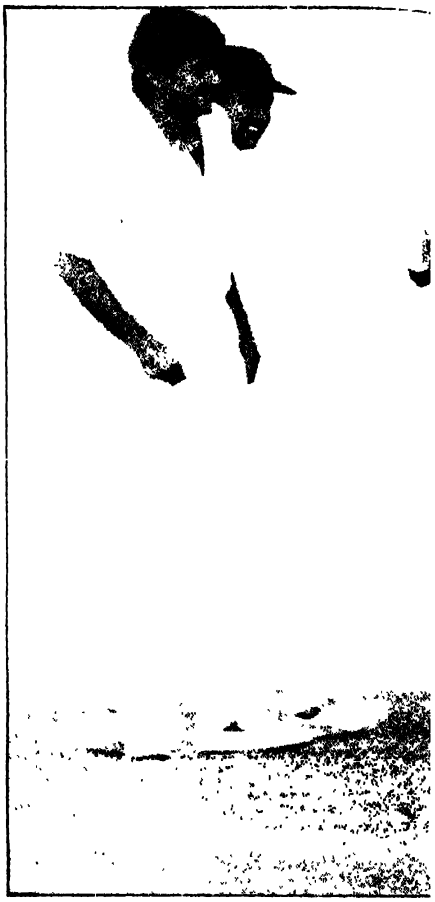
Likely, because at the time of going to press, the BCCI was making desperate attempts to salvage the Asia Cup and the full, five-Test series with Pakistan. Officials were frantically trying to use the good offices of the external affairs ministry in allaying the fears of the BCCP about the security of its players. But this is not likely to succeed because it is not in Pakistan's interest to get on with the game at this stage.

The BCCP secretary, Arif Abbasi, wrote to BCCI secretary [illegible] saying: "Due to public opinion in the country and the situation being what it is in India, one wonders whether for the sake of maintaining our good relations, would it not be pertinent to postpone the commitment to a date which would be more conducive to such important events." His suggestion was that fresh dates could be discussed after the World Cup in Australia/New Zealand in 1991-92. Of course, more to assuage feelings here than to really mean it, Abbasi added that if the situation improved, "perhaps we can come to India at an earlier date".

But with the present thinking in Pakistan, it is highly unlikely that the Pakistanis would come to India in the near future. This makes the Asia Cup a second-grade tournament—if it is held at all—for the third time running. The first Asia Cup in 1984 went off smoothly. But from the next, held two years later in Sri Lanka, there have been continuous problems. The 1986 tournament had just Pakistan and Sri Lanka as contestants. The next one in Bangladesh was postponed once and then held amidst terrible natural calamities.

The fourth, cleared by the central government early in December, was to have been held between Christmas Day and 3 January 1991. Now, with Pakistan withdrawing, there are three teams in the fray, making the competition a lack-lustre affair, if it is held at all.

With the withdrawal of Pakistan, the Asia Cup competition will be a lack-lustre affair, if it is held at all. Thus, the prospects of an exciting season of cricket have come to an end



And, India certainly cannot complain about Pakistan's withdrawal. India had done just that when the second competition was held in Sri Lanka. The ethnic conflict in that country was the reason cited by India, while withdrawing from the three-team competition. And India withdrew at the last moment, just as Pakistan has done this time. The reasons cited by Pakistan are the same as those given by India to hosts Sri Lanka four years ago.

But present indications are that the Asia Cup will have to be held within the teams left in the fray. The Asian Cricket Conference secretary, Tanvir Islam, said in Dhaka that, "as far as the ACC is concerned, it is perfectly alright if only three teams take part in the competition. As of now, there's absolutely no question of postponement (of the tournament)."

But if he did leave an escape route open for India, which the hosts may now prefer to take, considering that there would be little interest in the competition with just Sri Lanka and



(Above) The last Asia Cup competition held in Bangladesh in 1988: jubilant Indians; Imran Khan and Jagmohan Dalmiya (right): managing contradictions

Bangladesh facing India. The ACC secretary said: "It will, of course, be a different matter if, for non-cricketing reasons, India is not able to host the tournament."

So, in one stroke, the entire season of international cricket in this country, was written off. For, the BCCP letter is merely a gentlemanly way of telling India that the tour was definitely off. The "situation" referred to is the communal disturbance that has erupted in different parts of the country. It is another matter that the simultaneous outbreak of violence of this nature could very well have been engineered by *agents provocateurs* from across the border. What is tangible is the loss of entertainment for millions this winter.

Actually, this cancellation was on the cards for a long time. When the World Cup boxing was in full swing at the Bombay Gymkhana, the president of the world amateur boxing body, Prof. Anwar Choudhury, expressed his doubts about the cricket tour coming off. Although it was an adjunct to his excuse for the absence of the Pakistani boxing squad, it was a clear expression of Pakistan's thinking. And he said it in early November, which means the decision to call off the tour had been taken privately a long time ago. And, in all probability, it was taken by Imran Khan because he is the last word in Pak cricket.

Apparently, there was a lot of discussion over first, the Ayodhya incidents and then, their repercussions in different parts of the country. Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and his Islamic Democratic Alliance overwhelmingly voted against a cricket tour. Although, this was more because of the political implications of sending a Pakistani team in the face of the country's official barrage against communal riots (never mind the fact that Pakistan dispensed with the problem in this sphere by destroying temples in both west and erstwhile East Pakistan), the reason cited by the BCCP is the risk the players will face in playing during the disturbances.

The irony of the situation here in India was the pronouncement by the BCCI secretary, Jagmohan Dalmiya, that the Pak tour of India was "definitely on" even as his counterpart in Pakistan was sending a letter requesting postponement of the tour. Worse, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB), had a full-fledged meeting on the very day Pakistan's decision was known, to finalise the ticket rates for the two Asia Cup matches scheduled for Calcutta. The round-robin league match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh was to be held on the last day of the year and the final on 3 January next year.

"I have spoken to my Pakistani counterpart over telephone (on 10 December) and I had no indication from them (BCCP) of their having second thoughts on the tour," he said. Of course, he did add, "However, I cannot say if something unforeseen happens." Actually, it was not unforeseen, especially if one goes by what Anwar Choudhury had said over a month ago.

The dialogue between the two secretaries covered the itinerary, with Arif Abbasi suggesting certain changes of venues. In fact, the police authorities in Hyderabad, one of the cities in Pakistan's tour, had withdrawn the clearance it had given earlier for the match in the city. Naturally, a change of venue was on the cards.

Now, of course, all that has changed. Ticket rates for the Asia Cup will have to be drastically scaled down and the venues re-allotted.

But the saddest person in India today must be Gundappa Vishwanath. After a great deal of preparation, he had almost finalised his benefit match at the Eden Gardens, with Indian and Pakistani players. ●

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

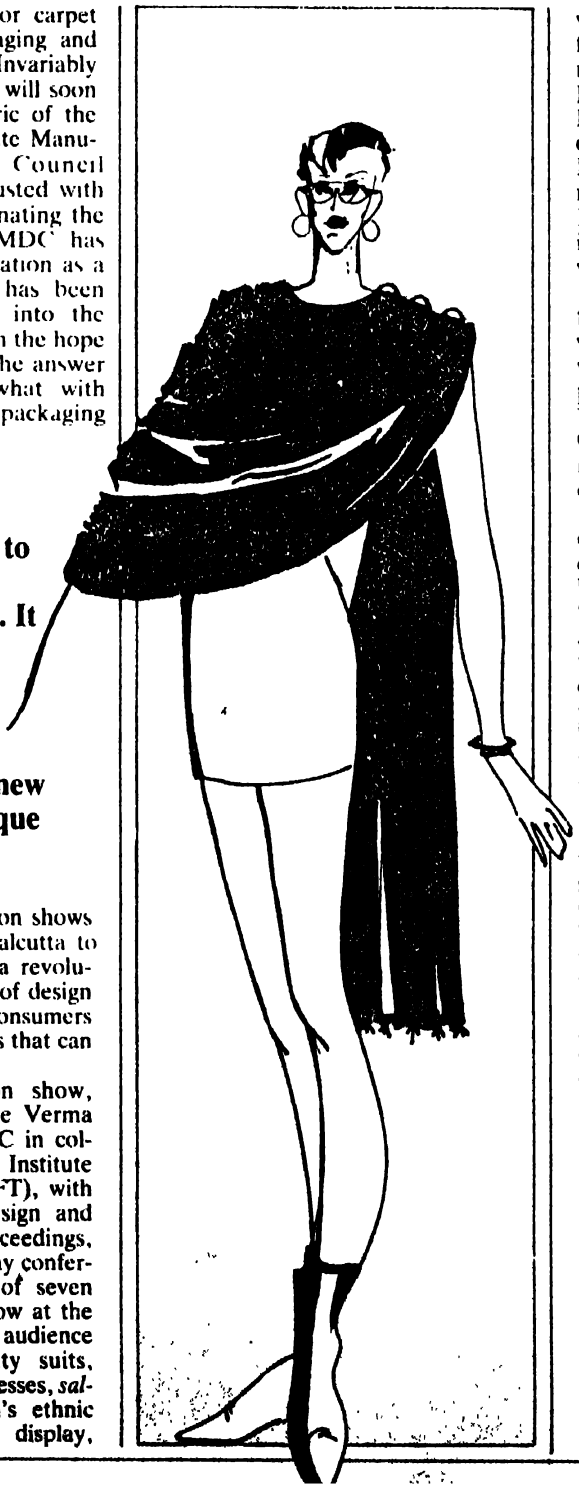
Jute couture

It is emerging as the *fashion fabric of the Nineties*

Jute for cordage, jute for carpet backing, jute for packaging and now, jute for fashion. Invariably dismissed as sackcloth, jute will soon emerge as the fashion fabric of the Nineties. At least, if the Jute Manufacturers Development Council (JMDC) has its way. Entrusted with the responsibility of rejuvenating the fast-dying industry, the JMDC has identified product diversification as a thrust area. And priority has been given to introducing jute into the charmed world of fashion, in the hope that *haute couture* may be the answer to the fall in demand, what with synthetics taking over the packaging market.

JUTE FOR FASHION

Jute is bound to catch on in the fashion market. It has that comfortable look. If used with suitable embroidery, applique work and other accessories, the new item will be quite unique



Hence, the series of fashion shows in Bangalore, Delhi and Calcutta to introduce what is certainly a revolutionary change in the world of design and familiarise prospective consumers with the fabric and the things that can be done with it.

In Calcutta, the fashion show, choreographed by Shyamolie Verma and presented by the JDMC in collaboration with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), with Prasad Bidapa of the Design and Print Group overseeing proceedings, was the highlight of a two-day conference on jute. Collections of seven NIFT designers were on show at the Taj Bengal before a capacity audience of approximately 400. City suits, waistcoats, jackets, skirts, dresses, *salwar kameez* sets, and men's ethnic wear were included in the display, with the emphasis on block prints and fabric paints. Prasad Bidapa's External Affairs, Sushanta Kumar Das' Paat Paridhan and Nikhil Kapoor's Form and Formality went down particularly well with the audience. Chetna Bhat's experiment with the comma motif in her shawls and drapes and Ranjan Sengupta's generous borrowing from the Japanese kimono concept were also appreciated.

The outfits, modelled by 15 models from Delhi, Calcutta and Bangalore were predominantly white or beige with bold red and black geometric prints. The *kurtas*, according to Wilma Machaya of the Designer and Print Group, required as much as eight metres of cloth for achieving the right effect.

According to G.K. Roy Chowdhury of the JMDC, the fabric is bound to catch on in the fashion market. "Jute has that comfortable look," he says. "If used with suitable embroidery, applique work and other accessories, the new item will be quite unique and click in a big way with those who prefer natural fabric." And once it has been introduced in the home market, tapping export potential will be the next priority.

Prasad Bidapa agrees, maintaining that jute will ride on the *khadi* wave to make a place for itself in the fashion scene. Calcutta artist and designer Goshto Kumar wasn't too impressed by what he saw at the Taj, insisting that the designs were largely repetitive.

Others in the audience were more appreciative, however. Said one socialite: "We came here expecting to see sacks on show but instead were treated to such beautiful outfits that I wouldn't mind paying a fortune for it."

The show lasted 45 minutes at the banquet terrace of the hotel. With good music, informative commentary, photo-slides and a suitable ambience, it was without a doubt the best debutante ball the golden fabric could have hoped for. "The only grievance against my organisation," says an amused Bidapa., "was that the show began on time."●

Nabanita Dutt/Calcutta

ODDS AND TRENDS

Ghost teachers?

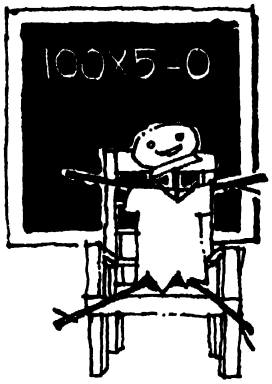


ILLUSTRATION BY ANJU ROY

■ Anything can happen in Bihar. Recently, about 500 secondary teachers were appointed to posts that do not exist by the state government. Revealing this, Shatrughan Prasad Singh, general secretary of the Bihar Madhyamik Sikshak Sangh, added that many of the posts were for subjects not taught in schools.

Citing examples to substantiate his charge, he claimed that a large number of *Maithili* teachers were asked to work in the tribal areas of south Bihar where the subject has never been offered. Others were commissioned to teach ancient history, a subject which is only taught at the higher secondary level.

Seems like the government is all set for an illiteracy drive!

Coming alive

■ The West came as a saviour. At least to the Kalamkari, the school of painting that once flourished under feudal patronage.

Western interest is now sustaining the only family in Tamil Nadu that has kept the Kalamkari tradition alive. Emberumal, the maestro from Tanjore, shot into fame after visualising the Seoul Olympics mascot 'Hodori' in the Kalamkari style.

Apart from 'Hodori', Emberumal has to his credit tantric and metrical designs and symbols in Kalamkari style.

And that is not all. His paintings found a place in the Festival of India in Moscow and he says that "though there is a gradual decline in the royal patronage, the art is hoping for a revival."

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

PRIZE RS 200 FOR CONTRIBUTION



Bhanupriya



Sridevi

(Contributed by Rabin Gupta, Calcutta)

Heart to heart...

■ Another chapter in India-Pakistan relations. Until recently, a poor vendor from Karachi had accepted the fact that his son, who was suffering from a complex heart ailment, was destined to die. But then there came along Dr K.M. Cherian, director, Madras Medical Mission, and honorary surgeon to President R. Venkataraman, to save the child.

The doctor performed the necessary paediatric heart surgery free of cost. "Ten per cent of the surgeries in the mission are free for the totally poor", says Cherian.

Both father and son are delighted. "What the heart speaks matters for me," says the beaming father.

MILESTONES

DIED: Ustad Ghulam Taqi Khan, a vocalist of distinction, belonging to the Sahaswan Rampur *gharana,* on 7 December in New Delhi. He was 53.

DIED: Chandrakant G. Medhekar, noted journalist and former Bombay bureau manager of United News of India, after prolonged illness in Bombay on 9 December. He was 65.

SELECTED: Mohammed Azharuddin, as the captain of the South Zone in the Deodhar Trophy one-day matches, due to start from 18 December.

SELECTED: *The Sword Of Tipu Sultan,* as the "outstanding TV serial of the year", by the North Bombay Junior Chamber on 6 December in Bombay.

SUSPENDED: Hindi news broadcasts, from the Jalandhar and Chandigarh stations of All India Radio, on 10 December.

RESIGNED: Arjan Singh, from the post of the Lt Governor of Delhi, on 9 December.

APPOINTED: T.N. Sheshan, as the next Chief Election Commissioner in New Delhi on 11 December.

APPOINTED: Vijay Karan, Commissioner of Delhi Police, as the next chief of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

APPOINTED: G. Ramaswamy, as the new attorney-general of India and **Arvind Dev Giri,** as the new solicitor-general of India, on 2 December in New Delhi.

WON: Sumit Khurana, Kirat Singh and Mohit Dua, of Modern School, the first prize and the champion trophy at the prestigious International Software Contest for under 17 years at Manila, Philippines.

INAUGURATED: India International Dance Festival, presented jointly by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Sangeet Natak Akademi, on 8 December, consisting of the participation of 23 countries, in Delhi.

REPLACED: S. Deshmukh, principal secretary of the Prime Minister, by **S.K. Mishra** from 18 December.

BANNED: All audio and visual cassettes on Ram Janmabhoomi issues, in the Ghaziabad district.

BEGINNING 23 DECEMBER 1990 BY AMRITLAL

ARIES (21 March—20 April)



There may be quite a few disappointments in store for you this week A person you trust might suddenly go against you Employees are advised to be cautious in dealing with their superiors

Good dates: 23, 25 and 29
Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: North

TAURUS (21 April—20 May)



This is a week of mixed fortunes Law-suits may cause some anxiety A good time for musicians and dancers The time is not favourable for romance A letter might bring good news Be careful on the domestic front

Good dates: 24, 26 and 28
Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: West

GEMINI (21 May—20 June)



This is an excellent week to go ahead with marriage plans Your family will be a source of joy and comfort to you Those who are employed in the private sector may be transferred

Good dates: 26, 27 and 29
Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6
Favourable direction: South

CANCER (21 June—20 July)



Though you may prosper financially do not be extravagant Those who are employed might be promoted Students are advised to concentrate on their studies and make full use of all the opportunities that come their way

Good dates: 23, 24 and 26
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South west

LEO (21 July—20 August)



There might be a major change on the professional front The stars are in favour of love and romance but avoid matrimony for the time being Try to involve yourself in things besides your work

Good dates: 25, 26 and 28
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: North-west

VIRGO (21 August—20 September)



You will have to face problems this week, particularly in dealing with a member of the opposite sex. Relatives will play an important role in your life Avoid speculation Do not be extravagant

Good dates: 24, 25 and 27
Lucky numbers: 3, 6, and 9
Favourable direction: East

LIBRA (21 September—20 October)



You will have to rely on your own resources to get through this week. You might face differences will your relatives, regarding property matters However, businessmen will profit from investments

Good dates: 23, 26 and 27
Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: West

SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)



Do not hesitate to be aggressive Go ahead and take risks as most of you will do exceedingly well on all fronts Promotions are in the offing for those in service Do not pin your hopes on a recently developed friendship

Good dates: 25, 27 and 28
Lucky numbers: 2, 5, and 7
Favourable direction: South

SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)



There are chances of some financial gains this week Some of you might inherit property Job opportunities are in store for the unemployed Children will do well in their examinations

Good dates: 26 27 and 28
Lucky numbers: 1 4 and 5
Favourable direction: North

CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)



This is the ideal time for love and matrimony Professionals may have to shoulder added responsibilities Do not hesitate to accept difficult assignments Those who are unemployed may find jobs

Good dates: 23, 24 and 25
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: West

AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)



A very lucky week lies ahead of you Most of your plans will materialise and you will be praised by friends and relatives Employees may be promoted or transferred The time is not favourable for romance

Good dates: 24, 25 and 29
Lucky numbers: 6, 8, and 9
Favourable direction: East

PISCES (21 February—20 March)



Businessmen should be prepared to take on new responsibilities With a bit of hard work, they can go a long way Women will make new friends and receive gifts from unexpected quarters

Good dates: 25, 28 and 29
Lucky numbers: 2, 7 and 8
Favourable direction: East

STAR PARTNERS: SCORPIO—ARIES

A Scorpio woman, with fixed ideas and a strong need for security, cannot in general find fulfilment in a partnership with an Aries man, who will not understand and will be impatient of her unrelenting moods and unforgiving nature.

One good turn...

The Tau may have dropped out of newspaper headlines, but his abilities as a fixer are as sharp as ever.

Not only did the deputy prime minister manage to get his protégé S.K. 'Chappie' Mishra into the PMO, he also wangled a prestigious job for T.N. Seshan.

Yes, contrary to popular perceptions, it wasn't the Congress which got Seshan



T.N. Seshan: the Tau looks after his own

appointed as chief election commissioner, but Chaudhary Devi Lal. Evidently, when the Tau had been sacked by V.P. Singh, Seshan had proved to be a friend in need, providing Lal with inside information on various matters of state. The senior bureaucrat has also visited Lal and Shekhar at home while the dissidence drama raged, hiding his face in the folds of a shawl to escape being seen by mediapersons.

And now a duly grateful Chaudhary had returned the favour by getting him made the CEC.

Coffee House camaraderie

If the Raja clung to his Allahabad aristocracy, Chandra Shekhar intends to prove true to his coffee house compatriots.

During V.P. Singh's tenure in South Block, only bureaucrats from the Uttar Pradesh cadre in general and Allahabad in particular were regarded as being of consequence. Not only did they get prize posts almost effortlessly, promotions also came of their accord.

HEARD AT NORTH BLOCK

In most governments, ministers make the policy and bureaucrats deal with cases. In this government, the bureaucrats make the policy but the ministers like to deal with the cases.

A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT

Chandra Shekhar's accession to power changed all that. For the bearded *baba* of Ballia decided on rewarding all those he'd chatted up at the Lucknow Coffee House for years altogether. The first coffee companion to gain from the Prime Minister's resolution was Markandeya Singh, recently-appointed Lieutenant Governor of Delhi after the resignation of Air Chief Marshall (retired) Arjan Singh.

And soon other members of the coffee brigade will be in clover as well.

THERMOMETER

Dr Sanjay Singh's friends—and enemies

- **Chandra Shekhar:** Despite the reservations of certain sections of his party and the Congress(I), Shekhar appointed Sanjay Singh to the ministry. The Prime Minister maintained that Singh had been let off by the court, so there was no justification in keeping him out on the issue of his alleged involvement in the Syed Modi murder case

- **Mulayam Singh Yadav:** In the perception of the public, Sanjay Singh was always the Raja's man But the perpetually smirking prince of Amethi, in fact, owed primary allegiance to Mulayam Singh Yadav, who'd also got him a seat in the Rajya Sabha. And now that the communications minister is in a bit of spot, the UP CM has taken on the responsibility of ensuring that he stays. It is, of course, another matter that Yadav's own position in his state is less than secure.

- **Captain Satish Sharma:** Ever since the last election in Amethi, where Sanjay Singh and the good Captain found themselves in opposing camps, Satish Sharma has been looking for an opportunity to knife Singh in the back. And what better way to do it than lobby for his removal from the ministry now that the government has gone in appeal in the Modi case.

- **Chaudhary Devi Lal:** His animosity against Sanjay Singh is no secret. Even when Singh was a favourite in the Raja's *durbar*, the Tau derided him at every turn. He is now trying his best to get him removed from the post of communications minister. But Shekhar refuses to give in to his pressure tactics.

- **Subramaniam Swamy:** Political observers feel that Swamy, as law minister, could have refused to go in appeal in the Syed Modi case. And the fact that he has chosen to put his ministerial colleague in an embarrassing position only means that he is against Singh's continuance in office.

Facts about figures

If Arun Nehru's around, Arif Mohammad Khan can't be far behind. This simple law of Janata Dal politics has never failed before. So, it was quite a surprise when Arif Mohammad turned up



Arif Mohammad Khan: but where is Arun Nehru?

at Ram Dhan's house to begin an indefinite fast to protest against the wave of communal violence in the country, and AKN was nowhere in evidence. Enquiries revealed that the former commerce minister was in London, and it wasn't long before observers had begun joking about how Nehru didn't want to risk losing his impressive figure in any such exercise.

Dal spokesman Jaipal Reddy was also in for some embarrassing questions at his press briefing, with reporters asking him to request Nehru to fast along with Arif. It would do AKN's health good, suggested assembled hacks.

Pride and prejudice

His views on economics have always been regarded as being of Fifties vintage. Small wonder than that Chandra Shekhar didn't have much time for the Montek Singh Ahluwalias of the world, regarding them as members of the much-abhorred World Bank lobby.

But the Prime Minister seemed to be carrying his prejudice– and opposition to the industrial policy - too far when he refused to make Ahluwalia commerce secretary.

Thankfully, good sense and Subramaniam Swamy's arguments in the bureaucrat's favour prevailed. The commerce minister convinced Shekhar that with his knowledge of the export-import market, Montek Singh would be the ideal choice.

And the Prime Minister relented, though against his better judgement.

Image problems

Ever since the Janata Dal(S) government assumed office, the security phalanx around Rajiv Gandhi has been strengthened But strangely enough, the Congress president has taken kindly to what may be best described as a good-will gesture on the part of Chandra Shekhar. Rajiv, apparently, feels that there are too many sten guns in his vicinity, they will damage his image far more than they will any prospective assassin.

These days, therefore, whenever Gandhi sees an policeman deployed to protect him, he loses his proverbially short temper. "What are you doing here?" asks Rajiv in his most peremptory manner, while the cops beat a hasty retreat in the face of his obvious ange

But Rajiv doesn't stop at that. He follows them for a distance of as much as 300-400 yards to ensure that they have *really* left, and are not hiding behind the nearest tree.

Only then does Gandhi, image intact, revert back to the charming man of the people mode.

HEARD AT 24 AKBAR ROAD

Chandra Shekhar's idea of fairness is that if Mulayam Singh has to step down as CM because of riots, then he'll bring him to Delhi and make him home minister in charge of the whole country's law and order.

A CONGRESS MP



Rajiv Gandhi: gunning for security men

C H E C K – L I S T

State Governors: the great survivors

- **Khurshid Alam Khan:** Appointed Governor of Goa by Rajiv Gandhi, Khan survived all through the Raja's regime, perhaps because V.P. Singh did not want to fire any Muslim. Shekhar has also kept him on and with the imposition of President's Rule in the state, Khan has become an important figure
- **Chintamani Panigrahi:** Another Rajiv Gandhi appointee, the Manipur Governor went along with V.P Singh on the issue of the change in the state government. Naturally, the Raja retained his services Taken by his obliging nature, perhaps, Chandra Shekhar has also decided against firing him
- **Dr Swarup Singh:** Despite being a relative of Ajit Singh, he has maintained close ties with Chaudhary Devi Lal. His Haryana connections have now paid off, with Dr Swarup Singh being given charge of Gujarat rather than the less-important Kerala.
- **Surjit Singh Barnala:** V P Singh appointed him to the Tamil Nadu governorship for being an Akali leader obviously, has its advantages when Shekhar is Prime Minister, for Barnala stays, with additional charge of Andaman and Nicobar islands.
- **Mahmood Ali:** Governor of Madhya Pradesh, he has been a good friend of Chandra Shekhar since his Socialist Party days. And knowing the PM's well-developed sense of loyalty, there is little doubt that he'll stay in office

Shekhar knows best

Never mind the rumours. The Congress doesn't really get its way when it comes to appointing people to crucial posts.

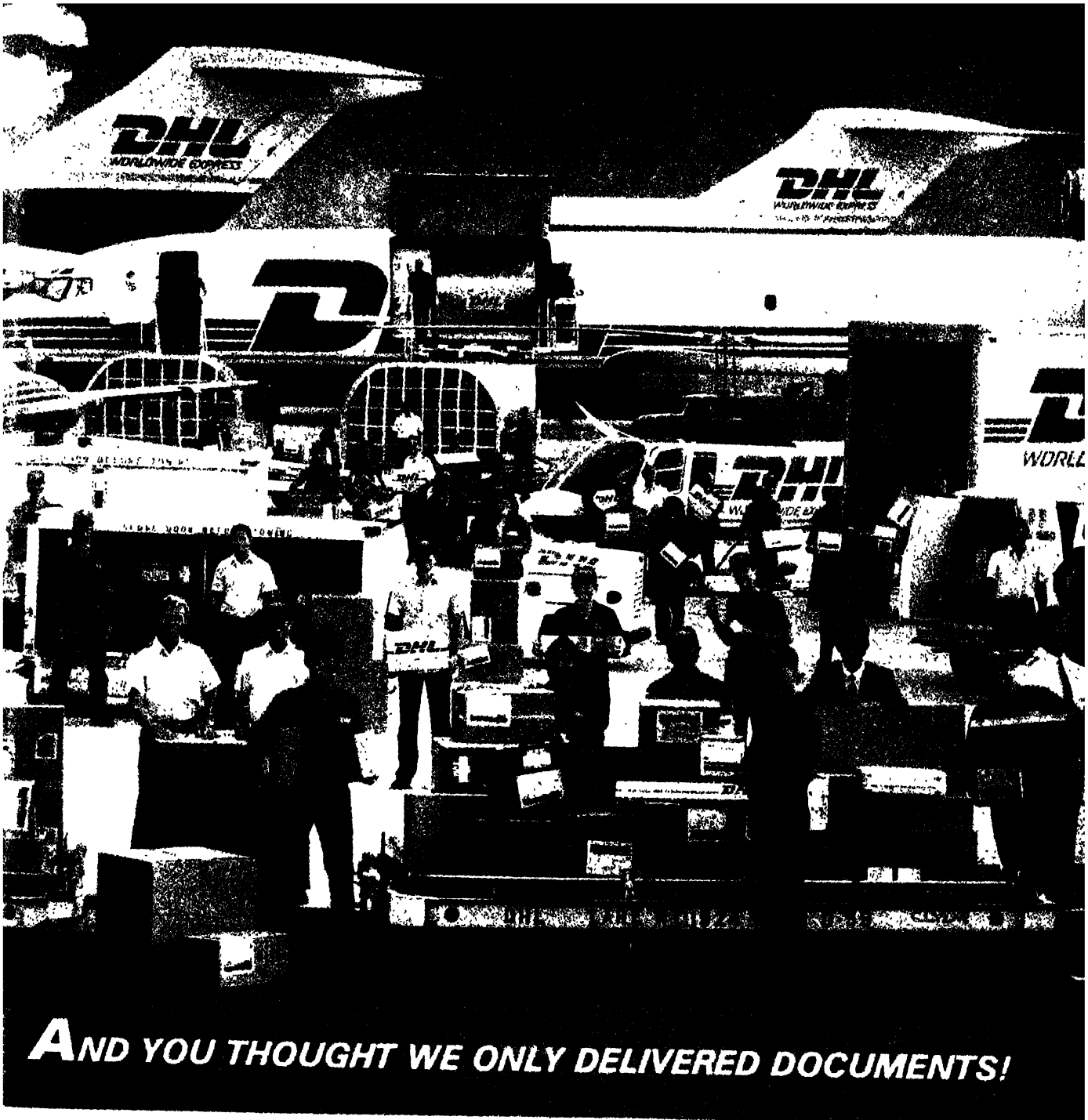
The Punjab governorship, for instance. The party was very keen that either General K.V. Krishna Rao or General Hoon be appointed in Veerendra Verma's stead, for it was considered that only someone from the army could get the situation under control. But it was O.P. Malhotra who got the nod, despite the Congress deriding him as a soft-liner.



O.P. Malhotra: soft-liner?

Apparently, while Krishna Rao declined the offer, maintaining that he could only work with Rajiv Gandhi, Hoon's name was scratched off the list by Chandra Shekhar, in a brave show of independence.

The Congress, however, has already begun a campaign to the effect that Malhotra will prove to be another Nirmal Mukarji (read disaster). It remains to be seen if Shekhar will take the hint.



DHL moves millions of packages and documents around the world each year. In fact, we handle packages of up to 30 kilograms each. Of course, we continue to be the international leader of document air express services as well.

So next time you have a package or document, call DHL. We deliver on time. Everytime.

We are listed in the Yellow Pages/Telephone Directories.

DHL
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS
THE COURIER DIVISION OF AIRFR
re in safe hands

Take the world in your stride.



dinesh

Exclusives ▲ Suitings ▲ Co-ordinates ▲ Safaris

The choice of leading fashion houses, internation

Exclusive showrooms: **BANGALORE:** Pushkar • **MYSORE:** Sagar • **BHOPAL:** Vishal Corner • **INDORE:** Dawar's • **BHAGALPUR:** I
• **BUXAR:** Vastralok • **JHARIA:** Bharat Cloth Store • **PATNA:** Bhartiya Bastralaya